AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILDHOOD IN AN AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

The effects of domestic violence on childhood are significantly under investigated in the literature, the experiences of women dominate the field. The underpinning argument of this thesis is that children who witness domestic violence are silent victims. I have used feminist and sociological theories to strengthen the thesis and frame the gendered and social contexts of domestic violence, providing context for how the social phenomena has been historically understood.

I have used lived experience to explore the effects of witnessing domestic violence as a child, in an Australian context. The highlights and challenges of investigating the self within the context of a sensitive topic are discussed. Autoethnographic methods have been harnessed to represent an experiential narrative of witnessing domestic violence, connected to the context of the broader social issue. Field texts were produced during the research process, in the form of diarised entries and stream of consciousness writing and were subsequently utilised for analysis. Genealogical data sets comprised of family artefacts such as photos and life documents were also used as primary data sets.

The disordered nature of writing the self is thoroughly investigated and demonstrated in the excerpts of diarised entries included in the data section. The thesis concludes with the proposal that the production of familial generational violence and victimisation is impacted by structural factors such as class position, gendered behavioural patterns, and the constructs of the nuclear family. Adulthood is negatively affected by a childhood disrupted by experiential accounts of domestic violence, exposure to violence and victimisation in the home significantly impacts life outcomes.

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Ligia Pelosi has continued to challenge my thought processes throughout the formation of this thesis, at times Ligia and myself had different perspectives on fundamental aspects of the framework of the thesis. The meetings and constructive debates we shared improved my critical thinking skills and developed my ability to think of various audiences while constructing arguments. Thank you, Ligia, for persevering with me over the years, it has been a pleasure.

Siew Fang Law read an essay I wrote for her class on conflict resolution wherein I skimmed the surface of what life was like as a child living in a home disrupted by domestic violence, Siew proceeded to make the self-less effort to contact me and advise me that there was a bigger story to be told. I will always appreciate the moment we sat and spoke about how I could develop the narrative of my lived experience into a bigger piece of work. Siew

expressed her idea that the topics of resilience and identity could be focused on, and ultimately the research has crystalised into a story of identity. Thank you, Siew, for taking the time to influence the trajectory of my research capabilities.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my mother and her mother but ultimately it has been written for all the children who have suffered and who have been silenced.

DECLARATION

I, Alexis White, declare that the PhD thesis entitled *An Investigation into the Relationship Between Domestic Violence and Childhood in an Australian Context* is no more than 80,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

I have conducted my research in alignment with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Victoria University's Higher Degree by Research Policy and Procedures. All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee and was approved on 14 September 2020, application number HRE20-162.

Signature:  Date: 18 April 2022

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INTRODUCTION

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Domestic violence and family violence

This thesis will use the term domestic violence opposed to using the terms domestic violence and family violence interchangeably to support continuity and linguistic cleanliness. Due to this research being autoethnographic, and my experiences of witnessing domestic violence in my childhood home having been embedded in male-to-female, intimate partner violence, the term domestic violence is the most applicable to this research thesis.

The *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children* (2009, p. 2) defines domestic violence as:

> acts of violence that occur between people who have, or have had, an intimate relationship. While there is no single definition, the central element of domestic violence is an ongoing pattern of behaviour aimed at controlling a partner through fear, for example by using behaviour which is violent and threatening. In most cases, the violent behaviour is part of a range of tactics to exercise power and control over women and their children, and can be both criminal, and non-criminal. Domestic violence includes physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse… Family violence is a broader term that refers to violence between family members, as well as violence between intimate partners.

Overview

To investigate the relationship between childhood and domestic violence in an Australian context, I have analysed the generational pattern of female victimisation and male violence in my family whilst drawing on the literature that frames the social issue. Specifically, I have harnessed my own childhood experiences and applied them to my adult life in an effort to draw conclusions about the lifelong effects of witnessing domestic violence.

The family, the site of domestic violence, is the underpinning thread that runs through this autoethnographic investigation. The theme of generational identity emerged from the familial data sets. I have utilised Abraham Maslow's theoretical framework that discusses the process of self-actualisation, to demonstrate what happens to identity when basic human needs are not met, within the context of domestic violence. I suggest that the family does not exist separate from the social conditions within which is functions, therefore, this thesis understands that the family is both affected by and a contribution to the social realm within which domestic violence exists. Historically, I found that the experiences of women have been at the forefront of the discussions about domestic violence. As the research

progressed, I became increasingly concerned with the gap in knowledge regarding the experiences of children who witness violence and victimisation.

I have investigated six components of the social phenomenon of domestic violence: (1) myself within the context of the domestic violence that I witnessed in my childhood. (2) the domestic sphere in relation to the violence that can occur within it. (3) the scholarship on women and domestic violence. (4) the historical context in which the social phenomenon is understood. (5) the absence of first-person accounts of witnessing domestic violence as a child in the literature. (6) the scarcity of research investigating children's experiences of witnessing domestic violence.

This thesis substantiates that children who witness domestic violence are the silent victims of domestic violence and that children's experiential accounts are critical in understanding and therefore reducing the production of familial generational violence and victimisation. Children's experiences are fundamental in the prevention of domestic violence. The idea that children are the silent victims is not a new one, in 1988 Roger J. Grusznski, James C. Brink and Jeffery L. Edleson (p. 431) wrote that 'children are the forgotten victims of domestic violence'. Children who live in homes characterised by domestic violence are the 'silent, forgotten, or invisible victims' (Osofsky 1998; Edleson 1999, cited in Kovacs & Tomison 2003, p. 514). I argue that, if the effects of witnessing domestic violence during childhood could be more comprehensively investigated, that patterns of generational violence and victimisation could be weakened. Acquiring comprehensive knowledge regarding children's exposure to violent and victimised behaviours would enable this to happen.

Women's experiences are central to feminist theory, therefore within the context of analysing domestic violence, feminism understands the social issue as one that is caused by gender inequality and that affects women's lives. Sue Peckover (2002, p. 254) noted that 'domestic violence has been an important feminist issue for many years' and that the women's experiences of domestic violence have been made visible. Although women's experiences are the primary focus of much of the research in the field, it's important to mention that there is still a lack of women's *voices* within the literature. In researching the topic of domestic violence and therefore seriously considering the feminist standpoint as the one that should be applied to this work, I decided to apply feminism where it would have been inappropriate not to, however feminist theory does not shape this thesis.

Monica Campo (2015, p. 11) described the literature (particularly in the Australian context) on children and domestic violence as quantitative, noting that 'research directly assessing children's experiences is lacking.' Children's experiences, within homes characterised by domestic violence, are significantly absent within the feminist theory informed narratives. In instances where children's experiences are discussed, the research has most often been informed through the mother's perceptions of their children's experiences (Edleson 1999).

Violence against women in Australia is a social concern that is 'overwhelmingly committed by men against women' (Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety 2014, p. 1). A Personal Safety Survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in 2016 found that 'one in four women compared to one in thirteen men experience violence

by an intimate partner' (ABS 2017). I agree with feminist thought, that societal gender inequality contributes to the disempowered position women can find themselves in, within intimate partner relationships. It has been extensively documented in the literature that gender norms, sexist attitudes and gender roles within the home are contributing factors that negatively affect the experiences of women within the home (ANROWS 2010; Evans 2005; Hill 2019; Jones 2004; Showden 2011; Our Watch, ANROWS & VicHealth 2015; Gleeson et al. 2015; Grusznski, Brink & Edleson 1988; Flood & Pease 2009).

Marie Hume et al. (2013, p. 24) wrote that 'women's services throughout Australia are struggling to maintain a feminist perspective in supporting women escaping male violence.' The lack of feminist analysis, Hume et al. (2013) argue, in contemporary services for domestic violence victims, increases the risk of homelessness and further experiences of domestic violence. Hume et al. (2013) identified a flaw in the front-line responses, in that non-feminist approaches hindered women and children's ability to leave violent men.

Sue Peckover (2002) conducted a study using healthcare staff as participants, to explore their perspectives on working with families who experience domestic violence. Peckover (2002, p. 256) determined that 'the notion that children are a priority permeated all aspects of the health visitors discourse about their practices around domestic violence.' Sophie Namy et al. (2017) claimed that research regarding the impacts on children who witness domestic violence is comprehensive, however they cite only three journal articles that discuss adverse outcomes and the increased risks of future violence and victimisation. This thesis has found that there is undoubtedly a gap in the field regarding children and domestic violence. The intergenerational nature of the social issue could be addressed and perhaps resolved if the focus shifted from women to their children.

This thesis does not depict an exhaustive list of factors that contribute to incidences of domestic violence. I argue that domestic violence is the manifestation of many contributing factors, discussed in the literature review. However, it is beyond the scope of this research to properly investigate each individual contributing component in depth. What this thesis has done is bring together its arguments based on the themes in the literature, the field texts that were produced through this autoethnographic investigation, and genealogical data sets.

<u>Research questions</u>

1. How is the narrative of childhood changed by witnessing domestic violence?
2. How does the experience of domestic violence shape identity?
3. How has the social phenomenon of domestic violence been narrated, framed, and understood?

<u>Rationale</u>

The methodologies used to conduct this research speak to the importance of utilising voice and experience in academia. My experiences are at the core of this research project and my voice is harnessed by academic investigation. Considering I was unable to locate other

autoethnographic accounts of childhood's disrupted by domestic violence, I would argue that this thesis offers a unique perspective into the issue.

My overarching argument is that children themselves are fundamental in stopping the perpetuation of familial generational patterns of violence and victimisation. The importance of children's livelihoods is underrated within the literature concerned with domestic violence, and yet it is an incredibly vital component of the issue itself. To reduce the production of generational violence and victimisation in homes their experiences must be much better understood. The long-term impacts of domestic violence and victimisation that continue to be reproduced generation after generation, requires immediate attention. This thesis it is not an exhaustive investigation, but it offers insight that could be utilised as a vantage point for extended research and development of ideas regarding the relationship between childhood and domestic violence.

Aims of this thesis

1. To demonstrate that the familial generational production of violence and victimisation is a social issue that requires immediate attention and action.

2. To investigate the domestic sphere, the site in which domestic violence and victimisation occurs.

3. To explore the social and cultural contexts that are both influenced by and influences of the nuclear family.

4. To utilise my lived experiences and use an analytical lens to contribute to the scholarship on the effects of domestic violence on childhood.

5. To extract findings from autoethnographic and genealogical data sets that can expand on pre-existing knowledge regarding the relationship between childhood and domestic violence.

Scope of the issue

The Red Heart Campaign (2022, see reference for a comprehensive list of victims) tracks the loss of Australian lives to violence. The majority of the lives that are lost are the lives of women and children within the context of *domestic* violence. Sherele Moody, founder of the campaign, is an Australian journalist and anti-violence activist and has recorded that:

> In 2018, 79 women were murdered and 49 were domestic violence/intimate partner related. 26 children were murdered and 23 were domestic violence related.
>
> In 2019, 75 women were murdered and 51 were domestic violence/intimate partner related. 25 children were murdered and 17 were domestic violence related.
>
> In 2020, 68 women were murdered and 45 were domestic violence/intimate partner related. 30 children were murdered and 17 were domestic violence related.

> In 2021, 45 women were murdered and 29 were domestic violence/intimate partner related. 18 children were murdered and 9 were domestic violence related (Red Heart Campaign 2022).

The issue of domestic violence, however, cannot be accurately portrayed in statistics because the nature of the violence certainly does not always result in death, and it is a private matter that is often undocumented. It has been noted how:

> Collecting reliable data on this hidden issue poses several challenges. In almost every country there is limited data available on the prevalence of domestic violence, and even less information on the numbers of children who may be exposed to such violence, some countries have no recorded data (UNICEF 2006, p. 5).

On average, Australian Police respond to one matter of domestic violence every two minutes (Blumer 2016). In the state of Victoria alone, statistics show that children experience domestic violence at an alarming rate. The Victoria Police's *Family Violence Incidence Reports* showed that for the year ending 30 June 2014:

- Victoria Police attended 65,393 family incidents; and
- children were present at 22,445 (34%) of these incidents (Campo 2015, p. 5).

While these figures are useful, they are not definitive. Due to incidents being underreported by both the abused parent and children, studies that have been conducted are based on unreliable statistics (UNICEF 2006).

<u>Context</u>

Personal:

I have included a chapter in this thesis that discusses the context within which I have conducted this study. Due to the highly personal nature of writing autoethnography, I thought it was relevant to include excerpts of my personal writings that detailed certain elements of my life over the research period. The context of my life has essentially been a component of the data and the research findings, as my experiences reflect the relationship between childhood and domestic violence.

Social:

Domestic violence rates increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic but at the time of writing, the experiences of women and children were not fully understood because the pandemic had not ended. Some studies were conducted, particularly by Women's Safety NSW, to gain better insight into how domestic violence was affected by the lockdown restrictions that forced most people out of the public arena and into their homes (see Foster 2020a; Foster 2020b; Foster 2020c & Foster & Fletcher 2020). One key finding of a study conducted on the life setbacks for 30-year-old males and females as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic was that women took on more domestic work and childcare, were more likely

to decrease their hours of paid work, leave the workforce and defer their studies (Harrison, Curry & Bowman 2020, p. 1).

Change in thesis format

My original plan was to submit a creative thesis in the form of a fictionalised autoethnographic novel accompanied by an exegesis. I decided to change direction and write a traditional thesis due to the problems I encountered working in the fictionalised genre. The challenges I faced, when writing chapter drafts for a novel, were related to the process of storytelling, coherence in structuring my recollections, and the retelling of my lived experiences. I wrote in excess of 50,000 words in the drafting process, in a concerted effort to eventually produce a readable version of my story, but ultimately, the structural writing issues were unable to be overcome. During the process of drafting the creative thesis novel I produced substantial narrative accounts which then became the field text upon which the analysis was partly based.

The research process

This thesis has been written using my experiential accounts of witnessing domestic violence as a child. The themes that emerged throughout the autoethnographic narrative have been connected to the broader social issue through the process of reviewing the literature in the field. Using my own reconstructed narrative to investigate the effects of witnessing domestic violence in my childhood was a process of writing the self. Conducting autoethnography on a sensitive topic resulted in issues regarding validity, accuracy of data sets, ethical dilemmas of the misrepresentation and anonymity of others, and the disordered nature of writing the self.

While using autoethnographic, genealogical and narrative inquiry methodologies to investigate my own life, I analysed the literature in the field. Through this process of engaging with the social issue of domestic violence, I was able to critique the work of others for further expansion of ideas.

The study has drawn on grey documents of life as its primary data sets and used narrative inquiry to investigate the field texts and identify the themes that emerged. Family artefacts such as, letters between family members, photographs, video recordings and newspaper clippings assisted in the reconstruction of my interpretations of my childhood.

Concluding comments

The domestic sphere is where childhoods are lived out, it is where lives are shaped, it is also the site of domestic violence. Children must be raised in better conditions than the environment that domestic violence fosters.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of domestic violence

'Domestic violence refers to violence, abuse and intimidation between people who are or have been in an intimate relationship. The perpetrator uses violence to control and dominate the other person. Domestic violence is a violation of human rights' (White Ribbon 2018).

Physical violence is the most obvious example of intimate partner violence, however the definition of domestic violence can be extended further to other behaviours that are controlling and coercive in nature (AIHW 2020; Callaghan et al. 2018; Hill 2019; Katz 2016; Our Watch 2017; UNICEF 2006). In 1979 R. Emerson Dobash and Russell P. Dobash (p. 15) stated that 'violence in the family should be understood primarily as coercive control.' Nam Hee Thomson (2000) argued that patterns of not just physical but also emotional, psychological and sexual abuse should be included in the definition of domestic violence. Domestic violence occurs when the perpetrator is seeking to maintain control and power over the victim (Thomson 2000), regardless of the form of abuse.

The United Nations (1993, cited in Moulding 2015, p. 12) has defined violence against women as:

> any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.

A brief history

'The field [of family violence] began with the study of physical assaults on children, and then expanded to studies of violence against wives, siblings, parents, the elderly', which evolved from just physical forms of violence to neglect and psychological abuse of children and spouses (Straus 1992, p. 212).

It took an extensive amount of time to trace back through the literature, due to the volume of research that has been conducted in the field. I was determined to understand the origins of research on domestic violence and found that research in the field begun in the 1970s (see Richard J. Gelles 1980; Katrina Ellen Davis 1988).

Estimated figures of domestic violence in the 1970s relied on domestic related homicides, family-court hearings, domestic call outs to police and women treated in emergency hospital rooms (Martin 1976; Walker 1979, cited in Gelles 1980, p. 877). In 1978, 3.8 percent of American women reported that they had experienced violence in the home within the previous 12-month period (Gelles 1978, cited in Gelles 1980, p. 877). 'The decade of the seventies witnessed a wholesale increase in attention to and published reports on various aspects of violence in the home' (Gelles 1980, p. 874). It is fair to claim that the rise

in feminism in the 1970s brought the issue of domestic violence into the social space. 'The first large-scale campaign against wife beating took place in the 1970s [as] part of the renaissance of feminism' (Breines & Gordon 1983, p. 507). Carisa Renea Showden (2011, p. 43) observed that feminist analyses of domestic violence arose from the battered women's movement in the 1970s and have dominated the topic since. The women's movement embodied the elimination of patriarchy, the reconstruction of the family, and the equal distribution of childcare and domestic labour between genders (Stark, Flitcraft & Frazier 1979, p. 487).

Wini Breines and Linda Gordon (1983, p. 490) noted that the 1960s and 1970s saw a 'passionate awakening of concern with both child and wife abuse' which they attributed to several factors, one being the cultural shift regarding the personal life. 'A new acceptability of a confessional mode [resulted in a] trend which reached an extreme in the 1970s [and] contributed to the opening up of areas of life once hidden' (Breines & Gordon 1983, p. 491). The social contexts shifted, the private lives of women became public as the fight for gender equality altered both the nuclear family dynamic and intimate partner relations. In 1980(b) Murray A. Straus (p. 91) wrote that progress towards sexual equality had been slower than what seemed possible in the early 1970s.

1955 to 1970 was a 'critical period in the much-described "crisis" of the family, of which family violence was seen as a symptom' (Breines & Gordon 1983, p. 491). As documented by Rebecca Jennings (2018, p. 90), the Radical lesbian movement that arose out of the women's movement, was based on a belief that sexism was the root cause of all oppression and deemed the nuclear family a destructive institution.

The women's movement, which provoked personal matters to be made public, supported the awareness of the crisis of the family (Breines & Gordon 1983, p. 491). Rosamund Thorpe and Jude Irwin (1996, p. 1) stated that since the 1970s, domestic violence has become of increasing public concern.

> There was very little known or written about violence against women until the early 1970s, not because it did not happen but because it was hidden from the public gaze (Thorpe & Irwin 1996, p. 1).

In 1992, Murray A. Straus (p. 215) noted that research on family violence had grown exponentially since 1970 attributing the rise in research to a sociological shift: 'the women's movement made rape and then battering central issues in the 1970s, and created a new public consciousness of these ancient cruelties.' In 1983 Breines and Gordon (p. 528) noted that the 'recognition and analysis of violence between intimates is still in an early stage.'

Once I located literature some of the original work in the field, written in the 1970s and 1980s regarding domestic violence, I immediately started to look for any signs of research that had been conducted that explored or even skimmed the surface of the effects on childhood. The closest ideas I could find, within the scope of the topic of childhood, were discussions about the cycle of violence (Gelles 1980) and the concept of role modelled behaviours (Parker & Schumacher 1977) that indicated some knowledge regarding the perpetuation of generational patterns of domestic violence. In 1977 Barbara Parker and

Dale N. Schumacher noted that investigation into the effects of domestic violence on childhood was needed. Specifically, in their study on violence in the nuclear family, Parker and Schumacher (1977, p. 761) noted that 'children from families with marital violence need further follow-up and study to determine the impact of this violence on their adult life.'

Domestic violence in Australia: a social epidemic

'At least one in every three women globally has been beaten, coerced into sex, or abused in some other way – most often by someone she knows, including by her husband or another male family member' (UNICEF 2006, p. 5). In Australia, '3.6 times as many women as men are killed by their partners' (James & Carcach 1997, cited in Headey, Scott & De Vaus 1999, p. 57).

'Statistics are often at the centre of discussions of violence against women. However, the data reflecting the reality of women's experiences of violence are complex and can easily be reported inaccurately due to time and other pressures' (ANROWS 2010, p. 1).

Domestic violence has been referred to as Australia's 'hidden crime' (The Policy Shop 2017), 'hidden shame' (anonymous Australian citizen, cited in Hendry 2020) and its 'filthy little secret' (Ken Lay, former Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police, cited in Hill 2019, p. 249). Cathy Humphreys (2008, p. 230) described domestic violence as a 'chronic and devastating social problem.' In 1979 Richard J. Gelles and Murray A. Straus (p. 551) noted that the main category of public calls made to police was domestic violence. Australian Police deal with an average of 5000 domestic violence matters weekly (Blumer 2016).

In 2006, Paula Wilcox (p. 8) claimed that there is ample evidence that shows domestic violence is predominately male-to-female perpetrated. Jeff Hearn (2013, p. 152) also wrote that women are most commonly victims of domestic violence and men are most likely to be the perpetrators. The Personal Safety Survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in 2016 found that '1.6 million women and 0.5 million men had experienced violence by a partner since the age of 15' (ABS 2017). Comparatively, domestic violence and violence perpetrated by a stranger is experienced at different rates, according to gender:

> approximately one in four women experienced violence by an intimate partner, compared to one in thirteen men, and more than one in four men experienced violence by a stranger, compared to one in eleven women (ABS 2017).

Drawing from an Australian study on violence against women, Peta Cox (2015, p. 28) reported that women are more at risk of experiencing violence by a male that they know, as opposed to a stranger, and male perpetrated violence is a greater risk to males, outside of the domestic space. Men who experience violence do so in settings such as prisons, public places and workplaces (Taft, Hegarty & Flood 2001, p. 500), rarely in the domestic sphere, therefore domestic violence should be understood and discussed as a predominately male-to-female perpetration issue. (See Cox 2015 for a comprehensive analysis of Australia's statistics on violence against women, gathered from a 2012 survey).

In 1979 Evan Stark, Anne Flitcraft and William Frazier (p. 462) referred to domestic violence as being 'social in its construction, its dynamic, and its consequences.' Throughout the course of this research, I have kept a diary filled with my own personal commentary on domestic violence cases that have been prolific in the media. Below is a list of, sadly, merely a few of the victims I have documented in my diary. I have used my diary to stay connected to the issue, below I have listed some of the lives lost to domestic violence to provide the reader with an insight into the epidemic that was affecting society at the time of writing. For a comprehensive list of victims within Australia who were murdered in domestic violence/intimate partner contexts refer to the Red Heart Campaign (2022), the memorial dates back to 1838.

Luke Batty, son of Australian of the year 2015 Rosie Batty, was stabbed by his father who was in breach of his intervention order, at a children's sporting event. Rosie had fought to protect herself and Luke relentlessly, the legal system failed her and her son. Hannah Clarke and her children Aaliyah, Laianah and Trey were set alight in their car by Hannah's ex-husband, the father of her three children. Hannah had recently separated from her husband before the murders and feared for the safety of herself and her children. Alicia Little was hit by a car by her fiancé during an argument on her property, he left her injured and she died alone. He went to the pub and a mutual friends' home after the incident. He did not tell them what had happened. Alicia had phoned police that day, regarding the domestic dispute. Jack and Jennifer Edwards, teen siblings, were shot in their home by their estranged father who then committed suicide. Jack and Jennifer's mother Olga found them and committed suicide approximately 6 months later. Maria Lutz and her children Elisa and Martin were poisoned while they slept by Maria's husband, the father of her children, who also died by the same poisoning (murder-suicide). Helena Broadbent fell from a moving car driven by her intimate partner while she was on the phone to police afraid of being killed with a hammer by her partner. Helena's unborn baby was delivered by an emergency caesarean section and survived.

Men's violence against women has been referred to as an epidemic (Hill 2019) that has worldwide recognition as a significant social problem (Dobash & Dobash 2004). In 2005, The World Health Organisation (cited in Buchanan 2013, p. 21) highlighted gendered violence as 'the greatest health risk to women in the world.' Almost a decade later, The World Health Organisation (2013, cited in Moulding 2015, p. 1) still referred to male-perpetrated violence as a 'major social and public health problem across the globe.'

Grace Headey, Dorothy Scott and David De Vaus (1999) investigated three aspects of domestic violence: male perpetration against females, the effects of male physicality in male-to-female violence, and intergenerational patterns of violence. Crime statistics showed that the significance of male perpetration is clear. The authors added that clinical studies were unreliable due to the nature of gathering information, but those statistics showed that women outnumbered the amount of men hospitalised for domestic violence related injuries. Sample surveys were more valid because they allowed for broad coverage on the topic and they also showed higher rates of female victims than males (Headey, Scott & De Vaus 1999).

Within the Australian context, domestic violence is rife within society and there is a high level of recidivism (KMPG 2017). In terms of domestic homicide, the data clearly shows that domestic homicide is gendered. Of 152 cases of intimate partner homicide between 1 July 2010 and 30 June 2014, the majority involved a man killing his partner. In most cases where a man was killed, the person who killed him was a partner who he had been abusing (ANROWS 2019). A 2004 VicHealth study (cited in Salter 2012, p. 4) found that for women aged 15-44, domestic violence is the reason for 9% of their total disease burden, and that rate is more than the rates for high blood pressure, smoking or obesity.

Between 2016-18 183 domestic homicide victims from 173 domestic incidents were recorded:

Of the 183 domestic homicide victims, there were:

- 101 victims of intimate partner homicide
- 30 victims of filicide
- 23 victims of parricide
- 8 victims of siblicide
- 21 victims of other family homicide (see Bricknell 2020a & Bricknell 2020b for a thorough analysis of the homicidal incidents).

Of those 183 domestic homicide victims, 100 were female, and 73 of those female victims were killed by an intimate partner (AIHW 2020).

Australia has seen a rise in women's refuges and other support services (Thorpe & Irwin 1996, p. 1) and our public health policy responses to violence are 'largely and appropriately' targeted towards women and children (Taft, Hegarty & Flood 2001, p. 500).

While the focus of this thesis is on domestic violence in Australia the American family has been described by Hutchings (1988, cited in McKay 1994, p. 37) as the most violent of institutions.

> Violence in the home is one of the most pervasive human rights challenges of our time. It remains a largely hidden problem that few countries, communities or families openly confront. Violence in the home is not limited by geography, ethnicity, or status; it is a global phenomenon (UNICEF 2006, p. 3).

3.3 to 10 million American children witness their mothers being abused each year (Moe 2009; Thomson 2000). In 1994 Mary McKernan McKay (p. 37) stated that approximately 1.6 million American wives are severely assaulted each year.

<u>Witnessing domestic violence</u>

'For some time, researchers and activists have called for recognition of the impact of domestic violence on children in families and the consequent importance of taking children's experiences seriously' (Callaghan et al. 2018, p. 1554).

In 2012, over half a million Australian women reported that their children witnessed domestic violence (Cox 2015, p. 102). Research suggests that the witnessing of domestic violence in and of itself is a form of violence. Jess Hill (2019), author of a book on power, control and domestic abuse, argues that children who witness domestic violence are victims themselves. Marilyn Augustyn and Betsy McAlister Groves (2005, p. 272) refer to children and adolescents who are not direct victims of violence in the home as hidden victims, they are 'bystanders who are not physically injured but who may be psychologically traumatized by witnessing injury and even death'. Grusznski, Brink and Edleson (1988) suggested that children who experience domestic violence are emotionally, if not physically, injured. Lorraine Radford and Marianne Hester (2006) maintained that since the 1990s, authorities in the United Kingdom have recognised that witnessing domestic violence in and of itself constitutes maltreatment and abuse of children. Jane EM. Callaghan, Joanne H. Alexander, Judith Sixsmith and Lisa Chiara Fellin (2018, p. 1552) agree that children who witness domestic violence are 'significantly affected, and can be reasonably described as victims of abusive control.' Emma Katz (2016, p. 47) extends this discussion further by addressing 'a lag in thinking' regarding children's experiences with domestic violence. Katz (2016, p. 47) suggests that even though coercive control has been identified as a form of abuse experienced by women, the effects of children witnessing and being involved in the dynamics of coercive abuse is yet to be accounted for, and physical violence still remains at the core of the discussion.

It is important to note that children witness violence not only by just seeing or hearing violence, or being present in a room or location when violence occurs, but may also witness violence by overhearing incidents (Augustyn & Groves 2005, p. 272) or by otherwise being aware that violence has occurred (Radford & Hester 2006). In studies looking at the children of victimised women, it is clear that the trauma of witnessing their father's violence against their mother is a significant stressor for children (Thomson 2000).

A cultural problem

According to Jackie Anderson (1994, p. 437): 'A woman who lives under the terror of domestic violence cannot exercise her reproductive freedom and her social class will not protect her.'

Domestic violence affects women and children within *all* social and cultural sectors across the globe, it is a humanitarian crisis. Since white occupancy, Australia's history has been one of violence (Thorpe & Irwin 1996, p. 3). The foundations of a violent Australian culture began with the 'the destruction of indigenous people' (Thorpe & Irwin 1996, p. 3) and continued as British systems of law and government were adopted in Australia that mirrored the class, race, gender and other inequalities of Britain (Thorpe & Irwin 1996, p. 3). Considering these foundations, violence has been a deeply rooted part of Australian culture since colonisation (Thorpe & Irwin 1996, p. 3).

Germaine Greer (cited in The Policy Shop 2017, 35:32) believes that there is something deeply wrong within our society that causes violence to occur at such alarming rates. The insidiousness of domestic violence is due to the setting in which the violence occurs. The home is supposed to be the safest place to be in the world and the people that it is shared

with are supposedly the ones that love you the most. Women are confronted by violence from men in both public and private settings, highlighting the fact that for women, there is no place they can truly be safe from violence (Hill 2019, p. 141). It is more likely that a female will experience violence by a male that they know, particularly one that they have being in an intimate, domestic relationship with, it is not the 'monster lurking in the dark' (Hill 2019, p 141) that they should fear. The greatest irony of husband-as-protector is that he poses the most danger to women and children (Greer 1999, p. 279). Acknowledging this, also means acknowledging a 'dark reality' and major cultural problem that hundreds of thousands of Australian men 'have inflicted pain, suffering and even sadistic torture on people they professed to love' (Hill 2019, p. 9).

Sharon Hayes and Samantha Jeffries (2015, p. 12) argue that violence in the home is more than just acts of sexism, that indeed it is a form of terrorism that 'operates in Australia every day'. When violence occurs behind closed doors, women are silenced, which makes the epidemic even more dangerous. The reality is that rates of such crimes remain static, despite decades of research, policy and practice aimed to address the issue, which indicates that the combined efforts of researchers, practitioners and criminal justice professionals are missing part of the puzzle (Hayes & Jeffries 2015, p. 25).

In the public sphere and in the media, domestic violence is most generally spoken about through gruesome headlines that, while they raise awareness about the problem, lack the nuance and delicacy to build more in-depth knowledge and understanding about domestic violence, particularly in relation to the complexities of a woman leaving an abusive relationship or what it is like to be a victim (Fletcher 2018, p. 42). An example of this was when the murder of Hannah Clarke and her three children, Aaliyah, Laianah and Trey (February 2020, in Camp Hill, Queensland) stirred an intense response from media outlets, the general public. It was a short-lived reaction, and on the three-month anniversary of their deaths, a senate inquiry into domestic abuse closed early without submissions or a hearing (Dent 2020), so no real change was implemented to protect women and children from domestic violence. The news stories and public discussions raised awareness and one of the fundamental changes that needed to be made did not happen. There is a dire lack of cultural, implementational change occurring.

White Ribbon Australia emerged in 1991 as a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to putting a stop to men's violence against women. White Ribbon used the platform held by several prominent Australian men, in particular sporting personalities, to publicly call out men's violence against women. Newly appointed Executive Director, Brad Chilcott (cited in Siebert 2020) has noted that White Ribbon experienced a period of tokenism where men felt like they had done enough by saying a pledge and wearing a ribbon. The organisation came close to financial collapse, however with a new funding source, leadership and focus is now focused on replacing tokenism with action to end men's violence against women (Siebert 2020).

Chilcott (cited in Siebert 2020) acknowledges the work that White Ribbon has done in bringing awareness to domestic violence but believes that 'the time for awareness has passed. People are aware'. New leadership recognises a level of goodwill for the

organisation within the community and hopes to use this to create change when it comes to gendered violence (Chilcott, cited in Mills 2020).

> Male violence against women is not an abstract tragedy that takes place outside our realm of experience. We must accept it for what it is: a crime that we witness, tolerate through silence, and even participate in throughout our lives (Chilcott, cited in Di Iorio 2020).

Real reform and change are needed to alleviate Australia's suffering with this issue of immeasurable emotional and personal costs that reach all levels of society (Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety 2010, p.1).

The domestic sphere

'… for a woman to be brutally or systemically assaulted she must usually enter our most sacred institution, the family' (Dobash & Dobash 1979, p. 75).

Domestic violence occurs within the domestic setting, it is therefore integral to discuss the details of this setting. Wilcox (2006, p. 85) described the home, the site of the family, as a 'potent site' wherein gendered 'meanings, relationships and practices are produced.' The home is a threatening place for women and children experiencing abuse (Wilcox 2006, p. 89), when it should be a place that can provide safety. Cox (2015, cited in Humphreys & Campo 2017, p. 4) refers to domestic violence as a 'chronic and destructive aspect of family life in Australia.' Women aged between 24-35 years old are most at risk of experiencing domestic violence (Cox 2015, p. 85). Being a wife is what makes a woman a suitable victim (Dobash & Dobash 1979).

> In 2016, for both men and women, the divorce rate was highest for those aged 25–29 years. After that, divorce rates lower slightly, staying steady for couples during their 30s before a second peak in their late 40s. After 55, couples become increasingly less likely to divorce (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2020).

Lori L. Heise (1998, p. 272) recognised that marital conflict as a predictor of domestic violence was frequently mentioned throughout the literature and substantiated that 'when conflict occurs in an asymmetrical power structure, a much higher risk of violence exists than when conflict occurs in an egalitarian relationship.' In 1979 Dobash and Dobash (p. 76) discussed the cultural legacy of the patriarchal family, arguing that even though components of violence against women in the home had been recognised as illegal, that the hierarchical, patriarchal nature of the family was omnipresent at the time of writing.

Domestic violence as a private issue

'… the private sphere is reproduced by the [social] services not as a space where self-hood can be apprehended and developed but where it can be denounced, managed, and even eliminated. To this extent, far from extending the family's ideals into a liberating public space, the services achieve the opposite, the social construction of privacy as a living hell' (Stark, Flitcraft & Frazier 1979, p. 484).

Historically, the private and hidden nature of domestic violence has meant that very little was known or written about it until the early 1970s (Thorpe & Irwin 1996, p. 1). Denise C. Webster and Erin C. Dunn (2005, p. 128) claim that myths about violence against women have often been understood under the pretence/prejudice that 'women are men's property and that "family matters" should be private.' Greer (cited in The Policy Shop 2017, 32:26) mentioned that in 1998 Australian police avoided entering the home for 'domestic' matters which meant that violence was left unchecked. Theodore Dalrymple (2004) believes that there is nothing to discourage domestic violence in the private domain of the home, in the public sphere there is less tolerance for violent behaviour therefore it occurs less frequently.

The conservative attitudes towards domestic violence for a long time prevented discourse about the issue entering the public sphere. Even until the 1980's, men in Australia were immune from prosecution for rape if it occurred within the confines of the marriage laws (Australian Law Reform Commission 2010, section 24.59), this has since changed, but is evidential of the historical, private and protected nature of male domination within the home. Greer (cited in The Policy Shop 2017, 32:26) said that breaking down the barrier between household and society would go a long way to preventing abuse of women, arguing that abuse is less likely to happen if it is visible or if someone else is watching.

Joanna Fletcher (cited in The Policy Shop 2017, 7:09), CEO of Women's Legal Service Victoria, explains that the private nature of the family space has meant that the extent, scale and nature of domestic violence has largely been hidden. It is historically documented that domestic violence is thought to be better handled as a 'personal, private concern' (Showden 2011, p. 230). However, since the 1970s, the issue has become of increasing public concern (Thorpe & Irwin 1996, p. 1). With increased visibility of the issue, there is an opportunity for individuals, governments and institutions to address, challenge and prevent domestic and family violence (Fletcher, cited in The Policy Shop 2017, 7:09).

In 1979 Stark, Flitcraft and Frazier (p. 462) believed that the widespread and systematic nature of "wife-beating" confirmed the problem was a social and deliberate one, but that despite this the issue was still considered a "private" event inherent in family interactions. Fletcher (2018, p. 43) noted that there is a gap in knowledge regarding both the perpetrators and victim's experiences 'because it is often difficult for scholars to recruit participants to share their experience in the context of a conventional qualitative interview.' Access to data is limited because it is difficult to produce data on this issue, which both contributes to and is a symptom of the private, personal nature of the social problem. Due to the nature of domestic violence occurring in the private sphere, it is difficult to ascertain exactly how many children are exposed to violence (Augustyn & Groves 2005, p. 272).

<u>Children's exposure to domestic violence</u>

'Violence in children's lives… is a major public health issue' (Augustyn & Groves 2005, p. 272).

In 1975 Jean G. Moore published findings from the first study ever conducted on the effects of witnessing domestic violence on childhood, the study was headed by The National

Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. At the time, studies on domestic violence had been underway for a decade but little had been written about children (Moore 1975, p. 557). To conclude the paper, Moore (1975, p. 565) stated that more research was desperately needed. Almost four decades later, and the impacts on childhood are still very vague (see the Impacts on Children section of this thesis for more on Moore's findings).

Not enough is known about the effects of witnessing domestic violence on children, how many children are impacted globally, or what can be done to make a difference (UNICEF 2006). The significant gaps in knowledge regarding the simplest aspects of the problem are concerning (UNICEF 2006). According to Lucy Carter, Lois Weithorn and Richard Behrman (1999, p. 6) 'the effects of domestic violence can vary tremendously from one child to the next.' The context within which the violence occurs and is witnessed can influence the child's ability to cope, and additional research is required to investigate the compounding effects of other stressors such as poverty or homelessness (Carter, Weithorn & Behrman 1999, p. 6). The support of an adult is critical for a child to be protected from the effects of domestic violence; however, this is complicated when the adults are either the perpetrator or the victim because their capacity to offer reassurance may be limited (Carter, Weithorn & Behrman 1999, p. 6). Caroline McGee (2000, p. 77) stated that:

> Children's feelings of powerlessness can increase their trauma, particularly if nobody is talking to them about the domestic violence or giving them an outlet for their intense emotions.

Humphreys (2008, p. 230) believes that domestic violence is a social problem that 'undermines the health and wellbeing of children' and considers the recognition of the potential harm to children living in such conditions a 'step forward in the conceptualisation of domestic violence' (p. 228). In 1999 researchers agreed that millions of children were being exposed to domestic violence in the United States each year, however the lack of trustworthy statistics makes it difficult for professionals in the field to implement policies and interventions (Carter, Weithorn & Behrman 1999, p. 5).

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (2006, p. 7) found that, for children witnessing domestic violence:

- There is increased risk of children becoming victims themselves
- There is significant risk of ever-increasing harm to the child's physical, emotional and social development
- There is a strong likelihood that this will become a continuing cycle of violence for the next generation.

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (2006, p. 9) suggest that to deal with the effects of witnessing domestic violence:

- Children need a safe and secure home environment
- Children need to know that there are adults who will listen to them, believe them and shelter them
- Children need a sense of routine and normalcy

- Children need support services to meet their needs
- Children need to learn that domestic violence is wrong and learn non-violent methods of resolving conflicts
- Children need adults to speak out and break the silence.

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (2006, p. 11) recommend that policymakers:

- Raise awareness of the impact of domestic violence on children
- Create public policies and laws that protect children
- Enhance social services that address the impact of violence in the home on children.

There is a high number of children in Australia who are exposed to family or domestic violence in the home. The 2012 Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey found:

1. Of the women who had experienced violence by a *current* partner, 54% had children in their care at the time of the violence and 31% of the children had seen or heard the violence.
2. Of the women who had experienced violence by a *former* partner, 61% had children in their care at the time of the violence and 48% of the children had seen or heard the violence (Campo 2015, p. 4).

'Research tells us that several factors play a role in the intensity and duration of a child's response' to witnessing domestic violence (Augustyn & Groves 2005, p. 273). In 1977, it was suggested that further, long-term follow up studies needed to be carried out regarding the impact of witnessing domestic violence as a child, and the effect it has on the child's adult life (Parker & Schumacher 1977). It can be noted, 40 years on, that there is still significant work to be done in understanding the effects of domestic violence, especially on children. In an autoethnographic study, undertaken by Danielle M. Stern (2014, p. 361), she refers to the lack of children's voices in the scholarship of domestic violence and calls for scholars to inquire into the narratives of lives embodied by experiences of gendered violence. 'Children's experiences and voices are underrepresented in academic literature and professional practice around domestic violence and abuse' (Callaghan et al. 2018, p. 1551). Unfortunately, children's experiences are counterparts to their mother's (Edleson 1999).

In 2003 Katie Kovacs and Adam M. Tomison (p. 530) noted that the *needs* of children exposed to domestic violence had historically been 'overlooked by both the child protection system and domestic violence services.' Child abuse that occurs in the domestic sphere has been written into the literature as abuse that is experienced directly (for example, physical punishment) by children, perpetrated by people in the family home (see Dobash & Dobash 1979; Steinmetz & Straus 1974). This thesis has found that the effects of domestic violence on childhood is virtually absent from the literature and is rarely considered in modern research. Experiences of children that have lived immersed in domestic violence should be understood more intricately, beyond the confines of the common narrative that children who are from homes in which domestic violence occurs are simply "exposed" to physical acts of violence. Historical works such as Sidney Wasserman's (1967), which analyse child abuse within the context of domestic violence, write from the standpoint that children who

qualify as victims of domestic violence are children who experience violence directly from adults in their home.

Foundations for wellbeing and resilience are grounded in the development of the self and social competencies within the family unit (Clarke-Stewart & Dunn 2006, cited in Turner et al. 2012, p. 210). A child's sense of self is crucial for the development of identity and socialisation skills. Resilient children have access to people who can offer emotional support (Kashani and Allan 1998, p. 82). McGee (2000, p 78) noted that domestic violence can cause severe identity impacts, including for girls a lack of self-confidence and self-esteem, and for both boys and girls, withdrawal. In her autoethnographic account, Carolyn Steedman (1986, p. 122) described how the foundations of a child's sense of self and identity are formed, noting that children generally see themselves as episodes in someone else's narrative. If a child sees themselves in a gendered light within the context of gendered violence, there is potential for this to play into intergenerational factors. Some psychologists have focused on the relationship between the re-telling of an individual's life story and the quality of their life (Chase 2005, p. 658), which indicates that children from domestic violence upbringings need to make meaning of and incorporate violence into their life story in some way in the future.

Children are vulnerable and that vulnerability is enhanced in contexts of domestic violence; their capacity to deal with the tumultuous nature of a home characterised by violence is limited. Having the ability to critically reflect, exercise agency and practice autonomy (Showden 2011) in relation to the social structures that construct identity (Hickey & Austin 2007, p. 21) are limited if not impossible for children to exercise. Domestic violence negatively affects a child's abilities to critically reflect, exercise agency, practice autonomy and construct identity, which has significant life-long effects.

Germaine Greer (1971, p. 288) wrote that: 'The most sinister aspect of domestic infighting is the use of the children as weaponry and battlefield.' Children's abilities to analyse what is happening to them or around them is limited, and situations and events may take on a different meaning later (Steedman 1986, p. 28). Showden (2011, p. 3) wrote about external forces and described the way they:

> shape internal development and how, in turn, personal development leads one to order and focus on certain overlapping aspects of one's external situation differently at various times and places.

Children who have experienced domestic violence may only come to understand the violence as part of their identity and history as they get older, experiencing it differently at different times. The process of telling your own story to yourself enables you to hear alternative versions of your own life events (Chase 2005, p. 668). Revisiting the story from their own perspective at different times may enable a person to better situate the violence within their own identity in a way that makes sense to them.

<u>Impacts of domestic violence</u>

It has been reported that both women and children are at higher risk of experiencing psychological challenges as a result of domestic violence when compared with those who do not experience violence (Levendosky et al. 2003; Graham-Bermann & Hughes 1998). Research into the impact of domestic violence focuses on the 'battered female and battering male' (Thomson 2000). A gap in knowledge regarding the impacts on children exists and requires further analysis (see Davis 1988 for a brief literature review on the studies that had been conducted at the time, on the effects of witnessing violence on children).

Impacts on parenting

In a report written based on the findings of a 2009 study commissioned by the Australian Attorney-General, that focused on the relationship between people's experiences of domestic violence (with a particular focus on post-separation periods), Dale Bagshaw, Thea Brown, Sarah Wendt, Alan Campbell, Elspeth McInnes, Beth Tinning, Becky Batagol, Adiva Sifris, Danielle Tyson, Joanne Baker and Paula Fernandez Arias (2011, p. 49) found that parent's concern for the safety of their children was reflected in the children's reports.

> One-quarter of the women and just more than one-quarter of the men surveyed said that mental health problems and/or misuse of alcohol or other drugs, and/or criminal activity were a factor in their concerns for the safety of their children following separation (Bagshaw et al. 2011, p. 53).

Alytia A. Levendosky, Alissa C. Huth-Bocks, Deborah L. Shapiro and Michael A. Semel (2003) found that domestic violence negatively impacts a woman's psychological functioning. More research needs to be conducted that investigates the impacts of domestic violence on parenting, but it appears that women who experience psychological harm due to domestic violence seem to struggle with parenting (Levendosky et al. 2003).

Thomson (2000, p. 26) noted that the research that has been done on mothers and their children has been conducted *after* the abuse has occurred, not whilst it is occurring. Available evidence seems to suggest that parents within couples where there is domestic violence may be emotionally unavailable to care for their children (Thomson 2000, p 9), which may negatively impact on the parent's ability to foster secure attachments for their child/ren. Emotional unavailability may therefore prevent parents from providing the sufficiently stable family environment to build and maintain a child's secure attachment to their caregiver. Peter Reder and Sylvia Duncan (2001, p. 411) argue that attachment concepts are 'sometimes rather loosely [applied], to concerns about child maltreatment'. They coined the term 'unresolved care and control conflicts' (Reder & Duncan 2001, p. 411) as a way to describe parenting that results in neglect, abuse or death of children. Reder and Duncan's (2001, p. 423) concept of unresolved care and control conflicts is borne from the desire to further unpack the 'compelling' but 'elusive' theory of attachment and aims to support a 'psychological conflict resolution and emotional growth rather than the more mechanical approach of anger management.' This perspective places value on the developmental impacts on children in domestic violence settings, wherein harmful conflict resolution is used and negatively affects parental capacity.

Father-child relationship

McGee (2000, p. 69) has indicated that a child's relationship with their father or father figure is impacted by the violence the mother is experiencing, however there is very little understanding of *how* the father-child relationship is impacted. In review of Jefferey L. Edleson's 1999 paper on children witnessing domestic violence, Erika Kimball (2016, p. 627) noted that 'there has been little advancement over the last 15 years on gaining the perceptions of children exposed to domestic violence [or] understanding father-child relationships.' Augustyn and Groves (2005, p. 272) propose that since 1990 'there has been increased attention paid to the hidden victims [children and adolescents] of domestic and community violence'. These conflicting opinions on the progression of research in the area is a dilemma, during this investigation I have reached the same conclusion as Kimball.

Mother-child relationship

'Together the infant and mother [victims of domestic violence] face the dilemma of being both terrified of and inextricably tied to each other: the mother through social and maternal responsibility and the infant as a matter of survival' (Amos, Segal & Cantor 2015, p. 1444).

Nancy J. Chodorow (1974, p. 9) claimed that the only universal statement that can be made about gendered labour is that women mother and the role of mothering is central to women's lives. Jane Ribbens (1994, p. 1) mirrored Chodorow's idea, and wrote that 'childrearing is a central part of the lives and concerns of the majority of women, particularly mothers.' I find it interesting that Ribbens has included *all* women, not *just* mothers, in her observation about the female and her preoccupation with raising children. Women don't *have* to have children but are perpetually considering whether to have or not have them and are therefore consumed by motherhood regardless of whether they birth children or they do not. Ann Oakley (1974, p, 201) described the desire for motherhood as a culturally induced *need.* The myth of motherhood can be found within the socially prescribed guise of the following assertations:

1. children need mothers
2. mothers need their children
3. motherhood represents the greatest achievement of a woman's life (Oakley 1974, p. 186).

'Mothers are a socially and economically impoverished group… women are oppressed because they love children' (Oakley 2005, p. 181). Women mother, not only because of biology, but because it is how they can participate in a patriarchal society (Chodorow 1974). The mother is central to how the family functions offering psychological support, nurturing, discipline, and socialisation, therefore children view their mothers as the significant parent (Chodorow 1974).

'Childrearing is a highly emotive and politically sensitive topic, one that is very hard to discuss without immediately making controversial assumptions' (Ribbens 1994, p. 1). I discovered early on in this project that domestic violence is a highly politicised topic, even though it is such a private one, and that discussing mothering within the context of

domestic violence is a volatile and fragile place to be as a writer. The ideas of the researcher (in this case me), and the opinions of others (the readers), can be incredibly divisive and controversial. Fiona Buchanan (2013, p. 27) argues that women who are experiencing domestic violence are already disempowered because of the impacts of the abuse and that trying to understand their relationships with their children within this context can do harm, to the women. I argue that the harm inflicted on the child, whether it be long-term developmental or immediate trauma based, is overridden by the desire to protect women. Buchanan (2013, p. 26) stated that: 'It is disempowering to perceive ones destiny as compromised by an early relationship deemed as deficit' (Buchanan 2013, p. 26), a view which grossly minimises the role of the mother/child relationship, especially within the traumatising context of a domestic violence setting.

Cathy Humphreys, Ravi K. Thiara, Cathy Sharp and Jocelyn Jones (2015, cited in Campo 2015, p. 9) argue that 'domestic violence can be conceptualised as an attack on the mother–child relationship' which may therefore limit a child's development. The quality of a mother-child relationship can be impacted by a mother living within a violent relationship, with research showing victimised women attending less to their children and experiencing more conflicts with their children than mothers who were not in a violent relationship (Thomson 2000, p. 25). Stephanie Holt, Helen Buckley and Sadhbh Whelan's (2008, p. 797) review of the literature on the impact of exposure to domestic violence on children and young people, notes the importance of the mother-child relationship to 'mitigate against [the] impact' of witnessing domestic violence.

A range of child responses to the mother relating to the violence have been documented, some children blamed their mother while others felt their shared experience of violence brought them closer (McGee 2000, p. 83). Communication between the mother and child was the key difference between these two responses, children needed to hear their mother's perspective in order to make sense of the violence (McGee 2000, p. 84). Kathryn H. Howell (2011, p. 567) found that research on domestic violence showed that 'a mother's ability to effectively cope with adverse situations impacts the child's resilience.'

For children, the effect of domestic violence creates 'advanced maturity and a sense of responsibility and emotional confusion in relation to parents' (Radford & Hester 2006, p. 81). Anne Morris (2008, p. 209) claimed that despite mothers and children experiencing the violence together and the evident importance of a mother-child relationship on outcomes for a child, few services offer services that support the mother-child relationship. It is more common for mothers and children to attend separate services, with children's services typically leaving the mother out of consideration and sometimes even constructing a child's needs as conflicting with their mothers (Morris 2008, p. 209).

In her earlier work, Anne Morris (1999, p. iv) argues that mother-child alienation occurs in homes characterised by domestic violence with a deliberate purpose, 'wedges have been deliberately put in place between mothers and children.' Katz (2016, p. 53) found, in her study of 15 mothers and 15 children who had experienced domestic violence, that some fathers intentionally prevented mothers and children from spending time together, through a process of monopolising mother's time, as it allowed the male to exert dominance over the family. Through a feminist lens, Morris (1999) counter argues the mother-blaming

narrative that is omnipresent within the literature by shifting the responsibility of the disruption to mother-child relationships to the father. In doing this, Morris (1999) disregards the effects the violence may have on a mother's capacity to parent and the vulnerable position of the child/ren witnessing the violence.

Jackie Amos, Leonie Segal, and Chris Cantor (2015, p. 1447) describe the desperate and unhealthy process of a child seeking safety from their abused mother:

> Even when the mother's behavior toward the child is placating, pleading and submissive, the child must appease the mother in whatever way is possible to remain in close proximity to her and feel some sense of safety.

Cathy Humphreys, Lucy Healey, Debbie Kirkwood and Deb Nicholson (2018, p. 162) argue that children living with domestic violence are indirectly affected 'through the disabling of the primary carer (usually mother) by fathers who use violence.' Similar notions have been described by Melcior Rossello-Roig's (2017) who discovered in the literature that women's vulnerability to mental health disorders and substance abuse addictions, because of male violence, alters their parenting.

In his essay that discusses the mother-child relationship, Thomas Leithauser (2012) draws from the ideas of Marxist psychoanalyst Alfred Lorenzer whose work is closely related to Sigmund Freud's (Bereswill, Morgenroth & Redman 2010, p. 231). Leithauser (2012, p. 56) was interested in the 'complex mediation of familial and social interaction forms' paying particular attention to the mother-child relationship. According to Leithauser (2012, p. 60) a child's psychological development is determined by physical and emotional mother-child interactions. The mother-child relationship creates the foundation for the child's social relationships (Leithauser 2012, p. 60).

Attachment issues

John Bowlby, attachment theorist, (1979, cited by Wierzchowska 2018, p. 21) wrote that 'attachment behavior [characterizes] human beings from the cradle to the grave'.

Breines and Gordon (1983, p. 497) found, written into the literature regarding child abuse and attachment theory, that mothers were to blame for their children's experiences of abuse.

> The underlying implication is that mothers are ultimately responsible for the reproduction of abuse through an intergenerational cycle of poor bonding and parenting. Fathers – and the full array of social relations in and around families – are ignored as unimportant (Breines & Gordon 1983, p. 497).

Domestic violence can impact on a mother's parenting and the quality of a mother-child relationship (Levendosky et al. 2003). As predicted in the literature on attachment 'effective and authoritative parenting was positively associated with the child's attachment to the mother' (Levendosky et al. 2003, p. 284).

When a mother's parenting is impacted by domestic violence, her ability to foster positive attachment may be limited, which may have negative long-term impacts for the child. Levendosky et al. (2003) found that mother-child attachments are weakened in circumstances where domestic violence is occurring and this has negative effects on the children, overtime. John Bowlby (1969; 1982, cited in Amos, Segal & Cantor 2015, p. 1443) substantiated that there is research to demonstrate the importance of an enduring emotional bond between mothers and their infants/growing children which provides survival advantages for the child.

Impacts on children

In 1983 Breines and Gordon (p. 499) wrote that the context in which children experience abuse and neglect in matters of domestic violence was largely missing from analysis.

In the acclaimed first study on the effects of domestic violence on childhood, conducted in 1975, the following themes emerged: (1) scapegoating, wherein the child was either favoured or rejected by their parents. (2) turned against self, in self-sabotaging acts of internalising the aggression. (3) school problems, in the form of attendance and/or engagement issues. (4) pawns, children were neglected because their parents were consumed by their own 'neurotic pattern of conflict' (Moore). It wasn't until the late 1980s that the effects of witnessing domestic violence were recognised as a 'potential etiologic factor for child psychopathology and associated problems' (Hughes 1988 cited in Kashani & Allan 1998, p. 35). Javad H. Kashani and Wesley D. Allan (1998, p. 36) noted that the ethical issues associated with conducting research on children within the context of a sensitive problem has limited mental health researchers' ability to investigate the field.

Some of the documented impacts on children include psychological distress (Levendosky et al. 2003; Graham-Bermann & Hughes 1998; Richards 2011), impacts on internal development (Augustyn & Groves 2005), attachment issues (Levendosky et al. 2003) (though limited data), disrupted parent relationships (Thomson 2000; McGee 2000; Radford & Hester 2006) and intergenerational issues (Headey, Scott & De Vaus 1999; Wells et al. 2012; Hill 2019; Thomson 2000; Richards 2011; UNICEF 2006).

Abigail H. Gewirtz and Jefferey L. Edleson (2007, p. 151) substantiate that 'exposure to intimate partner violence can variably affect a child's development depending on other individual and environmental influences.' The conditions within which the domestic violence is witnessed determines the effects on childhood developmental processes. Research into the child as victim is limited, '… when violence occurs between parents but is not directed toward children, the effects on children may be overlooked or overshadowed by great parental need' (Davis 1988, p. 291).

> Although scientific interest in problems of domestic violence is now several decades old, much of the research effort has been focused on the battered female and the battering male (Thomson 2000, p. 6).

James S. Campbell (1969, p. 252) discusses the developmental and socialization processes that both disrupt and inform childhood in instances where domestic violence is occurring,

noting that '… the patterns of behaviour of the child are largely established by his early life experiences.' While there has been significant research into the impacts on women and mothers, children remain under-represented in the understandings of domestic violence. Despite witnessing violence clearly falling within the definition of domestic violence it wasn't until the late nineties that children started being considered 'victims' of domestic violence (Kovacs & Tomison 2003). Humphreys et al. (2018, p. 162) wrote that children who are living with domestic violence are 'profoundly affected by the abuse that occurs around them.' Augustyn and Groves (2005) determined that a child's traumatic reaction to domestic violence depends on the child's perception of the safety of their caregiver, which suggests that the child's sense of safety is reliant on their parent's state of safety.

Wilcox (2006) argued that children's experiences of domestic violence are gendered but that very little research in this area has been done, she suggested that the relationship between children and the mothers needs to be assessed on these gendered grounds. Wilcox (2006, p. 79) found in her study that the impacts on women's daughters was harder to find compared to the impacts in their sons, she suggested that this could be due to mothers being more concerned with their sons becoming violent or that young girls internalise their emotions. Wilcox's (2006) study was conducted from the perspective of mothers, not children, which adds to the scholarship of children's experiences being understood through their mother's lens, which can be biased. Wilcox (2006) highlighted that more research on the gendered experience of children should be done. I argue, however ethically challenging it will be, that children should be the participants of such research, not their mothers. Historically, almost all studies relied on a mother's report of her child's problems (Edleson 1999), and children of domestic violence became the 'forgotten victims' (Grusznkski, Brink & Edelson 1988).

The main argument in the literature regarding children and the effect of domestic violence understands children to be passive rather than active agents: 'Children are in fact *living in/with* and *responding* to domestic violence just as much as their mothers are' (Wilcox 2006, p. 61). Grusznski, Brink and Edleson (1988, p. 432) noticed a 'growing body of evidence to support the belief that children of battered women are being emotionally, if not also physically, injured.' In the Australian context, the majority of research that considers children's experiences of domestic violence has been quantitative rather than qualitative (Campo 2015).

In her 2000 study, McGee (p. 78) found that the impact on identity of children who experienced domestic violence seemed to be particularly severe:

> Girls said that because of the domestic violence they lacked self-confidence and self-esteem and that they were nervous and timid. Mothers referred to both boys and girls, but particularly girls, being withdrawn. One young girl felt that she had had to grow up too quickly because of the domestic violence and another boy felt that he and his siblings had missed out on a lot of things when they were growing up because of the domestic violence.

McGee also (2000, p. 69) found that:

> … children and mothers both reported a wide range of effects of domestic violence on the children including fear, powerlessness, depression or sadness, impaired social relations, impacts on the child's identity, impacts on extended family relationships and their relationship with their mother, effects on educational achievement and anger, very often displayed as aggressive behaviour.

Sandra A. Graham-Bermann and Honore M. Hughes (1998, p. 3) noted that children who have been exposed to domestic violence 'express a range of reactions, from those who are overwhelmed with fear and anger to those who appear resilient, or unaffected by these events.' There is a general consensus that childhood experience is a significant foundation for adult disposition (McGavock & Spratt 2017). Impacts on adulthood can be understood through principles of social learning theory, social cognition, family systems theory, interpersonal relationships theory and trauma theory (Graham-Bermann & Hughes 1998). Kelly Richards (2011) found that some of the long-term effects of witnessing domestic violence are psychological, behavioural, health and socioeconomic related. There is a growing body of material that supports the proposition that growing up in an atmosphere of violence can have significant, detrimental effects on the children concerned (Radford & Hester 2006), although further research into the *long-term* impacts on children is needed.

Approximately 40-60% of children raised in conditions where domestic violence occurred are at higher risk for psychopathology than those raised in non-violent families (Graham-Bermann & Hughes 1998). Lorraine Radford & Marianne Hester (2006) have noted that these impacts may not be present until these children reach adolescence. The literature seems to suggest that children can cope and survive at the time of domestic violence, but that the impacts are not really felt until later (Radford & Hester 2006). The trauma of experiencing and witnessing domestic violence has been linked to the same kind of impact seen in post-traumatic stress disorder (Radford & Hester 2006). Einat Peled, Peter G. Jaffe and Jeffery L. Edleson (1995, p. 29) described the symptoms of witnessing violence between parents to be associated with post-traumatic stress disorder, a life-threatening event causes a child's internal and external resources to become 'overwhelmed and/or ineffective.'

> Because children who witness their mother being assaulted by their father are experiencing a traumatic life event, some of these children will reflect this experience through obvious adjustment problems that demonstrate a significant disruption in their emotional and cognitive development (Jaffe, Wolfe & Wilson 1990, p. 51).

The impact of witnessing domestic violence varies, dependent on the child's age (Peled, Jaffe & Eldeson 1995). Peter G. Jaffe, David A. Wolfe and Susan Kaye Wilson (1990) determined that 'children's responses to witnessing their mother being assaulted by their father will vary according to their age, sex, stage of development, and role in the family.' Mental illness can be both a cause and effect of domestic violence (Bagshaw et al. 2011, p. 53). Gewirtz and Edleson (2007, p. 152) found that the three main developmental effects on children who witness domestic violence are: (1) attachment issues with their caregiver 'usually the mother'. (2) relationships with peers. (3) problems with self-regulation. There needs to be a better understanding of the differentiation between children coping with, compensating for and overcoming abuse (Radford & Hester 2006).

Intergenerational issues

In 1970 Robert N. Whitehurst wrote that violence between husbands and wives occurred due to inequality of the sexes, claiming that to reduce violence between intimate partners it would take a 'generation of men and women reared under equalitarian conditions' (pp. 75-76).

Intergenerational violence is mostly understood within the context of taught and learnt behaviours. Peter D. Scott (1974, cited in Parker & Schumacher 1977, p. 760) claimed that an abused wife is 'carrying out a role model learned from her mother'. Murray A. Straus (1976, cited in Parker & Schumacher 1977, p. 760) said that a violent husband is 'carrying out a role model learned from his father'.

Headey, Scott and De Vaus (1999, p. 60) found, in their analysis of domestic violence in Australia, that 'intergenerational transmission is weak.' Adults who had violent parents were more likely to be either victims or perpetrators of domestic violence, but majority of the adults who were violent with their partners, did not have violent parents (Headey, Scott & De Vaus 1999, p. 61), a contradictory and confusing argument. In a similarly contradictive finding, Heise (1998, p. 267) wrote that violence is a 'learned response' (therefore intergenerational) but that exposure to domestic violence does not always result in the perpetration of similar abuse. In 1979 Dobash and Dobash (p. 152) suggested that not all children who witness violence in the home perpetuate violence, but they couldn't deny that direct observation of violence is a means through which some children accept and normalise violent behaviours within the family. These findings suggest that intergenerational perpetuation of violence and victimisation is neither definitive or improbable.

More recently research has indicated that children who grow up in a violent home are more likely to become either a victim or perpetrator of domestic violence themselves (Hill 2019, p. 186), are more likely to reflect the same attitudes and behaviours witnessed during their childhood experience (Richards 2011, p. 3) and are at risk of perpetuating these patterns with their own children and partners (Wells et al. 2012, pp. 3-4). It has been noted that 'boys learnt their male role from father and girls their female role from their mother' (Greer 1971, p. 219) and that, in particular for boys, they can learn to form the view (or grow up with the belief) that violence can be used to solve their problems (Thomson 2000, p 48). Lana Wells, Elizabeth Dozois, Merrill Cooper, Caroline Claussen, Liza Lorenzetti and Casey Boodt (2012, pp. 3-4) wrote that suggestions have been made that the main focus for primary prevention of domestic violence should be on children, youth and at-risk young adults, especially those who are or may soon become parents.

In review of their study conducted on well-adjusted adolescents, Kashani and Allan (1998) discussed child resiliency and self-esteem as key prevention measures for intergenerational violence. Kashani and Allan (1998, p. 82) found that:

> Many adults who perpetrate family violence are ignorant of normal child development and have poor coping and problem-solving skills [and have] frequently been raised in homes that were characterised by excessive violence.

Joseph H. Michalski (2004) has claimed that individuals learned familial behaviour is undeniable but that is also more likely to occur within certain sub-cultures. The production of intergenerational violence may be more of a structural issue than a cultural one (Michalski 2004, p. 654). Focusing on the cultural aspects of violence may overlook the 'structural features that perpetuate violence against women from one generation to the next' (Michalski 2004, p. 654). In review of her own extensive work in the field, Sander J. Breiner (1992, p. 154) believes that the issue of domestic violence 'originates in infancy' and is 'embedded in culture.' In her article on stress in the family, Breiner (1980, p. 249) quoted her earlier work, writing that 'the more parents rebelled against the way they were treated as children, the better their chances of not creating a similar situation with their own offspring.' Although there are conflicting ideas regarding the perpetuation of intergenerational patterns of violence in the literature, it is reasonable to say that children that live free from domestic violence are at less risk of further perpetuation of violence and victimisation. Denying this would undermine the important roles that parents play in children's developmental processes. Mothers-to-be are the origin of the family unit, they are every newborn girl, and they are the most important people in the world (Breiner 1992, p. 154).

Gender lens

In 1988 Andrea Dworkin (p. 325) posed the question: 'Will feminism be a political movement that confronts the power of men over women in order to dismantle that power; or will feminism be a "lifestyle" choice, a post-modernist fad, a cyclically noted fashion?'

In 1971 radical feminists Lois Anne Addison and her lover wrote that:

> women are constantly catering to the 'needs' of men… One of the most common problems of women is that we are forced into being defined (or living through) a family, a boyfriend, a husband… When a woman finds herself without male 'protection', she is suddenly faced with the realization that she doesn't have any identity. She doesn't know "who she is" … Men will continue doing this to women, to keep us dependent financially and emotionally in order to keep women sucking up to men and supporting them.

There is a body of literature that supports the notion that domestic violence is caused by gender inequality (ANROWS 2010; Evans 2005; Hill 2019). This view is rooted in feminist analyses of domestic violence and has dominated the topic since the 1970s (Showden 2011). Women's experiences of domestic violence have been a long-standing concern for feminists (Peckover 2002, p. 254). Feminist discourse argues that 'gendered power' is the lens through which domestic relationships should be understood (Jones 2004, p. 11), and articulates that the cause of domestic violence is sexism (Showden 2011). Inequality of women is grounded in their 'lack of power relative to men in society, the law and the economy' (Showden 2011, p. 43). Feminism considers both the 'lower social status of women relative to men' (Grusznski, Brink & Edleson 1988, p. 440) and the existence of the patriarchy (Goetting 1999, cited in Showden 2011, p. 231) as key factors of gendered violence.

Ann Goetting (1999, cited in Showden 2011, p. 231) insists that 'battering takes two: a man and patriarchy', she describes domestic violence as:

> an obsessive campaign of coercion and intimidation designed by a man to dominate and control a woman, which occurs in the personal context of intimacy and thrives in the sociopolitical climate of patriarchy.

There are certain predictors or drivers of violence against women that reflect aspects of the feminist discourse, these predictors and drivers include 'beliefs and behaviours reflecting disrespect for women, low support for gender equality and adherence to rigid or stereotypical gender roles, relations and identities' (Our Watch, ANROWS & VicHealth 2015, p. ii). The Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth (2015, p. 23) report states that the gendered drivers of violence against women are:

- Condoning of violence against women
- Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence
- Rigid gender roles and identities
- Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.

Evidence points to violence occurring against women in countries where there are greater disparities between men and women in terms of economic, social and political rights. Rights disparity is demonstrated through things such as under-representation of women in leadership and gender pay gaps in income and superannuation (Gleeson et al. 2015, p. 7). Showden (2011, p.3) argues that there is 'undeniable evidence that women are systematically subordinated in various ways—which clearly compromises their ability to choose and act freely.' Women are oppressed as a group, not as singular victims (Stark, Flitcraft & Frazier 1979, p. 484).

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018) Executive Director, Yury Fedotov said that 'women continue to pay the highest price as a result of gender inequality, discrimination and negative stereotypes'. Fedotov (2018) noted that even though most homicide victims are men, he highlighted that women are most likely to be killed by someone they know, be it an intimate partner or family member. Men's experience of violence, and the causes of such violence, are fundamentally different and occur outside of a gendered sphere.

Gender is undeniably a major factor in the social epidemic of domestic violence, women must be freed from the domestically charged submission to men. Male violence and the domestic sphere inextricably coexist, addressing gendered power and domestic conditions is where the nuances and intricacies of the issue coincide. '… confronting male violence is integral to reversing the dominance of men over women' (Anderson 1994, p. 440).

Angela Taft, Kelsey Hegarty and Michael Flood (2001, p. 500) argue that responses to violence in Australia must be gendered in focus and that female victims and their children should be central to domestic violence response. It could be argued that non-gendered factors must also be considered in order to adopt a more nuanced understanding, that

achieving gender equality will not end domestic violence. Hill (2019) argues that focusing on gender equality 'will not prevent women and children from dying tomorrow, or even next year, and it certainly won't see domestic violence significantly reduced by 2022' in line with the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children*. To achieve gender equality, there must be a change in social attitudes (Hill 2019, p. 343), which is a slow process and includes factors such as intergenerational violence and victimisation and will not lead to a decrease in rates of domestic violence in the immediate term.

National and state policies and plans acknowledge the importance of primary, secondary and tertiary interventions, as well as the importance of prevention tools and society's attitude towards gender inequality, to decrease violence against women (Australian Attorney-General's Department 2010, p. 7). Hill (2019, p. 343) recognised bias in the *National Plan,* the fight for gender equality is the approach 'endorsed by many of Australia's leading minds on gendered violence, several of whom were consulted for the *National Plan.'* Hill (2019) also identified a weakness in the *National Plan's* research method: 'in measuring something as vital as the safety of our communities, how on earth is surveying people on their attitudes to violence considered adequate?'

Grusznski, Brink and Edleson (1988, p. 440) believe that gender roles, and the asymmetrical power structure within them, is a 'major cultural factor in why men abuse women.' A way to move past negative gender stereotypes is to understand women and egalitarian relationships as positive constructs (Grusznski, Brink and Edleson 1988, p. 440). Michael Salter (2012, p. 3) argues that gender inequality is perpetuated by 'masculine privilege.'

<u>Socio-economic indicators</u>

Karl Marx (n.d., cited in Greer 1971, p. 301) stated that 'social progress can be measured by the social position of the female sex.'

In 1980 Bruce W. Brown (p. 177) wrote that:

> Research on family power has emphasised the beneficial effects of the equalitarian marriage style. It has been heralded in the popular culture as a cure-all for the ailments of contemporary marriages.

It can be argued that to have power is to have access to money and in 1980 Brown (p. 178) noted that researchers believed that the main reason power balances were affected in American marriages was due to an increase in the number of wives that worked. A hypothesis proposed by Brown (1980, p. 179) was that the result of wives becoming employed, experiencing financial gain and therefore an increased access to resources, threatened male authority over the female in the home. Brown (1980, p. 183) concluded that while some husbands embraced the change and an increase in intimacy ensued, newly imposed equalitarian structure in the domestic sphere led to conflict and violence in some cases. This argument contradicts the more popular trope that one of the common factors that effects women's experiences of domestic violence is financial insecurity. Richard J. Gelles (1976 cited in Straus 1980a, p. 88) wrote that women endure physical violence because the alternative to divorce is poverty. The World Health Organisation (2002, cited in

Evans 2005, p. 36) has found that, while all social classes experience violence, people who are poor are more at risk.

Working-class living conditions (especially for women) are harsh, it is a system wherein the people occupying it are consistently on the precipice of poverty and can therefore be included into the definition of 'poor.'

> The women of the lower classes have always laboured, whether as servants, factory hands or seamstresses or the servants of their own households, and we might expect that the middle-class myth did not prevail as strongly in their minds. But it is a sad fact that most working-class families are following a pattern of 'progress' and 'self-improvement' into the ranks of the middle class (Greer 1971, pp. 215-216).

Heise (1998, pp. 273-274) stated that violence against women occurs across all socioeconomic classes, but highlighted that evidentially domestic violence is 'more common in families with low incomes and unemployed men.' In their research on violence in the family Suzanne K. Steinmetz and Murray A. Straus (1974, p. 321) found that '… as income level goes up beyond the poverty level, physical punishment tends to go down' and 'as the number of children goes up, so does physical punishment' which is indicative of financial stressors increasing the likelihood of domestic violence.

Mike Donaldson (1991, cited in Thorpe & Irwin 1996, p. 116) investigated love in the working-class families and suggested that ideologies can restrict life chances and create an 'ever-present potential for male violence against women and children'. Sue Lees (1993, cited in Thorpe & Irwin 1996, p. 118) investigated sexuality and adolescent girls and found that:

> young working-class women were well aware of the prevalence of male violence, in both adolescence and in marriage, yet experienced overwhelming pressure to have a steady boyfriend and eventually marry. Their major challenge was to avoid ending up with someone who would treat them badly.

Patricia McNamara acknowledges the limitations of the common narrative that 'Australian women killed by their partners have often been understood to come from backgrounds of poverty and marginalisation' (2008, p. 198). McNamara's research investigated a victim of intimate partner homicide who was of middle-class, through interviewing the deceased women's friends. McNamara (2008, p. 198) substantiated that regardless of 'their socio-economic status, it seems that women victims of lethal violence, lack the power to protest'. McNamara's idea regarding female victims of homicide being powerless regardless of their socioeconomic position, raises questions regarding factors outside of the financial context that render male perpetrators dominant.

<u>The male</u>

Jeff Hearn (2014, p. 24) claims that when men commit violence against women that they know, that it is an 'outcome of domination.'

The results of a study that interviewed 94 men of whom 50% were violent with their female intimate partners and the other 50% did not have a history of domestic violence, showed that:

- The strongest predictor of male violence in the regression model was male's perceived relationship support from his female intimate.
- The male's recollection of his relationship with his mother was a significant predictor of male aggression further supports the salience of attachment issues in understanding male violence.
- Life events and stress appeared to have a significant effect on male violence (Kesner, Julian & McKenry 1997, pp. 223-224).

Michael Salter (cited in Hill 2019, p. 109) believes that we need to go back to psychoanalysis work done in the 1970s, which is now deemed as anti-feminist, and reconsider the:

> issues around men, vulnerability and dependency, and [the] high level of sensitivity among men that their basic needs can't be fulfilled, and that they will be overwhelmed and betrayed by their interrelationships.

It is not women's responsibility to overcome the issues that lead men to commit violent acts, however recognising and understanding the patterns of behaviours could certainly be useful. It seems that there is a high likelihood that, when faced with an injured self-esteem due to a perceived lack in their significant relationships with a female, a common response is to utterly dominate the other person through violence (Dalrymple 1998, p. 33).

Dalrymple (1998, p. 33) has also commented that male jealousy, a commonly conveyed reason by males to explain their violence, comes from a place of selfishness:

> the jealous man does not love his lover, he loves himself. He wants to preserve the relationship… without her he is nothing, and cannot disguise his nothingness from himself.

John Money (cited in Greer 1999, p. 165), who first introduced the notions of gender roles and gender identity, argues that the biological makeup is not a fixed and preordained construction, and that sociocultural context is not unfixed and optional. Germaine Greer (1999, p. 164) says that there is 'the possibility that violent men are not violent because they have more testosterone to cope with, but that they have more testosterone because they are more violent.' Research into the role hormones play on behaviour has found no link between testosterone and any human behaviour (Greer 1999, p. 162).

Greer (cited in The Policy Shop 2017, 19:49) has argued that 'a happy man does not beat up his sexual partner'. To resolve the root issue of domestic violence, the male and his violent behaviour must be better understood so that children are no longer witnessing it.

<u>The production of generational violence and victimisation</u>

In discussion of the numerous etiological models used to understand domestic violence, Kashani and Allan (1998, p. 11) said of the family systems approach that:

> Maladaptive familial communication, in particular, seems common in families that are violent, and may serve as an important intervention target in the violent family.

Intergenerational transmission etiologic ideas first appeared the literature in 1963 and draws on theories of social learning, the foundations of its ideas are based on the 'relationship between parental violence and subsequent child violence during adulthood' (Kashani & Allan 1998, p. 11). Like most of the literature on generational violence and the effects of domestic violence on children, Kashani and Allan (1998) focus on the male child becoming a violent adult, completely overlooking the potential for the generational transmission of female victimisation.

There is a large body of evidence that demonstrates experiences of violence and victimisation span generations (Wells et al. 2012; Hill 2019; Thomson 2000; Richards 2011; UNICEF 2006).

Radford and Hester (2006, p. 73) found evidence that 'there is a cycle of abuse whereby patterns of abusive behaviour are handed down the generations from parent to child', however, they still argue that the notion of a 'cycle of abuse' is too simplistic, because it suggests that there is direct correlation between childhood and adult abuse without considering other influences.

> Individuals who grow up with domestic violence do not all end up in violent relationships, and adults in violent relationships did not necessarily experience domestic violence or other abuse as children (Radford & Hester 2006, p. 73).

Patterns of generational abuse emerged from the data of a study that investigated the relationship between childhood trauma and intimate partner violence (see Fulu et al. 2017 for further exploration of findings). There are polarising debates in the literature that battle with the fragile and limiting data on familial behavioural patterns, further studies are required to comprehensively reach a conclusion.

The predominate narrative regarding generational violence discusses male children becoming perpetrators as adults, however there is some literature that suggests that female children of victimised women are at high risk of becoming victims of violence themselves (Thomson 2000; Grusznski, Brink & Edleson 1988; Taylor-Browne 2001; Peled, Jaffe & Edleson 1995). Children who witness domestic violence learn violence as a way to resolve conflict, girls are taught that victimisation is inevitable and 'suffering in silence is reinforced' (Jaffe, Wolfe & Wilson 1990, p. 26).

Some have argued that situating violence as an outcome of dysfunctional family relationships can fall under attachment theory perspectives of domestic violence, which can exclude feminist knowledge of the issue (Dobash & Dobash 2004, cited in Buchanan 2013, p. 20). Studies have shown that to understand the relationship between childhood experiences of domestic violence and adulthood perpetration that social issues such as gender

inequality, gender roles and masculinity must be better understood (see Campo 2015, p. 10 for multiple references to the studies). Experiences of shame and isolation have been found in some instances of intergenerational patterns of abusive behaviour (Thomson 2000, p.9; Hill, 2019). The process of delegitimising domestic violence is a way to break the intergenerational link (Thomson 2000, p. 37), how that can be done is more difficult to ascertain.

Women as active agents

'If a woman gets married because she is sick of working, she asks for everything she gets. Opportunities for work must be improved, not abandoned' (Greer 1971, p. 320).

Women are more likely to be victimised than men are in both the domestic sphere and the public domain due to embedded gendered issues in society. Jane Fonda (2018, 36:14) says, through tears, 'I always saw my mother as a victim. Women equals victim. I am a woman, I am going to be damaged, I am going to be crushed'. When women are perceived as *solely* victims in matters of domestic violence, according to Theodore Dalrymple (cited in ABC 2016, 30:18) who has worked with thousands of women experiencing domestic violence, it can be disempowering because her ability exert some level of control is overlooked.

Hill (2019) begins her book on domestic violence by introducing Albert Biderman, a social scientist for the US Airforce who established a chart that re-defined coercive control beyond the narrow and limiting term 'brainwashing', that was used in the 1950s within the context of the Korean war. Hill (2019, p. 17) compares women in domestic abusive relationships to prisoners of war, in that their experiences of coercive control are more traumatising than the physical abuse. There is no denying that women who are victims of domestic violence have lost agency and control due to the nature of the various forms of violence, the abuse itself entails diminishment of the victims' sense of power and autonomy.

The context of a woman's abusive relationship is pertinent to the form of abuse that that individual is experiencing, the context within which the abuse is occurring, the historical context of the person's life, and their access to resources and support.

> In evaluating agency, we cannot consider only the current time slice of someone's relation to structures and discourse. We must also account for the historical development of agency, the process through which an agent acquired her motives, goals, and resources (Showden 2011, p. 18).

Cultural and social settings shape the historical context in which women's personal experiences occurred and must be considered when discussing women's agency. Greer (1999, p. 184) said that women's lives have become better but harder. Post-suffragette women who prioritised public duty over marriage, were influential and were celebrated, but the truth was that they couldn't have a family and a career, because looking after men and children was a full-time job (Greer 1999, p. 255). Now, there is even more opportunity to work, but the children must still be cared for and husbands tended to. Women are expected, by society and in private, to do more than just raise children and exist in the

domestic sphere. There is more pressure on women to manage both their career and their family.

More women are refusing to be 'lied to, beaten and betrayed by the fathers of their children' (Greer 1999, p. 271). Women are aware that they no longer have to be subordinate to men, but they still are – it's a conflicting space to exercise agency within, seeking autonomy from a weak foundation. 'The illusion of a stable family life was built on the silence of suffering women' (Greer 1999, p. 271), women succumbed to living in whatever conditions their husbands provided. More women are fighting against these constraints, but it is a hard fight because there is a lot working against women, therefore not all women are prepared or have the capacity to engage in it.

Greer (1999, p. 167) explains that there has never been much analyses of women's attitudes to male violence but that there is some particularly depressing evidence that women are 'thrilled' by male hardness.

> Many battered women will eventually return to their homes, often naively expecting that things will be different. In these instances, our task is not to denigrate the romantic ideal which so many battered women hold close, even in the face of physical crises unimaginable to persons who live more safely. Our task rather is to extend this ideal politically to help forge a world which can sustain it (Stark, Flitcraft & Frazier 1979, p. 488).

In 2012, a staggering 81,900 Australian women reported that they wanted to leave a violent, current partner but didn't (Cox 2015, p. 120). Dobash and Doabsh (1979, p. 148) interviewed 109 battered women and found that the most common reasons that women leave, stay, or return to their violent husbands are related to their children.

> Australia has spent millions on campaigns urging women to leave situations of domestic violence, and to risk a jump into the unknown. Women bravely responded, despite the risk that leaving – or even saying they want to leave – could get them killed. But instead of being there to catch them, we're holding out a safety net that's full of holes (Hill 2019, p. 236).

Leaving violent man is a dangerous, high-risk time for women (Taylor-Browne 2001, p. 331). The alternative to leaving is to stay. Leaving and staying are both dangerous options. But denying that women have the agency to make their decisions based on their circumstances is to disempower the individual. As dire and complicated and dangerous the situation is for women, at the very least, they are active agents, they have choices. Children do not.

Conclusion

'Women make their own lives, but they do so under conditions not of their own choosing. Both individual agency and social structure must be considered' (Personal Narratives Group 1989, p. 5).

Domestic violence in Australia is a gendered epidemic – heavily documented in the literature – that has long-lasting impacts for women and children. Despite increasing efforts to prevent and respond to domestic violence, Australia has not seen any improvement over time. Domestic violence is still a private issue, something that happens behind closed doors, even though concerted efforts have been made to bring awareness of the issue into the public space, it remains a personal matter. The private but social problem is nuanced and there is not one single defining factor, one motivator, that can be held accountable for or defines domestic violence.

This literature review has briefly discussed the perils of the domestic sphere for women and children; it has provided context and scope of the issue; explored the impacts of domestic violence on the family; analyzed intergenerational, gendered, cultural and social contexts; provided a historical framework of how the issue has been understood; and examined the male and the female experience.

Domestic violence evidently has dire impacts for women but there are also lasting impacts on children within families characterised by violence that need to be more closely investigated. When a women experiences violence from an intimate partner, much of the time a child also either witnesses or experiences violence too. Witnessing violence has been attributed as a form of violence in and of itself and that makes children a victim of violence each time it is perpetrated against the mother.

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre (interviewed by Guttorm, Hohti & Paakkari 2015, p. 16) said that doing research is a methodology and that methodologies aren't real.

In the human disciplines, the study of consciousness has been grounded in psychology since the 1870s (see Polkinghorne 1988). Donald E. Polkinghorne (1988, p. 105) noted that in the 1980s, psychology inquired into the role of narrative in establishing personal identity. Qualitative research has a long history within psychology, in the contexts of 'history, society and culture' (Carrera-Fernandez, Guardia-Olmos & Pero-Cebollero 2013, p. 1590). In the 50s and 60s it was used in the forms of ethnographic methods and case studies, in the 90s the strengths of qualitative methods were reinvestigated (Carrera-Fernandez, Guardia-Olmos & Pero-Cebollero 2013). The following merits of qualitative methods emerged: 'access to personal experience and its meanings, respect for cultural diversity and contextual factors, hypothesis generation and deep analysis of the issues' (Carrera-Fernandez, Guardia-Olmos & Pero-Cebollero 2013, p. 1590).

To investigate the effects of witnessing domestic violence in my childhood, I used a genealogical methodology that narrated the generations of violence and victimisation from which I come. As a result of the narrative that emerged, I applied narrative inquiry methodology to analyse the historical and present contexts that my identity was formed within. The overarching methodology used to write this thesis is autoethnography. I drew together the genealogical and narrative inquiry methodologies and investigated the self further through autoethnography. Human sciences produce 'knowledge that deepens and enlarges the understanding of human existence' (Polkinghorne 1988, p. 159). I positioned myself within the familial setting that I from and the social world that I live within.

I read literature related to my topic dated back to the 70s, to develop a lens influenced by historical context. My analysis of my own experiences with a social phenomenon has been developed through positioning lived experiences within the scholarship of domestic violence. Through explorations of personal data sets and field texts I have turned myself inside out as I tried to frame my living and thinking into a narrative that could be understood against the backdrop of the larger context, within which my life and this research is positioned. I have interrogated myself, and attempted to place my narrative neatly, within the disordered patterns of human experiences. During the process of self-inquiry, I have come to learn about others. It could be argued that writing autoethnography has deepened my understanding of the human experience. The complexities of lifelines, which are undeniably determined by cause and effect of experiences, became profoundly evident when conducting autoethnography and genealogy. The act of living my life has been a rugged, haphazard series of events that have been defined by my formative years as a powerless young girl unable to escape the cycle of familial, generational violence and victimisation. The generational patterns of living emerged from the genealogical data sets; I discovered that my positionality had roots, I was able to place my experiences within a repetitive cycle that had preceded me. What I witnessed and how I survived, was not

without reason, there was a foundation that had been built before me, directives already in place.

The motivation for this research project was my childhood experiences, the formative years that shaped my adulthood are the foundations of this thesis. As an adult, I discovered that I was too busy surviving life to properly understand the way that I was raised, the context in which I grew up, the family history that preceded me, and the domestic violence that I had witnessed. To investigate the self, I had to do more than just analyse the data that I had accumulated over the years and had produced over the course of the research project, I had to link my experiences to a larger, social setting. I used narrative inquiry, autoethnography and genealogy to produce the data (stream of consciousness, diarised entries) that I did not have, and to inquire into the data sets (family archives and personal life documents) already in my possession. According to D. Jean Clandinin and Vera Caine (2008, p. 542) 'narrative inquiry is first and foremost a way of understanding experience'. Data includes 'artwork, photographs, memory box items, documents, plans and policies' (Clandinin & Caine 2008, p. 544) and similar to autoethnography it is imperative that larger social institutions and cultural narratives inform the research, otherwise the narrative becomes autobiographical (Clandinin & Caine 2008, p. 545). The most significant experiences I can recall, and some of the earliest memories I have of myself, are constituted around domestic violence. My childhood was characterised by male violence and female victimisation.

My story is rooted in genealogy, I did not see what I saw in a vacuum. There was a history to what I was exposed to and I felt a humbled sense of responsibility to explore the effects the generations of violence and victimisation had on shaping my identity.

Ken Plummer (1983, p. 5) wrote that:

> In the face of the inherent society – individual dualism of sociology, surely there must always remain a strand of work that highlights the active human subject?

I uncovered patterns in lives, gendered norms, social class distinctions, and resounding silence that crossed generations. Tessa Muncey (2010, p. 82) argues that voice is not just the spoken or written, the obvious, but that 'it is articulated in theories and texts purporting to represent everybody's experience.' I was acutely aware of the responsibility I carried, in writing my version of other people's lives. I knew that my voice, my version of my family's history, had the potential to influence other professionals in the field. David Boud, Rosemary Keogh and David Walker (1985, p. 29) said that recalling events accurately is determined by our understanding of an experience, which is rooted in perception, and mine will be challenged at great lengths. At times it was a gruelling, meticulous process being objective about a topic that has a lot of weight, and of which I was the primary subject.

Historically, writing the self was uncommon in the human sciences due to formal scientific frameworks (Polkinghorne 1988, p. 149). A challenge that I faced, in writing my own identity, pertained to the personal nature of the research and, admittedly, working within an unstructured "informal" format. However, writing the self was an incredibly liberating experience that caused me no discomfort, in fact I became addicted to it. Writing is a private exercise and I became more and more comfortable with myself throughout the

writing process, I was the only person I had to reveal myself to, in the production of this thesis. Of course, once finalized, other people will read it. Helen Garner (2019) observes her external world and writes; therefore, her internal world is documented through her observations. My journal writing is more insular, regarding the personal, written out of desperation to understand myself and my own experiences. Life histories and personal narratives were produced in the form of journals and autobiographies by second-wave academic feminists (Chase 2005, p. 654). A research group called the Personal Narratives Group was established in 1983 to facilitate and coordinate feminist scholarship, in 1989 they wrote that anthropologists, of a younger generation, 'questioned the absence of people in ethnographies' (p. 3). Feminists saw the value in life histories and personal narratives as modes through which women could be 'social actors in their own right' (Chase 2005, p. 655). Writing the self was understood, by feminists, to be more than just placing oneself in cultural and social contexts (Chase 2005).

Qualitative research

'Much of the literature on children and domestic and family violence is quantitative, and research directly assessing children's experiences is lacking, particularly in the Australian context' (Campo 2015, p. 11).

Martyn Hammersley (2008, p. 26) wrote that the use of qualitative research was encouraged in the late 60s and early 70s, to better understand people's perspectives and behaviours and in recognition that social life is an emergent process not a 'repetition of lawlike patterns.' Hammersley (2008, p. 28) commented on a compromised methodological principle of qualitative research, arguing that participation selection often favours the oppressed over the dominant individual. Hammersley's (2008) view is reflected in the literature on domestic violence, women (the oppressed) are overtly investigated, and men (the dominant) are rarely mentioned. It could be said that subordinated people in society are heavily investigated in qualitative research due to being underrepresented in the social world, and the suffering and the silencing of those individuals and communities is valued by anthropologists, sociologists, and the likes. Quantitative research has been criticised for disrespecting the nature of human social life: 'experimental investigations were dismissed as incapable of telling us anything about what goes on in the real world' (Hammersley 2008, p. 30).

The methodologies that I used to collect data are qualitative because the research is concerned with personal experience within a social context and attempts to connect the gap in the literature between statistics and experiences.

> Domestic violence is a very complex issue, as is the whole area of child protection. Qualitative methods allow for more exploration of issues so that a fuller picture can be obtained in a contextual way (McGee 2000, p. 14).

The use of qualitative methodologies became a crucial anchor point for two of the overarching arguments of the thesis that determined the following: (1) voice and experience are missing in the literature. (2) The cyclical, generational, familial patterns of violence and victimisation are not properly considered in the scholarship.

> To understand any act of family violence requires looking at its overall contexts and patterns, but simultaneously searching for specific meanings. Closely connected to this need for specificity is the importance of qualitative, as well as quantitative, forms of insights (Breines & Gordon 1983, p. 530).

I have used qualitative research methodologies to produce a personal narrative account that has layers and depth in its meaning. Qualitative research 'carries its meaning in its entire text [it must be] read, not scanned; its meaning is in the reading' (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005, pp. 959-960). The research conducted *on* children from homes characterised by domestic violence is underwhelming, and I was unable to find any research that had been conducted *by* adults whose childhoods were affected by domestic violence. I determined that qualitative methodologies were best suited to my research topic because it pertained to the meaning of lived experiences. As the research ensued, the social and political aspects of the thesis intensified as I found myself engrossed in and burdened by choices of theoretical frameworks. I knew that my thesis was positioned in a much broader context than my own life or the lives of my family members, but until writing I hadn't quite grasped the importance of how I framed my ideas. '… in some ways, qualitative research has come to be more embroiled in political and ethical constraints than most quantitate research ever was' (Hammersley 2008, p. 29).

Elaine Showalter (1986, p. 4) reflected on her experiences with writing the self and writing for the academy:

> The raw intensity of feeling and the insistence on the relationship of literature to personal experience that accompanied these early phases often expressed itself in an autobiographical or even confessional criticism shocking to those trained in the impersonal conventions of most academic critical writing.

Carrera-Fernandez, Guardia-Olmos and Pero-Cebollero (2013, p. 1589) argue that qualitative research is 'subjective', that it requires a lot of time to conduct, is 'tendentious' and it evokes new questions rather than new answers. I argue that generating new questions is a way to deepen future research and strengthen knowledge production. Qualitative research 'places people [researchers and participants] in their social context, paying particular attention to the social position they occupy' (Carrera-Fernandez, Guardia-Olmos & Pero-Cebollero 2013, p. 1590). Qualitive research has typically been used to investigate 'new phenomena and generate hypotheses' (Carrera-Fernandez, Guardia-Olmos & Pero-Cebollero 2013, p. 1590).

Domestic violence has a history, it needs new hypotheses, and practical intervention. However, domestic violence is a difficult topic to investigate in a qualitative manner, as the recruitment of participants is both practically and ethically challenging. Fletcher (2018, p. 43) has said that information regarding men and women's experiences with domestic violence is limited 'because it is often difficult for scholars to recruit participants to share their experience in the context of a conventional qualitative interview'.

Inductive and deductive research logics can be used across qualitative and quantitative research methods, it is most likely that a research project will use more of one than the other, but the utilisation of both 'can enrich the research loop' (Carrera-Fernandez, Guardia-Olmos & Pero-Cebollero 2013, p. 1600). I tackled this topic with some preordained ideas about the conclusions I thought would arrive at, based on the quantitative statistics that are commonly known in the field. But the research has been a process of learning about the social topic and how it is understood and how the knowledge could be deepened. In terms of the field texts and the investigation into my identity, I could not have predicted what emerged about myself and my lineage. '… the post qualitative inquirer does not know what to do first and then next and next. There is no recipe, no process' (St. Pierre 2018, p. 604). The process was messier than I had anticipated, I moved around the research and within it without much sense of order, on reflection I cannot imagine how a cleaner process could be applied.

> We are so concerned with being rigorous, systematic, scientific—with the prestige of hard science—that we force ourselves into these narrow methodologies that almost prevent us from doing something different (St. Pierre, interviewed by Guttorm, Hohti & Paakkari 2015, p. 17).

St. Pierre (interviewed by Guttorm, Hohti & Paakkari 2015, p. 19) prefers to use the term inquiry rather than research, she goes on to say that 'inquiry begins in curiosity.' I was curious about the topic of childhood and domestic violence because I was curious about how my identity came to be. By applying qualitative methodologies that involved deep and layered analysis of self-inquiry, I drew out the foundations of who I am (autoethnography) by embarking on an investigation into my family (genealogy) and positioning my life story (narrative inquiry) within the social epidemic of domestic violence.

<u>Creative to conventional product</u>

David L. Streiner and Souraya Sidani (2011, p. 2) believe that 'any study, no matter how well designed, will face challenges in its execution.'

Approximately two years into this research the thesis format changed from a creative product to a conventional one. Research about conducting research describes the process as straightforward and linear, from idea to publication (Streiner & Sidani 2011), but this was not my experience. In writing my own reconstructed version of childhood events, I was overcome with the messiness of constructing a succinct and linear narrative. Linking my experiences to a broader social phenomenon in which matters are contested and the implications of the issue are severe, added to the complexities of rewriting my life. Though the themes that were under investigation were serious, I could not deny or resist the weight of the responsibility I had taken on. My data was messy, my life (from child to adult) was disordered, the context in which I was writing was complicated, and the social topic that I was writing about was incredibly complex and multifaceted. Nothing about this study was straightforward.

Moving from the creative product (the autoethnographic novel) to the traditional thesis format was a transitional period. The work that I had been doing on the novel got reworked

into blocks of stream of consciousness field texts that I then used for analysis. I had been writing my own story for so long, that when I came to write chapters such as the literature review, I required some time to step away from my own narrative so that I could comment on the research conducted by others in the field. My interpretation of my data and of the literature in the field was intrinsically biased, therefore I was aware that the validity of the research would be scrutinised and challenged. Maria Tamboukou and Stephen J. Ball (2003, p. 13) wrote that: 'It is in the process of interpretation… that the genealogist has to stand back, disengage herself from the turbulence of the problem and indulge in her "pathos for distance".' I became subjective by placing periods of time between writing the self and commenting on the literature to allow my thinking to adjust from one context to another. It may sound precious of me and as though time was wasted, but this was a writing structure I needed to apply to strengthen the validity of the thesis. I had to be consciously aware of my positionality, always.

Validity

Tony E. Adams (2017, p. 63) wrote, 'I frequently encounter these evaluations — of others judging an autoethnography as not critical enough, or as too social scientific, or as too descriptive and not evocative, or as too evocative and lacking cultural insight. But these comments, especially when made by fellow autoethnographers, are simple, ignorant, and arrogant.'

The Personal Narratives Group (1989, p. 261) believed that narrative truths are found through the process of interpretation, by understanding the world views that inform the personal narrative. Academic disciplines have commonly discouraged researchers from treating personal narratives as valid research data because they fail tests of 'verifiability, reliability, facticity, [and] representativeness' (Personal Narratives Group 1989, p. 262). Pat Sikes and Ivor Goodson (2017, p. 66) emphasise that life historians and other qualitative researchers' capacity for subjectivity is commonly disputed.

Writing autoethnography has caused me much self-doubt, not about my ability to write my story, or the validity of the story itself, but because of the lack of validity of the methodologies I used. I was aware throughout the whole process that academics may not view this work as "proper" research. I was reading about the lack of validity in qualitative research while trying to concoct my thesis arguments; I was acutely insecure. I knew my position was biased, I was a product of the social topic under analysis, my position made me an unreliable source. This was a contradiction, because I embodied knowledge that was scarcely available to researchers.

Academics construct the knowledge that they produce (Hammersley 2008, 129), and this places them in a bias position, regardless of their research method.

> While scientific writing is designed to persuade readers of the truth of what is claimed, it occurs within an institution that is concerned with the production of knowledge; and pursuit of persuasion is properly constrained by that larger enterprise (Hammersley 2008, p. 128).

I produced something out of the ordinary that would be placed under a microscope due to the topical, timely and dire nature of the research. I was taking a huge risk both personally and professionally.

> … experimental work is risky, creative, surprising, and remarkable. It cannot be measured, predicted, controlled, systematized, formalized, described in a textbook, or called forth by preexisting, approved methodological processes, methods, and practices (St. Pierre 2018, p. 604).

Although there are questions of validity in relation to autoethnography as a research methodology, Hayes & Jeffries (2015, p. 4) are confident that it is embraced within certain disciplines such as 'anthropology, education and sociology'. The intersection of theory and personal allows for 'evocative and yet empirically validated study' (Hayes & Jeffries 2015, p. 2). As discussed by Harry F. Wolcott (2002) qualitative researchers experience dilemmas associated with the desire to portray their individual experiences as unique, but for the research to be also recognised as having broader meaning. Erin Parke (2018, p. 2954) wrote that, 'the concern of autoethnography is not accuracy of data, but truth of the experience as the writer experienced it.' Interpretation of experience is a validity issue, but reflexivity is an integral component of autoethnographic work. Muncey (2010, p. 55) argues that it is the 'capacity of reflexivity, the awareness of being aware that enables accurate representation of the imagination [lived experience].'

Gresilda A. Tilley-Lubbs (2016, p. 3) reports on her role as an auto-ethnographer as being a process of 'intense reflexivity' that requires the interpretation of her own narrative 'without the pretext of having eliminated [her]self as a participant in the study.' Informing the reader that the data is interpreted from the researcher's perspective, is a method of transparency (Tilley-Lubbs 2016, p. 4). Towards the end of constructing this thesis, I recognised that there would be value in having a researcher interpret my data sets, as it would inevitably offer a different perspective to mine.

My capacity for reflexivity increased the more that I wrote. It was in the writing that the experiences took on meaning, as I interacted with my own memories or other data sets, the "truths" emerged. Carolyn Ellis (interviewed by Douglas & Carless 2016, 3:47) explains the process of reflexivity as:

> being tuned into the voices in your head… you quietly listen and let all the voices speak… give them the opportunity to speak to each other, ask questions of each other and make you reflect on the different ways to see the world.

Sociologist, Talcott Parsons (1954, p. 24) wrote that:

> every human society possesses a considerable stock of empirically valid knowledge, both of the nonhuman environment in which its members act, and of themselves, and of each other.

This knowledge is considered invalid if it cannot be theorized, and from a positivist perspective empirical knowledge is unverifiable (Parsons 1954, p. 24). Elliot W. Eisner (1981,

p. 5) wrote that '… some philosophers of science regard no form of research in the social sciences as scientific.' Scientific approaches to research focus on the *behaviour* of the research participant/s and artistic approaches to research focus on the *experience* the individuals or groups are having (Eisner 1981, p. 6). One of the traditional aims of scientific research was to discover truth, artistic research is preoccupied with discovering meaning, not just the truth (Eisner 1981, p. 9). Hammersley (2008, p. 135) wrote that the primary concern of qualitative research 'must be with truth not justice.'

Keeping the personal narrative linked to a social context

Mary-Lynn Hamilton, Laura Smith and Kristen Worthington (2008, p. 20) wrote that: 'Autobiography work that does not engage with a social aspect of the personal experience exists in a different realm to autoethnography, however the two methodologies are inextricably linked.'

Hammersley (2008, p. 30) describes how the work of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Karl Marx and Georges Bataille all, in some way, deal with the role of the unconscious: 'how people's experience and actions are shaped by factors of which they are (perhaps necessarily) unaware.' Hammersley (2008, p. 30) purports that this role of unconsciousness underpins the idea that 'in order to explain social actions and institutions a primary requirement is to understand the perspectives of those involved.' Autoethnography, inquiry into the personal narrative, is a method that investigates the unconscious of the individual to gain perspective on the social context that their life is experienced within.

'Human experience is enveloped in a personal and cultural realm of non-material meanings and thoughts' (Polkinghorne 1988, p. 15). The realm of meaning is not static, meaning is informed through experiences and context, and is processed through stages of reflection and recollection (Polkinghorne 1988, p. 15).

I used various techniques to ensure that my research into identity remained connected to the broader social issue under investigation, including:

- Reading and reviewing literature in the field. Engaging in literature that is linked to personal experience is autoethnographic research (Muncey 2005, cited in Wall 2008, p. 39).
- Reading and diarising my thoughts on domestic violence cases reported on in the media.
- Attending a plea hearing and sentencing hearing for a domestic violence homicide.
- Reading emerging research on the effects of COVID-19 on domestic violence, divorce rates and the impacts on family households.
- Following the live statistics on homicides in Australia tracked by the Red Heart Campaign (2022).
- Engaging with current practitioners in the field by listening to podcasts, watching panel discussions and reading books.

The personal narrative is autobiographical in nature, however that lived experience must be directly linked to a social context, or else it fails to be recognised as valid research. Herein

lies the challenge of moving between the personal experience and the bigger issue under analysis. I overcame the fear of not properly linking my own story to domestic violence as a social issue by remaining connected to the current climate and through considered research techniques. Identifying field texts as data to be analysed rather than just documentation of my life enabled me to separate the self from the analysis process. *Producing* the data was a different process than *analysing* it.

Sarah Wall (2008, p. 39) writes that 'autoethnography offers a way of giving voice to personal experience to advance sociological understanding'. Tony E. Adams and Jimmie Manning (2015, p. 352) explain autoethnography as a process of connecting the researcher with others, and society. I remained vigilant and across relevant, and timely information related to domestic violence throughout my research. I engaged with the work that was been done at the time of writing and (more importantly) followed the crisis as it was occurring.

Autoethnography

Arthur P. Bochner and Carolyn Ellis (2016, p. 208) wrote that: 'Autoethnography has become a genus for many diverse species of first-person, vulnerable writing that calls attention to subjectivity, emotionality, and contingency and brings readers into ''feeling'' contact with the suffering of others.'

While writing autoethnography about being a child victim of domestic violence, I wrote not only *of* the effects of witnessing and been born from familial, generational violence and victimisation, I wrote *from* the literal deficit of that life. I have written through experiences that my childhood led me to live through, I have written from the voices of both the vulnerable young girl and the adult who is so desperate to survive what is so hard to overcome. I have written for the young girl and the other young girls alike, for the mothers and the siblings and even for the fathers. I fought against my instinct to protect myself from scrutiny. I have been transparent in ways that I certainly do not practise in my everyday life. I have written the better sections of both this thesis and the field texts used for analysis when emotionally unguarded and refrained from analytical thought. I have written about the perils and challenges of writing about the self, and contrary to what I once believed, I have determined that autoethnography does not flow from the mind. I commenced this research with the belief that autoethnography would be easier to conduct, compared to other research methods, because the data does not have to be collected externally. Ultimately, I realised that this actually made the research method extremely difficult to undertake because I had the role of both producing and analysing the data. Autoethnography is hard, it is arduous, it is a relentless pursuit of pinning yourself down to assess yourself while forming an intelligible argument about a social issue based upon the pre-existing and emerging ideas of other academics in your field. I feel the methodology has been a contradiction to work within, in that, writing autoethnography is undeniably highly personal research but the thesis must not be *too* much about the personal. Autoethnography must be about the social topic under analysis, otherwise the research is deemed incredulous, invalid. The challenge has been to find the balance between the two.

My social and emotional positionality has been the anchor point from which I have written. I have written not only from the impoverished environment I have found myself caught within the cycle of, desperate to escape. My surroundings and life settings are consequential to my emotional incapacities, I am not like others, I am flawed in my thinking and behaviour because of how I feel. This thesis has been written from that flawed perspective, often fighting against myself and battling with the manner in which to conduct the study. At times, I have been overwhelmed by the choice in data sets, data collection and analysis methods. I have found myself frustrated by the literature that has constructed the narrative so matter-of-factly and neatly when in truth the reality of the effects of domestic violence are haphazard and difficult to properly understand. Conveying this unruliness to a reader has been even more challenging. I felt at times that the topic was too big to comprehend and critique, that my ideas, arguments and findings were inadequate. I had doubts about my ability to construct a proper, coherent, durable thesis. In many ways this could have been a result of insecurities, but I do think that the enormity of the social issue was at times too much for one person to take on. The intricacies and subtleties of each of the very many facets of the topic deserve proper attention that was of course outside of the scope of this thesis.

The research has felt unwholesome, reflective of my emotional being, and illustrative of the effects domestic violence has had on my childhood that has carried over into adult life. As I have written this work I have written not *through* the trauma, I have written from *within* the trauma and at times from outside of it as a spectator analysing the acutely vulnerable state of being as it moves through society unseen, unchecked, unresolved.

Writing autoethnography

Bochner and Ellis (2016, p. 212) noted that the rise in autoethnography allowed researchers to be personally connected to their research, which had previously been discredited by methodological directives.

Autoethnography is a disordered process of self-inquiry that utilises researcher reflexivity, and at its core is the construction of a narrative identity within the framework of a social issue. The literature on autoethnography regularly makes mention of the intersection of the personal significance and the sociological benefits (Wall 2008; Muncey 2010; Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011 & Adams & Manning 2015).

Bochner and Ellis (2016, p. 2013) describe auto ethnographers as people who seek the good and who want to be better people within a better society, they argue that methodical investigation isn't essentially the way to achieve that. The culture of inquiry is grounded in criteria and methodological order, but autoethnography is not about predicting and controlling (Bochner & Ellis 2016, p. 213), 'autoethnographies show people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and what their struggles mean' (Bochner & Ellis 2006, p. 111). Wall (2008, p. 39) wrote that the personal nature of autoethnography makes it the most challenging in its field.

I chose autoethnography as my predominate methodology because of the two gaps in the literature: (1) the effects of witnessing domestic violence on children. (2) lack of first-person

narrative accounts in the field. I had the data (the lived experience) required to conduct a study that could address the gaps in the literature. My own life was comprised of the data necessary to add to the field, I was the living by-product of a childhood home characterised by domestic violence. I was generating the data while I was analysing it, and I discovered that it is impossible to live and record everything. Laurel Richardson (in Richardson & St. Pierre 2005, p. 963) wrote that 'ingeniously, we know there is always more to know' in autoethnography.

Autoethnography can be used as both a research method and a methodology in social science (Hamilton, Smith & Worthington 2008; Muncey 2010; Olson 2004). The principles of autoethnography are centred in 'emotional resonance' and 'analytical exploration' (Hayes & Jeffries 2015, p. 3). Tony E. Adams (2009, p. 619) explains autoethnography as 'a critique of the text, a critique of the life'. In writing this thesis I have realised that in autoethnography you need to have something to look for, to carry the research into different stages and progress the data collection and analysis phases. I had been carrying around my tangible data for decades, sorting through it, re-packing it, dealing with the hindrance of boxing and unboxing cumbersome family photo albums and other life documents. The non-tangible data was also re-understood, as I began to question the internal processes of emotions and experiences. The research forced me to get to know things, I had to look for new information as parts of the narrative began to emerge. Ronald Bishop (2008, p. 405) wrote that, 'the joy felt by a researcher when a key discovery is made must be tempered by the realisation that there is more information to find.'

Moving away from the writing of the self and analysis of that writing, into the literature and the writing up of the research, was a transitional period from the emotional connection to the data into the analytical investigation of the theory that supported what I had been producing. Hayes and Jeffries (2015) explain autoethnography as being grounded in the experiences of the self but suggest that reaching beyond the self is an integral part of conducting analytical research. Autoethnography has been described by Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams and Arthur P. Bochner (2011, p. 278) as 'layered accounts' that 'focus on the author's experience alongside data, abstract analysis, and relevant literature.' There was a distinctive phase towards the latter part of the research where I found it difficult to remove myself from my story and connect with the literature in the field. 'Auto-ethnographers are confronted with self-related issues at every stage of their analyses and this can lead to self-absorption' (Hayes & Jeffries 2015, p. 5) and the act of writing the self 'not only foregrounds emotion but indulges in it' (Edbrook 2017, p. 125). The manner of writing the self is incredibly intimate and all consuming, trying to make sense of the self but also the topic under study is a battle between mindsets that requires a balance of thought and focus. Tony E. Adams (2009, pp. 619-622) regards autoethnography as 'a critique of the text, a critique of the life' and describes his own observational analysis as a way to place his experiences within a historical context in which a set of conditions allowed for the experience to happen.

Pat Sikes (2008, p. 235) wrote about her experiences with writing autoethnography in the 'context of a society ruled by a culture of fear… a society where taking risks is often not allowed.' Sikes (2008) highlights the differences between intellectually understanding the risks associated with conducting research on a highly sensitive and contested topic, and actually living it experientially. Research that deals with public issues and is concerned with

changing the world not just interpreting it, can potentially be transformative (Sikes 2008). Sikes's story was exploited in the media, due to the nature of her personal narrative. Sikes (2008, p. 238) discovered that the 'link between theory and experience' was problematic, but she would continue to write about controversial topics regardless of the discomfort she experienced in telling her story. I had to take precautions to conceal my identity to protect my family members, I had to remove information that could jeopardise other's rights to anonymity, but I was determined to work around these restrictions because the story was worth writing.

Autoethnography research came about because scholars in the area found that 'conventional ways of doing and thinking about research were narrow, limiting, and parochial' (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011, p. 275). The future of autoethnography relies on researchers showing what autoethnography can do, that other methodologies cannot (Adams 2017, p. 65). Laura Edbrook (2017, p. 131) describes investigating and writing the intimate as not always a 'dichotomy between the personal and the political, the scholarly and the subjective', instead it can be understood as a creative and critical inquiry into one's own life.

Women writing about women's lives

Author Marie Cardinal (2003, p. 264) wrote on the life of women: 'It's true that in the life of an old woman, there is often the rainbow of her children's laughter, the dream of an old love and sometimes even the warm afterglow of tenderness. But most of all she's learned the red of her blood, the black of her fatigue, the shit brown and pus yellow of diapers and underpants worn by her babies and her man. And then the gray weariness and the beige of resignation.'

The director of a women's shelter in 1976 sought out experts in the field who could assist women that were trying to escape violent relationships, she discovered 'that the only real experts on the subject were the women who had lived the experience' (Webster & Dunn 2005, p. 128).

I propose the idea that women's lives are innately private, perhaps because they are regarded as somewhat irrelevant, especially within the context of the domestic sphere, which is where Australian mothers spend a lot of their time. In an Australian study that analysed household, income and labour dynamics over the period of 2002-14, it was found that after women had children their average 33 hour paid work week dropped to just 9 hours per week (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2016). The significant drop in paid labour hours was a result of more time spent caring for the children and doing housework (AIFS 2016). Or perhaps women's lives are private because of the suffering they endure, the entrapment of their embodied gender is difficult to overcome, impossible to be free from. Analysis of the life stories of women has been described by Julia Swindells (1989, p. 24) as women liberating other women from history but cautions that the subjects of analysis may not have led liberated lives. Showalter (1986, p. 14) wrote that, 'women's writing has its own unique character [it] reflects women's complex cultural position'.

The nature of this research, regardless of theoretical underpinning, draws on the development of identity through reflexivity. I have harnessed my lived experiences, critiqued a social phenomenon, and extended the longstanding feminist theory discussion. 'Feminist standpoint researchers locate a woman's lived experience at the centre of the research and use it to understand the functionality of society' (Keeling & van Wormer 2012, p. 1365). It could be argued that my writing is indicative of primarily feminist thought because I am a woman discussing a social issue that mostly affects females.

In her book *Housewife*, written because of her own experiences of oppression as a housewife, Oakley (1974) thanks the women's movement for their collective work and claims that her book is about women, not the family, marriage, or gender equality. 'A housewife is a woman: a housewife does the housework' (Oakley 1974, p. 1). However, a woman's life cannot be written about without context and Oakley did in fact include the sub-genres she claimed the book would not address. The social context of Oakley's era, the industrialised society, is omnipresent, and underpins the experiences of housewives at the time.

American feminist Roxane Gay (2011) wrote:

> I receive the most correspondence about the stories I write about women, stories that are often intense and dark and intimate. Most of these letters come from women who thank me for telling these kinds of stories, for bringing a kind of testimony to certain women's experiences.

Gay (2011) has described the stories that she writes as domestic, claustrophobic stories about the lives of women. Gay (2011) often feels that her stories are inferior to more important stories that are *political*, and exist outside of the domestic sphere, such as human rights, global poverty, or war.

> These global, overwhelming issues are, indeed, very serious issues that demand serious writing and attention. I do think, however, that I need to stop seeing this as a binary where either you're writing about the personal and the body, or you're writing about some of these larger scale issues (Gay 2011).

Despite the self-doubt Gay (2011) argues that whenever she writes about a women's experience, she is 'committing a political act' (Gay 2011).

In her analysis of women's life stories, Luisa Passerini (1989, p. 195) observed that because women's work is given less recognition and lacks security, that it is less suitable as a basis for an identity. Showden (2011, p.3) looks at identity in relation to political possibilities to further unpack:

> the undeniable evidence that women are systematically subordinated in various ways—which clearly compromises their ability to choose and act freely—with the need for public policy makers, social commentators, scholars, public service providers, and other interlocutors to see and respect the ways in which women exercise dignity and make choices in the face of subordination.

Elizabeth Hampsten (1989, p. 129) claimed that due to the renaissance in women's writing, that 'women are writing, and being written about, as never before.' 'Listening to women's voices, studying women's writings, and learning from women's experiences have been crucial to the feminist reconstruction of our understanding of the world' (Personal Narratives Group 1989, p. 4). Life history research Rubby Dhunpath (2000, p. 547) acknowledges The Personal Narratives Group for their role in utilising personal narratives to create feminist theory. The Personal Narratives Group (1989, p. 263) argue that women's personal narratives 'embody and reflect the reality of difference and complexity and stress the centrality of gender to human life' and are therefore essential in understanding humanity and reconstructing knowledge. Analysis of women's writing is the most 'exciting prospect for a coherent feminist literary theory' (Showalter 1986, p.12).

Cara T. Mackie (2009, p. 324) wrote a poem that explored her experiences with sexual abuse, to do this she used 'systematic sociological introspection to write through emotional experience', a process of self-introspection that generates understandings of lived experiences (Ellis 1991). Wall conducted an autoethnographic study on herself and her experiences as an adoptive mother. Wall (2008, p. 39) proposes that 'autoethnography offers a way of giving voice to personal experience to advance sociological understanding'.

In the writing of my own life and consequently the lives of other women in my family, I have come to learn more about the submissive positionality of females in both the domestic and social worlds. The dominant narrative of this thesis shows the perpetuation of the powerlessness of generations of females before me. The effects of being a victim in the domestic sphere have been examined in the social world, the vulnerability experienced within the home transmitted into the external worlds that myself and the other women in my family had to function within.

Genealogy

Michel Foucault (1977, p. 148) substantiates that 'genealogy is situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body.'

Although autoethnography is the dominant methodology I have used to conduct this research, I could not have investigated myself without using genealogy. Investigating the self, within the context of my childhood experiences, meant that I had to understand where I came from. My family's history is the foundation from which both my identity and the generations of violence and victimisation that I came from were reconstructed and written. Genealogy is the essence of identity, without it, there is no understanding of how the self came to be.

Research on why researchers undertake genealogy is limited (Bishop 2008, p. 393). In his data that investigated genealogists, Bishop (2008) found a predominant motivation for conducting genealogical research was to situate their family within a larger context, and that curiosity was a driving factor. By investigating my family, I came to understand the structural conditions that enabled domestic violence to occur, which characterised my

family lineage. I was not interested in deconstructing my own family in an effort to place certain characters within the larger context of domestic violence, as examples of people with particular behaviours that could be used for comparative analysis. The aim of conducting genealogy was to use the literature, in conjunction with my data, to determine how the structures of the working class, heterosexual, nuclear family constructs enabled violence and victimisation to occur, across generations. In doing this, I have ultimately positioned my own family, and myself in particular, within the larger context. Robert Ball (2017, p. 74) argues that the 'paradigm [of genealogy] allows people to understand their stories of their families and the communities that they came from in order to create a whole story with context and details'.

This thesis is rooted in the history of gender and family, and victimisation and violence within the private, domestic space. 'In searching in the maze of dispersed and forgotten events' genealogy provides a channel for voices that have been suppressed through subordination and marginalisation (Tamboukou & Ball 2003, pp. 5-6). The lineage of females that I was born from have been suppressed and the males have remained protected by their silence. I knew there was a history of ill-behaved men in my family, but it was not until I engaged with genealogy that I identified serious patterns of abuse and victimisation. Bishop (2008, p. 404) identified that 'finding one's place in a broader family narrative is not always a comforting or positive experience.' I discovered more than I had expected to find in genealogy. Within the grey documents of life that represented many generations and the diarised entries I produced, I was able to reidentify other people in my life and get to know them in new ways. 'Genealogy can only be performed on oneself and one's family' (Bishop 2008, p. 394), it is an exploration of how a person's identity is formed. 'The author of a genealogy succeeds when his work causes a reader to go off and begin creating a version of his or her ''becoming"' (Bishop 2008, p. 395). Tanya Evans (2011, p. 68) an historian who investigates the family unit and motherhood, has said that supporters of genealogy believe that their story has not been told in traditional history texts, and she thinks that academics should pay attention to this insight. Evans (2011, p. 52) believes that in the merging of family history and academic history, there is potential to reimagine how Australians 'think and write about the past.'

Genealogy has expanded feminist research through the process of 'examining the various ways the female body has been moulded, constructed, and exploited in human history' (Tamboukou & Ball 2003, p. 6). Through my recollections and reconstructions of the self, I have contextualised the positionality of myself and the other women in my family. The position of the female is founded upon vulnerability and disempowerment, which is exacerbated by socioeconomic position and social conditioning of domestic, family life. The constructs of gender, the nuclear family and socioeconomic status define my identity, in relation to my family's history. 'Family history is a sociable enterprise and practitioners are often committed to the wide- spread dissemination of their findings' (Evans 2011, p. 58). Most family stories are 'shaped by secrets and lies but also transition, tragedy and adaptation' (Evans 2011, p. 68). The history of the disordered nature of life has been captured in the grey documents of life, and the stream of consciousness writing that I have done. Margaret A. McLaren (2002, pp. 3-4) described genealogies as '… local and specific histories. But unlike traditional histories, genealogies focus on discontinuities and rupture, rather than continuities.' Ball (2017) believes that genealogy is a story-telling method that

aids the process of re-telling stories about the past or other people. 'Genealogy is about people, their lives, and about how their stories shape who we are' (Ball 2017, p.74), it is a way of forming the 'narrative of a family' (Bishop 2008, cited in Ball 2017, p.74).

Narrative inquiry

Susan E. Chase (2005, p. 668) wrote that the 'narrator is his or her own audience, the one who needs to hear alternative versions of his or her identity or life events.'

Narrative is the 'primary form by which human experience is made meaningful' (Polkinghorne 1988, p. 1). Hermeneutics is the best way to understand narrative, finding meaning in narrative is not a static process and therefore not easily grasped (Polkinghorne 1988, p. 7) Henning S. Olesen (2017, p. 214) noted that 'adult learning processes are primarily linked to their life experiences and general life situation.' Hermeneutics relies on subjective meaning of lived experiences. 'Cognition and emotion in a present situation activate memories of similar past situations, and initiate a process of cognitive and emotional differentiation' (Olesen 2017, p. 220). I unravelled the meaning of my childhood by analysing the themes that emerged in my adulthood. The process was not linear or straightforward, it was messy and required immense flexibility of the mind. In his discussion on the role of narrative in the construction of identity, Clive Baldwin (2017, p. 537) argues that the insistence that narratives:

> be linear, realistic, mimetic, internally coherent, self-consistent, and emplotted [sic]… fails to do justice to the complexity, ambiguity, and messiness of lived experience.

According to Kip Jones (2015) the narrative paradigm in qualitative research was developed throughout the 1970s and 1990s, and by the 2000s narrative was a part of the social sciences (Denzin 2000, cited in Jones 2015, p. 86). Vera Caine, Andrew Estefan and D. Jean Clandinin (2013, p. 574) noted that narrative inquiry was developed by the 1990s. John Dewey's 'theory of experience is most often cited as the philosophical underpinning of narrative inquiry' (Clandinin & Caine 2008, pp. 542-543). Sean Lessard, Vera Caine and D. Jean Clandinin (2018, p. 201) believe that narrative inquiry is often understood to be concerned with the personal, practical and the social and that it ultimately 'disrupt[s] common understandings, perceptions, and practices.' Jo Mensinga (2006) was sceptical about research, believing it was an elitist endeavour that was disconnected from the real world and lacked motive for real change. 'I think that's why I initially chose to take a narrative approach, I believed that it gave people a voice and offered me a chance to say something too' (Mensinga 2006, p. 10). On reflection of her experience, in writing narrative inquiry, Mensinga (2006, p. 10) said that 'finding the right language is not easy'.

D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly (1990) acknowledged that journal records and autobiographical writing can be used as sources of data in narrative inquiry. David Boud (2001, p. 10) argues that 'journals reveal what their writers have learned… and that individuals can use journals to enhance their own learning'. My field texts, the diarised entries, provided me with data, real-time data that captured what I thought at a particular time, in a particular context. When I inquired into the narrative data sets, I began to

understand that the context in which one conducts research is pertinent to the research outcomes. I also realised that it is impossible to document every detail of living, and that journal writing is an interpretation of events, therefore there are gaps in journals, pieces of life are missing. 'Effective research means thorough, although not always meticulous, record keeping' (Bishop 2008, p. 405). The field texts assisted me in ordering my own thoughts while I processed a lot of memories and personal experiences. The thesis diaries have indirectly and unconsciously documented my learning progression, through the act of collating data that was then deconstructed. Boud (2001, p. 9) explains journal writing as a 'form of reflective practice' that allows meaning to be extracted from experiences. Reflective practices involve focusing on the unknown and then investigating those reflections without 'necessarily knowing where it will lead' (Boud 2001, p. 16).

Inquiry into narrative is as accurate as the term narrative inquiry, in that 'narrative is both phenomenon and method' (Clandinin & Connelly 1990, p. 2). Narrative is a way of understanding the phenomena of human experiences (Clandinin & Connelly 1990), and 'works from the understanding that who we are – our stories to live by – are fundamentally narrative in nature' (Caine, Estefan & Clandinin 2013, p. 584). Dhunpath (2000, p. 545) believes that 'our lives are intrinsically narrative in quality, [that we] experience the world and re-present our experience narratively.' Humans tell stories, and lead storied lives, 'the study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world' (Clandinin & Connelly 1990, p. 2). Narrative inquirers explore the places wherein 'silences can be broken, where the unsaid might be said' (Lessard, Caine & Clandinin 2018, p. 201). The study of narrative is the study of the 'ways in which humans experience the world' (Dhunpath 2000, p. 546).

Human life is a continuous cycle of 'living, telling, retelling and reliving stories' (Clandinin & Connelly 1990, p. 4) and for narrative inquirers, 'living *is* the field text' (Caine, Estefan & Clandinin 2013, p. 579). I encountered the dilemma of not knowing when the writing begins or ends, Clandinin and Connelly (1990, p. 7) substantiate that 'it is not at all clear when the writing begins' in narrative inquiry. Mensinga (2006, p.11) describes the process of writing down thoughts concluding that it's never really a completed task:

> I am sure as soon as I fold it, seal the envelope and post this letter other thoughts will come to mind, but that will always be the case.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000, cited in Mensinga 2006, p. 11) argue that a research text is like a life, in that it is in a perpetual state of occurring: 'the narrative insights of today are the chronological events of tomorrow'. The complexity of conducting narrative inquiry is met when the inquirer is both living the stories 'in an ongoing experiential text' and telling the stories 'as they reflect upon life and explain themselves to others' (Clandinin & Connelly 1990, p. 4). This is precisely where I found the most tension in my research, in the living and the analysis of that life. Inquiring into one's life required a capacity to observe and live simultaneously.

> Narrative enrichment occurs when one retrospectively revises, selects, and orders past details in such a way as to create a self-narrative that is coherent and satisfying

> and that will serve as a justification for one's present condition and situation (Polkinghorne 1988, p. 106).

Qualitative research deals with the concept of reflexivity and it is a well-known and thought through research tool, however, Kerstin Roger, Tracy Bone, Tuula Heinonen, Karen Schwartz, Joyce Slater and Sulaye Thakrar (2018, p. 533) argue that reflexivity is:

> often presented as a process by which the researcher understands her/his *outer* "*world view*" in relation to the data… [and that] what is virtually absent from the discussion is the interplay of the researcher's *inward view*, or introspection, with the reflexivity process.

In a study conducted by Virginia Dickson-Swift, Erica L. James, Sandra Kippen and Pranee Liamputtong (2007) *on* qualitative researchers who do sensitive research, many participants described feelings of de-sensitisation and vulnerability. 'Feelings of vulnerability for these [qualitative] researchers often came from the fact that in doing the research they were sometimes learning things about themselves' (Dickson-Swift et al. 2007, p. 342). It has been argued that questions of vulnerability are interwoven with narrative inquiry (Lessard, Caine & Clandinin's 2018, p. 203), which could be attributed to: (1) the influence that a private narrative account can have on the social world. (2) the nature of a published text been accessible to the public. (3) the high level of transparency required to construct a narrative story. 'Once a story is told, it ceases to be a story: it becomes a piece of history, an interpretative device' (Steedman 1986, p. 143). Douglas Flemons (in Flemons & Green 2002, p. 90) rightly claimed that:

> When you write a story about yourself, you accept an assumption about yourself that determines in part how you understand yourself, and if you publish this account, then you are defining yourself not only personally but also professionally.

Fred Steier (n.d., cited in Flemons & Green 2002, p. 90) supports this idea with the notion that 'research is both invention and intervention.' Narrative has a relationship with the agency of lived experience and producing meaning from those experiences (Olesen 2017, p. 216). Garold Murray (2009, p. 47) believes that narrative inquiry will not produce findings that can be generalised and argues that narrative inquiry is 'conducive to documenting the changing conditions of lives.' I remained acutely aware of the unique circumstances and experiences individuals and families live through in situations of domestic violence. The findings reached in this research can be utilised to understand the issue better, but they are pertinent to my *personal* narrative which is rooted in historical family patterns. The Personal Narratives Group (1989, p. 6) described personal narratives as rich sources because the analysis of a life is a form of historical evidence.

<u>Life history research</u>

Mark Vicars (2017, p. 447) understands the role of voice, of the 'I', in life history work as an important ethical encounter '… at the heart of social inquiry there has to be authentic engagement with the individual.'

Life history method uses biographical narrative to frame life events but is more concerned with understanding the 'reality external to the story' (Dudek 2017, p. 226). The narratives under analysis in my genealogical data sets were biographical and were understood through the ordering of life events. Violence and victimisation could have been easily overlooked if the documented life events were the sole focus of the narrative accounts. In her discussion on using life stories as a research technique, Karolina J Dudek (2017, p. 227) notes that 'the focus on narratives [in social science] combines the *life stories* approach with a broader perspective of *narrative inquiry*.' Matters of domestic violence were revealed when narrative inquiry was applied, I delved deeper into the data and therefore the lives of others and my own. Domestic violence was hidden in my data sets. I relied on my memory recall and my conversations with other people (pre-thesis – no interviews were conducted in the construction of this research) to embed the unspoken, undocumented, private reality into the story.

Literature on life history discusses the research participants and researchers as different people who play a different role in the production of life history narratives. I was the participant and the storyteller, the producer of narrative and analyser of the narrative that was produced. Instead of asking other people questions, or listening intently, with curiosity to others' stories (Goodson & Sikes 2017, p. 73) I had to find methods to inquire into my own life and the lives of others that were not participants of the research. Analysis of my family history was a process of framing identities in relation to their experiences (through my perspective) of domestic violence. Hanne K. Adriansen (2012, p. 52) has warned that life history research is problematic because it is too often used as a way for people to make better sense of their lives. I utilised writing an autoethnographic account to make better sense of how witnessing domestic violence as a child shaped my life outcomes. I did this with the intent to add to the scholarship in the field, to expand on the historical understandings of the social issue, not to gain insight into the self. Self-discovery was on outcome of life history research not an intention. Adriansen (2012, p. 41) noted the self-involved nature of life history work but also regards the method as useful in understanding how life stories are related to their 'historical, social, environmental, and political context[s].'

Dhunpath (2000, pp. 543-544) conceptualises life history as a counterculture to the empirical tradition embedded in academia and critically examines some of the methodology's limitations and hazards, stating that there is a need for both 'scientific enquiry' and 'artistic approaches' in research. Dhunpath (2002, p. 544) boldly claims that life history is:

> probably the only authentic means of understanding how motives and practices reflect the intimate intersection of institutional and individual experience in the postmodern world.

I believe that many members of my family, especially the women, were unable to properly consider the foundations of their identities in relation to the conditions of their domestic and external worlds. This blind positionality meant that they lacked awareness of who they were and why they were experiencing life in certain ways. Survival can be damaging because it is all-consuming and it often derails me from self-inquiry and steers me away

from my values, but I have been fortunate enough to allow myself time to contemplate the contexts of my identity. I believe that if my familial predecessors had been able to discover themselves within their inner and outer worlds that my life may have been experienced differently, because I would have been living in an environment wherein the people were privy to more, therefore functioning from a more knowledgeable position.

> By making individuals more consciously aware of the social and ideological roots of their self-understanding, they are able to alter, reject, or make more secure their tentative views of the world (Dhunpath 2000, p. 544).

Life historians' primary aim is to investigate how people make sense of their experiences, life histories themselves represent the life under analysis (Sikes & Goodson 2017, p. 61). Personal stories are based on narrative experiences, the people under analysis are part of an 'active, ongoing social project' (Dhunpath 2000, p. 545) and exist within ever changing circumstances (Olesen 2017, p. 217). '… life history work is as variable as life histories themselves, and the capacity to respond variously and intuitively to life history research is the key to best practice' (Goodson & Sikes 2017, p. 73). Working within my family narrative meant that I was working within many different planes of inquiry into the past (history), the present (me), the conditions (social contexts) of both the past and the present, and the experiences (private) of the lived and the living. My main finding, working in this space, was that living itself is a haphazard set of events. A life is not able to be contained, documented or easily described.

Family narrative

'It is a truism that families affect children's development. Understanding how this occurs, however, is becoming an increasingly complex enterprise. Current conceptions of the family's effect on children involve an interlocking set of social contexts' (Fiese & Sameroff 1999, p. 1).

Barbara H. Fiese and Arnold J. Sameroff (1999, p. 3) produced a Family Narrative Consortium that was used to devise a research methodology that could capture some of the richness of family narratives. Narrative coherence, narrative interaction and relationship beliefs are central to the study of family narratives (Fiese & Sameroff 1999, p. 3). Narrative coherence, a term also used by Baldwin (2017) in his work on the relationship between narrative and identity, is explained by Fiese and Sameroff (1999, p. 4) as an individual's capacity to 'construct and organize a story.' Through family narrative individual identity can be located. 'Narratives have been found to be particularly useful in studying identity' (Erikson 1963, cited in Fiese & Sameroff 1999, p. 7). Narratives are an indication of a person's individual identity and illustrate family's relational worlds (Fiese & Sameroff 1999, p. 5). The story of identity emerges from the narratives of the people who conditioned the individual and the social contexts they lived within. 'The process of interpreting family behavior may be carried across generations, providing links between the family of origin and current family functioning' (Fiese & Sameroff 1999, p. 2).

'Feminists analyses of the family vary greatly' (Breines & Gordon 1983, p. 493) and the family comprises a large portion of Australian culture:

- In 2012-13, there were 8.9 million households in Australia, 74% were family households.
- Of the 6.7 million families in Australia in 2012-13, 85% were couple families.
- Of the 17.6 million adults in Australia living in private dwellings in 2012-13, 64% were currently married, registered to marry, or in a de facto marriage (ABS 2015).

The defining features of a family are changing, as progressive and inclusive ideologies expand the variants of the family unit. The family environment cannot be escaped, we are not separate from the version of a family we are raised in. The narrative of the family is an essential component of analysis in genealogy and autoethnography because it is the foundation of identity, and it is comprised of both private and social contexts, settings and meanings.

Hermeneutics and psychosocial

'The assumption of unconscious meaning components makes the language game an instrument with which to analyse individual structures and to identify collective social processes' (Olesen & Weber 2019, p. 242).

Henning S. Olesen and Kirsten Weber (2019, p. 221) explain Alfred Lorenzer's in-depth hermeneutic cultural analysis as a methodology that 'seeks to understand collective unconscious meaning in text.' The premise of Lorenzer's methodology was the possibility to 'learn from the type of hermeneutic process in psychoanalysis for the analysis of cultural phenomena' (Olesen & Weber 2019, p. 240). Freud, whose work Lorenzer draws from, believed that psychoanalysis could be used to contribute to the field of social science (Leithauser 2012, p. 66). Lorenzer's ideas about the unconscious 'enables a clearly hermeneutic stance without giving up the bodily dimensions of the human subjectivity' (Olesen & Weber 2019, p. 245).

In their article on deep-hermeneutic method, Mechthild Bereswill, Christine Morgenroth and Peter Redman (2010) discuss the psychosocial elements of Alfred Lorenzer's work. Lorenzer believed that the body and the social are not easily separable, he viewed them as inextricably entwined (Bereswill, Morgenroth & Redman 2010, p. 227). An oversimplification of Lorenzer's ideas is that the human body is always within an environment, it can never be removed from its social world; the body is conditioned by its interactions with its external world, and the external world to the body is shaped by neurophysiological responses to it. The making and remaking of neurophysiological structures become a process of mental development 'in which scenic experience begins to have a representational dimension' (Bereswill, Morgenroth & Redman 2010, p. 228). Lorenzer believed that human's capacity for experiencing the self emerges from states of scenic awareness (Bereswill, Morgenroth & Redman 2010, p. 228). Individuals and society are bound together in a relationship of dialectical tension and everyday life is 'constantly made and remade from unconscious interaction forms that are subjective and individual' (Bereswill, Morgenroth & Redman 2010, p. 237).

When considering Lorenzer's ideas regarding the psychosocial, I think of the concept of embodiment. I have largely understood my research to be a process of examining and

drawing links between my internal and external worlds. My internal world is the dialogue, the text I have produced. The text, the narrative, although derived from within also represents my external world, both the social contexts and familial settings I have lived within. I have embodied my surroundings and conditions as I have moved through them, I cannot be separated from them, but I have made meaning from experience that has been documented in this thesis.

Reading, thinking, writing, and living

'The long preparation for post qualitative inquiry is reading, thinking, writing, and living with theory' (St. Pierre 2018, p. 604).

Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre (2018, p. 604) believes that '… the post qualitative researcher must *live* the theories' that they intend to apply to their research and suggests that *doing* research, collecting data, before the researcher has lived the theories is problematic for the study. I had to sit with the theory that was the most obvious to use for this research topic, I had already lived the underprivileged position into which my gender and childhood cast me. The ideas about gender inequality and the female position in the domestic and social spheres in feminism were already my life and had been for decades, that was inescapable. Writing about women highlights the main problem of feminist criticism: 'how to combine the personal with the theoretical' (Showalter 1986, p. 4). I had to write through my doubts about applying feminist theory to the core of the work, I knew it was there, in my story and the stories of the other women in my family, but in the end, I located the correct theory that drove the main theme of the thesis by *doing* the research.

Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) described writing as a method of inquiry, that allows the writer to explore their identity and their topic. Writing is not something that is simply done at the end of a research process, 'writing *is* thinking, writing *is* analysis, writing *is* indeed a seductive and tangled *method* of discovery' (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005, p. 967). In the act of writing stories of the self, I positioned myself within my family history, social context and academic scholarship. Writing stories of the self is a 'valuable creative analytical practice' (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005, p. 965). When the thinking, reading and writing started to form, the research arguments became succinct. A cyclical process emerged that generated substantial thought; the reading of literature stimulated the thinking that led to writing and subsequently more thinking, which led me back to reading new texts. I did this while living within the contexts (or confines) of being a female raised in poor conditions, which was in essence a part of my research that I had not initially identified.

Writing stream of consciousness text was extremely useful in breaking through barriers in my thinking. Knowing that I was not writing for an audience, that the text would never be read, was instrumental in producing my honest thinking on contested and personal topics. Whilst I hadn't supressed my past, I had faced my trauma years before writing this thesis, I certainly realised that there were other layers to the self as a result of writing stream of consciousness texts. The thesis diary was the most pivotal in this process. I purged new aspects of my suffering through stream of consciousness writing, which was a lengthy and tiring process that, on reflection, had to happen before the thesis could begin to take shape and be palatably written. I started the diary when I started the research, I wrote it on the

side, knowing it would never be published, but as a way for me to think without considered thought. I needed somewhere to be free, the manuscript itself required certain language and content that had to be thoughtfully written and edited. Writing diarised entries was liberating because I knew they would never have to be re-written, they stood alone and they were allowed to exist as loose thoughts, without structured coherence. St. Pierre (2018, p. 605) is resistant to the 'linearity of the conventional qualitative research report', she wrote separate to her dissertation taking risks and experimenting, deconstructing the formality of academic writing. St. Pierre (2018, p. 605) explained this act of writing separately to her thesis as providing a way to 'think-write', as she thought and wrote she was moving, generating more thinking and writing. 'It's in the thinking that writing produces that analysis occurs' (St. Pierre, interviewed by Guttorm, Hohti & Paakkari 2015, p. 21). My internal dialogue is not what I bring to the external world, I communicate with the world in a different language to how I think and write. I was able to analyse the parts of my identity that were undiscovered, separate from the academic dialogue, unformed in my own mind and not yet portrayed externally. Data began to emerge in peculiar ways as my subconscious was awoken by writing, and my lived experiences were reimagined through thinking. '… data appeared in dreams, in my body, and in memories' (St. Pierre 2018, p. 606). My body was the data set moving through the world, it was the field of my study.

FINDING A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK (THAT WORKS)

Introduction

In a 1971 paper that investigated psychology, sociology, and anthropology as theories through which family violence could be understood, Morton Bard (p. 129) wrote that 'unfortunately, it is probable that no single theory will ever explain the wide variety of aggressive human behaviours.'

To understand the relationship between domestic violence and childhood, within the context of writing autoethnography, I investigated the social issue of violence in the family and my identity in relation to my exposure to that type of violence. I explored how domestic violence was written about and therefore understood, to assist the progression of the ideas that emerged from my data sets and field texts.

> Within both the family violence and violence against women approaches, researchers sometimes fail to articulate the complex nature of intimate partner violence as they build their concepts and the tools used to measure it (Dobash & Dobash 2004, p. 331).

During the process of data collection and analysis I come to realise that domestic violence in my family was produced generation after generation. The complexities and stressors intimate partner relationships places on individuals and family units emerged from both my data and the literature. This finding started to frame my theoretical lens and direct the focus of this thesis. The social and familial contexts within which the data (my family history) existed became a prominent feature of the research, and from this the notion of identity began to emerge. The structure of the nuclear family and the implications it has on factors that contribute to violence occurring in the home influence the production of individual identity. To substantiate my own narrative, I remained connected to the larger, broader milieu through the investigation of themes that are relevant and integral to understanding how my own world was shaped as a result of witnessing domestic violence.

Showalter (1986, p. 12) poses the question, should feminists draw from or resist scientific methods that may narrow the feminist enterprise? Showalter (1986, p. 14) believes that women's writing 'reflects women's complex cultural position' and presents the problem of feminist criticism: 'how to combine the personal with the theoretical' (ibid. p. 4). I skirted on the edges of feminist ideas, without delving deep into the sub-categories of any of the many isms, because the feminist undertones were already there, speaking for themselves, easy to detect. I was convinced from the outset that the feminist lens was not the sole perspective I was writing from. I introduced the feminist theory and discussed how it fits into the prism of domestic violence and my life, but I was not satisfied, and I continued to seek out what I needed to accurately frame my thesis. I approached sociology the same way I did feminism and found that there were certainly elements of sociological thinking that fitted nicely into the autoethnography I was constructing, mainly in relation to the family and both its influence on society and how it is influenced by social constructs. However, I found myself

equally as dissatisfied with the lens that sociology allowed me to place over the arguments I was raising. I have analysed the family unit and the violence that can occur within it, and the society and context in which it occurs. Both feminism and sociology fitted into those components of the research. But at the core of what I was investigating was how my childhood was affected by the domestic violence that I witnessed. I realised that the dominate theme of this thesis was identity, not the family, or violence, or gender, or power, or socio-economic position, or cultural norms, but the person who lived within all of those contexts and how I navigated the world I was from, the world that I was in, and the world I wanted to live in. Buried deep within that realisation I found the theory I needed to explain my positionality in relation to my disrupted childhood, marred by my father's violence and my mother's victimisation. I rediscovered Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory. I had in fact returned to the initial essay that I wrote that led me to the writing of this thesis, the short essay that explored the idea of conflict resolution. I had decided, boldly, to submit a paper to the lecturer that detailed some of the affects domestic violence had had on my childhood because I figured what I had witnessed was a form of conflict, and on reflection I am certain that that conflict was never resolved, and upon writing this thesis I have found in the literature, ideas about healthy conflict resolution being the solution to domestic violence (see Straus 1980c; Foss 1980; Farrington 1980; Charny 1969; Wyden 1968; Breines & Gordon 1983; Bach & Wyden 1968). I had quoted Maslow in the essay and used the pyramid of human needs as a framework because I had resonated with the simplified version of what a human needs in order to become self-actualised. I revisited Maslow late in this research phase, forgetting how seamlessly the theory could be applied to my life as an adult because of the needs that were not met as a child.

A significant gap in the literature was detected in the early stages of the research phase; childhood experiences of domestic violence are largely overlooked. This gap partly exists due to the overarching focus on the experiences of women, which is a direct reflection of the application of the feminist framework to the social issue. This observation has been the catalyst for my argument that different theoretical perceptions should be used in the field, to broaden the discussion and analysis, to understand the social impacts of domestic violence from a familial, cyclical perspective, rather than exclusively a gendered one.

> We consider the notions of attachment to be among the most compelling yet also the most elusive in the field of human development. Compelling because they intuitively make such sense and offer logical explanations for crucial aspects of childhood experience and later interpersonal functioning. Elusive because there are many gaps in our knowledge, ambiguities in the way the terms are used and difficulties in translating the theory into everyday practice (Reder & Duncan 2001, p. 423).

Childhoods are affected by domestic violence because the attachment to their primary careers is disrupted, usually resulting in negative impacts on adulthood. Childhoods are not protected from domestic violence; it is assumed that when women are protected from male violence that their children are. Childhoods that are experienced in homes within which domestic violence occurs are forgotten about. Childhoods are the vital precursors of the next generation of family units but are not treated accordingly. Childhoods are a key

solution to the cessation of the perpetuation of generational violence and victimisation, but they are largely ignored.

Historical context

'Looking through one eye never did provide much depth of field' (Eisner 1981, p. 9).

Narrow theoretical and methodological practices were applied to family violence in the sixties (Gelles 1980, p. 873). Research in the seventies was aimed at using informed data but one of the main issues was 'to develop theoretical models of the causes of family violence' (Gelles 1980, p. 876). Gelles (1980) identified a gap in the research in the 1970s pertaining to the need for a development of theoretical models to explain domestic violence. The foundations upon which domestic violence was been studied in the 1970s was not secure and I would argue that this is still a burgeoning issue that is not yet resolved. Gelles (1980, p. 883) suggested that even though there was a surge in research on family violence in the 1970s, that 'theoretical development and methodological refinement [would] be necessary to keep this field of study vital and viable.' Murray A. Straus (1980b, p. 23) substantiated that 'marital violence cannot be understood in terms of a single factor such as sexism, aggressiveness, lack of self-control, or mental illness of husbands who beat their wives.' In 1983, Breines and Gordon (p. 493) believed that purposeful and intense theoretical and political debate regarding family violence had only just begun.

Matters of the personal narrative: Ethics

Carolyn Ellis (2016, p. 212) cautions researchers: 'Live the experience of doing research with intimate others, think it through, improvise, write and rewrite, anticipate and feel its consequences.'

The process of reconstructing my life narrative, has been empowering and enlightening, which has been beneficial for me. 'For some people, the act of narrating a significant life event itself facilitates positive change' (Chase 2005, p. 667). Wolcott (2002, p. 135) wrote that when researchers become the subjects of research, that they become acutely aware of how delicate research is. Ellis (2016) believes that researchers don't *own* their stories because a researcher's story is also other people's stories.

How I applied ethical conduct to write about the lives of others:

- legal change of my surname, which omits any connection to any of my family members (for publication purposes).
- no use of names of other people, not even pseudonyms. Instead referring to others by way of pronouns or titles e.g., mother.
- exclusion of places in which events occurred, e.g., hometown.
- limited use of other people in my story, instead the focus of the narrative is on my own identity.

I was prompted to change my surname when I divorced a man while I was conducting this research and I wanted to regain my own identity. I had no sentimental attachment to my

family name, given how I was raised. I was aware of the ethical implications of this text and therefore I chose a surname at random; one that would act as a permanent legal pseudonym. Professionally, I decided that changing my surname was an ethical means by which I was protecting others and ensuring myself a certain level of privacy. Personally, I was beginning to frame my own identity, I was no longer attached to my family heritage or an ex-lover.

Wall (2008, p. 49) wrote about her dilemma with publishing her autoethnographic work under her real name and presenting at a conference under her mother's maiden name, for the sake of protecting her son's identity, calling it a 'practically awkward' experience. The university that Wall (2008) conducted her study within approved her ethics application and did not see it necessary to publish the paper anonymously. Wall (2008) was cautious about protecting her son's identity but at the same time wanted the research to be attributed to her. Representing others in research is a responsibility that the writer must consider and make ethical choices according to their situation. My identity was in a transitional phase while writing this thesis, due to both the nature of autoethnography reshaping identity and my divorce. The decision to change my surname is demonstrative of this. Hayes and Jeffries (2015) highlight the importance of protecting the privacy of others, within the research narrative, and admit that it is difficult due to the highly personal nature of autoethnography. Writing autoethnography has been a process of protecting other people's identities whilst ensuring that I was not silenced in my victimhood, as a result of being ethically compliant.

In the initial stages of writing the research in the form of a creative novel, I was fictionalising the other characters in my autoethnographic account. When the thesis later changed to a traditional format, I had to rethink how I was going to deal with the ethical considerations of writing about other people into a non-fiction text. In 1980, the novelist, Edgar L. Doctorow (cited in Richardson & St. Pierre 2005, p. 961) stated that 'there is no longer any such things as fiction or nonfiction, there is only narrative.' This statement purports that regardless of genre, ethical dilemmas in narrative texts exist. I was the only active participant in my research but in the writing of my story passive participants were implicated into my narrative. 'Writing about the self is simultaneously writing about cultural values, practices, and experiences' (Adams & Manning 2015, p. 352), and other people (Hayes and Jeffries 2015).

Australian indigenous academic Jeanine Leane (2016, p. 43) wrote on the ethics of writing the "other" that:

> to achieve empathy one must know those they are seeking to represent - and not just through limited and controlled observation, or through a state archive, or someone else's research. Rather, they must know through social and cultural immersion.

Lesley Neale (2017, p. 116) wrote that 'writer's intentions are at the core of ethics.' This research project was not concerned with writing about other people, the intention was to rewrite the self, drawing from the lived experiences that situate my life in cultural and social contexts and settings. Even if I did not *intend* to write about other people, I was, and in doing so I was aware of my moral and political role (Plummer 1983). Writing about

members of my family who had either acted violently or been victims of that violence was obviously a concern for me, but I chose to navigate that as sensitively as I could without denying the truths as I perceived them.

Richardson (in Richardson & St. Pierre 2005, p. 966) wrote that:

> for the most part, I have found no ethical problem in publishing stories that reflect the abuse of power by administrators; I consider the damage done by them far greater than any discomfort my stories might cause them.

Anne Lamott (2012, cited in Bolen & Adams 2017, p. 623) wrote something in a similar vein to Richardson believing that 'you own everything that happened to you. Tell your stories. If people wanted you to write warmly about them, they should've behaved better.' Derek M. Bolen and Tony E. Adams disagree with Lamott because her approach is 'too simple.' I agree with Richardson and Lamott, because victims of bad behaviour can easily be silenced through the systematic, ethical processes of academia. However, personal narrative should be written responsibly, to acknowledge the position of privilege, and minimise the risk of identifying others in the text. I have come to learn that it is possible to write a story rooted in victimisation, without demonising or identifying other people that contributed to the victimhood. By focusing on the analysis of *my* experiences my initial desire to blame or condemn others that are intrinsic, passive participants of my narrative was tempered. The research became a process of being responsible for my own identity, whilst not entirely ignoring the wrongdoing of others. The narrative spoke for itself. Focusing on the self was beneficial, by keeping the identities of others anonymous I was able to write with more freedom, with less fear of reprehension.

Writing about a social issue that is unequivocally a private one, an issue that is treated with acute apprehension across both the social and domestic spheres, and within the academic institution, was challenging. Autoethnographic research itself is rife with validity issues, Bolen and Adams (2017, p. 621) identify the problematical nature of writing from memory:

> Related to narrative truth and historical truth are ethical considerations of memory, working with past events, and assessing how a narrative has been influenced by memory, time, place, context, audience, and relationship.

I discovered that the topic of my thesis added additional layers of ethical considerations to the investigation due to domestic violence been treated as a highly sensitive topic too fragile to be tampered with, and pre-existing theories too established to challenge.

<u>Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs</u>

'Since, in our society, basically satisfied people are the exception, we do not know much about self-actualization, either experimentally or clinically. It remains a challenging problem for research' (Maslow 1943, p. 383).

Abraham Maslow theorised that self-actualisation can only be realised when five stages of needs are met (see Mathes 1981 for a case study that tests this theory). Jeevan D'Souza and

Michael Gurin (2016, p. 210) discuss the five stages of Maslow's hierarchy pyramid; to reach each individual need the preceding need/s must be met:

1. physiological needs
2. safety
3. love and belonging
4. esteem
5. self-actualisation

Maslow's theory is based on the idea (as are other psychological and philosophical theories) that 'individuals are born selfish and must gradually move toward selflessness and compassion to create a flourishing society' (D'Souza & Gurin 2016, p. 210). When the various stages of needs are interrupted or unable to be fulfilled, the process towards selflessness and self-actualisation is either stalled or unable to be reached, herein lies the connection between the internal (personal) and the external (social) worlds. How a person interacts within the world varies, dependent upon which basic human needs are being met or unmet in a personal context. Maslow's theory suggests that a person can simply survive in the world, taking from it what they need to survive, or they can contribute to it, and this is based solely on whether their human needs are met or unmet. Maslow's (1943, p. 373) theory of human motivation describes physiological needs as the foundational and dominate of all other needs. 'A person who is lacking food, safety, love, and esteem would most probably hunger for food more strongly than for anything else' (Maslow 1943, p. 373). Living is a matter of survival and adulthood is prescribed by the conditions that are survived in childhood. When a human is consumed by obtaining a particular need, the future is altered (Malsow 1943, p. 374), life outcomes are determined by areas of deficiency, shaped by what is needed not what is desired. Once physiological needs are met safety is sought out and when children are lacking a sense of security, they seek routine and order; in an unreliable, unpredictable world, children need structure (Maslow 1943, p. 377). 'The central role of the parents and the normal family setup are indisputable' and events such as death, physical assault and divorce within the family may be particularly terrifying for children (Maslow 1943, p. 377). Domestic violence in my childhood home severely disrupted my access to the basic needs described in Maslow's theory. Whilst I had food and water, I was living within a constant state of unrest and instability. Emotionally, I was very unsafe and witnessing my mother live emotionally and physically at risk of harm affected my needs for safety, love and esteem. 'The average child in our society generally prefers a safe, orderly, predictable, organized word [with] parents who protect and shield him from harm' (Maslow 1943, p. 378). There was no order to my life, even when the violence ceased and my mother left my father, she (and therefore I) was in a very vulnerable position in society, mainly due to lack of financial stability. Safety is sought out in areas other than emergency situations like wars or natural catastrophes, safety is intrinsic in areas of life such as economic stability (Maslow 1943, p. 379). My mother's desire to meet other men, to provide her with a sense of comfort was not beneficial for me, because my needs were secondary to her needs and her decisions were out of my control yet directly and negatively affecting me. I was powerless. My father's presence in my life began to wane, and although his violence was not missed, his absence was damaging. We (my mother and I) were better off without him but vulnerable in new ways, it was an unhealthy predicament to be in as both mother and child.

In addition to how Maslow's theory relates to the effects of domestic violence on childhood, I have found ideas that are applicable to explaining some of the core, sociological issues pertaining to why men commit domestic violence. In the safety phase, Maslow describes the endangered feeling humans feel when economic instability is experienced. In the love phase, Maslow (1943, p. 381) describes the absence of affection as the 'most commonly found core in cases of maladjustment and more severe psychopathology.' In addition, Maslow (1943, p. 381) stresses that 'love is not synonymous with sex', he classifies sex as a purely physiological need. In cases of intimate partner relationships these needs are merged and can lead to internal conflict that may eventuate to relational conflict.

Once the physiological and safety needs are fulfilled, the next phase in Malsow's (1943, p. 381) hierarchy of needs theory is for humans to seek out love and a sense of belonging. What follows is the needs for satisfaction of the self-esteem, which leads to self-confidence, independence, and having purpose in the world, without self-esteem a sense of helplessness ensues (Maslow 1943, p. 382). In my twenties, as a result of a nervous breakdown, I found myself back in a place, filled with people who had offered me the most amount of safety that I had experienced in my childhood. I fulfilled the first three phases at that stage in my life, my need for psychological, safety and love were met through the selflessness of others but I was discontent, unable to reach a place of esteem. The lack of independence, confidence, and sense of purpose that the conditions I was living in produced, led me to feelings of dissatisfaction. I was excruciatingly conflicted, all I had wanted was to be safe while I was vulnerable, but the safety and love of others didn't satisfy me, I still was without an identity. I had more of myself to discover, but I knew it was a harsh and difficult world I was going to re-enter. I berated myself for needing to revisit the world of uncertainty, the world that had in the past, preyed upon the vulnerability of my position. If I had stayed, would I have been able to reach a place of self-actualisation, or would I have felt stuck, the same way I had felt in a marriage, a decade later?

If the four phases can be fulfilled: the physiological, the safety, the love, and the self-esteem, the process of self-actualisation proceeds and if satisfied, concludes Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. Unless a human is doing what they are suited to do, a sense of discontent and restlessness develops, and if not resolved self-actualisation cannot be reached, 'what a man *can* be, he *must* be' (Maslow 1943, p. 382). Human's basic needs are endangered when freedom is unattainable, having the ability to inquire and express are preconditions of the fulfillment of those basic needs (Maslow 1943, pp. 383-384).

> If one has the capacity to reflect critically on one's situation but few means by which to change it, one has some autonomy and limited agency but not an open horizon for fulfilling life goals (Showden 2011, p. 4).

Humans feel safe when they understand the world and for the intelligent persons, this comprehension leads to self-actualisation (Maslow 1943, p. 384). 'The healthy, normal, fortunate adult in our culture is largely satisfied in his safety needs' (Maslow 1943, p. 378). Although the pyramid of needs is ordered in its explanation, the process is not necessarily lived out in a linear and fixed manner (Maslow 1943, p. 386), life is disordered and disrupted

by nature, human motivation and experience are unique to the individual, changing the course of self-actualisation.

Intersection of issues born from class: Marxism

Qualitative researcher, Brene Brown (2019, 24:55), said that 'any conversation, about social justice and change, that does not include economics and class, is bullshit.'

Parsons (1954, pp. 326-327) wrote that 'the most prominent structure of modern Western society is that it is organized around the "work" people do' which creates an 'inherent hierarchical' system. In the context of family, the husband or father is the normal functioning member of the social system, the wife or mother's class is shown within the activities she engages in and the shopping that she does, based on her husband's income, and children share the same status as their parents (Parsons 1954, p. 328). For all members of the family unit, class is an inescapable system that is premised on the income of the male. 'The Marxian ideal of a classless society is in all probability utopian above all so long as a family system is maintained but also for other reasons' (Parsons 1954, p. 334). The family could be understood as the site of class in societies, wherein class is bred because generational patterns of economic conditions are mostly inescapable.

My story is strongly positioned within a working-class context, a factor that certainly contributed to the generations of violence and victimisation that I am from. Financial insecurity shaped the generations that preceded me, and still defines the life that I am living. I have never experienced conditions of poverty, but I have always had to work, and I will never inherit family funds, because there are none. I am accustomed to living with financial instability and uncertainty and recognise the vulnerable position in which that places me. My genealogical data showed that the women (most notably my mother) were vulnerable as a result of their class and economic positions.

> The women of the lower classes have always laboured, whether as servants, factory hands or seamstresses or the servants of their own households, and we might expect that the middle-class myth did not prevail as strongly in their minds. But it is a sad fact that most working-class families are following a pattern of 'progress' and 'self-improvement' into the ranks of the middle class (Greer 1971, pp. 215-216).

Domestic violence occurs within a prism of which various contributing factors subsist. Social position affects the power dynamics of gendered roles within intimate relationships. Karl Marx (cited in Greer 1971, p. 301) once claimed that 'social progress can be measured by the social position of the female sex.' I would argue that social progress should be measured by the position of women in the family home, determined by the roles and duties that they *do not* carry out, and the violence that they do or do not endure.

Domestic violence was not a major theme in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels's work, but they did recognise the connection between class oppression and control of the female sex by males (Hearn 2014, p. 16; Hearn 2013, p. 153). Hearn (2014, p. 17) makes a reasonable assumption given that Marx and Engels 'saw class as at least a potentially violent relation, [that] potential violence could similarly also apply to sexual/gender relations.' The domestic

space is shaped by the class position of the people that occupy it because individuals live according to their financial capacities. In her study that investigated what works in reducing domestic violence, Julie Taylor-Browne (2001, p. 318) found that 'households in financial difficulties were two or three times more at risk of domestic violence than those that were financially secure.'

With capitalism came male power, as the father became head of the economic unit (Stark, Flitcraft & Frazier 1979, p. 486). The industrial society has historically determined that the male is the main income earner, which causes various issues to do with imbalanced power relations between genders in the home. Capitalism destabilises everyday life and reduces family life to an economic calculus (Stark, Flitcraft & Frazier 1979, p. 487). Dobash and Dobash (1979, p. 51) said of early capitalism that the shift from domestic production to industrial production devalued domestic work and therefore the domestic worker (the woman). Capitalism subordinated and isolated the woman who lives became 'subject to domination, oppression and physical chastisement within the domestic sphere' (Dobash & Dobash 1979, p. 51). As a result of capitalism and industrialisation, the burden of earning money falls to men and women are powerless within their economic dependency, which creates a breeding ground for the victimisation and violence of women. Conflict within the home is bred due to the economic strain of earning (by primarily males) and the economic dependency (of primarily females) on another person. Complicated even further by the intimate, sexual nature that the domestic relationship is built on. Men find themselves stressed and under pressure, and women become powerless and trapped.

> Under capitalist forms of production, her contacts with the outside world were dramatically constricted and her economic, and to a considerable extent her social, life mediated through her husband (Dobash & Dobash 1979, p. 51).

Stark, Flitcraft and Frazier (1979, p. 487) argue that portrayal of the family as a "haven" is misguided and that the "factory" (the workplace) and the "family" are not separate, particularly for working-class women. 'Battering arises today as the services attempt to reprivatize "women's work" in a context of patriarchal domination against counter-tendencies to socialise the labor of love' (Stark, Flitcraft & Frazier 1979, p. 487). Straus (1980c, p. 228) suggested that men and women in the labour force should be paid consistent with the standards of society, and those unable to work must be subsidised. Greer (1999, pp. 215-6) proposed that motherhood should be considered a genuine career and a valued form of paid work, that motherhood should be dignified.

Virginia Woolf (1928, p. 39) wrote, of her experiences with inheriting money from an aunt:

> … what a change of temper a fixed income will bring about. No force in the world can take from me my five hundred pounds. Food, house, and clothing are mine for ever. Therefore not merely do effort and labour cease, but also hatred and bitterness. I need not hate any man; he cannot hurt me. I need not flatter any man; he has nothing to give me. So imperceptibly I found myself adopting a new attitude towards the other half of the human race.

The conditions of economic position affect the function of family, intimate partner relations, and gender power structures.

> The universalisation of the wage and its movement through "boom" and "bust" cycles periodically disaggregates and reconstitutes the family unit as a function of the changing shares of income household members command in the market (Stark, Flitcraft & Frazier 1979, p. 487).

Economic instability disrupts lives both within and outside the domestic sphere, the relationship between class (money) and women's lived experiences (vulnerability) is immeasurable. The risk of domestic violence increases within the interconnectivity of these two inevitable, unavoidable conditions of human life. One cannot escape living within a particular class structure, and within that system certain vulnerabilities prevail, especially according to gender.

Domestic violence is stuck in an ism: Feminism

'Sexual equality in itself is almost certainly not going to end conflict and violence between husbands and wives. Equality will reduce or eliminate certain kinds of conflict, but, at the same time, it will create new conflicts' (Straus 1980c, p. 224).

In 1983, most scholarship on family violence had a weak understanding of family, of gender, and of power (Breines & Gordon 1983, p. 492). Since then, there has been an increase in theoretical understandings of both gender and power, as a result of the feminist framework. Feminists analyses of the family varied greatly, and although they are all concerned with women's rights, they arrive at different conclusions and suggestions for change (Breines & Gordon 1983).

Murray A. Straus (1980c, pp. 224-225) warned that the foundations of stability and security in family life were jeopardised by the freedom and flexibility of gendered roles that the feminist movement represented, noting that the millions of women who were opposed to the Equal Rights Amendment and the feminist movement reflected this anxiety. Straus (1980c, p. 225) recommended that sources of stability and security would need to be rediscovered in the self, as society began to breakdown gender roles. According to Straus's (1980c) ideology, a focus on conflict resolution to resolve the conflicts that arise from the conditions of both gender inequality *and* equality could be an apt solution to domestic violence. At the core of violence is conflict. Unequal distribution of power across genders disempowers women making them more at risk of being victims of violence, but this is not the only factor that should be addressed in discussions about domestic violence. Conflict resolution, particularly in the domestic sphere, deserves more attention and consideration. Taft, Hegarty and Flood (2001) note that the two popular, differing views used to discuss domestic violence in the literature are between sociologist and feminists. 'Sociologists interested in family systems see the family as a site of conflict, reflecting broader conflict in society' (Taft, Hegarty & Flood 2001, p. 499). Feminists 'view male-to-female aggression in relationships as often coercive, which reflects the patterns of male domination in most societies' (Taft, Hegarty & Flood 2001, p. 499). Sociologists take what is acknowledged here

as a broad view: family conflict is one of many kinds of conflict. Feminists focus their energy on women's subordination, which equates to male domination.

Straus (1980c) raised the notion of identity and the importance of having a sense of security in both the self and the family. Sandra Frieden (1989, p. 172) wrote that the 'transformation of individual consciousness, and ultimately of society, has always been the main agenda of feminism.' Feminism has aimed to reconcile the areas of separation – within which gaps in identity are experienced – between the private and public, between the personal and political (Frieden 1989, p. 172). This thesis has drawn from literature on conflict resolution, identity, the social and the private spheres, the familial system, socioeconomic circumstances and gender because these are conditions of living that interact with each other, they are difficult to separate, and they *all* affect lived experiences of domestic violence. Criticisms of feminism are generally conservative in tone, with the overarching perspective that males and females and are 'genetically, biologically and divinely' different, therefore their lives are lived differently (Coakley & Dunning 2020, p. 4). I argue that lives are lived differently according to gender because of the unequal distribution of power according to gender. Female vulnerability results in lived experiences that *are* different to males because they embody and cannot escape what males are able to avoid. 'The fact that human experience is gendered is central to the radical implications of feminist theory' (Personal Narratives Group 1989, p. 4).

Susan Evans (2005, p. 37) argues that Australian government and non-government sectors regard the 'truths about domestic violence' as grounded in male supremacy, 'producing and reproducing' a singular truth and reason for domestic violence. Evans (2005, p. 37) notes that other forms of inequality (aside from gender inequality) and their impact on domestic violence have been given little recognition, therefore the perspectives and discourse are too narrowly conceived. Domestic violence is not a simple issue to analyse, the application of one theory alone does not allow for a nuanced analysis of the social issue. The purpose of the development and application of a theory is to understand how society functions through a particular lens, but a theory can't be applied to a social issue and remain fixed. Especially if that issue continues to prevail. Jay Coakley and Erin Dunning (2020, p. 3) wrote that:

> Theory is never perfect, never complete, never proven. Instead, theory provides us with a starting point for our understanding but it begs to be expanded, contradicted, refined, replaced.

A theory is more than a framework developed and disputed throughout literature, its purpose should be practical, its ideologies implemented into the living world. Feminists assert that feminism is a critical theory that is intentionally used to enact social change (Coakley & Dunning 2020, p. 4).

> Socialist feminist theory privileges neither capitalism nor feminism but acknowledges class and gender as mutually supporting systems of oppression: capitalist patriarchy is the proper subject for analysis and social action (Coakley & Dunning 2020, p. 7).

The relationship between class and gender is an important component of Coakley and Dunning's (2020) argument that would benefit from further investigation, outside of this thesis. Class and gender struggles are embedded in the structures of the family (Stark, Flitcraft & Frazier 1979, p. 462) and are responsive to the 'increasing tensions between the needs of an expanding capitalist economy and the often contradictory pressures to sustain traditional patriarchal privileges.' Evans (2005, p. 41) has suggested that the (second wave) feminist construction of domestic violence as a gendered power issue has led to a lack of engagement with other potential factors causing domestic violence, including poverty. Heise (1998, p. 262) used an ecological framework to understand gendered violence, in-line with the idea that the social issue is complex due to the nature of the 'messiness of real life.' This thesis has identified that the lived experiences of domestic violence within my family, occurred within imperfect conditions created by imperfect people. Narrating my life in autoethnography has been a process of realising that life occurs in a disordered manner, that time is linear, and experiences can be messy.

> Accepting that life is not neat and tidy, logical, consequential and consistent, perhaps, in these post-modern days, presents researchers with less of a dilemma than was previously the case (Sikes & Goodson 2017, p. 65).

Feminist theorists have been reluctant to include factors other than patriarchy in their analysis of gendered violence (Heise 1998). 'An ecological approach to abuse conceptualises violence as a multi-faceted phenomenon grounded in an interplay among personal, situational, and sociological factors' (Heise 1998, pp. 263-64). Traditional patriarchal relations turn the family into a veritable battlefield and provide the contemporary context within which battering must be understood (Stark, Flitcraft & Frazier 1979, p. 464). The most integral point of my argument regarding theoretical frameworks is that whilst feminist thinking has led to changes for women in the social world, domestic violence remains. 'Intellectual feminists have written millions of words on the ways in which men have colonised and controlled women but still the process rolls on' (Greer 1999, p. 114). The feminist movement has been instrumental in working towards better living conditions for women across the globe. Karen B. Sacks (1989, p. 87) argued that 'the feminist movement added another dimension to understanding women's experiences' beyond the Freudian and Marxist views about the oppressed positionality of women in the family sphere.

In 1989 Sacks (p. 86) wrote that:

> Feminist researchers in the middle and late seventies were up against a paradigm. As soon as one tried to think theoretically about family and family relations, one confronted the nineteenth-and early twentieth-century intellectual grooves and agendas created by Freud or Marx.

This research is centred around the lives of victimised women and was written by a female. This is a feminist piece of work. Isn't it? 'Is women's writing necessarily "feminist"?' (Showalter 1986, p. 12). I felt that to properly position myself within the feminist framework, that I would have to investigate feminism itself, to be able to reach some sort of definitive definition of what my beliefs are regarding gendered experiences. In my quest to find myself within feminism, in the readings of other authors, I discovered more

unanswered questions than a sense of solid relatability. Some of my thinking is innately feminist in thought. I experienced many moments of familiarity within sections of feminist texts but the overarching concern I reached regarding the theory was the fractionalisation within the sub-genres of feminism itself.

> I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or a prostitute (Rebecca West 1913, cited in Moss 2014, p. 284).

Julie R. Enszer (2016, p. 180) defined lesbian separatism as a 'political theory and feminist practice' that has been historically ignored by other feminist theories. Separatism accelerated women's liberation through its political theory and practices (Enszer 2016), in the process of removing men from their lives, where possible, women became liberated. I come to understand feminist theory as one with a distinct adult orientation that views the protection of children as a by-product of the protection of women, that understood children as secondary to women's experiences of male violence. 'Lenore Walker, herself a feminist, has been accused by other feminists of victim blaming because she has identified a particular pattern among battered women' (Breines & Gordon 1983, p. 518). Walker's main theory, 'learned helplessness', was formed from her idea that a battered woman has fallen prey to the social conditioning of victimhood (Breines & Gordon 1983, p. 518). When abuse isolates women from networks outside of the family unit they are cut off from 'collective subjectivity' and perceived as 'helpless victims' (Stark, Flitcraft & Frazier 1979, p. 488). This thesis found patterns of female victimisation; I was taught what my mother was taught from her mother. Acknowledgement of this is not to *blame* the women that preceded me, it is evidence of perpetuation.

Wilcox (2006, p. 58) made the observation that:

> The roles and attitudes of women in society *are* changing but gendered patterns of domestic work and caring in the family remain relatively static with children primarily cared for by mothers, and fathers primarily seen as economic providers.

These lack of changes in gendered roles and behaviours illustrate that gender equality has not yet impacted the domestic spheres and considering it has now been 50 years since the feminist movement began, I believe this should be of concern to us all. The attitudes in society regarding gender and power are almost redundant if changes in the private sphere do not occur. Without change what is the purpose of a theory or a movement or a collective idea on a social issue? The changes in attitudes regarding gender have occurred so slowly that alarm warnings should have been raised long ago. Those concerned with the protection of women have historically and predominantly been feminists.

Elaine Showalter (2001, p. 16) wrote that 'life stories retain their power when theories fade', but was criticised by Dierdre English (2001, p. 44) who deemed the comment 'flippant', 'defiant' and 'defensive', demeaning feminist thought. Buchanan (2013, p. 23) criticised family violence theory because it does not look 'beyond the family for the origins of violence' and renounces the knowledge that can be obtained from lived experiences.

> It is of concern when family violence and attachment theory perspectives combine to disavow deep knowledge based on lived experiences, which have informed the field of domestic violence over the past decades (Buchanan 2013 p. 20).

I have utilised not only my own life story but segments of other women's narratives to expand on knowledge and ever so slightly reposition the way that theoretical frameworks are used to view the social issue. I did not intend to be contesting the very theory that lives at the heart of the topic, but my life story has led me here, thinking critically about the future of females, children and families. In reflection of her own thesis that investigated domestic violence, Michelle Jones (2004, p. 12) claimed that her work extended 'feminist knowledge about domestic violence, which in turn [had] the capacity to extend practice in [the] field.' To extend the understandings of domestic violence, I argue that the theories that investigate the issue must be diversified in order to properly conceive the experiences of children. Female children are going to be the vulnerable, victimised women that the next generation will be writing about if more attention is not paid to their experiences. If the focus remains on female adults, there will be no interference with the generational pattern or disruption to the perpetuation of victimisation. Trying to find a solution to repair the damage once it has been done, is too late for the individuals' livelihood and for society, this thesis is proof of that. There is a dearth of information in feminist theory that aids children, female or otherwise and I am adamant that that needs to change.

Salter (cited in Hill 2019, p. 107), an Australian criminologist and trauma expert who works in the violence against women sector, expresses his frustration with the increasingly narrow discussion that is happening in the public:

> We've moved into a neoliberal feminist analysis of violence, which assumes that perpetrators have no depth; that they are all just surfaces that are written upon by tv and pornography and culture… I think the populist discourse on domestic violence has turned into a total shitshow. Those of us who appreciate a bit of complexity in our analysis have just stepped back to shut our mouths… treatment based on these liberal feminist principles is not working… these guys have an inner world.

Mary Polis (cited in The Policy Shop 2017, 14:13), former Chief Executive Officer of Victoria's Royal Commission into Family Violence, lists some of the factors associated with domestic violence as, 'alcohol misuse, financial pressure, socio-economic status, exposure to violence as children and intergenerational trauma.' Analysis of what is known about *all* the contributing factors of domestic violence is important, especially regarding intergenerational patterns of trauma, and should be considered in designing practice and policy interventions not just within theory-driven literature. My intention has not been to negate the historical and modern importance of feminism in its entirety, but I felt it necessary to raise the concerns that I have in relation to the rigidity of the relationship between feminism and domestic violence. There simply seems to be no room for the discussion of domestic violence unless it is rooted in feminist thought, which is a limited approach to resolving a social epidemic.

<u>The conflicted nuclear family: Sociology</u>

In their book written from the perspective that family violence is borne from the nature of social arrangements, Murray A. Straus and Gerald T. Hotaling (1980, p. 3) noted that even though physical violence is typical within American marriages, it is not understood why it exists or what can be done about it.

Murray A. Straus, Richard J. Gelles and Suzanne K. Steinmetz (cited in Breines & Gordon 1983, p. 500) have argued that 'child abuse and wife beating are different manifestations of the general problem of family violence.' Violence is not always the product of a different social issue, violence is not always caused by something else (Hearn 2014, p. 24). The unstable nature of the nuclear family is a result of the emotional investment between members of family, the major life changes that occur within family units, and the crisis-like nature of those changes (Gelles & Straus 1979, p. 553). Randall Collins (2008, p. 137) determined that most people experiencing poverty, stress, life-transitions, or social isolation are not violent, even though they are often perceived to be precursors of domestic violence, 'it takes a further situational process to create actual incidents of violence.' The family is often a source of stress, a lot of problems are linked to family situations or structures (Farrington 1980, p. 104).

> … the family routinely encounters numerous stressor stimuli in the course of its daily existence. The sheer number of stresses faced probably ensures that at least some of these cannot be resolved (Farrington 1980, p. 109).

Joyce E. Foss (1980, p. 116) explained the paradox of family is within its own structure, the intimate relationships are likely to create hostility which is likely to be supressed. Conflict that occurs in the family can be difficult to manage, however avoidance of conflict can lead to more conflict and/or violence (Foss 1980). Conflict resolution seems the viable solution to minimising violence.

Ribbens (1994, p. 14) explains the theory of sociology as the study of socialisation and in her analysis of childrearing she noted that sociologists overlook parent-child relationships. The domestic sphere is central to the socialisation of individuals; however, family life is less important than 'public and male-centred social contexts' in sociology and analysis of the family have been underwhelmingly conducted by sociologists (Ribbens 1994, p. 14). In 2005 Ann Oakley criticised sociology for the lack of female perspective in analyses of the family and marriage. Oakley (2005) argued that female centric lived experiences of 'sexuality, reproduction, child socialisation and housework' are clustered together and that beliefs that 'children ruin a marriage, [and] sex and family life simply don't go together' have been conjured up and dispersed. I agree with the notion that the foundation of the family is based upon sex and that that is not a steady breeding ground for children, but Oakley is discussing the lack of female perspective in sociology and the narrow analysis of females lives, which I *do* agree with.

Drawing from the long history of research conducted on aggression and violence in non-family settings, Gelles and Straus (see 1979, pp. 568-9) applied 15 theories to their work on family violence, based on the premise that the pre-existing work on aggression and violence could be applied to family violence research. However, Gelles and Straus (1979) do suggest that a theory exclusive to family violence should be developed due to the unique

characteristics of the family, the extraordinarily high incidences of violence in the family and their belief that theories should be specific to the phenomenon they are investigating. The definition of violence has also been richly developed (see 'definition of violence' section) since Gelles and Straus (1979) analysed the topic which referred *only* to physical violence that occurs in domestic settings throughout their research.

Contrary to the common belief that physical violence is abnormal behaviour, Gelles and Straus (1979, p. 549) maintained the notion that physical violence in the domestic sphere is socially accepted. Conflict theorists have ascertained that conflict in social relationships is inevitable, but violence is not (Gelles & Straus 1979, p. 549). Due to the belief that conflict is inevitable in the family, theoretical developments in sociology began to understand society under the guise of conflict theory (Straus 1992, p. 216). Research on family violence and the culture of sociology was hopeful that families and society could be improved through the process of lifting women and children from oppression and demystifying the idea of the family as a 'haven' (Straus 1992, p. 216). The family is a violent group, social setting, and institution (Gelles & Straus 1979, p. 552), in the 60s and 70s the ideology of the family became disillusioned and negative features of family life, violence included, emerged (Straus 1992, p. 215).

From 1970 to 1990 there was a growth of research on family violence, according to Straus (1992, p. 211) the spike in research was unusual in the history of sociology. Members of the Family Research Laboratory published 'more than 250 articles and 31 books on family violence from 1974 to 1991' (Straus 1992, p. 211). Straus (1992) investigated this unique development to find explanations for the growth, explore aspects of the relationship between sociological research, social movements, and social policy, and investigate the connections between mass media, moral agendas and science. The women's movement was the cause of the upsurge in research on the topic because the private, gendered, domestic experiences of women were brought into the public discussion.

Chodorow (1974, p. 43) said of sociologist Parsons' work that he filled a theoretical gap that other social theorists did not address, he considered the family responsible for the reproduction of social relations. The family system is the primary setting within which a child is socialised, but both the structure and articulation of the family must be understood with other social structures (Parsons 1950, p. 7).

> Of course in any one society some possibilities of structural variability are excluded altogether, or can appear only as radically deviant phenomena. But it must not be assumed that in spite of its conformity to a broad general type, the American middle-class family for instance is, *precisely in terms of social structure*, a uniform cut-and-dried thing. It is a complex of many importantly variant sub-types (Parsons 1950, p. 13).

According to Parsons (1950) sociology began to form in the 1940s and by the 50s it was active. Parsons (1948, p. 160) understood the social system within the structure of the situation, the cultural tradition, the institutional structure, and motivational forces and mechanisms. 'There is a fundamental theoretical difference between the analysis of culture in the anthropological sense and the analysis of institutional structure of the social system',

but they cannot be separated, they must be understood in relation to one another (Parsons 1948, p. 163). Parsons (1950, p. 16) described sociology as a 'sister-science' to both anthropology and psychology. Psychological theories pertain to people, identity and experiences, and anthropological theories analyses humans and their behaviours within particular social and cultural settings. The family unit is made up of humans learning behaviours and forming identities based on their environments. The family, as a framework, is a social structure within which humans experience relationships and meaning is derived from the values inherent to and within those relationships. Sociology is the incorporation of human experiences and social settings; it is the merging of identities and environments. Analyses of the family can be neatly positioned within the examination of *identity* and *environment* and the study of the relationship between the two is sociological analysis, the family is a social phenomenon.

In a comprehensive essay on the scholarship of family violence, Breines and Gordon (1983) noted that in the initial years of the emergence of family violence in research, sociologists were particularly interested in the topic, as was the women's movement. Taft, Hegarty and Flood (2001) noted that the two popular, differing views used to discuss domestic violence in the literature are between sociologist and feminists. Hearn (2014) identified a problem with the theoretical underpinnings of domestic violence, highlighting the disconnection between the gender and sociological discourses. Sociologists explored the family as a site of conflict that was reflective of conflict within society (Taft, Hegarty & Flood 2001, p. 499). Violence that occurs in the social sphere is understood as structural in nature, domestic violence is not, feminist approaches to domestic violence undermine structural factors (Hearn 2014, p. 17). Dobash and Dobash (1979, p. 14) argued that analyses of physical violence that do not consider the social setting in which the violence occurred are narrow and limited.

Hearn (2014, p. 17) highlighted that domestic violence has not been prioritised by sociologists, and the nature of the interpersonal violence in contrast to 'institutional, collective, and revolutionary violence, has often been played down.' Understandings of domestic violence that lack societal context, are reduced to focusing on human behaviour and lack connection to 'social forces that construct intersectional gender relations' (Hearn 2014, p. 21). Michalski (2004, p. 652) believes that 'the structure of interpersonal relationships' is integral to understanding domestic violence, yet this key social component is overlooked due to the preoccupation with the psychology of violence and cultural factors. In seeking out the risk factors for domestic violence, domestic violence itself has been overshadowed by the development of ideas regarding social structural characteristics (Michalski 2004, p. 652).

The typical pattern of violence against wives is largely a reflection of the society within which it occurs, the family system, and gender roles (Straus 1980c, p. 229).

> Given the velocity of change in our society, it is inevitable that family structures will come under increasing pressures. These pressures are likely to underscore the family's importance even more than at present; for the stability of man, and his ability to respond nonviolently [sic] to his life experiences, depend on the stability of the family in which he is raised. The family, the central institution of human society,

> whose failure undermines all, can and must be strengthened by the operations of the other institutions of society (Campbell 1969, p. 261).

Campbell's ideas support my thinking regarding the familial, generational perpetuation of violence and victimisation, however there is sense of archaic undertone that treats the male as fragile and renders the family unit and society responsible for the behaviours of adult men who can't cope with stressors.

In his examination of the sociological significance of domestic violence, Hearn (2013, p. 152) considers 'both how analysis of domestic violence is illustrative of more general issues in sociology, and how sociology can be informed by analysis of domestic violence.' Domestic violence is rarely considered in sociological theory, sociology is more concerned with analysing social conflict (Hearn 2013, p. 153). Michel Foucault's ideas on 'disciplining, surveillance and permeation of social life through epistemic and discursive violence' are concerned with institutional rather than domestic power (Hearn 2013, p. 154).

> When violence is referred to it is more often as institutional force by states or collective social groupings. While collective violence is often seen in structural terms, violences around intimate relationships are less often understood as structural phenomena (Hearn 2013, p. 154).

Straus (1980c, p. 215) wrote on that topic of the family as a training ground for violence that '… the level of violence in all aspects of the society, including the family itself, reflects what is learned and generalised from what happens in the family, beginning with infancy.' Straus (1980c) suggested that the following could prohibit the production of violence in the family:

- Parents should not use physical punishment to discipline their children
- Parents should denounce violence between siblings
- Parents should use non-violent methods of conflict resolution in family life
- Parents should be warm and loving to their children not cold and distant

Straus (1980c) has discussed the process of conditioning children in the home, the importance of teaching children how to resolve conflict without violence. Campbell (1969, p. 252) describes the family as 'the primary channel through which human culture is transmitted to the young of the species.'

Keith M. Farrington (1980, p. 94) suggested that the family is a unique social group that experiences more stress than other social groups and is potentially less capable of dealing with it. Bard (1971, p. 129) proposed that 'the intensity of aggressive interaction is related to the closeness of relationships.' Marriage counsellor Israel W. Charny (1969) substantiated that aggression and conflict is a part of marriages but if it is supressed and not resolved in a positive way it can lead to violence, an idea mirrored by psychotherapists George R. Bach and Peter Wyden (1968, p. 98) who determined that couples that fight properly and constructively stay together. 'The family in particular is an institution that permits and sometimes even encourages its members psychologically and/or physically to hurt one another' (Breines & Gordon 1983, p. 529). George R. Bach and Peter Wyden (1968, p. 109) believe that 'the inability to manage personal conflicts is at the root of the crisis that

threatens the structure of the American family.' Campbell (1969, p. 251) wrote that the American family was once a 'source of cohesion and security' but that the family was 'increasingly disrupted', and incidences of marital conflict surpassed divorce rates. The family system engenders frustration and struggles to counter stressor stimuli (Farrington 1980, p. 110) and is therefore trapped within a cycle and is furthermore poorly equipped to resolve or release stress. Greer (cited in The Policy Shop 2017, 8:16) believes that the 'nuclear family is an unhealthy unit… and that coupledom is toxic' because it ignites conflict.

In 1980 Straus (c, p. 211) claimed that violence in marriages was culturally accepted. Since then, the social climate has changed and violence in intimate partner relationships is significantly less accepted and certainly no longer considered a norm. In 1974 Steinmetz and Straus edited a book that explored violence in the family, the 1970 meeting of the National Council on Family Relations motivated the production of their book. To introduce and simplify the issue of violence in the family, Steinmetz and Straus (1974, pp. 18-19) produced a flow-chart of sociological contributing factors that both affect and are affected by family violence. Steinmetz and Straus (1974, p. 315) suggested that social scientists could contribute to the future of society by showing citizens and governments alternative ways that societies can operate. Robert N. Whitehurst (1974, p. 315) suggested that alternative family structures (different to the husband-wife-children structure) may reduce family violence through the process of rejecting hierarchical structures present in the traditional family and therefore allowing the individual to have more autonomy than they do in the nuclear family system.

Morris Zelditch (1955, pp. 308-309) named the nuclear family a social system that regenerates itself over generations:

> the isolation of the nuclear family is not the distinguishing structural characteristic; rather a bilateral system generally functions to incorporate the nuclear family in a kin-oriented group, but one in which membership is fluidly structured from generation to generation.

John E. O'Brien (1971, pp. 71-72) also describes the family as a social system, believing that it is responsive to the larger social and economic worlds that it is exists within. Farrington (1980, p. 95) wrote about the application of an integrative framework to family violence, that considers the stress experienced by family members as a contributing factor to the development of violence occurring in the home. 'Unfortunately, analysis of the family is more often than not neglected by family violence researchers' (Breines & Gordon 1983, p. 528). Sociology was first applied to wife beating in the 1970s, researchers begun studying the family as an institution, a significant change from the psychopathology understandings of the issue, which viewed the victim as the cause of her battering (Breines & Gordon 1983, p. 508). Sociological perspectives of domestic violence contrast to psychological explanations for violence (Straus & Hotaling 1980, p. 5). Breines and Gordon (1983, p 513) noted that an 'important theme in sociological scholarship on wife beating is the role stress.' According to Breines and Gordon (1983, p. 513) investigations into the role of stress in family violence was a method of seeking out the relationship between the 'individual personality, family tensions and societal problems.' I understand the family unit as a structural framework that orders society and determines life outcomes and experiences;

identities are borne from within the realms of family life. In their discussion about how personality and family are socially formed Stark, Flitcraft & Frazier (1979, pp. 482-483) make reference to the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism, noting that gender inequality and economic strain filter into the family home from the social realm and can manifest into domestic violence. In their extensive review of the literature on family violence Breines and Gordon 1983 (p. 531) conclude with the idea that we as a society are oppressed by institutions and that we should focus our attention on changing the structural causes of oppression to free the family home from anger and frustration.

As societies moved away from big, interconnected and extended families towards smaller, detached nuclear families, domestic violence has remained hidden (Brooks 2020). For David Brooks (2020) this shift represents a situation where life has become freer for individuals but more unstable for families and worse for children. The shrinking of family networks places more pressure and demands on the relationship between intimate partners, therefore increasing the risk of domestic violence. In reference to the 1950s nuclear family structure, Greer (1999, p. 184) said that figuring out how to have families that function is the next phase of feminism – even though it should be everyone's issue.

Fleeting periods of sexual attraction: Intimacy

'Intimacy appears to be a very particular interpersonal and intrapersonal social phenomenon, or set of phenomena. Intimacy is often ideologically afforded a (overly) positive place, just as love and pleasure are often assumed to be beneficient' (Hearn 2014, p. 18).

Intimate partner relationships tend to be unrealistically romanticised by humans, under the pretence that the relationship will last the longevity of the lifetimes of those involved. Realistically, given that the foundation of these types of relationships is grounded in sexual attraction, they often only last for fleeting periods of time. During the 1970s, in response to the women's movement, Radical lesbians explored nonmonogamy and found that:

> Breaking down monogamous relationship structures enabled women to explore non-monogamy and free sexual expression and allowed alternative practices of intimacy to emerge (Jennings 2018, p. 88).

'The patriarchal world was so oppressive and corrupt that we couldn't possibly live in it. So, we would just create our own world' (Chris Sitka interview by Jennings 2018, p. 98). Intimate partner relationships are fragile, they are based on intermittent moments of sexual attraction. The conditions of domestic relationships that are founded on sexual attraction (which they all are) have historically proven to be potentially dangerous for women and children. Greer (cited in The Policy Shop 2017, 8:16) said that families are built on 'sexually interacting couples', and describes that as an unsteady foundation upon which to build a family. The heterosexual relationship is the most valued in western culture, women are conditioned to strive for marriage, they emotionally invest and become anxious when these relationships breakdown (Wilcox 2006, p. 90).

Straus (1980b, p. 24) wrote that the family is the 'most violent civilian group in our society' and yet it is the place where 'most people look for love.' The nature of sexual relationships is interpersonal and the setting within which those relationships are carried out is a private and therefore intimate one. Due to the private nature of the domestic setting, within which intimate relationships exist, domestic violence is consequently hidden from the public.

Michalski (2004) suggests the following as structural factors of intimate partner relationships:

- social isolation
- integrated networks that increase social pressures to deal with conflict civilly
- gender inequality
- relational distance, i.e., absence of individual identities within relationships
- centralisation of authority, or power imbalance
- violent network exposure, wherein the perpetrator has been exposed to violent reactions to conflicts.

Hearn (2013, p. 155) has suggested that mainstream sociology could learn from the contradictions of violence and intimacy. Hearn (2013, p. 156) describes the perils of intimacy, in relation to violence:

> unequal intimacy, is one aspect of gendered intersectional unequal power relations that may sustain heterosexual violence… intimacy may also be a way in which some forms of heterosexual violence are discursively molded [sic].

Michalski (2004) argues that the structure of interpersonal relationships determines the likelihood of violence occurring because, he claims, there are many opportunities for violence to emerge across various societies and contexts within them, but it does not always emerge in other contexts. Michalski (2004) ideas contribute to the notion that the home is the primary site of gender-based violence because intimate partner relationships are breeding grounds for conflict.

> Wars and riots aside, physical aggression occurs more often among family members than among any others. Moreover, the family is the predominant setting for every form of physical violence from slaps to torture and murder… violence is as typical of family relationships as is love (Straus & Hotaling 1980, p. 4).

Vique Martin (cited in Greer 1999, p, 294) believes that there is no such thing as a cycle of abuse, that there need not be any reason for a man to beat a woman, that he does so because she is there, she is a target, and any excuse will do. 'The unhappiness of many women would be eliminated if their men provided them with the same nurturance they offer them' (Marylin French 1978, cited in Greer 1999, p. 188).

Michalski (2004, p. 670) claimed that 'until there are changes in the interpersonal structures of the social landscape' that the world will carry on being a violent place. Social theory does not regard interpersonal violence within intimate relationships as a form of social relations (Hearn 2014). Sociology understands interpersonal relations to involve 'relatively rational

agentic individuals… who conduct their affairs in a liberal, mutually adjusting manner' (Hearn 2014, p. 18), domestic violence is indicative that it is an incorrect, idealistic view.

'The practice of violence is itself a form of social inequality' (Hearn 2014, p. 24) and when conducted in the home, by a male to a known woman, it can be both a sign of weakness and an act of asserting power (Hearn 2014, p. 23). Heterosexual forms of male to female violence contribute to the 'eroticization of dominance' (Hearn 2014, p. 18). In heterosexual culture, intimacy and family 'signifies belonging to society in a deep and normal way' (Berlant & Warner 1998, p. 554).

MAKING SENSE OF THE MATERIAL

Introduction

My original plan was to submit a creative thesis in the form of a fictionalised autoethnographic novel accompanied by an exegesis. In May 2020, I decided to change direction and move the work to a traditional thesis due to the problems I encountered working in the fictionalised genre. The challenges I faced, when writing chapter drafts for a novel, were related to the process of storytelling and coherence in structuring my recollections and in the retelling of my lived experiences. I wrote in excess of 50,000 words in the drafting process, in a concerted effort to eventually produce a readable version of my story, but ultimately, the structural writing issues were unable to be overcome. During the process of drafting the creative thesis novel I produced substantial narrative accounts (field texts) which I have subsequently used for textual and thematic analysis.

I experienced, at times, quite lengthy transition phases between working with the data and reading the literature. Moving from the bouts of extensive reading into my own experiences demanded from me a set of skills that took time to refine; analysing my own perspective on my own experiences was different to analysing the externally formed theories and hypothesis that other researchers had penned. I wanted to be patient with myself and allow myself time to naturally move into the self-analysis space after spending time analysing the external world that was formed without me, but that was not a practical way to move through a research project. I found I was able to progress with my data by revisiting it, by looking back over the data sets and field texts, the photos, the diary entries, and the drafted analyses I had already done. This helped me move away from the theoretical format and immerse myself back into the lived experience where the data existed.

I have continued to hold onto an unrealistic fear of losing data, of poignant lived experiences been overlooked. I was and am the data, and because I was changing with the research, I was concerned that parts of me could be lost. It was the interpretative process that made me question just how reliable my data actually was. Lost memories, distorted and everchanging recollections, wavering emotions that could not be held down, fleeting ideas about the meaning of experiences, attachment to and distortion of narratives about both my own identity and that of others, unforgiven grievances from the past, from a lens so rooted in the experience how could I be objective? I discovered that the unsteady relationship I had with my data sets was a result of my uncertainty around the validity of the data sets. If a memory was faint, or my interpretation of my mother's experience felt weak, then how could I defend my data and therefore my arguments?

The interpretation of my own life required far more self-inquiry and analysis than I had originally thought through when considering autoethnography. I began writing with an incorrect idea about what autoethnography was, I had imagined that I would simply re-write what I had lived, and the findings would reveal themselves. I had written about myself for decades, in various forms for various reasons, I felt equipped, confident that I had the

capacity to offer some new insight into a social phenomenon. I significantly overlooked the demands of autoethnography, the relentless investigation of the self, the constant shifting between being the data set and data analyst. Studies of personal narratives require a narrator to tell her life story and an interpreter who records and analyses 'various dimensions of the relationship between narrator and interpreter' (Personal Narratives Group 1989, p. 201). Investigation into the self requires the researcher to consistently move between different voices, perspectives, and lenses. I knew I embodied the data; I felt the strength of the research lived within the readily available, vast data stream to which I had such comprehensive and unending access to. I believed that I had already lived it, that I had already done the hard work. But I found myself intermittently either blocked or overwhelmed by the sheer volume of data I was dealing with.

I suppose it would be true to say that at times I was completely overwhelmed by being the living data set, I felt I had to move between processes of both self-observation and living which required awkward transitional periods of thinking. During the phases of self-subjectifying, I would be inclined to assess my life and make decisions to alter what I felt needed to be changed. I was embodied in the research as much as the research embodied me, the process of writing autoethnography is not superficial it is life-altering.

The primary documents used to conduct this study were grey documents of life that collectively narrated a story of the perpetuation of familial generational violence and victimisation. My life history is documented in my diary entries, letters between family members and family photographs, which are valid data sets according to the Personal Narratives Group (1989). Essentially, I discovered that both autoethnographic and genealogical methodologies were comprised of data sets and field texts that documented life narratives, therefore preserving the lived experiences of people.

> Since feminist theory is grounded in women's lives and aims to analyse the role and meaning of gender in those lives and in society, women's personal narratives are essentially primary documents for feminist research (Personal Narratives Group 1989, p. 4).

It was during the process of analysis that those life narratives took on new meanings, rather than lying dormant, stored in cardboard boxes and photo albums. Importantly, I think it worth noting, that the data took on meaning within the framework of my research questions. Had I been looking at the data sets through a different lens, the narratives would be geared towards the topic of discussion. Herein lies the argument of the validity of life writing, the misrepresentation or personal bias intersecting the process of the truth-telling of people's lives. I cannot deny these validity issues exist, but I argue that the benefit of analysing my own life, and therefore my family history, has been extremely beneficial in identifying otherwise unknown knowledge in the scholarship regarding the relationship between domestic violence and childhood. It was a wonderful process, at times, a privilege, to be able to cast my attention over the generations that preceded me and make use of the lives that were essentially negatively disrupted by experiential accounts of domestic violence. Essentially, I have produced data that I have not been able to locate in the literature, the lived experience of a childhood shaped by domestic violence. A first-hand account.

Conducting data analysis

'Analysis is about making sense of, or interpreting, the information and evidence that the researcher has decided to consider as data' (Goodson & Sikes 2017, p. 84).

Brene Brown (2020) arrived at her theoretical framework after she generated her data, she then went on to review the literature, arguing that as a grounded theorist the research problem should emerge from the data. Reflecting on data production is a part of the data analysis process and provides a strong connection between the analysis and the research question (Olesen 2017, p. 217).

I approached the data sets looking for what I had already loosely identified from both the production of the data and reading of the literature. To begin analysing the data I collated the themes that had begun to emerge from both the literature in the field and my autoethnographic diarised, stream of consciousness data sets. Thematic patterns materialised during the process of reading and writing, and I took those themes and conducted a word frequency exercise to search and code my narrative data sets by selecting key words from the list of themes. To expand the vocabulary that I used to begin coding data sets and conducting textual analysis I conducted a word association exercise. The word association exercise broadened the scope of my search within the texts, and therefore decreased the likelihood of overlooking sections of data. Based on this word frequency exercise I located portions of text to be thematically, narratively and textually analysed.

The autoethnographic data sets, the field notes, were written without the forethought that they would be analysed. Therefore, the data has not been skewed or influenced by a sense of awareness of how it would later be interpreted and what would ultimately be presented in the findings chapter of the thesis. Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre (in Richardson & St. Pierre 2005, p. 970) 'used writing as a method of data analysis by using writing to think'. St. Pierre says that she wrote herself into spaces that qualitative data analysis methods would not have been able to identify. The data was written as a counterpart to my thinking and processing of my research topic and my identity within that topic, as both the researcher and subject of the research. Data is somewhat irrelevant compared to the analysis process, data analysis is the writing, the thinking and the formatting of the field work (St. Pierre 2018, p. 606). The large body of work that I coded, 245,572 words, was produced through the process of documenting my thoughts and life throughout the research. 'Recording and transcribing a life-story freezes and stabilises a specific version of the story, as it was told, and renders it ready for analysis' (Dudek 2017, p. 233). These timely reflections were in essence and by definition, autoethnographic field notes. These field texts represented not only my interactions with and within the research, but also documented a significant period in my adulthood wherein my life outcomes that were shaped by witnessing domestic violence in my childhood, were actualising.

The genealogical data sets existed before this research commenced, unlike the autoethnographic component of the data, which was largely produced during the course of the research phase. The genealogy data sets, such as family photos, archival video footage, and grey documents of life, were analysed from the perspective of producing a family

narrative and building the foundations of life histories. I revisited family archives acutely aware that I was analysing generations of gender and class relations, I positioned my family into social and private structural frameworks to analyse the prevalence of perpetuation of violence and victimisation in my family. The relationship between childhood and domestic violence emerged, I harnessed my own childhood and applied my memory recall with the hard data sets to re-produce my own narrative within my family history.

Data sets and field texts

Autoethnography (field texts)

- Thesis diarised entries spanning from 2018 – 25th October 2021: word count of 186, 606
- Drafted chapters for original fictionalised novel version of thesis: word count of 17, 506
- Stream of consciousness blocks of text written across two days at seven-hourly writing intensive sessions: word count total of 41, 460
- Memory
- Lived experience
- Video recording of a dance concert
- Childhood diarised entries written from late 1997 the day after my mother's terminal illness diagnosis until days before her death in January 1998

Genealogy (data sets)

- 12 family photographs
- Letters written from my maternal grandmother to my mother
- Newspaper clippings of my maternal great great-grandfather
- Handwritten beneficiary letter
- Memory
- Lived experiences
- Shared knowledge between myself and family members over my lifetime that pre-date this research (no participants were involved in the production of this thesis)

Thematic analysis

'In many ways the emergence of themes is a highly creative process, making it difficult to explain in concrete terms' (Murray 2009, p. 54).

Themes that emerge from a story and the descriptions of the story itself can be forms of qualitative data analysis (Ollerenshaw & Creswell 2002, p. 332). When expressed narratively, life events form 'coherent, meaningful, unified themes' (Polkinghorne 1988, p. 126).

Themes that emerged from autoethnographic data production:

- Development in identity
- Progression in society
- Access to and engagement in education
- Parental conditioning
- Instability in adulthood
- No secure home in childhood (a sense of domestic dislocation in adulthood)
- Seeking out healthy family dynamics in other homes
- Historical patterns of familial generational violence and victimisation
- Lack of voice (conditionally silenced)
- The effects of trauma on mental health

Timeline analysis

Adriansen (2012, p. 43) describes a timeline as 'a tool to provide a visual representation of main events in a person's life' which helps construct a story.

I started to work on my timeline by working from 2021 backwards, headed towards 1985 (my year of birth), I wanted to encapsulate periods that spanned across my entire life because the research is concerned with the effects of childhood on adulthood. Deciding 'when the timeline should begin and end' is important and varies dependent upon what is relevant in the re-telling of the story (Adriansen 2012, p. 43). The process of recalling experiences occurred sporadically, not linearly. I worked in a disordered manner to record and date memories of life, and in the final stages of writing up the timeline I grouped the dated experiences consecutively. A timeline is a useful tool to begin life history, it helps produce and construct key life events and 'is useful in prompting memories and concentrating attention' (Goodson & Sikes 2017, p. 81). I conducted this exercise through use of memory recall and cross-checked dates with my personal diary entries that span decades and meticulously document periods of my life. By drawing on photographs from my personal archive, I could visually connect experiences listed in the timeline, which generated further memories I then added to the timeline. Adriansen (2012) makes the point that complexities in storylines can become apparent, that what would have otherwise remained unknown, if a timeline was not developed. After the construction of the timeline, I added reflective thoughts, adding a sense of contextual and emotional mind frames, the experiences are as representative of my identity at the time, as my identity is of the experiences. My decisions are shaped by who I was, and who I was formed by the life circumstances my decisions led me towards. The timeline illustrated a chain reaction of events that narrate a burdensome struggle as I attempted to avoid an adulthood pre-determined by generations of domestic violence.

The themes that emerged from assembling a timeline:

- Domestic instability (everchanging homes)
- Career insecurity
- Disruption to education
- Economic inferiority
- Intimate partner relationship issues

- Disempowered in decision making
- Solace in creativity (writing and photography)
- Survival mindset (willing to work hard to overcome the past)
- Loneliness (many periods of isolation)
- Experimentation with identify
- Resilience (rarely defeated)
- Focus on physical health (to battle mental health)
- Incessant discontentment and vulnerability
- Bouts of extreme anxiety and mild depression
- A sense of displacement in society
- Unprotected and unsafe
- Independence versus dependence (the rise and fall of emotional and financial security)
- Conforming to social norms (marriage and work life)

Word association

Subordinate categories can arise during word association exercises, newly produced words produce new ideas (Zakaluk, Samuels & Taylor 1986, pp. 57-8).

Using the themes derived from the timeline analysis and thematic analysis I created the table of words below to narratively inquire into the autoethnographic field texts.

Identity			
Conditioning	Voice	Taught	Learn
Gender	Silenced	Dependence	Conforming
Self	Internal	Experience	

Education			
School	Degree	University	Learn
Study	Read		

Parents			
Family	Mother	Mum	Father
Generational	Dad		

Instability			
Insecurity	Trauma	Inferiority	Survival
Dislocation	Disruption	Disempowered	Battle
Vulnerability	Unprotected	Unsafe	Neglect

Violence			
Victimisation	Aggression	Abuse	Anger
Victimhood	Perpetrator	Power	Control

Home

Domestic	Live	House	Reside

Mental health			
Illness	Emotional	Panic	Sick
Anxiety	Depression		

Career			
Work	Job	Economic position	Class
Money	Wage	Social position	Stability
Stable			

Loneliness			
Isolation	Alone	Discontentment	Pain
Disconnection			

Partner			
Relationship	Marriage	Hate	Love
Husband	Intimate		

Creativity			
Writing	Art	Photography	Passion

Resilience			
Access	Strength	Security	Progression
Survive	Overcome	Grow	Development
Success			

Word frequency

The production of word frequency lists is a good starting point for the analysis of large texts (Baron, Rayson & Archer 2009, p. 42). The frequency or the rate at which a word has been used is an important component of this type of textual analysis (Benthin et al. 1995, p. 133).

Using both the word that represented the theme and the words associated to it, I calculated the rate at which the theme was present in the autoethnographic texts.

Theme	**Frequency**
Identity	1872
Education	283
Parents	2067
Instability	426
Violence	1695
Home	1466
Mental health	842
Career	2397
Loneliness	324

Partner	979
Creativity	1902
Resilience	474

Textual analysis

'The analysis of linguistic data makes use of hermeneutic reasoning… because the contours of the consciousness correspond more closely with linguistic, instead of mathematical, structures, the methods for its study are not as precise' (Polkinghorne 1988, pp. 7-8).

Klaus Krippendorff (2004) believes that measuring qualitative data is difficult, but that is not a valid reason to avoid discussing it. Concentrating on the issues of reliability, will increase the integrity of qualitative research, rather than ignoring or becoming complacent with them (Krippendorff 2004). Qualitative data is a continuum until a researcher conducts analysis and draws distinction (Krippendorff (2004).

During the word frequency analysis, I realised I was analysing my subconscious, the thinking and writing that produced the field texts represented a hidden part of my identity, the unspoken voice. Working through the texts linguistically, gave the narrative more meaning, through validation of lived experiences. Themes reflective of the effects of witnessing domestic violence were made tangible, and absent themes emerged in the textual analysis. Human connection, positive relationships that involved empathy, sympathy, compassion and love were not written into the autoethnographic data, and the absence of this vital component of human lived experience elicits a finding of itself. The gap in my lived experience was found through the analysis of the texts I produced about my life.

Diary analysis

'Think about ethical considerations before writing but don't censor the first draft, get the story as nuanced and truthful as possible' (Ellis 2016, p. 214).

Diarised entries were in many ways my first drafts, they provided me with a space to practice self-reflexivity and self-efficacy, and they certainly were not censored. Journals are substantial sources of data, they can be used to make field notes, they provide practical and factual information, and assist with analysis and interpretation by showing trends, themes, and patterns (Goodson & Sikes 2017, pp. 81-2). Woods (1986, cited in Goodson & Sikes 2017, p. 81) wrote that the basis on which a diary has been complied needs to be clear, noting that there are many motivations behind diarising, suggesting that context is critical. I became more focused in my thinking and used the diary differently as the research progressed, I was able to identify the thoughts that belonged in the thesis and those that fared better in the privacy of the thesis diary. During a home invasion I had a diary stolen from my desk, it was an accident, of course the robber only wanted my Apple computer not my handwritten thoughts. This loss has always reminded me of the importance of a diary as a form of a person's life data. I had written in that diary about the loss of my mother and a period of time when I was supporting my then husband through an organ transplant, both central to my emotional identity and lived experiences.

During analysis, I realised that my diary was mostly comprised of the woes of life, but amongst the challenges and the negativity I was able to find incredibly insightful and illuminating excerpts.

Marriage, divorce, and domesticity

'Housework is work directly opposed to the possibility of human self-actualisation' (Oakley 1974, p. 222). Greer (1999, p. 137) describes housework as a repetitive, non-productive activity like behaviours of 'obsessive-compulsive disorder.'

My time spent married, and my decision to later divorce, are central to my experience of understanding the world through a gendered, domesticated lens. My decision to marry was based on gaining a sense of security, therefore it was a direct effect of my childhood trauma that left me feeling incredibly unstable in the world. My husband was the opposite to my father, he was not hyper-masculine, he was not social, he was an introvert who didn't drink alcohol, and I found him non-threatening. Seeking out security, through marriage, is certainly not exclusive to women who have experienced childhood trauma. In fact, I think women commonly seek out security in men, regardless of trauma history. Seeking safety in the world, through male companionship and building a family is a condition, an unconscious choice that is inherently sought out by heterosexual women. My reflections on marriage and divorce add to the feminist scholarship, childhood trauma or otherwise. This thesis is an investigation into identity, on a topic that negatively affects females, written by a female. My reflections on my gendered experiences are relevant. Experiences of marriage and divorce encapsulate the vulnerability of women within the domestic sphere.

> January 2017
> *Three days after marriage*
>
> The happiness is transient, the tragedy is defining.
>
> I am portrayed as a little bit useless, of lacking drive to succeed, but my success has been to keep a hold of my sanity and entrust in strangers, for I am surrounded by them.
>
> February 2018
> *Birthday dinner*
>
> I sat there last night, over our first drinks while waiting for a table, willing J to have a personality, to take the lead and give me some kind of happiness for a couple of hours. I want to share moments with him, not just experience the same thing differently, separately. It's just so unfulfilling. It's not a relationship, it's co-habitation. I don't leave him because I love him. I don't say this stuff often, because when I do he gets hurt. I don't hate him; I just tire of him. I want it to change, our relationship, the dull dynamic, but he can't change.
>
> November 2018
> *A life of silence*

I was silenced as a kid. And now I am re-silenced, in a different context, but silenced, nonetheless.

November 2018
On leaving

I wouldn't leave him for someone else. I wouldn't leave him in anger. I would leave because I am an adult who wants to open us up to happiness elsewhere. It's such a big change. It's a decision that carries so much weight. I am overwhelmed by the consequences of the decision.

March 2019
Menial tasks

I've taken my time to get here this morning. Chatted with K; cleaned my cameras; did some dishes; folded some washing; and on and on the menial tasks go. All of which get in my way of doing study. My brain is thinking about my studies all the time, which I love, it is good, to be actively using my brain. I just wish it was the only thing that I had to do. But I have work, I have a husband, a dog, and a body that needs to be exercised, fed, and cleaned.

July 2019
Am I the problem?

Maybe I could stop pushing against my marriage and live within it, within the constructs of a heterosexual relationship. I can't do that, I must question it, and turn it around so that I can feel empowered, so that I don't feel trapped. I need to know why I live the way that I do, how my past got me here and what I am content with. How I can compromise, or not. How I can choose how I want to live, based on healthy, informed decisions, not unconscious reactions and interactions with my external surroundings. It would be nice to be in control.

September 2019
Another anxious day

Even though he may think he is doing the right stuff, been a good husband by working all the time, he is denying me something that I need, him. I may as well be single if I don't have a present husband.

September 2019
In-law's father

Saw G in the hospital today, the young boys reminded me of R and I, but different. Their little personalities, been shaped, and moulded, luckily not affected by death and violence and trauma. I wish I had a life more like that. Visiting their grandfather,

while his knee recovers, is so different to visiting a dying mother. Lucky for them, they will hardly remember let alone be scarred by their visit today.

October 2019
Married to the wrong family?

A couple of nights ago I spoke with J over the phone. I asked if he thought we had drifted apart, I asked if he was happy. He said no, we haven't drifted, and yes, he is happy. I find that concerning, that he doesn't see the gap in connection, that he doesn't feel it. He is happy? He never seems it, sombre, neutral, monotone, those are not signs of happiness. I told him he doesn't make an effort with people in my life that I regard as family, because I don't have my own. He said he wishes that I had family, like he had. I told him that I think he wants a person from a different background, who spends their time differently to me, and who has different values than I do. He disagreed and said he never had any expectations when we married, I understand that to mean he didn't do any forward thinking, any reflecting. He isn't very insightful, which means he probably doesn't really know who I am.

November 2019
Byron Bay

My favourite part of the trip was finding the tea tree oil lake. I swam in it on my own a couple of times yesterday and today I took J and his parents there. They loved it. Something super calming and serene about it, the scenery is visually pleasing, and the water is unique.

December 2019
The unfixable marriage

The weekend was consumed with J and I talking about how we have become distant. He feels it, but doesn't want the marriage to end, he wants to fix it. I know that he cannot 'fix' or 'change' what I need, the emotional support will never be there.

January 2020
Post-argument

I know that J will never see me or life the way I want him to, which will mean we will always be disconnected as far as I am concerned. He feels attacked and sensitive and resentful post-argument, he does not feel as though he needs to change his behaviour, he does not feel empathetic for my unhappiness about the domestic life we both chose when we married. It feels worse, recognising the inevitability of my discontentment. I either start earning more money so I can live independently, or I continue to be unsettled in my feelings and do the best I can to placate the anxiety through means of escapism. It is all on me, because it is clear that J does not intend to compromise or consider any type of change.

February 2020

Unbalanced

When I was working and researching and being a domestic woman, it was all too much. But I had money, I had independence. Now I don't work, and I am dependent, but I have more time. How excruciating life is when nothing balances, especially finances and emotions.

February 2020
Divorce

We are fundamentally not able to fix what is wrong between us, because the root of the issues is based on our personalities, our values, and our attitudes. I am sad for the loss of our relationship. I am a little frightened of what the future will be for me, especially financially. I am relieved that I don't have to pretend anymore or ignore my own instincts. I am disappointed that I have spent so much time trying to make it work when I knew it wasn't going to. I am annoyed that I have been taken along for his ride, and been a part of his goals, that have not served me. I am thankful that I have continued to evolve and move closer to where I want to be. I did not give up on myself, I compromised and sacrificed, but I did not let go of who I am.

January 2021
Domestic life

Marriage is a trajectory into boredom. Motherhood is busy and dull, I imagine.

Research

The aim of this thesis was to explore the foundations of identity, for the purpose of understanding a broader topic. The focus shifted throughout, narrowing, and expanding intermittently. The intricacies of the self unravelled, and the value of those minor discoveries began to take on more and more meaning as the developments compiled. It was a timely labour, but with additional time permitted, it could have taken on more meaning. It is a difficult discipline, to stop the investigation with the awareness that there is more to know.

December 2018
Scanning images from the 70s

The other day, I sorted through many albums of photographs that document my family's history. I picked through images that dated back to the 70s and stopped gathering images after my teen years. I cut away from my family in my teens, I still had bouts of connection with them, but my collection of photographs shows the shift in my life, the segregation of myself from my family, in particular my father.

February 2019
Maternal grandparents

With D and D in a retirement home, at the end of their lives, trapped by the of their age, I wondered if it would be worth my time to attempt to go and see them. I thought about how many years it has been since I saw them (22), I thought about men and denial (I have seen it first-hand) my father living in denial. I considered G, on his death bed, denying to T the violence he perpetrated within her family, and I thought, it's probably not good use of my time, to try to get some information from D. Definitely not worth my time, I doubt that I would get anywhere in my pursuit of male confession.

May 2019
Autoethnographic field notes

I have just hit 50 000 words in this diary. I am at 92 pages in length. This makes me hopeful that I have the capacity to write the amount of content that is required. I am feeling the relief of knowing that in a few days I will have hours and hours more than I did when I was working, to focus on this research. I will have mental energy and focus that won't be drained by work, that I can pour into this research. I am starting to feel the benefits of quitting my job.

October 2019
Greer binge

I have ordered three Germaine Greer books, after listening to some of her interviews she has drawn me in. I like her crassness, her politically incorrect approach to academia and women's lives. I wanted my own copy of *The Female Eunuch*, with the cover of the hanging body, so I found one. Then I got a couple of others that seem relevant, *On Rape* and *The Whole Woman*. Greer has written on various other topics, such as indigenous Australians, Shakespeare, ecological restoration, and art. I will get to those topics one day but for now I must stay on track, women are my focus.

December 2019
Narrow view

My perspective is not intersectional. I am a working-class white woman. My experiences do not represent migrant communities, people with disabilities, indigenous Australians, LGBTIQ communities, or socioeconomic classes that aren't working class. However, some of my ideas and findings are transferrable.

February 2021
Autoethnography

I thought I had to stop my life, to use my life as data. But it's impossible to live like that, on pause. I had to find the skill of living and returning to the past.

Anxiety

One of the main themes of this thesis is mental illness, my anxiety disorder. The anxiety that I have always and will always have stems from my childhood trauma and is disproportionate to reality, at times, which makes it a disorder, an illness. Anxiety can be felt in various ways to varying degrees. In a sense, anxiety is a normal bodily response, but when it is debilitating it is life changing.

June 2019
Anxiety free in Paris

My anxiety has always, and remains, triggered by other people. I have coped by escaping other people, getting far away from how they make me feel. My mother is the crux of it, how she made me feel installed a deep-seeded anxiety that has been the foundation for generalised and specific anxiety to-date.

December 2019
Trauma is forever

Children cannot un-see or un-know domestic violence. That is trauma, that is conditioning, and that is through the fault of the person inflicting the violence and the response, of both parents, to the violence. The circumstances of domestic violence are particularly traumatising for children because they are witnessing their mothers be victims of the violence. Whether the abuse is physical, emotional, or financial, children know the violence is occurring.

February 2020
Too anxious for compassion

Anxiety disables ability for compassion. I used to have trouble finding the emotional space for compassion, it's not that I didn't *have* compassion, I just couldn't exercise it. I was too consumed with my own anxiety, to even consider someone else's suffering. Overtime, as my anxiety subsided, I had more time and more energy, which afforded me the ability to invest in other people. I resent that, that I spent time unable to understand other people. I found that I was disconnected from people, which is no way to live. Anxiety is a selfish and insidious illness.

February 2020
Slow moving

I have left the house, only to shop for food and a few household items. I made a salad for lunch and juiced a pear and ginger juice. I don't feel very anxious today, I can tell, because I am able to smile at strangers easily and I move at a slower pace, in less of a hurry.

February 2020
Re-traumatisation

I thought of the term 're-traumatisation' and how I will be expected to write about the notion. The term is too severe for what I have experienced while conducting this research. Perhaps 'confronting' is a better way to explain how I have found the writing of autoethnography to be. Even confronting seems a little severe because I have always written about myself and my childhood. I will have to think of another way to explain how I have interacted with and felt about re-writing a narrative that deals with an intense amount of negativity.

February 2020
Finished Steedman for the second time

My default setting is to survive.

February 2020
Walking in the rain

The trouble with living in survival mode, means I have missed so much enjoyment.

July 2021
Fear rising

Sat in the pink armchair, legs and arms stretched out, waiting for the heart to slow the nerves to settle and the brain to refocus. I realised my anxiety is not done with me just yet.

August 2021
The fragility of the mind

A drop in anxiety, a shift in perspective, but it's teetering.

Doctors always looking for a trigger. Sometimes the trigger is just having to live, having to survive.

Reflective observations

The practise of observing individuals, society and the self requires a level of sensitivity and a degree of dissonance. There is a harsh disconnection between the observer and the observed that seems inhumane. Witnessing is not experiencing. Living becomes inactive in reflexivity.

January 2020
Respectful attitudes

The common belief in the field is that the prevention of male violence lies within training boys and men to treat women with respect. Although in good jest, this is rife with issues. The approach reduces the social issue to an *attitude*, suggesting that if males respect women that no woman will ever be harmed by a man that they know,

which is a false sense of security and is not based on any concrete research. There is no way to measure the effects of a societal change in attitude. A study of this nature is impossible, but if it were, it would be a fine way to debunk the common rhetoric that respectful attitudes is the answer to gender violence.

March 2020
Local mums

'The amount of human work and attention that the house can absorb is and will remain limitless. The only way to escape this tyranny is to abandon the house' (Greer 1999, p. 143).

I watch strangers, mothers in particular, who remove themselves and all other living beings from the home into the public space, to escape, for some reprieve. Babies nestled safely in cumbersome prams. Toddlers gingerly walking a few steps back and forward down the walking tracks. Dogs desperate to be free of leads. Small children learning to ride the bike, scoot the scooters. All of this is orchestrated, patrolled, and managed by the anxious mother, trying to contain the children and the dogs from running wild and facing potential harm or hurt. This generally happens during the day when the father is at work. Sometimes it happens on the weekend and the father joins in. But as a general rule, mum takes what has a heartbeat from the home and continues her domestic duties in the parks, on the walking tracks, somewhere that isn't her place of residency and is comprised of the practicalities needed for her and her brood. The attempt to escape her motherly role fails, as she continues to protect and pander to others. Some mothers meet with other mothers who have their children and pets in tow, and they walk and talk and supervise. Their conversations are dismal and centred around the sleeping patterns of children and the other nitty gritty details of motherhood and domestic life. The very roles they are seeking reprieve from are discussed as their desire to connect with another woman who is dealing with the same, or similar daily routines, overrides the need to forget about the home-life, for an hour, in the park.

September 2021
Friends

I write almost nothing on the topic of friendship. I am writing a whole thesis based on my family, I write constantly about my lover, ex-lover, unrequited love, but never my friends and yet I rely on them the most, for support, comfort, familiarity. The women in my life have generally always been reliable, available even after periods of silence, after moments of tension, they are always there holding me up but never considered in my writing. Maybe it is because I only write about what troubles me, what I cannot seem to resolve internally, and the women in my life don't have negative effects on me the way that my family and male intimate partners do. Maybe it is inconsiderate of me to omit the people who allow me to turn to them unconditionally from my writing.

<u>Cinderella 1996 analysis</u>

When I was 18-years old, I saw a psychologist because I was having severe anxiety attacks. At the end of our session, after I had talked incessantly because no one had ever shown such interest in my life and my thoughts. The psychologist said two things to me that I have never forgotten:

> "Most people who have lived through what you have would have topped themselves by now."
>
> "Focus your energy on what *you* want to do, what do you want to be?" "A dancer" I replied.

Dance was a welcomed escape from my life, when I was young, and I am always regretful that I didn't hold onto that doctor's comment and pursue it further. In adulthood, I replaced dance with photography, I shouldn't let that insight fade away.

Analysis

My perfectionist traits are evident. I am a very good dancer, but I am hyper aware of my surroundings, myself and the other dancers and am unable to fall into myself and the dancing. I am vigilant and attentive to the younger dancers when they need some guidance, I am anxious, I am not free, my energy is restricted. I was always at the front, I was reliable, I could be counted on to get the timing right, remember the choreography and keep my concentration steady.

The performance was prepared and showcased in a working-class context, the props, the stage, the quality of the show, all resemble lack of access to money. Families had enough to fund their children's hobbies and the academy earnt enough in fees to produce a concert, but the budgets were tight.

Very little has changed, I am still that little girl, living out my personality in different settings and contexts but still existing within the same prism of identity. My innocent dancing routines are a false replication of the brutal life I had lived and was still living at the time the concert was performed.

After my mother died, my father never offered to enrol me into a dance school, even though he knew that I had spent years and years immersed in various types of classes and performances. I was 13, I should have been on the verge of using my voice to express what I wanted, leading myself to where I wanted to go. Of course, I wanted to keep dancing after she died but I became distracted by my grieving emotions and my father never gave me the opportunity.

<u>Letter analysis</u>

Mensinga uses the 'letter as a literary device' (2006, p. 2).

Gianluca Valenti (2017, p. 685) wrote that private letters are rich with precious information, dates and informal language that can be utilised as useful data sets. The letters that I used to conduct textual analysis were written from my terminally ill maternal grandmother to my mother, her daughter, before I was born. The letters document their relationship at a particular time within a set of conditions that led my grandmother to desperately seek out my mother, who was attempting to escape. The burden of my grandmother's illness and the violent behaviours of both her brother and her father had impacted my mother's life for much of her youthful years. Once my mother reached an age where she had the capacity to leave her domestic setting, she travelled the country leaving her mother to deal with her treatments both in and out of the hospital. By this time my mother's father had divorced my grandmother and was in a different intimate partner relationship but my mother's brother was still at home and causing her mother trouble. These letters predominantly tell the story of my grandmother nearing the finality of her life, pursuing my mother, wanting her to come home.

Excerpt of letter

> November 1980
> *Maternal grandmother to my mother*
>
> I hope you have received my letters. I have been waiting to hear from you but I suppose you must be busy. Everyone is well no problems. Your car is ok. G hasn't touched it. Have you booked your plane ticket yet? Could you let me know what your plans are, just drop me a line, so I know when you are coming home.

<u>Photo analysis</u>

My family through my mother's gaze

Photo description:

Circa early 1990s. Children with vacant faces, half smiles, and tense arms, a little lifeless in posture. Sitting inside a well-kept home, that illustrates an obvious pride in the aesthetics. This follows through into the clothing, hair and body language of every person photographed, effort, style, a sense of cleanliness is presented. Dad has strong body language, starring straight into the camera, unflinching.

Reflection:

This image represents people who are engaged in life, have time and money to spend on material possessions and are engaged in vanity. There wasn't a lot of money, there was time though and vanity. I wonder how my mother felt, at the time, thinking about her children in the lap of the man who assaults her, was she disappointed with how her relationship had turned out? Did it feel normal for her, considering her father abused her mother and her brother abused his wife?

My family through my father's gaze

Photo description:

Circa early 1990s. The children's body language is rigid and forced. Mum is demure, unhappy almost, with a slight smile forced into the corners of her lips. Everybody who is photographed is being looked at through the eyes of the dominant, violent male in the house. Supressed emotions are demonstrated through body language and facial expressions.

Reflection:

Did my father feel any guilt? Did moments of reflection ever befall him? How did he feel about himself and the behaviour he displayed in front of children?

My father's mother

Photo description:

Circa 1970. It is blatantly clear that my paternal grandmother adored my father and that my father was dominant, and my grandmother was inferior to him. The home décor and clothing worn by both are stylish. My father's body language and facial expression illustrate slight aggression; tension in hands, feet tucked underneath knees, rigid body posture. Dad's body does not lean into his mother, or even react to her presence, he stares straight at the camera, unflinching.

Reflection:

My paternal grandmother always idolised my father, she was in frequent communications with him, and he absorbed her love and attention until she died.

My father and I

Photo description:

Circa 2000. I am uncomfortable, awkward in stance and looking away from the camera. Dad is happy and relaxed, however hand on the hip and hand on my shoulder shows a silent, subtle dominance over the situation.

Reflection:

My father always tried to remain in my life, but never offered what I needed. I always felt I wanted to escape him, and only his own actions can be held accountable for that. His violence (the memories of it), his emotional flippancy, pushed me away but his reliability and willingness to always have his home open to me brought me back to him many times. My feelings for my father and ones rooted in incredible amounts of confliction that I don't think will ever be able to be resolved.

My mother and I

Photo description:

Mum holds me in her arm with my maternal step grandmother standing at her side. Mum wears a read coat, with jeans, sunglasses and loafers, she looks beautiful. I would be about a year old, and my mother looks comfortable in her new role in the world. The three of us are pictured on the front deck of my maternal grandparent's home, a place I used to love visiting.

Reflection:

I often wonder if my father had showed signs of violence from the beginning of their relationship or if my mother was oblivious of his aggressive nature for a period of time. I am curious about her experience with pregnancy and labour, and how she felt with a newborn. Did my mother ever forgive her father for the violence he brought into her childhood home, or was it normalised and ignored? Did she fear experiencing what her mother and her sister-in-law experienced, even if male violence was expected to be a part of her life given her exposure to it and the social context of the time? Seeing my mother hold me as an infant provokes feelings in me that perhaps I would also like to be a mother, but they are thwarted by the fear of not being able to cope with the responsibility on my own. I am without family support, financially independent but not stable, emotionally aware but intermittently struck by bouts of despair, and I know what that means, I am aware of the vulnerable position I am in and would therefore place a child in. I am deterred to be a mother because of my past, because of who I am and my social position.

My family from an outsider's gaze

Photo description:

Circa early 1990s. Dad's body language is assertive and tense, sitting forward in the chair hands clasped. His eyes gaze at the camera, while his head does not turn, it portrays him as rigid. The cans of beer and bottle of wine (on my father's side) are telling of his over drinking. In the background on the fridge children's paintings hang, I vaguely recall painting the butterfly. My hand in my mouth is odd, perhaps a sign of nervousness. The other child looks unphased by the camera, while mum looks down at them. Their relationship is displayed accurately in this photograph, a child needing of their mother and the mother's attention on the needy. I am sat alone, between my parents, body language turned away from them both, disconnected from them.

Reflection:

I was under 10 years of age, and I don't remember who took the photo, presumably a neighbour or friend who was visiting. This image is very powerful to me. It is where my first memories of physical violence occurred, behind where my mother sits and in the kitchen in the background. The alcohol and my father's body language are the most important elements of this image, his identity is the forefront of the narrative captured in this one

frame. My father's violence, always fuelled by alcohol and the desire to exert control is palpably displayed here, a very accurate representation of my family's dynamic. I am anxious then, and I am anxious now. I am alone in that image, observed by the person taking the photograph and by my mother, observed, not embraced. I am turned from my father, distant from the man that disrupted my childhood, I am merely a body in the room to him, a person left to manage the world alone.

The 70s women

Photo description:

Circa 1970s. Two generations, three women who experienced domestic violence stand side-by-side in a backyard, upright, hand by their sides or behind their backs. My mother, my aunty and my maternal grandmother dressed in frocks and cardigans, hair washed and blow waved.

Reflection:

I see submissiveness, I see women acting out a gender norm of passive existence. I see a social, cultural point in time where women's aesthetic was of upmost importance, and their personalities were trodden. It is a sad representation of how women lived in the world as the time, I see them through the lens of the domestic violence that they all endured, and it is incredibly sad knowing parts (certainly not all) of their suffering.

Maternal grandmother and grandfather

Photo description:

My grandfather holds my grandmother, lovingly, in the sun, leaning against the front of a car. They are youthful, perhaps in their early 30s, both beaming with the happiness that new love and good health promotes.

Reflection:

Even in their happiness, my grandfather is holding both arms of my grandmother in what could be easily passed off as a connection, as a close bond, but given the abuse he inflicted onto her, the body language could also mean control and ownership. It is sad to think that my grandmother, once so healthy, became so ill, so young, and endured domestic violence along the way, only to be divorced by my grandmother for another woman.

Main street, Beverly

Photo description:

Main street, Beverly, the home is pictured and represents good working-class stature. It is neat, it is well-sized, and it shows no signs of poverty or degradation.

Reflection:

This home housed so many of my family members for some many decades, and I never saw it, only through pictures have I come to be familiar with it.

Grandmother's final day

Photo description:

My mother turns to face the camera moments before she steps into a small blue car. She is sombre looking, young. A contradictory expression in her eyes of emotional distance but complete awareness and presence of what she is about to face, her mother's death.

Reflection:

One of my mother's closest friends sent me this photo by mail, and I cherish it because it has such a strong narrative attached to it. It is my favourite photo of my mother. Her hair is dark, I remember my mother as a blonde, so this distinction allows me to see her as someone that is not my mother. I knew my mother as a social woman, either drinking or working with people, always smiling, in public spaces. At home she was more frustrated than happy. I believe that my mother's social side was pretentious, a false representation for who she really was, of what she had lived through and was living. This photo is her feeling something real and I adore that, it allows me to see past the socialite and into the woman. She suffered in her life, and you can see some of that suffering here, in this photo. Her socialising was perhaps an escape for her, but I wish she hadn't defaulted to it, I believe she could still be alive today, had she lived her life more responsibly. During her years spent as my mother she wanted to escape the dreariness of her past, I knew that because I lived with the consequences of her life decisions and her emotional mindset. While living in her past, she wanted to escape it, and that is evident in both photographs of her lifestyle at the time and the letters written from my grandmother to my mother. It would be easy to say that I relate to my mother in this photograph, because I too was once entering a car to go to a hospital to face my dead mother, but I was much younger and I don't feel a sense of connection to her here, in this image.

The violent home

Photo description:

Two cars parked in the driveway of the first home I can recall any memories in, including the violent ones. The loungeroom curtains can be seen from the driveway and the lawns look well-kept, the house is not very appealing, it is below working-class suburban standards.

Reflection:

This photo has the address of the first home I have memories living in written on the back of it, in my father's handwriting. It is my father's handwriting on most of the photos in all the albums. My father must have spent a lot of time looking through the albums and making

short notes on the back. This is the only photo wherein the street number was written, the others just have the street name noted. My father loved the red sports car, the other car was less flashy and more used for practical purposes. I remember packing a bag one day and leaving that house, I only made it to the end of the street but I was obviously wanting to escape when I was too young to understand what I was wanting to escape.

Two women, two men, two girls, four boys

Photo description:

My mother and her brother pictures with their intimate partners and their children, on a farm. Two violent men; my father and my uncle and two victimised women; my mother and my aunty, and six victimised children stand staged, posed for the camera in a natural setting.

Reflection:

Two men affected eight lives negatively. I wonder who took this photo.

<u>Grey documents of life</u>

Maternal great great-grandfather

Newspaper clippings description:

Two excerpts from a newspaper, of a Cr. F. M. One narrates his he retirement from local government due to ill-health. There is a hand-written the date June 14th, 1978, on the paper. The second is a story about his death, aged 83, on February the 5th, year not noted in the story, or on the piece of cut out paper. The story has been cut out so that the date of print is also not available. An accompanying tribute section dates his death as the 5th of February 1979. His death is listed as the result of an accident.

Reflection:

The home address listed in the tribute section is the same address my mother grew up in, the house must have been passed down to my grandfather from my great-grandfather who obtained the house through his grandfather (my great great-grandfather).

Every time I look through my family albums I find more information, I find different things, I look for different things, and sometimes a photo of a document does not take my interest, but on another occasion it will. It depends on my lens, on my objective, my purpose for looking. It is also dependant on what stage I am in of the research. Today, I am looking to connect more of the generational dates, the events, the narratives, to complete more of the familial story. Today I am looking at old newspaper clippings, of a man that is my grandfather's grandfather.

Beneficiary

Letter description:

My father's handwritten letter to my mother's superfund from her voice, lists the requests for beneficiaries formally, signed and dated.

Reflection:

On the 12th of January 1998 Dad hand wrote this letter for Mum, outlining the beneficiaries of her superfund. Early the next morning, she died. Dad must have been told that day, that the death was coming, quickly. I do remember him at our friend's house, where we were staying, crying on the couch and giving me the choice to go and see her. I declined, I was sick of seeing her sick and could tell it must have been bad. I had seen her maybe the day before and she was not lucid, she was in excruciating pain, and I don't think I even spoke to her that day. I went with my father early in the morning, and I saw her dead in the bed, but I couldn't approach the bed and sit next to her like Dad did, I saw from the foot of the bed all I needed to see and a went back into the hallway, alone, unprepared for a life without protection.

Lived experience: analysis of the memory

'Class and gender, and their articulations, are the bits and pieces from which psychological selfhood is made' (Steedman 1986, p. 7).

Infancy

I was a baby in a carrier, placed at the feet of adults on a boat. The boat was moving fast, and I felt as though I was wedged between the legs of the adults under some type of covering, as though an attempt at protection had occurred in an unsafe setting, the paradox of my life.

Violence

I stood between my mother and father as a drunken verbal argument in our dining room escalated into a standing physical fight, one that my mother had no chance of winning. They moved around the house, the worst of the abuse occurring in the kitchen when my father held my mother by her hair and beat her head into the bench. She somehow got him out of the house, or perhaps he left, but not long later he reappeared at the window of their bedroom where I was curled into a ball beneath my mother's arm on their bed. After pleading to be let back in he smashed the window, and the police appeared at the front door. My mother sat, face bleeding, on the floral sofa while the police questioned her.

Alcohol

I was perhaps 10 years-old, my mother and father had separated, and we were at a party at a beautiful home sat high on a hill. There were lots of other children and we danced and played and ate for hours and hours. It must have been summer, because at one point in the

day a hose appeared and were outside in a bricked courtyard that was divided by the house with huge glass doors, I ended up soaked in water and tired. I had become upset, why I can't recall, but I went upstairs to a bedroom and laid on a bed and cried unconsolably while the gum in my mouth made its way into my hair. My mother came upstairs and she cut the gum from my hair with her drunken way and fell on her way back down the flight of stairs. She had tried to be a mother, tried to provide some emotional protection, but her fall negated the act of taking the scissors to my hair.

My father was always drunk in the evenings, not the type to sit and drink alone, the kind that invited people over and pulled out wine and beer or went somewhere where other people were drinking. A social alcoholic. He drank at work because he worked in bars, he drank after work, as did my mother who usually worked beside him. The drinking continued on and on until my mother's death and only recently has my father stopped drinking altogether, I guess he ran out of people to invite over or places to go.

Safety

My mother took me to see East 17, and I fell asleep during the concert because it was the first time I had felt like I was safe with my mother. It was the first time I felt that she was not distracted by potential male partners, friends, work and my father's violence. She was sober, and I had her undivided attention.

During the writing of this thesis I suffered physical illness and spent a period time in despair, I pulled on this memory one desperate evening when I felt completely overwhelmed by the danger of living in a body that can be so easily harmed. In an appointment with a psychologist not long after that evening, I was asked if I could recall any good memories from childhood, I relayed this moment with my mother at the concert. I had instinctively drawn upon a childhood moment where I had once felt safe, during a time of fear in my adult life. This process, of having to look back two decades prior, to console myself, was depressing. How had I lived for so long without a sense of safety? Why didn't I feel safe in the present? The lack of *consistent*, safe conditions in my childhood has and will continue to negatively affect me till death, the damage caused by an insecure childhood is permanent.

Threat

During an argument with my father my mother retreated to my room where she laid herself on my rug next to my bed where I was laid, willing sleep to wash over me so I could escape. My presence became her safety. Her danger became my threat.

Anxiety

Personal diary entry written in 2010 about the condition of anxiety: It is just a feeling. Some people seek drugs to gain that feeling. A fear of a word that has been heard, read, thought. The fear of what has been done, felt, seen, smelt, inhaled, induced. The craving to do what you have not done, of what you have missed, of what may be missed, it sends one ballistic.

Summer of 2000, I went into the toilet blocks at school before the third class and wafted cigarette smoke to stop it escaping atop the cubicle door while I inhaled the tobacco as a means to release anxiety or out of rebellious habit. The bell rang and I heard the main entry door open followed by a clunk of a lock. I flushed the butt of the cigarette opened my cubicle door to face the wall of mirrors and nearing the exit door I realised that I had accidentally been locked in. I was trapped in the toilet block for two sessions before the next break commenced, I could have just chained smoked cigarettes and taken a wee, but I became claustrophobic and panicked ensued. When the bell rang for the second time, a teacher unlocked the door and I sped to the counsellor's room, by this stage full of rage, my anxiety and fear had turned to anger. I caught the counsellor by surprise as I marched into her room impatiently and demanded an explanation as to why a proper check of the cubicles had not been done and I had subsequently been locked in the toilet block for two sessions. The counsellor could not deescalate my irritability, so I walked out of the school gates and vowed never to return, and I didn't.

I had not yet sat my year 10 exams, I had no mother, I had an anxiety disorder but didn't know it, and I made an irrational decision based on a negative experience.

Idealism

I wanted to escape the responsibilities of living emotionally and financially independent, I was, unknown to me at the time, on the verge of a serious mental breakdown. I was instinctively peeling off the layers of stress, seeking some comfort away from the functioning world I had been narrowly surviving in for too long. My relationship with a boy was weakening and I was too tired to work anymore, so I moved to my father's place in a remote country town, far from the city's reach. I pictured myself writing under a tree all day and been fed of an evening, the idea felt comforting, and I thought I would be able to live calmer. I arrived, to a barren property, where snakes shed their skin at the shed's entrance and slithered past the laundry while we ate. The smouldering heat could not be escaped beneath the tree perched on the hill beside my bedroom. The northern sun, so harsh it seeped between the branches and wrapped itself around the trunk, suffocating my already short, sharp breath. I wrote, and I ate, and I read and I trialled the idealised version of what I thought I was moving into, but I had grossly overlooked the conditions I was up against. The emotional perils of living in my father's home washed over me night after night, and I resided to the idea that I would have to move states to get as far away from the heat and him as I could. I had to step back into reality and one by one pile upon myself the responsibilities most people have to manage, but I was managing them from a deficit and once I learnt that I had nowhere to go, I felt the harshness of the world gently fall atop my shoulders as the fantasy, the idealised version of how I wanted to live my life began to fade.

Suicide ideation

The idea of suicide as an option to end my suffering has come to my mind a couple of times in life. The first time was in the midst of a mental breakdown in my twenties, I had been cast out of a home I felt safest in and was surreptitiously dying in my new environment. I made my way to the emergency department, certain that I had to end my life, without the means to, but felt I had to declare this internal discovery to someone. Who better than a medical

professional? I walked in, probably at a panicked pace, and stood at the nurses window ready to make my statement. I had taken a 5mg of Valium prior, to ease the anxiety the idea of suicide stirred in me, but I was far from calm, the drugs didn't work, the brain was stronger. I claimed I couldn't do this anymore and that I wanted it to end, I wanted my life to end. In unison, the two people behind the desk looked straight at my wrists, nothing. Have you taken anything? 5mg of Valium to help my anxiety. That won't even touch the sides of your anxiety, he said. I was told to sit in the waiting room. Sit in the waiting room? I had no time to wait, I wanted to die now, this made no sense. I sat there for a long time, hours even, and then a psychiatrist called me into a room. He asked me various questions, working his way down from the severest forms of mental disorders to the most common. He wrote me a script, not sure what for, and a referral, not sure who to, and I was ushered out by a gentler man who walked me into the park outside the hospital. He spoke with me on a park bench, said that if I couldn't get out of bed that I needed to take medication. I left, still wanting to kill myself but too tired to consider how.

The second time was a decade later than the first, and I was well-versed in dealing with the ever-present anxiety I had been dealt that lulled at times but was always lingering. The anxiety was no longer the problem, a physical injury that disrupted the nervous system was the root of my suffering, and it ignited my anxiety, and it was deemed by the doctor as life-long. All of the techniques used to treat anxiety were suggested by the doctor, to minimise the symptoms and manage them when they could not be avoided. Psychotherapy, meditation, mindfulness, all the antithesis to anxiety, were prescribed for my physical trauma. At times, I felt armed with the tools I needed to deal with the new damage that had been done to the nervous system, but most of the time I felt a sense of finality tied to the diagnosis. This was it, how was I going to manage? I couldn't withstand any more trauma; I had already endured enough. The damage of childhood had worn the body and the mind so thin, that I didn't have the energy for much in adulthood. Been told that I had done irreversible damage to my already worn and torn nerves was too much to process, it was too much to live with, so I wanted to die, again. I was faced with the same problem I had encountered a decade ago, I didn't know how to do it, I didn't have the means, the capacity to actually murder myself. So, I suffered, because I had to live.

Abandonment

The paradox of my father abandoning me was that I wanted him to, but once he'd gone my life didn't improve, in fact it worsened. The same can be said of my marriage, I pressured a man to divorce me, only to find my life became increasingly difficult as soon as he left. I was emotionally distraught when they were in my life but found myself in a deeper state of unrest once abandoned by them.

The absence of my father's violence in my childhood memories was replaced by the frivolous relationships my mother had with men who did not care for my mother or her children with any moral intent. The violence, however traumatising, was replaced by a sense of displacement and economic strain as my mother attempted to fend for herself and her offspring while still enjoying her life and tending to her desires and needs. The instability of the newfound way of life, free from violence, incited a new series of anxieties within me, that piled themselves atop the older ones, borne from the drunken, abusive nights I had

previously witnessed. Which life was better, the former or the new? The drunken, violent father, or the multitude of selfish men and string of banal rentals? On paper, the latter seems more palatable, and it probably was much more endurable for my mother. Abandonment is complex in its toxicity, the need versus the logical reasoning, the empowerment entangled in the vulnerability, pursuing the victim to move between places of ease and distress.

I was, in marriage, emotionally abandoned. In divorce, the physical abandonment caused relief from seeing the person who was constantly absent but always present. After time, the physical disconnection stirred nostalgia for the moments of connection that were experienced, that felt so infrequent at the time of marriage but in divorce were disproportionately skewed. It was a form of trickery, to pine for what was once so traumatising. My father, with age, became less volatile, but the damage had already been done. I often thought that my ex-husband had the time to undo the past, but perhaps that was foolish thinking.

Panic

I was not yet 10, and I was staying at a friend's house for the weekend. Sleepovers with friends and their families was a reoccurring part of my upbringing, I can recall many, many houses where I would stay as an outsider and be treated as though I was slightly peculiar. Or maybe I just felt peculiar. This family house was extravagant, more extravagant than mine. It had a huge backyard that felt like a private sanctuary. The house itself was very large and oozed character, filled with furnishings and feelings of extreme comfort. It was a double story, pitched home and for some reason myself and my friend decided to climb to the roof. The details of how we came to do this are unclear, how we got up or if we were authorised by the adults to be up there, I'm not sure. But I do remember the journey up, I was calm, having fun, in the moment, without fear. Once we reached the slanted pitched roof-tiles and sat to gaze outwards I was overcome with panic. Panic so severe that I was frozen and unsure how to make my way down fast and safely. I felt I would be stuck there forever. I can't recall how I got down, but I did without harm.

In another home, less lavish, but still more upmarket than my own, my friend L and I used to watch movies like *The Labyrinth* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, pop popcorn drenched in butter and icing sugar and sleep in a tent in the front yard (for fun). I woke one night, in the midst of a panic attack. I wanted to go home, but I didn't. I felt safe in the house, but I didn't. When L's mother asked me how I was feeling I said "sick", so she gave me a vitamin C tablet, and thinking that they then must have been the cure to my "sickness" that I had been carrying around with me for most of my life, I ate a few more than just the one I was offered. A cure, I thought, how comforting, and it tasted so good. I made my way back to bed (we weren't sleeping in the tent that night) and felt at ease that I had learnt that a sugary, tangy lolly would be my comforter. It seemed to easy, even for my unevolved mind. And of course, I was right.

Whether it was my body saying, hey, you are safe in this home, I am going to call out for help. Someone here may have the capacity to pay attention to my suffering, unlike in my own home. Or maybe it was that I was in unfamiliar spaces, and would become triggered by

new environments and people. Whatever the cause, I would often become panicked on weekends spent away from home.

My father and mother were separated at the time but lived in close proximity, so I spent a lot of time with him, particularly on school holidays. I remember the time period that the roof panic attack happened, it was during the same time period that my father would take me to the local pool and lather himself in coconut tanning oil. I remember the smell of the oil, the chlorine and the grass where we would lay that surrounded the blue swimming pool.

Alicia Little

22 August 2019
Day of plea

9:15

Camera setup on the footpath, at the base of the steps to the Supreme Court. As I approach in my red turtleneck, a woman wearing red pants reaches the steps before me, holding a coffee. I watch her go through the security check. Red Heart Campaign. Red. It's a new movement. I thought to myself. The woman in red pants read the printed schedule for the day. 7B she said aloud. That must be where I am going, 7B. I made my way to the hard copy on the desk and read the schedule, I was going to courtroom 1, not 7B. We were going to different hearings. Her red pants, they didn't resemble anything. Maybe the movement is not quite happening, yet.

9:50

I reach the waiting area, at the entrance to courtroom 1. Women in red tops. This is how violence against women can end. Death. Courtrooms. White ribbons. Red tops.

10:10

It is a safe place in here. No media. No threat of violence. Everyone is well behaved.

12:15

10-minute courtroom break, I sit and write my notes.

The barrister looking around at the full court, and up into the balcony to see if there were more. As if he has never seen that many people in a plea hearing.

She had 4 kids. One is missing.

She had friends and family who knew she was in an abusive relationship, who feel guilty for not supporting her out of it. She had left him, once, but went back.

Learning all of this through impact statements. Putting her story together through the narrative recounts of others.

1:45

After lunch. I sit and write my notes.

No camera at the foot of the stairs.

I cannot see my father in that man.

The defence barrister said it's not a case of domestic violence.

The judge said it's not a case of murder.

Two members of the court saying that the case isn't something that it clearly is, is astonishing.

She made a call to police, on the day, within hours, of her death, saying she was in a domestic violent situation and wanted the police to come and remove the intoxicated man. How, is it not domestic violence? There is a history between them, the relationship was volatile, the court acknowledged that.

2:05

The friends and family start making their way back to courtroom 1.

Victim impact statement reflections

There were two commonalities between the effects on the family and friends; the inability to sleep since Alicia's death, and ill-mental health. The court dates and grieving process impacted some of the family and friend's ability to work and therefore financial pressures affected their livelihoods, relationships with spouses, and overall well-being.

I worry about the young-adult men in the courtroom, listening to the judge and the barrister minimise the death of Alicia to a dangerous driving offence. To state that the case is not a matter of domestic violence, that it is not considered murder, concerns me. Those impressionable, vulnerable young adults have been delivered a narrative about what happened to their family member or friend, by people in obvious positions of power. It is outrageous that the case is considered a driving offence, I am appalled. I acknowledge that I don't understand the legal system, I got a good sense of my own ignorance today.

I sat, throughout the day, a few rows back from Charles Evans. I could only see the back of his head and the way that his suit moved as his body reacted. I only saw his face when he stood and turned to leave accompanied by four police officers, and when he was stood at the base of the staircase getting cuffed before been led out a different corridor than the rest of us to take a break. He would sit up and pay attention when the judge spoke and

dependent on what she said he would either sigh (when her statement was not in his favour) or lift in his body (when her statement *was* in his favour).

He remained motionless throughout the victim impact statements.

10 September 2019
Day of sentencing

Before I walk out the door of my house. Two thoughts:

1. It's early, cold and I have peak hour traffic ahead of me. In the shower I thought, I will be able to find the outcome online via the Red Heart Campaign (2022). But then I thought, I will miss all the emotion, I will miss the process.
2. Members of Alicia's family and her friends will be attached to the idea of justice.

9:35

I arrive at the waiting area outside the entrance to courtroom 11. I was nervous.

Alicia's mother greeted everybody that arrived, she said to me, after shaking my hand and saying hello, that she wants to see change.

I read the daily schedule that was in a glass box outside the courtroom. It's only scheduled for half an hour? At 10:30 a different case is scheduled.

There are two long tables. I sit at the end of the second table, furthest away from the friends and family so that I can observe and be the least intrusive as possible. Today feels more private, I feel I am intruding.

There are flecks of red clothing in the room.

9:50

I couldn't remain anonymous; people became curious about my presence.

I thought you were a reporter one woman said to me, she had seen me on the 22 August.

Alicia's mother came and showed me Alicia. In a box shaped like a heart, she carried her ashes. That's my daughter, she said, she comes to every court room. I thought, that's what your daughter has been reduced to, a red heart box. Then I thought of my mother's ashes.

10:40

Judge called Evans cowardly and sentenced him to 4 years in prison, minimum 2 years, and he had already served 19 months. He was charged with dangerous driving and failing to render assistance. I audibly gasped.

One of Alicia's brothers said calmly to Evans as he was escorted from the room, enjoy your holiday.

Media at the base of the stairs waiting for family.

Data findings

Crisis of the family

Cardinal (2003, p. 66) wrote: 'To find myself, I must find my mother and strip away the mask and penetrate the secrets of family and class.'

I am bred from a succession of generational crises, however difficult, I believe that the generational trauma can eventually be overcome. I am not yet free from the constraints of my family members lives, even though most of them are dead. I am not imprisoned by the familial conditions, but I am a product of them and the social worlds they have occupied. I wrote this thesis from the consequential depths of male violence, from a place of female victimhood on the verge of personal freedom. I evidently live in the shadow of my family's history and on the cusp of discovering my future self. I believe that in reaching this exact positionality that I have narrowly escaped the perpetuation of victimisation that the former female members of my family were not able to surpass. No matter how banal and humdrum my socio-economic position is, I live it free from male violence, I live it independently. The economic constraints are constrictive, but they are not a matter of life and death, they impinge on my capacity to reach self-actualisation, but they do not prevent my agency, my free-will to reach my full potential as a human being who wants to offer the world something rather than just exist within it. I have fought hard and will always have to, and at times this knowledge reduces me to despondency. In comparison to the lives of the female family members that preceded me I am not living in terribly poor conditions, and I attribute that to rejecting the idea of creating a nuclear family for myself. I, like most western females, have been conditioned to desire the protective, male provider, to raise his children and to be content in the identity that those – mostly domestic – conditions elicit. Have sex in the bedroom, cook the meals in the kitchen, spend years in a state of home arrest save the local parks and the shops, clean and decorate each squared in room so others can make use of them and untidy them again, attempt to work part time, or study, anything to escape the confines of the world you inevitably become conflicted by, confused by your own resentment, lost in an identity that was supposed to be fulfilling and provide bountiful happiness. The nuclear family is a desolate place for all of its inhabitants, but mostly for women, because they spend the most time confined to it. Domestic violence was present amongst the generations before me largely due to the conflict that bred from the emotional dreariness of the toxic family unit, male inner conflict became rage unable to be tamed, for some, fuelled by alcohol, for others, in states of sobriety. Female inner conflict forced women into submission, exposure to male violence transformed submission into victimhood.

The application of genealogical methodology drew me back to my maternal grandfather, who is the focal point, the main character in this narrative journey through violence and victimisation. The violence that he inflicted upon my maternal grandmother, that of which was witnessed by both my mother and her brother, affected their positionality and experiences within intimate partner relationships. My uncle was significantly violent, to men and to women, in the presence of his children. My mother was the victim of being used by men for her sexuality and experienced physical violence by my father. I do not have the capacity to analyse the generations that preceded my grandfather, because I do not have the data, therefore my attention has been drawn, time and time again, to my grandfather and his violence and the consequences of his violence on the generations that proceeded him. My grandfather left my grandmother and started a new family, with a woman who had her own children, he moved into her life and left behind the family he had created before he met her. Not only did his violence disrupt my family unit, so too did his decision to rid himself of the responsibility of being a father, grandfather, and great-grandfather.

Through analysis, is has become clear to me that my mother was seeking out safety in men throughout her adult life because the men in her childhood were not safe. It is also evident, that I have carried on this behavioural pattern, for precisely the same reason. My awareness is my saviour from continuing to live like that, turning to myself for comfort not looking externally to replace the void of male safety, but I have not always lived like that. In my youth I was continuously taken advantage of by males because I was repeating similar behaviours to my mother. My mother's vulnerable quest for seeking safety in men led her to attract the wrong types of men, even if not violent, their intentions were never honourable. In her efforts to seek out what she should have been given in her childhood, my childhood suffered, I empathise with her position because I understand it, but I do not negate my own anguish because it is valid even if it isn't acknowledged by others.

My father, to this day, leans on his use of alcohol as the reason for his violent behaviour towards my mother. My father has never spoken of his own violent behaviour, but it was the death of my paternal step-grandfather that led my father to raise the topic of his own childhood marred by male violence. It was clear, when my father spoke of the violence his stepfather had inflicted on his mother, that my father perceived his own abusive behaviour as a by-product of drunkenness. My father could not comprehend how his stepfather, a non-drinker, had been so cruel while sober.

In his self-absorbed world of denial, my father has never freed me from my own contradictory feelings toward him, the silence has been a form of trauma that has increased with age. The more I have come to understand how wrong his behaviour was and how long-lasting the effects have been, the worse I feel. As a child, I was afraid, I knew what I was witnessing, therefore experiencing, was wrong, but I did not comprehend the complexities or the meaning of his behaviour. I have been emotionally abused by my father, even though he has loved me. I have been exposed to danger by my father, when he was supposed to protect me from it.

Crisis of the self

In 1973, psychoanalyst Charles Brenner (cited in, Breiner 1980, p. 247) wrote that 'changes occur as a person grows older… but the fundamental conflicts of childhood remain.'

The themes that emerged from the autoethnographic field texts led to one defining life outcome, the crisis of the self. The identity of the self has been in a perpetual state of crisis battling to locate itself, meandering through the staggered and disrupted process of self-actualisation. Self-actualisation is a privilege experienced by others, I am not privy to the benefits and comforts associated with such completeness, the wholesomeness of life has not yet been felt but I do believe that it can be reached.

The overarching effect of witnessing domestic violence as a child, for me, has been emotional disconnection, from myself. Not so much to disassociate from the violence that I saw occurring, but to deal with the neglect that I experienced because of the prevalence of violence being in my childhood family home. The acts of physical violence that I saw were brutal to observe, but they were fast, the moments were fixed and easy to define. The neglect that I experienced due to the presence of violence and victimisation that shaped my childhood caused a form of emotional instability that circulated my psyche, invisible, and was undefinable for a girl less than 10 years old. It was the inner turmoil caused by the seeds of insecurity that were cultivated in my untamed household riddled with male violence and female victimisation that continued to affect my life outcomes well into adulthood. The more that life happened, the more negative experiences and stresses that ensued, the further away from myself I became. As a child, I ignored the mounting sense of emotional combustion because I had no safe place to lose control, no access to a stronger person in my life to pick me up after I broke. As an adult, I lost myself in survival, finding solace in the momentary phases of independence that nurtured me like no one else had nurtured me before.

Loneliness

'Nothing to record; only an intolerable fit of the fidgets to write away. Here I am chained to my rock; forced to do nothing; doomed to let every worry, spite, irritation and obsession scratch and claw and come again' (Woolf 1953, p. 45).

Loneliness is a by-product of mental illness, and the very act of writing itself is strewn with conditions that incite loneliness. Unfortunately, I qualify as being both emotionally unwell and a dedicated writer. A writer's life is one spent in solitude, for lengthy periods of silence, within one's own thoughts when not writing. Living with fluctuating mental health is isolating even when surrounded by others because an anxious mind functions quietly, it is hard to distract and hard to detect.

I have isolated myself from living in a potentially nurturing world because I perceive it to be dangerous and strewn with perils that I constantly need to avoid. Why I have felt the need to persevere and battle against conditions and circumstances that I could easily have succumbed to is unexplainable to me, the answer has not revealed itself throughout this rigorous process of self-inquiry. The loneliness, however, has been relentlessly palpable and unable to be avoided due to the survival tactics I have unconsciously deployed.

Time spent alone has been time spent in an emotionally safe prism that has enabled me to recoup and recover from external stressors and periods of ill mental health. As I have become older, these periods of isolation have manifested into unhealthy stages of survival, causing anxieties of a different kind. New anxieties have intensified the old anxieties, as I have tried to understand what does and doesn't work for me at various stages of living.

In truth, I have been alone most of my life, emotionally out on a limb, fending for myself while my parents were engaged in conflict and resolution and my intimate partners were distracted by their own desires. Loneliness never phased me, I was not overcome by the prospect of a life lived entirely alone until my late thirties, then I became paralysed by the thought. I felt abandoned when a friend would leave, I felt fearful of never connecting with anyone deeply again. Why, after so many years spent emotionally grappling with the world, did I become secretly desperate for support? Had my childhood not built up enough resilience in me, to remain stoic and independent, had it burnt me out, used up all my energy too soon?

Resilience

In times of hunger, love is not important (Maslow 1943, p. 381).

My resilience has been built upon the ever-present mode of survival I have navigated the world from, which is not particularly healthy, but it is the truth. As a child I was provided with the basics, food, water, and a house, and that was it, the rest of the needs listed in Maslow's hierarchy of needs pyramid were mostly unfulfilled. I was, and still am, surviving on the bare minimum that a human needs to be able to reach their full potential and therefore contribute to society in an altruistic positive way. I have lived within a cycle of emotional and financial deficit and upon completion of writing this autoethnography, I have drawn the conclusion that the only positive life outcomes that have eventuated from my experiences are immense amounts of resilience and a hardened ability to live independently, emotionally, and financially. These positive traits have been built upon negative underpinnings and exist out of a necessity to survive and protect myself, can resilience be built in any other way though? It is the process of continuing to strive towards betterment of the self through the pitfalls of disadvantage that builds resilience, in my experience.

Education

Rossello-Roig's (2017, p. 91) research, on the topic of the effects of domestic violence on childhood development, found that educational attainment was already negatively affected at the age of 7 and by the age of 11 the effects significantly increased.

My formative years spent in a disrupted domestic setting affected my early childhood learning processes, particularly after my mother died. The build-up of domestic anxiety seemed to implode the year my mother became ill. I had lived through intermittent periods of my father's violence that had led me to retract into myself, became anxious and unable to concentrate. I attended school feeling a sense of general ill-ease, trying to process behaviours that were occurring at home that were beyond comprehension for my age. The

emotional weight of domestic violence interfered with my learning, even though it was unable to be seen. There was no proof in my grades, my achievements were not reflective of a disturbed child, but I was suffering, and I was struggling to keep my mind focused on learning what I was been taught. Due to my ability to absorb and think and produce quality scholarly outcomes, I have always perceived my early exit from high school (see anxiety section in memory analysis section) as representative of a failure of the school as an institution and my father's parenting capabilities. I have been able to overcome this setback through educating and supporting myself in later years, to which I only have myself to thank, and I am intensely thankful that I persevered with myself. I sacrificed extensively later in life, and I practised extraordinary levels of discipline to overcome the failings of both the school and my father in those formative, educational years.

Career

Very little time has been allocated to purposefully carving out a career for myself, jobs have meant one thing only: money. Job satisfaction and industry choice have been secondary to the need to financially sustain my independence, and I have remained afloat without debt but without asset. Working-class is insidious to identity, it demands most of the hours of a person's day, it keeps the person accountable for managing their own life, ineligible for any kind of assistance, solely responsible for their own livelihoods in a society that is impossible to succeed in without earning more than a working-class income can muster. Within the nuclear family, there is little, to basically no help from other family members, it is a tight, closed off house that stresses the occupants enough to damage the individuals and elevate the conflict between them, but the conditions are not poor enough for others to notice or assist. Working-class is a survival mode that keeps the order and functionality of society but depletes the individual and therefore the family.

Whilst I have not been able to work with intention, I have to a degree paved a path for myself in the working-class arena, and it's not an altogether terrible setting but it is not where I want to be. But this is not unique, most people spend their days doing what they don't want so that they can eat and be housed and pay taxes for the highways they use to reach their daily destinations. I am not unique, I am like everybody else, but it is in the knowing, in the awareness of the unhappiness, that I am disturbed.

Partner

'Why are women… so much more interesting to men than men are to women?' (Woolf 1928, p. 29).

I have stopped imagining my future life as one defined by partnership and nagging debt and needy children, I have purged the relentless unconscious desire to have what everyone seems to want or already has. I have recoiled from the idea that a lover and a child is what I need or what any women needs. My mother could have done without men and children, she could have lived differently, but she didn't so perhaps it is my turn to try something new, begin a new familial pattern, trial another way to find happiness and contentment. My mother's intimate partner relationship with my father emotionally traumatised her and her children.

My views on intimate partners are not solely built upon my parent's relationship, my father's violence, and my mother's death. I have chosen to steer my attention away from a life defined by sexual partners and children because I am witnessing my peers chose otherwise and I do not desire their lifestyles and responsibilities, their domestic confinement. It is odd really, because I am a recluse, I like being at home. I already have the attributes of a housewife and mother, but I prefer my home to be my own, a home that cannot be spoiled by maleness and childness because both are needy and selfish, and I have already suffered enough. It is the formative, childhood years of damage that have decreased my tolerance for stress. I choose peace where I can, monogamy and the nuclear family threatens my desire, and my right, to live serenely. Perhaps what is worse than the nuclear family dynamic is a life lived as a single mother, my mother lived intermittently single, raising children on bread and little time. The exhaustion of single motherhood perhaps motivated my mother to continuously seek out male partners, in the hope that they could alleviate some of her burdens, but they were more burdensome than her children. At least I am aware, and I have learnt from my mother's mistakes, not to take a man or his children, because at best, men leave easily, at worst, they abuse, control and kill.

But what about sex? What is a life without sexual connection and emotional intimacy? What is the healthier alternative? As I pry my gaze away from the masculine, I find I have only one other place to rest them, one other entity to analyse and connect with, the self. I can either devote the self to a man, or to myself, I cannot invest in both. Why do men drain the female of her energy?

Creativity

A poem written by me in 2011 in outback Queensland, recovering from a drawn-out mental breakdown: A love affair that is unable to defeat, Silence of beauty lies within the crevice, Rolls atop the peaks that cross, No sound is crisper than here.

In 1984 Ted Hughes (2007, pp. 484-485) described an artist as a person who has been hurt and who is not able to defend themselves (internally) against the pain, 'all art is trying to become an anaesthetic and at the same time a healing session.'

Through writing and photography I have been able to distract myself, express myself it could be said, but the intentions for creating are always to escape and never done with the forethought of what an audience may want to read or see. To an extent, I have written this thesis as a distraction, without a reader in mind, I have researched and analysed to move away from myself, but I have undeniably become closer and closer to my own narrative. Creating is a process of producing without prediction, of working in the moment and building upon prior thoughts and ideas.

The structure of a thesis, the milestones associated with producing a thesis, the knowing that experts will critique and that an examiner will assess have required me to be more aware of this writing process than I am of other forms, such as diary entries or poetry prose. This thesis has been produced a little differently to how I normally utilise creativity and

harness the ability to narrate with words or visually, I have certainly struggled with structure and form and discipline in a way that I hadn't experienced before.

I have always been relatively obsessed with documenting life, not just my own, and through photography I have been able to record the environment, different settings and locations, a vast amount of people whether in a studio or out in the world. I began photography later in life when I tired of using words to contain and describe what could be better represented visually and I intend to return to photography upon completion of this thesis to discharge from the arduousness of language for a short period of time.

Identity

'Identity consists not simply of a self-narrative that integrates one's past events into a coherent story… it also in includes the construction of a future story' (Polkinghorne 1988, p. 107).

As I have grown, I have intellectualised my own identity. Through analysis, I have identified a disparity between my emotional self and the analyst, a separation that causes immense conflict of the inner world that then translates into the exterior world. The inner crisis, caused by emotional turmoil derived from my childhood, negatively affected my ability to manage and survive in the social world as a child and continues to interfere with my capacity to progress as an adult. I am certain that I can theorise my life without any great trouble, but I am a victim to my own emotional world, unable to self-regulate. In its simplest and most honest form, I can describe myself, my condition, to be a process of perpetually seeking safety and most troubling of all, being unable to find it.

I have time-over, dismantled my identity in an effort to adapt and readjust to my surroundings. It could be said that all humans live like this, everchanging who they are according to their external worlds. My external world has never been steady, in many ways my sense of self has grown more and more uncertain as changes have persisted causing relentless acclimatisation, moving me further and further away from inhabiting a steady internal world. It could also be argued that through the constant awareness and reflexiveness of the self that I am self-aware, but that that awareness is too confrontational for the sensitivity, the vulnerability, the fragility of the mind.

The fragility of the mind

Cardinal (2003, p. 38) wrote on her experiences with severe anxiety: 'Danger was everywhere. I had to figure out a way to see without seeing, hear without hearing, feel without feeling.'

The external world is an everchanging setting unable to be controlled, but better managed when the internal world is ordered. The relationship between myself and the world outside of me has been managed through several protective measures. The self has been destroyed by the system that it must live within, it cannot move through it freely, it is intermittently traumatised by it and consistently guarded from it. This has manifested itself into a condition caused agoraphobia, within which I simply spend as much time as possible in my

home. The illness that I cannot escape, even in my own home, is called anxiety and panic disorder and I have been plagued by it since I can remember. Through the analysis of genealogy, it became clear why these illnesses befell me, it is not without reason, the direct causal link is the negative experiences of childhood. It would be easier to overcome the conditions of my childhood if I were not faced with the effects each day, reminded of my social position, my vulnerability in society, my emotional unrest. The symptoms of the illnesses motivated me to explore my mind in search of answers for how I came to be who I came to be. 'Without my madness I would never have discovered certain pathways of the mind' (Cardinal 2003, p. 19). The madness of the illness and the traumas of my childhood have been harnessed, the mind has been harnessed, the value of understanding the fragility of the mind has been utilised.

Excerpt of a letter I wrote to my sibling in 2010 without the intention of it being sent or read:

> Oh, how I know how much you will not be able to understand this, but I feel the need to jot it down in any case. I have felt pain like nobody should have to feel pain. Today I had another dose of such hell… the kind of hurt that has you cradled into yourself, protecting, reassuring yourself that you will not die, that you are feeling the worse that a person is able to feel. Emotional pain, loss, rejection, loneliness, and anger all compounds upon your chest and through your mind to your stomach; it courses through your veins like a wildness that is untameable.

Anxiety, panic, and agoraphobic disorders don't get treated as conditions that are real, I have always felt immense frustration about this, not to mention the lack of curable treatments available for any of them. The effects of these illnesses that are inextricably intertwined are incredibly and grotesquely real, the disorder has essentially controlled my life. The sense of unsafety at the core of my anxiety was borne from my childhood because it was a dangerous one, therefore, the anxiety is not disproportionate, it is not unexplainable, but in adulthood it has become out of context.

> I can only state that on each occasion, while I perspired and appeared paralysed and dumb, that in my mind there occurred extreme agitation made up of sudden advances and withdrawals at every direction at once, which I did not understand and could not control, and which terrorised me (Cardinal 2003, p. 143).

Can the unmet childhood needs really be blamed for the anxiousness of my mind, or is it the determination to reach self-actualisation that causes the internal dilemma? If the foundations of identity remain weak, will the anxiety ever dissipate? Is a life lived in a need deficit an anxious, vulnerable, and insecure one? Can a child's needs ever be met by anyone other than the adults in their lives at the time of childhood? Can the need-deprived child ever be an independent adult, or does the innate desperation to fulfil what was not met persevere?

Towards the end of Cardinal's (2003, p. 204) psychoanalysis treatment she wrote that she had overcome such strong internal resistances that she was no longer afraid to face herself. It took time to become healthy, and once health prevailed her 'character emerged in all its

individuality (Cardinal 2003, p. 261),' she had reached self-actualisation. Instead of falling into madness and succumbing to its finality in living, Cardinal was able to recover from her years of mental anguish. The thing is, it takes years for the illness of anxiety to manifest, and years of treatment to sustain a sense of living that is convoluted and riddled with setbacks. The illness steals people from their own lives, from what could have been lived.

In his essay on depression William Styron (1991, pp. 56-57) wrote about the affect loss has on psychology, determining that 'loss in all of its manifestations is the touchstone of depression' and that he, the sufferer, developed attachments and became possessive over ridiculous objects when an acute sense of the loss of his own life overcome him. Styron (1991, p. 62) described his daily life as moving from 'pain to pain' while also trying to maintain a normal existence. For Styron (1991, p. 69) the 'real healers were seclusion and time', and I completely agree with him, I have never relied on medication or therapy as I found neither to be helpful, long-term. Agoraphobia is a condition, a symptom of anxiety and panic disorder, but I think it has been a protective mechanism for me allowing me to be alone and take the time I need to repair my nerves. In 1984, Hughes (2007, p. 484) mentions in a letter to his friend after doing some research on the effects of stress on the body, that the psychological reaction to stress is defence as the conscious attempts to block out the real pain. I have found that in times of solitude I can allow the source of emotional pain to surface and be released, the effects of trauma have no place in the functioning world, they must be supressed to allow the victim to participate in society.

Barbara J. Jago (2002, p. 745) defines identity as:

> a process rooted in the complex interplay between individual biology, autobiography, and communication, which takes place within the context of an external environment… characterized by elements including the spiritual, economic, cultural, social, interpersonal, and biological.

Will I ever reach a state of mind that I won't be able to recover from? I have thought I may not survive many periods of time in my life, but I am pessimistically certain that the parameters of my mind are strewn with limitations that will be crossed. Surely the nervous system can only withstand the weight of a certain amount of angst before it is irreparably destroyed, sending the mind into madness and the body with it. I can become overwhelmed with the possibility that the fragility of my mind will one day be the death of me, but in moments of calm, a sense that I will never be divided from my own sanity settles the negative projections intermittently. The mind does heal, I have lived through the damage and the healing, I have felt every nerve contract and release in illness, I have been reduced to the foetal position and re-emerged enlightened, free from distress. One day perhaps I will be mad and, in that madness, in the disconnection from reality, the anxiety may be alleviated and that would be wonderful, ever pleasant. Eternal peace from the sufferings of living would be welcomed in madness.

Long-term dislocation

2021 Christmas was the first Christmas I had spent without the company of a family member or an intimate partner in 16 years, it was the year I came to understand the

concept of dislocation. I was in a dislocated state of existence because I was not attached to a partner and their family, and I was too sick to travel to where members of my family were going to be. I had not yet created a family of my own yet, and I didn't have one I could rely on to accommodate my physical and mental illnesses, I was alone.

The loose connections I had, with people that would allow me to morph into their worlds for the day didn't satisfy me. The thought of spending my day with any of them made me more anxious than spending the day alone.

I felt I was propped up on an unsteady hill with the choice to either be still and calm and remain steady while the time passed by or I could let the ground beneath me turn to rubble as I drifted into oblivion with the dirt and dust. I could write all day, I could prepare good food, I could spend time with my dog on the beach, I could meditate. I had a nice space, money for choices, capacity and good enough insight to know that the day would pass quickly and that it would no longer matter once I went to sleep.

Social, familial dislocation feeds the identity or perhaps it represents it. I had to identify with the position was in due to my choice of leaving an intimate partner, my mother's death, my father's absence, and my sibling's selfishness. I had to be responsible for what I had control over and recognise the flaws in people and the contexts in which those flaws were borne from. Even in my choices, there was context, and I had made the right choice but it had consequences that I hadn't thought through, as much as I didn't regret leaving my marriage, I did regret the time I spent alone when I could have met someone new. Even within that context, of meeting someone new, I was burdened by my physical injury and blocked by the global pandemic, I was trying not to suffer but I was suffering. The residual effects of the years leading into the Christmas of 2021 were surfacing and becoming very real, I couldn't offer myself any quick fixes, there was no way to resolve the dislocation, it was going to take some time. In the meantime, I had to tolerate the intolerable, I had to remain steady and find my way through the next phase.

Self-efficacy

David D. Preiss and Diego Cosmelli (2017, pp. 302-303) found that 'creative insight reveals a dual temporal orientation. On the one hand, insight has an immediate reference to what was going on in the preceding moment, as the experience of solving a problem by insight is always related to a prior "wanting" or "lacking" context to which that insight responds.'

I gained significant insight into the self, others, and their influence on understanding the self, and my social worlds by writing creatively in diarised form. Growing up I always had insight, but never great context, and as I grew I knew that I was curious to learn more about who I was through analysis of the contextual factors that shaped my experiences. I thought I knew more, until I learnt more, and realised that I started this thesis knowing very little about my relationship with the world. I have completed writing this thesis with the ability to differentiate between the person (the child) who has navigated the world through the lens and effects of trauma, and the person (the adult) who is no longer traumatised and who has the capacity to manage the effects. This identification, this acknowledgment of the duality in identity has been reached through the process of being both the participant of this

research and the analyst. I am not yet in control of these dually interconnected beings, they are still in battle with one another, fighting to see and live and interpret experiences as they see to be true, but I have at least been able to identify that they exist. I am not yet certain who would be better to dominate my thinking and feeling, the resilient but vulnerable child, or the calm and rationale adult. Maybe it is not possible to ever completely divide the two, perhaps the duality will be perpetually active, and is precisely who I am.

> Identities are central to agency because agency is both an ontological and an epistemological issue, a question both of who I am (and how I come to understand who I am) and of what I am capable of doing (Showden 2011, p. 13).

I have never really lacked confidence, motivation, or curiosity. Maybe after my surfing accident I lost some confidence for a short period of time because my appearance had changed, but even during that time I was old enough to know that aesthetics fade and that they only mean so much, genuine confidence exists deep in the being and is not present due to the exterior. My relationship with myself was harnessed on my appearance, for years, until I matured. People in the world respond to the exteriority of others until deeper relationships are formed between individuals and a new sense of connection and understanding evolves, for both the spectator and the subject. Identities shift within the relationships that are forged over time, and the types of relationships people engage with change as the experiences individuals have with others change the person. We cannot change in solitude, our perception of ourselves is formed by our interaction with those around us.

I have always been disciplined and drawn towards types of living that rely on disciplinary, self-motivated traits. I have always written, which has developed my brain, I have always used my body, which has kept the physique healthy. These are all characteristics that don't really fit the outcome of the downtrodden life of a neglected child, I am still relatively uncertain how this sense of identity was developed, perhaps some things are innate. But with all the positivity comes the overriding fear and anxiety that was most certainly developed due to my childhood experiences that has dampened my capacity to self-actualise. I have a lot there, sitting in the corners of my mind, that I can draw from intermittently, but I have always lived overshadowed by the damage done to my nervous system.

Because I have read and written, and lived exposed, I have the ability to survive and adapt to the social environments I have moved between. My relationship with the world is not straightforward, my view is not narrow, I see and feel the complexities of the simplistic framework that humans live within. My perception of myself and others is intrinsic and complicated because my mind is multifaceted due to the complicated conditions I have existed and continue to exist within. I am not easily disrupted by others; it is only my fear that disarms me.

AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC FRAMING: ANALYSIS AND CONTEXT

The Personal Narratives Group (1989, p. 19) wrote that:

> Acknowledging the centrality and complexity of context reveals the range of experiences and expectations within which women live; and provides a vital perspective from which to interpret women's ways of navigating the weave of relationships and structures which constitute their worlds.

I would argue that being female is a traumatising experience because of the struggle to ascertain power and agency over one's life, and if not traumatising, immensely challenging. Perhaps I saw the vulnerability of being female in my mother's experiences, maybe I understood the power that men have over the household and the female as an individual through my father's violence. As I grew, I saw that power imbalance permeate into social spaces. As an adult I have begun to understand my experiences and my identity within the gendered discourse that they have occurred within. This section of the thesis offers insight into the internal dialogue, it is a representation of my method of framing the self.

Stream of consciousness

Robert Humphrey (1958) states that the phrase 'stream of consciousness' conjures up ideas of 'innermost confessions [and] wells of suppressed energy'.

Through rigorous and disciplined writing sessions and allowing writing to occur without any attention to detail, stream of consciousness field texts have been produced. Tilley-Lubbs (2016, p. 8) described writing as a method of understanding personal situations.

The very act of writing this research came about due to my inability to function in society for lengthy periods of time. Historically, I have intermittently contributed to society in a "normal" way but have often found myself drawn back to the illness of anxiety and panic disorder which leads to bouts of agoraphobia and therefore limits my capacity to occupy the social world. I have been reduced to long periods of home arrest on several occasions and this has influenced my decision to dedicate my time to academia, time over. During the production of this thesis, I moved between bouts of steady emotional health and periods of mental illness, therefore navigating the negative effects of my childhood while I wrote about them. I have lived what I have written while writing up the thesis, therefore I can sustain the notion that the context within which I have written this thesis is an integral part of the research because it shows the lifelong effects of the instability domestic violence impedes upon life outcomes. I believe that the context within which the autoethnographic account was written is a substantial component of the process of conducting the research, which is why I have chosen to include this section into the thesis. Relationships assume contextual importance and interpretive power when women's lives are analysed (Personal Narratives Group 1989, p. 20), I have written about the relationship with myself, with other people and with the social world I occupy to provide a deeper level of meaning to the findings of this research.

Voice

The silent voices of victimised children sat beside me while I channelled my own, it was a quiet process. I attempted and I failed to re-write my experiences, of witnessing domestic violence, and the effects that that seeing had on me. I can never un-see, unknow, forget the violence and victimisation that I saw. I tried, for many months, to reconstruct my past, but I was stuck in the present, unable to remain in the childhood voice for any length of time long enough to allow a succinct and linear narrative to form itself. My voice, as a child, reappears in small waves, but it is mainly gone, because too much time has passed, and my thinking and my emotions have surpassed the memories I have of my father beating my mother. I was unable to write what I had intended to write, and I had to reassess what I could offer, what form of research I could use to contribute new knowledge to this social and personal topic of witnessing domestic violence as a child.

My adult voice, has emerged, not only with the passing of time, but within the process of producing my data, through my attempts to write chapters and chunks of segregated times and experiences. I have outgrown the traumas of my father's violence and my mother's victimisation. Contrary to popular thought, my mother's victimised position was more traumatising and damaging to my voice, my identity, my experiences in my childhood homes, than my father's violence. The way that she responded to her domestic abuse and managed her life within those set of circumstances, influenced my coping mechanisms and understanding of relationships and the domestic sphere. I have, overtime, been able to convert those dysfunctional learnings into positive ones, but that has taken many years of reflection and investigation to undo. My father's violence, the catalyst that resulted in my mother's victimisation, is the root of my personal experiences in the home. His violence is certainly reflective of the larger social issue, male violence is the foundation of the existence of female's victimised positions. But I had no respect for him, I disconnected from him, and his influence on my voice and my identity was weaker as a result.

My childhood voice appears sometimes, but it is mostly lost with time. I thought, when I began to write the novel version of my narrative that never prevailed, that I would be able to find that voice with ease, find the pain and the fear and the vulnerability. I discovered that the child had merged into the adult and that the pain and the fear and the vulnerability had morphed into mental illness. My childhood voice was suffocated by the anxieties I had formed over the years, moving through the world in a vulnerable state, I contracted displaced neurosis that I must constantly manage and eventually overcome. This observation in and of itself, is a lifelong effect of witnessing domestic violence. The silent voice that becomes overridden by, or turns itself into, a neurotic thinking pattern is everlasting and difficult to undo.

<u>Domestic life</u>

As I turned to the diary entries to make sense of my discontentment, I recorded the transition from what I considered to be an achievement (of becoming a wife) to the utter disappointment (of being a wife).

The lens through which I conducted this study has altered dramatically over the duration of data collection and analysis. I began this study a married woman. There are diary entries

upon diary entries of me confessing that my ability to write an autoethnographic account of my traumatic childhood was based on the secure emotional and financial contexts I was living within. I felt, because I had married a non-violent man, who I could trust and rely on, that I was the most secure I had ever been, and that I was certainly moving away from the generations of violence and victimisation that I am from. Two years later, and divorced, it is clear that I was struggling emotionally, to co-exist with a man that was not abusive, but was certainly absent. There are pages and pages of diary entries that document my unhappiness. I have documented the emotions and the analysis of those emotions, as I moved from wife to non-wife; from a home shared with a man to an empty one. It wasn't long after I was living alone, perhaps a week, that I woke up, laid in bed, my thoughts consumed by my recent separation and my research topic, both linked to the domestic sphere, the space that was severely disrupted by both my father's violence and my mother's response to that violence during my childhood. The domestic terrain is terrorised by gendered power imbalance (at best) and domestic abuse (at worse) and yet women and children continue to share their domestic home with men, under the guise that the nuclear family is the most secure way to exist, financially but also emotionally. I took an economic risk, to leave the security of a white man's wage, that wasn't ever mine to be had, but nevertheless gave me a false sense of security. My marriage was a false sense of security, much like his wage. My access to the benefits of *his* financial security, *his* ability to live securely in the world, was taken from me the day we separated. Marriage is *not* the means to emotional or financial security because it is an arrangement that is based on sexual attraction and the fickle, nuances of intimate relationships. *Independence* is a more secure way of enduring the world, a fundamental survival tactic that females should be taught.

I did not marry a violent man, but I married someone who was not able to understand my background or empathise with the complexities of the effects my childhood has had on me. I did not marry a violent man, but I married an emotionally absent one. I did well, I had thought, to marry a non-drinking, non-violent man, but there were other factors I could have considered, when choosing a man to commit to a domestic life with. First and foremost, a male who did not need to be schooled on empathy. Secondly, a male who understood acts of selflessness. Spending everyday cohabitating with one person is as challenging as it is comforting. What's the alternative, for a woman such as me, with no financial or emotional stability? Domestic life, or disadvantage, that was the choice. For some time, I thought I had escaped my childhood, that the effects of domestic violence and instability had worn off. But when I force myself to consider my life without my false sense of security of a privileged white male, I recognise that I have not surpassed my predecessors, that I am a child of domestic violence, in the body of a grown woman, dealing with the implications of the social world I live in as a single woman without much security.

The worst part of my experience with marriage was that I lacked emotional connection with a person I was legally bound to, because at one point in our lives we were sexually attracted to each other. My marriage, like most marriages, existed under the conditions of sexual intimacy, and was built upon the idea that we would never want to be sexually intimate with anyone else, ever again. I find this absurd, and I am disappointed in myself for not paying attention to what I was getting myself into when I decided to marry a person, and live with them, and make sacrifices, and give and not receive, and feel conditioned by society to act a certain way in the home and surrender to the life I chose for myself.

Monogamy is realistic for periods of time, but not a lifetime. I function in the world better, now that I am divorced, I have more energy and time to invest in myself. I am my own caregiver, my own domestic labourer, my own organiser, and my own decision-maker. I am not weighed down by the needs of a male who was unable to give in to my needs. I have more to offer the world because I have freedom. I am not foolish enough to hand it all over again, in an act of love, commitment. The falsity of freedom in domestic relationships has escaped me.

Identity

What I come from informs my decisions, not only about reproduction, but about how I spend my time.

The more I write, the more I expose myself, to myself. I write well some days, some I don't. It would be easier to do this if the foundations weren't constantly moving beneath me, within me. There is no balance, there is only sacrifice and survival. How would it feel, to live differently, without the passion, without the uncertainty if I am doing things right or getting in my own way? Without the passion, maybe I would feel more content. Without the desire to be more, experience more, offer more, maybe I wouldn't be so unhappy. If I could just stay put, be here, write this, love the unlovable, then I'd feel differently, most likely better than I do now, plagued by the desire to do more than I really need to.

I sound depressed. I'm not, I'm just sad. If I was depressed, maybe that would be better, to lie in bed and give it all up, surrender to the past and forget about the future. Stop exercising, see a doctor, take some pills, deal with side effects, come off them, get back on them, lie in bed, escape, disappear, be nobody, mend a little bit. Isn't that the cycle? I've heard it goes something like that. But that doesn't sound very appealing either, to be depressed. So, I will just be sad some days and happier on the others. I don't think I can choose to be reclused to my bed, mental illness is not a choice. I never chose to live in a transient frame of mind, where I was led by my anxiety, afraid, unable to cast my eyes up, from the downward glance, stuck, paused, too tired to deal with what many could not. If it ends up that way, me isolated in my bed, that won't be a choice, that will be symptomatic of the damage to the brain, the nerves, the spirit.

Can love fix this, can it fix me? Is love the crux of my dissatisfaction? Am I in love and rejecting it? Or do I want a different kind of love, the type a sexual partner can never offer? A pure love, not resting on the aesthetics of my femininity. I am tired, tired of the gaze, but craving it just the same. I am a contradiction. I don't want what I don't have, but I do. I don't want what I do have because I want it to feel different.

I have always been desperate, determined to do anything, to make sure I keep myself from emotional destitution. This has come at a huge cost and caused exhaustion. Relentless pressure and an immense sense of instability has stemmed from a life lived chaotically. The inconsistencies in my lived experiences, the inconsistencies that consistent change breeds, mar the parameters of my identity. I am not wholly this, or that, I am fighting for the freedom of my past. Is that all that I am? In almost everything that I do, that fight can be seen. Certainly, all that I feel, is premised upon the exact idea that I am invested in not

having to be a product of what I was once unable to control. But how naive of me, to think that in my quest for contentment, in my efforts to escape the manner in which I was bred, that I am unconsciously deidentifying with my past. An impossible task, that I set for myself to cope, when I was not yet a teen. Three decades on, I am no further from her, I am her, in the same body, an aged and capable body, stifled by the brain and the heart and the knowledge that all of that does define me, all of that that I could not regulate or navigate.

Their roles, as mother and as father, were damaged by their identities, their pasts. Their damage damaged my sense of self and created a past that I have had to reckon with, to determine why I ended up who I am, to reidentify myself, to understand the effects of domestic life, and the violence that occurred within mine. It is not just the violence, it is the space and time around the violence too, that shreds the nerves and pierces the brain. The unsettled child barely rests. I am an adult, and I am still her, we can't be separated. The anxiety lives on, peaks, lulls, intensifies, disappears only to reappear again, and again, and it will continue to, because I can never be separate from her, and she may never be calmed.

So, who was I, before I was the child in their home, witnessing her despair and his physical violence? I was too young to remember my thoughts, too young to have known who I thought I was or wanted to be. I was cute, healthy, happy, and sensitive, like most babies. I was vulnerable, like all babies. And I grew as I watched, and I lived, and I felt the effects of living as a working-class family. Intimate partner jealously was rife in my home. I learnt that it is possible, in heterosexual relationships, for the male to be jealous of the very thing that drew him to the female, her femininity, her attractiveness, her sexuality. Not only was my father jealous of my mother paying attention to, or receiving attention from, other men. He was wildly jealous of her beauty when they were alone. In their private space, away from external threats he was still jealous of her. He was drawn to what he hated most about her. My mother had unknowingly become entangled in my father's ego. It was my position, as the young girl, her young girl, their young girl, to be loved by them. But instead, I watched violence, I heard it, it rippled through the hallway, I would retreat to my violet walled sanctuary when the vibrations of a war began reverberating. I experienced significant changes and angst and instability as a result of his violence. My mother's choice to stay was damaging, as was her choice to leave. No matter which way she turned, it invited negativity into our lives. At the mercy of a vicious narcissist, my mother was incredibly vulnerable, a vulnerability that was passed onto her from her own mother, and then onto me, like a family heirloom, as the production of generational violence continued to bleed into my own identity.

Who I was before the first punch, before the first flow of blood was drawn, is irrelevant, because that person never came to be. The only woman I can be, is premised upon those formative years, within which I was neglected and unnurtured by both of my parents. I have had bouts of respite, but I am by no means mended. A professional once suggested that if I were to have my own family, that I would be able to heal those wounds. At the time, I had no response. It was a nice thought, an option I could consider in the very distant future. Now, I would have to disagree with the professional. To re-produce another generation of people who are likely to be at risk of instability at best or domestic abuse at worst, given the context in which I exist, would be an act of stupidity. Knowing what I know about being female, without a backbone, a family, a support unit, within the confines of working-class

conditions, deters me from wanting to grow a child. What if the child was female and her gender meant she was inevitably vulnerable, and she had to struggle to live well, and I died and left her to the wolves? Watching physical illness deplete my mother of her life, carrying on without her, without a father to trust or rely on, solidifies my choice to avoid falling pregnant. I must consider the generations of domestic violence that have occurred within my own family, wherein men are violent to the women that they live with, in front of the children that are their own, as a factor in my decision-making process. I want to break the cycle of disadvantage that I am from, not contribute to the larger social epidemic of women being abused by violent men.

I think it is obscure that I am the person within the family that is analysing hundreds of photographs; private, handwritten letters; 1990's video recordings, and other various, grey documents of life, searching for meaning in my experiences, in my family's experience. It is even more unusual that I am still in it. I have realised, that I really am still in it. I am not sure that I will ever leave it. The emotional survival continues, at times I have relief, but I am not free from the remnants of my father's abuse and my mother's compromised position as a mother. I am more secure, but not free. I have clung onto any details about my past, my parents, their parents, anyone I encountered, and the ones that died before I met them. I have always been curious to know more, because I have never really known a lot, and my experiences have always been abnormal and generally negative rather than positive. I have always wanted to know why my life is the way it is, without much knowledge behind me. The more I learn, the more I want to know, and the more I come to understand. It is only when people become aware of their own identity, understand where it came from, that they are they able to investigate it and challenge it and change it to a certain degree. My parents' behaviour impacted my childhood, tremendously, and I had to make sense of it in order to move past it. It works. It is hard, but it works. And then it all becomes a little easier.

If I am a vulnerable member of society based on my economic position, my gender, my familial circumstances, then my child would also be vulnerable, they would be the secondary victim of my own circumstances. Like I was my mother's victim. Like she was her mother's. I choose not to reproduce because I don't want to add to the social epidemic of vulnerable and abused women and children. I have a responsibility to make informed decisions about my circumstances. Perhaps it would be easy to ignore all of the facts, and hope for the best, but I'm too considered, and I view the role of motherhood as the ultimate sacrifice of the self. By choosing motherhood, I would be choosing to commit my life to protecting and loving another human the best I knew how. I do not question my own capacity to protect, to love, or to sacrifice, but I am relentlessly afraid of what may happen if my ability to do any of these things slipped away from me, because I have seen it happen, I am a product of it happening. The women around me are birthing children, torturing their bodies, to bring new life into the world. I am rebirthing myself, through autoethnography, the self-malice, self-inflicted, arduous pain of reconstructing the self seems incomparable to the stress of birthing and caring for a new-born. I'm trying to convince myself that I have chosen the better option, but in truth I am covering the pain of wanting to breed but being too terrified to regenerate the next vulnerable generation in my family line, I am trying to be responsible and sacrifice the self.

To my unborn daughter

As a mid-thirty-year-old female, the question of bearing children is on the tip of everyone's tongue, plaguing the forefront of my mind and most social interactions that I have. It would be obvious to you at this stage in the thesis, that I am a fierce self-reflector who consistently practices self-reflexivity to inform my decisions based on my inner-self and the world that I occupy. I have paid serious attention to my intermittent desires to have children. Having accidentally fallen pregnant almost two decades ago I know that I have fertility potential. I am entering into a risk category of being able to conceive, as the ovaries deplete, and the eggs begin to wane. Time over, I have become emotional at the thought of raising a child better than my predecessors raised me. At times, the thought of offering something so vulnerable protection and love, gives me some sense of life's ultimate worth, that it could be the most important thing I have to offer. But more often, I am afflicted by what I am so acutely aware of, that children (female children in particular) can become victims of the perils of the world too easily. I ask myself, what if something were to happen to me? Who would care for that human? My aversion to the falsity of the stability of intimate partner relationships is all but obvious now, the thought of relying on a sexual partner to parent in my absence does not make me feel secure.

I have been told by professional psychologists and counsellors that if I were to have my own family that some of my anxieties and traumas of the past would weaken. There is some merit to their logic, but I disagree, the notion is trumped by my awareness of the responsibility that I have as an informed adult to make a responsible, self-less decision, something that I vehemently believe most people do not do. Parenthood, in my opinion, is taken far too lightly and the reasons for it are generally self-indulgent but turn out to be self-destructive in many ways.

I have written to my unborn daughter, to reveal the perils of being born female. This letter is based on my experiences as a female and my interactions with men. It is no doubt, a negative reflection on males, but I won't defend that negativity because it is demonstrative of how I have experienced the male species.

To my unborn daughter,

Never need a man, not even your father, or your brother, certainly not a man of sexual interest. Strangers, relatives, acquaintances, never need any of them. Anyone you come across, that isn't a man, trust them more, rely on them, confide in them. Use men for what they are, and what they have to offer. Have fun with them, enjoy them. Play with them when you're a kid, fuck them when you're an adult. But never need them. Especially financially. Certainly not emotionally. Never need a man to be able to live well, you will be your most vulnerable in those moments. Realise that even though you may have "good' men in your life, that you would be stupid to need them for anything. Your presence in their lives is conditional, you will be treated grounded on what you have to offer them, because men are perpetually selfish. If I pay attention to my own advice, your father will be a better man than mine was, because surely there are "good" ones out there. You will be able to trust him, more than I could trust my own. But fathers leave families easy inviting stepfathers to further destroy domestic life. Stepfathers are worse than real fathers, so are

stepmothers. No one will love you as much as your real parents, if you're lucky enough to have loving parents, and I am certain I will love you. As a child, you will be a burden, as an adult make sure you're not. Being a burden to others is to be a burden on yourself. Be empowered instead. Take care of yourself, be sure that you can survive most tragedies, without needing anyone, especially a man, a sexual partner in particular. Any male you have in your life because you are attracted to them, will always be there, for the sex, don't be fooled to think they will withstand too much of anything they don't want to get what they need though. Like fathers, they leave easy.

If you find, at times, that the women in your life are unavailable to you, they are most likely dealing with a needy or abusive man or carrying or caring for a man's baby. Don't take it personally, just know that she is been drained by her sexual partner or a child and be there for her when she needs you.

I do hope that you don't experience all men like this, but I want you to know that you will experience some men as I describe them, in some of these contexts. I can't protect you from everything. Be wary, but not afraid. Just never need a man, ever. That is all. And when you do interact with the men who are better, enjoy that, but still, never need them. They are the same as the other men, but have been raised better, or trained better, by a more persistent and enduring woman, whether a mother, or a sexual partner, or a sister. It takes a lot of energy to re-teach habitual conditioning and innate behaviours; they must have been resilient women. Silently thank them.

You are at risk of the threat of male violence, that some men are prone to commit, because you are female. Before you are old enough to read this, you are at risk of abuse, by the people that you know. You will always be at risk of been violated, by the people that you know. More at risk than you are when you encounter strangers in unfamiliar places. But still, you have to minimise your risk of been harmed by a stranger and even though you shouldn't have to, you do. Even though men and their propensity to carry out acts of violence against women are to blame for female abuse, you still have to protect yourself. It is all good and well, to walk the streets late at night on your own, in an act of defiance against the restrictions some men place on all women, but if you are raped, or killed, the damage can never be undone, and you will wish you hadn't made that choice, even though you should have been able to. Even though you shouldn't have to think about the threat of male violence, you do.

Taking care, being diligent in the decisions you make about your own safety, won't ensure that you are safe, but it will minimise the chance of anything insidious happening to you. And if you can avoid the dangers, the acts of violence against you, as best you can then you will be better off. Not that it would ever be your fault, if you did or didn't try to protect yourself, and something happened. It is never your fault, if a male mistreats you, in the mildest form to the most extreme. But if you can live without the burden of the weight of a male's destructiveness, you will be more at ease. Not to say that if something happened to you, that you are irreparably damaged, you're not, you can survive and continue on, but it will be hard, and it will cost you a lot, and drain you of almost everything you have. And I would prefer you not to go through any of that, so try to look after yourself. Surround

yourself with people who also care for you, especially women, because they know how vulnerable you are, because they themselves are just as vulnerable.

Never get married, it's a ridiculous process. The set of ideals you will have to prescribe to will exhaust you, because men are needy and domestic life is unfulfilling. Especially if you don't have anything else in the world to focus on. Even if you married a "good" man, who *helps* with domestic chores and raising children, it will always be just *help*. You are the one that will instinctively do what needs to be done, while trying to be anything else you want to be. You will have to juggle many roles, and compartmentalise the different facets of your identity, to survive the days, weeks, years, god forbid decades of pandering to a man. You will, most likely, not earn as much as a husband would. If you're lucky you will earn some money, so that you are not entirely dependent. But just don't get married. It's a legal agreement entangled in emotional, physical and financial conditions and experiences. And people change, so you might have loved him before you married him, at the wedding, and for some time after, but that could change very quickly and it's difficult to untangle the coming together of two adults, especially when children are involved. Then there's the paperwork. And who can be bothered with paperwork, when matters of the heart and head are in a heightened state? Then there's the finances, and all that you will lose or gain, depending on how you navigated the marriage. If you do marry, never, ever, leave yourself in a vulnerable position.

Society looks after men. Women have to protect themselves. Women's vulnerability poses threat to their children. In a divorce, the man worries about when he will have sex again, *where* he should live, who will care for him, the threat of another man seducing his ex-wife. The woman worries about her future prospects, her loss of identity, *how* she will live, the financial instability she will most likely experience can lead to homelessness and other forms of poverty-stricken conditions. Men's biggest concern regarding women, is that they may have to deal with rejection. Women are most concerned about been killed or raped by men. This is how your gender affects you, this is why you should never need a man and you should keep yourself, not be kept.

If you do or don't marry and you find yourself in an abusive relationship, I feel for you, it could be one of the worst positions a woman can find herself in, in fact it is one of the worst. You could end up dead. You will live in fear, while you are there and after you leave. You will be hurt, emotionally and/or physically, dependent upon the abuse. You will suffer in some way. Educate yourself from a young age about what the signs of an abusive male partner are. The more you are aware, the more hope you have of taking heed of the signs. If by some chance, the signs aren't there and you are deep into a relationship with an abusive man and you feel trapped, try to leave. This is when the benefits of having women in your life can be used. Reach out, don't be ashamed, don't think it is your fault that you have chosen a "bad" man, just reach out. The more people you have around you that you trust, the better chance you will have of been able to leave. The stronger your support network is, the safer you will be. Don't rely on the legal processes, make use of them, but don't place all your confidence in a piece of paper stopping a violent man from hurting you. Make yourself safe, you will have a better chance.

If you have paid attention to my advice, on remaining financially independent, abusive relationship or not, you will be safer. The more financial freedom you have, the better, always, in any situation, but especially this one. If you are with a man who has rid you of financial independence as a form of control and abuse, then ask those around you for financial help, you will be able to repay them later. Draw on everybody around you, all your resources to leave and know that you will be most at risk of violence in the lead up to leaving, and when you do leave. Be aware, know that, so you can remain as vigilant as possible. If you are finding it hard to leave because you love him, know that he does not love you, that he wants to control you because he can't control himself. Love yourself, more than you love him, and leave. The earlier you can leave the abusive relationship, the better. And once you have left, do not go back. Really, don't go back, ever. Leave, and don't invite other men into your life until you reach emotional and financial independence, you will attract the wrong ones if you do, trust me.

You have to know all of this, because the cause of the problem of domestic violence is far from having been discovered, let alone fixed. It will take generations of brilliant minds, protection of children, disruption of the nuclear family, a thorough and definitive understanding of what causes men to be violent, then the ability to mend that, or treat that, in a proper and visceral way. Not through theory, or awareness, or campaigns, but through treatment of the issue, direct and effective treatment of the cause of male violence. Until that time comes, and it certainly will not be in my lifetime, and I am afraid to say, that it most likely will not be in yours either, you are not safe because you are female.

Who were the victims?

It was clear to me, that when my father was being physically violent, that he was out of control. It was also clear to me, that my mother was powerless to his behaviour. Therefore, she was unable to remain in control of the situation. Both of my parents were out of control when the physical violence was occurring. I also had no power or control over either my father's violence, or my mother's victimised position. I could not stop him. I could not help her. In the act of physical violence, my mother was the most victimised person in my household. When the physical violence was not happening, the dynamic shifted between my parents and myself, the memories of the violence were ignored, the experiences were overlooked. I became the primary victim when the physical violence against my mother ceased.

The difference between my powerless position, compared to my mother's powerless position, was that I did not have the capacity to practice autonomy or take any action in reaction to the violence that my father had inflicted. My mother did. I believe that it was not my mother's place to try to placate my father, or calm my father, or help my father with his aggression, in any way. My father should have been able to regulate his own anger, his own emotions, so that he did not behave the way that he did towards my mother in front of his child. No matter what the cause of the anger was, it was up to him to deal with his own response to whatever it was that triggered him, in the lead up to being physically violent. But it was clear, that he could not control himself, he could not control his outbursts, he could not control his anger, or his desire to physically hurt my mother. He hurt her to deal with his own inner turmoil, he tried to control her, but he couldn't control either of them.

There is a very strong narrative, in the field, that argues that domestic violence occurs because men want to exercise control and power over their partners and/or children. In my home, my father had the ability to be in control of my own emotions, because I hid them from him, I supressed how I felt about him and the violence that I saw him carry out. I could do what I wanted, and carry on being a child as I pleased, I was never actively controlled by my father, but I was passively, and indirectly controlled by him. Whether he knew that or wanted that, only he could answer. I don't believe he wanted that, but I think he knew, and it is the knowing and not owning that emotional abuse that is perhaps the worst part of his character.

What I saw, in my home, was a man who would try, pathetically and inhumanly, to exercise the only form of power and control – his physical strength – that he had over the person that was most accessible to him. And in that act, if he felt as though he had gained a sense of control and power within himself, then he was wrong. From my perspective, it seemed as though he had lost control, by making my mother powerless, because in the aftermath of the physical violence, I would argue that he regretted what he did. I do not believe that he regretted inflicting violence on my mother because he had traumatised her and his child, because he was a narcissist who cared only about how his actions made *him* feel about himself. But even his own self-hatred, his own ego, didn't afford him the discipline to control himself, because he would do it again. Torturing my mother, torturing me, and torturing himself. I didn't care that he was conflicted about his own behaviour, I always knew that he was incapable of being empathetic, of understanding my mother's or my own position, within his own cycle of self-loathing and destruction of the family unit. So, I had no sympathy for him, he taught me not to care for those who don't care for others.

I desperately wanted my mother to understand my father, and his cycle of violence, the way that I did. Now I can articulate how I understood my father, as an individual, but at the time I couldn't, I was too young. But I knew I wanted her to make the choices, take the steps, that I couldn't. I felt trapped in a house with him, with a mother that I wanted to be safe, that wasn't. I don't blame my mother for his violence. That would be absurd. I do hold her accountable, as a mother, who was responsible for her own welfare and my own, because it was clear that my father did not have our best interests in his mind. I blame my father for the violence because who else could I blame for it? I gave up on my father, before I was even able to believe in him, as a protector, as a nurturer. Later in life, I sought my father's love, because I was needy for it, and optimistic that perhaps he had softened in his old age, or learnt more, but he hadn't. I didn't want him; I wanted a father. I also wanted a mother, but my mother's death implicated my desire.

During the process, as a child, of recognising the severely flawed man I had been born from, I instinctively looked to my mother for what I needed. He couldn't give it to me, the love and security and warmth of a homelife I craved, he was a bad person. I looked to the other adult, the victim, the vulnerable, for what I deserved, for what I was born for, to be a child and experience childhood. Instead, I was caught within their relationship, damaged by his violence, and ignored by her. She was busy, she was coping, she was suffering abuse, and as an adult I accept her position, but I don't forgive her absence, like I don't forgive his violence. Both, to me, are unforgivable conditions to raise a child in. The enormity of the experience, of witnessing my father beat my mother, pales in comparison to the position my

mother was in, been beaten by the man she had a child with. But I was never treated like a victim of domestic violence who needed support, so my experiences went unchecked, by both my father and my mother, or anyone else, professional or otherwise.

I can never un-see what I saw him do. I will always know that his violence sent my life into a trajectory of instability, insecurity, and vulnerability. He did not take his role as a father to me, as a partner to my mother, seriously. He did not hold himself accountable for his behaviour, or responsible for how he decided to deal with his own behaviour. He never got help, he never admitted to the impacts of his abuse or his neglect, because he is incapable of acknowledging anybody else other than himself. My father is the only person that my father has ever cared about.

I can never unknow what it was like, to have a mother as a victim, to be a secondary victim of my father's violence, of my mother's victimised position. I will never stand down, from my opinions on what I lived through, and therefore know. No matter the criticism, no matter the rejection of my own response to my own lived experiences. It would be nicer, more pleasant, far more politically correct, to re-write the effects of witnessing domestic violence under the pretence that my mother did her best within the complex and difficult circumstances that she was in. But she didn't do a great job, at reacting to, and dealing with, the effects of my father's abuse and subsequent absence from our lives. My narrative does not reflect all children and women who have had to deal with the wrath and consequences of domestic violence. I can only write what I know and what happened to me based on how my mother went on to deal with the vulnerable position she found herself in, because of my father's violence.

What do I blame my mother for, if it was not her fault that my father was a violent tyrant? Firstly, and most importantly, I resent that she never spoke to me about the violence, ever. Neither when it was happening or after, not when she left him, not on her death bed. Understanding her position, not just from my own perspective, not just from a theoretical point of view, but from her own words, her own emotions, would have allowed me the opportunity to perhaps come to terms with why she went back-and-forth and didn't remove me from the house while she figured out how to navigate her incredibly frightening and complicated situation. Of course, now, I understand the context of domestic violence much better than when I was a young girl, but her input into my knowledge about our domestic life would have strengthened my ability to cope with the decisions she made. Ultimately her decisions, not only about whether she stayed or whether she left, but about how she managed the residual memories and trauma, shaped my life, and affect me to this day. It must be understood that I was traumatised by witnessing my father's violence, and that I was also able to overcome that trauma, over time. Today, I am punished more, by the neglect I experienced, that went hand-in-hand with the prevalence of domestic violence in my home. It was impossible for my father not to neglect me, his very acts of violence were acts of neglect, inflicting emotional scarring and lack of nurturing is neglectful parenting. As well as the violence, my father was emotionally absent, as I have already mentioned; a narcissist cannot provide another person with selfless love, and that's what I had for a father, a violent narcissist. So, yes, I am constantly battling with the aftermath of his presence in my life. The trauma subsided but the neglect carried on, and carries with it, a sense of instability that can never be completely reformed. I have tried, and had

intermittent periods in my life, wherein that sense of instability releases itself and frees me, long enough for me to realise that living my life in survival mode is unhealthy, uncommon and at times, unmanageable.

My mother, like all mothers who have experienced or are experiencing domestic violence, was more than just a victim of domestic violence. There is more to a mother, to a woman, who is being abused by their intimate partner, than her experiences with said abuse. Unfortunately, for me, my mother had traits and a past that didn't serve me well. Not all of her decisions, post-domestic abuse can be attributed directly to her experience with domestic abuse, but her life was certainly one that was tarnished by both violent men and economic instability which affected her capacity to parent.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

Limitations and scope

In 2007 Gewirtz and Edleson (p. 159) noted the following three limitations of their study that I would argue are still relevant to the field today:

> there are (1) few standardized measures for understanding or assessing the impact of violence exposure on young children, (2) few program evaluations on the impact of early childhood supports for children who have experienced domestic violence, and (3) few longitudinal studies to help us understand the interaction of these events over time.

The limitations of this study are tied to my identity and cannot be overcome. The foundation of autoethnography is analysis of the self, and therefore my lived experiences are the core of the field texts. Who I am and how I have lived frame this thesis, therefore, the research findings are restricted to the basis of my identity. The narrow perspective of autoethnography is problematic in that the scope of the data is not broad, however, it makes up for the lack of breadth with depth. I would argue that the insight gained from this work overshadows the disadvantaged position of the thesis.

> … the epistemological premise of autoethnography posits that reality and science are interpreted by human beings, focused on explaining some phenomenon and its interactions aside from numbers and statistics, with an emphasis on the quality rather than the quantity of the data (Tilley-Lubbs 2016, p.4)

The lack of breadth of data range was compensated for by the depth of inquiry. Broad, qualitative data sets on human-derived topics are unable to provide the context of the lives the data is attached to. The research topic is humanistic in tone and an analysis of lived experience was used to better understand the social phenomena. The field is rich with literature but lacks scope and nuance, it is generally repetitive in tone and topic, and the theories are dreadfully cyclical and insular. I have attempted to expand upon what has already been extensively addressed, to broaden ideas and re-think familiar concepts in new ways.

The disordered nature of writing the self

During the process of investigating the effects of witnessing domestic violence in my childhood, I *reconstructed* my narrative and the narratives of others. Acknowledgement of this, minimises criticisms of validity and reliability of the thesis because I have been transparent and realistic about what occurs during narrative construction and analysis. Narrative inquiry is a reconstruction method, a re-evaluation of events and emotions, that produces a version of the truth.

Issues of reliability, validity, truth, and representation of experiences in qualitative research have been heavily discussed in academia. Whilst writing this autoethnographically constructed doctoral thesis I encountered and engaged with these issues. Analysis of the

stream of consciousness and diarised entries that were produced during this thesis provided substantial insight into the process of writing the self. During the analysis of the field texts the following themes emerged that are worthy of further consideration outside the scope of this thesis: (1) Life is experienced non-linearly. (2) It is impossible to record all that is lived. (3) Awareness of identity and the world is heightened in self-reflexivity. (4) The nature of writing the self is disordered. Inquiry into these themes would benefit debates on the validity and reliability of qualitative research methods, particularly autoethnography.

Generational factors

In May of 2021 on a panel discussion entitled The Feed Forum: Solving Domestic Abuse, an Australian police officer who works in the field said that if the issue of generational violence isn't addressed that the panel members would still be talking about domestic violence in years to come (SBS 2021).

Self-reflexivity and genealogy

Understanding, and interacting with, the relational relationship between the self and the family is the basis of identity. A child's world is created by conditions beyond their control; therefore, the conditioning process of selfhood begins from a powerless position. The ability to practice self-reflexivity is how identity can begin to regain control of itself. Without genealogy, identity does not exist. Within genealogy, identity can emerge from the place that is has been conditioned.

Perpetuation

'Powerful factors of shame and isolation lead to cyclical and intergenerational patterns of abusive behaviour' (Thomson 2000, p. 9).

The perpetuation of violence and victimisation in my family history became increasingly prominent as the research progressed, I identified patterns of familial male violence and female victimisation and located a plethora of literature that supported my findings. Some literature opposed the idea, believing that there was not enough data to suggest that (violence in particular) was passed down generationally, but my study has found the opposite. Male violence was a dominant theme within my maternal genealogical data sets, as was female victimisation. Although I had extremely limited paternal genealogical data sets, I am aware of the prevalence of female victimisation and male violence in the generations that preceded my father's. Of course, my father's violence and my mother's victimisation meant that their generation was dictated by the domestic violence that they both witnessed as children. Of my generation, I am privy to the fact that several my male cousins are perpetrators of domestic violence.

Perpetuation of domestic violence is real, this thesis attests to it. Some children can intersect and change the course of their lives, avoiding the pathway that exposure to violence and victimisation can lead to. The risks are higher for some and lower for others, but the potential for perpetuation is real. For me the risk was high, I had various factors not working in my favour, I was and still am incredibly vulnerable. Both the ability to be self-

reflexive and the stamina of resilience I have developed saved me from living a life like my mother's, or her mother's.

Identity

Without my family, who am I?

Identity comes from the family, the connection between individuals within family systems is in many respects based on an attachment to one's idea of their own identity. It is a terrifying thought to mull over, to consider oneself alone without stable roots. The need for stability is the very reason that we stay connected to or create our own families, that sense of stability is based on something that has proven to be unstable, and herein lies the issues associated with the familial, generational, nuclear family. I would argue that an attachment to stability, can hold individuals back from emerging into their own individuality.

The construction of identity is based on interactions with others and the contexts within which those interactions occur, the domestic domain is the most powerful, influential space that humans are conditioned. Babies are exposed to, absorb and taught behaviours from onset of living, the conditioning begins at the start.

<u>Social change</u>

The concept of culture has been described by Robin M. Williams (1970, cited in Straus & Hotaling 1980, p. 5) as the 'total legacy of past human behavior effective in the present.'

Reducing domestic violence

'Generations of active intervention and major changes in the structure of society will be required to accomplish beneficial change, perhaps at least 40 or more years. Short-term plans and expenditures will be relatively useless and wasteful of resources and also will tend to lead people to believe nothing can or should be done' (Breiner 1992, p. 154).

Steinmetz and Straus's (1974, p. 323) view of a good society is one with minimal violence inside and outside the family, and they argue that it can be reached through the elimination of inequity and injustice, openness to change, and the 'development of social relations and institutions which will make violence unnecessary.' Social stressors influence violence in the home, elimination of financial stress could weaken the effects of stress on the family. The social and domestic worlds work in reaction to one another, the relationship between the two is based on an intricate, delicate arrangement that is in a constant state of cause and effect.

Gelles (1980, pp. 878-879) found that the following social factors contribute to domestic violence:

- The cycle of violence (familial, generational)
- Socioeconomic status
- Stress (financial insecurity)

- Social isolation

Hill (2019, p. 342) noted that the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children* 2010 – 2022 is significantly flawed because it is missing 'clear targets'. Absent from targets to achieve, the plan has set 'outcomes' some of which 'are so amorphous it's hard to imagine them ever being achieved, let alone reliably measured' (Hill 2019, p. 342).

> Outcomes like 'Communities are safe and free from violence' and 'Relationships are respectful' don't read like serious goals for reducing violence; they read like a wish-list for feminist utopia (Hill 2019, p. 342).

The issue of violence needs to be tackled at the core of its origin, which I would argue is embedded within the stressors associated with intimate partner relationships and parenting, the nuclear family. The financial position of the nuclear family is one of the key drivers of stress because it breeds conflict; animosity and resentment; independence and dependence; freedom and isolation. The nuclear family is constructed generationally, it is built upon the reproduction of human beings, therefore the perpetuating nature of violence and victimisation is predominately derived from the family unit. This needs to be better acknowledged and vigorously considered in the analysis of all domestic violence research. The male's desire for power is integral to this discussion and demands attention but is outside the scope of this research thesis.

> Only after the elimination of men's violence and a comprehensive change in social and institutional response to battering will children of battered women be safe from this form of violence (Grusznski, Brink & Edleson 1988, p. 443).

The phrase 'social change' has a weight to it, at best, it feels as though a lengthy slog of fighting for the oppressed and the silenced against the privileged and the powerful awaits, at worst it seems entirely unachievable. Feminists, in particular, have been battling issues that affect women for decades and domestic violence is still a crisis. Since March of 2020, the world has changed, a major threat to humanity ignited the powerful, the privileged (and medical professionals) to incite social change. Domestic violence has and will continue to pose a major threat to women and children, but nothing substantial has been done. Social change can happen, and it can happen fast, why aren't we responding?

Lived experience

This thesis was written parallel to me *living* the life outcomes of a childhood effected and affected by domestic violence. 'While life-story writing may contribute to a society's sense of self-understanding, questions remain as to its potential for effecting social change' (Frieden 1989, p. 183). I have embodied an adulthood framed by a disrupted childhood and meticulously analysed the data and presented the findings, but will my contribution assist societal change?

How can the experiences of children be harnessed to better understand the long-term effects of witnessing domestic violence?

How can the voices and lives of children be valued and utilised when addressing the issue of familial violence and victimisation?

How can the ethical dilemmas with researching children on a sensitive topic be overcome?

Conditioned choices

Margaret Thatcher (cited in Ribbens 1994, p. 46) said that 'there is no such thing as society, there are individuals and there are families.' Whilst this is a bold statement by Thatcher, I see some potential truth to it. As a believer in the perils of the nuclear family, I have chosen a life as a single person, and I live according to that choice. I am not a part of a family therefore I am alone and there is no space in-between. The experiences of the domestic sphere change dramatically dependent upon its habitats, without an intimate partner and/or children the home is experienced differently. The conditioning of heterosexual women to desire a male intimate partner and children is weakening, but it is still dominant. Even though the nuclear family lifestyle has proven itself to be ineffective, we continue to persist as a society to lock ourselves up together, chain ourselves to a person because we were initially sexually attracted to them and begin procreating because the alternative is to be single, and we are terrified of that prospect. Changes in society and domesticity are not mutually exclusive ideas, they are so connected it is hard to discuss one without merging into the other.

Attitudes

Michael Flood and Bob Pease (2009) believe that the attitude that society has towards violence against women influences the perpetration of abuse by men, as well as the responses of the victims and people who know them. Attitudes towards violence against women have been used in campaigns to assist in educating communities and preventing violence (Flood & Pease 2009). 'Attitudes have a fundamental and causal relationship to the perpetration of violence against women' (Flood & Pease 2009, p. 126).

> One of the most consistent findings to emerge from studies of attitudes toward violence against women is a gender gap. Gender is a consistent predictor of attitudes that support use of violence against women (Flood & Pease 2009, p. 127).

Attitudes regarding both gender and violence against women are closely related, male's adherence to 'sexist, patriarchal and hostile attitudes towards women' must be targeted so that they can be changed (Flood & Pease 2009, p. 137).

<u>Domestic change</u>

'The housewife role must be abolished. The family must be abolished. Gender roles must be abolished' (Oakley 1974, p. 222).

According to Oakley (1974) for housewives to be liberated the role must become obsolete, this notion suggests that the conditions of the role of a housewife cannot be improved, the role is purely beyond redemption. 'Women's position in the family is founded in their

maternity, now and for all time' (Oakley 1974, p. 186). The family creates and entraps the housewife therefore the family unit must become redundant. Gender roles are becoming weaker, but they are still omnipresent and must be eliminated. We must undo the conditioning that has been bestowed upon us generation after generation, for the betterment of the next generation.

> This role [of woman in the home] in its turn is determined by the assumed structure of the family as necessarily patriarchal, the distortion of reproduction into a parody of production, of sexuality into sadistic exploitation, and the socialization of the child as woman's unique and prolonged responsibility. These four structures, production, reproduction, sexuality and socialization will have to be reconceived if any major change is to result (Greer 1971, p. 298).

The submissive position of women in the domestic sphere is not the premise of domestic abuse, but it is a means for men to use their power to exert control and violence, if they choose to.

> Romance had been the one adventure open to her and now it is over. Marriage is the end of the story… What love seemed to be in her head, all electric lips and dreaming of him wide awake in her bed it never really was at all. She sees that she was a silly romantic girl. Now she finds that marriage is a hard job. Her romanticism becomes, if it has not already become, escapism (Greer 1971, pp. 186-187).

In 1980 (c, p. 211) Straus wrote that:

> Our ideas about the causes of wife-beating obviously influence the steps we take to prevent it. If wife-beaters are thought to be mentally ill, then psychotherapy is clearly needed. If husbands hit their wives because modern society puts excessive strains on the nuclear family, then some reorganisation is needed of the roles in the family and the family's relation to the society.

Taylor-Browne (2001, p. 327) determined that circumstances that increase the risk of domestic violence are young people living in poor conditions, wherein either the woman and/or man is unemployed.

<u>The narrative of childhood</u>

'… a great deal of work lies ahead in the development of a more sophisticated understanding of how children are affected by their exposure to adult domestic violence' (Edleson 1999, p. 866).

Some literature points to the effects of living in an environment of violence and victimisation, but mostly, abuse is considered abuse if it is inflicted directly onto the child. The experience of childhood must be treated with more vigour, the narrative of childhood projects into adulthood, it does not simply vanish as maturing occurs. It would be beneficial for individuals and more broadly, if the formative years of life were treated as though they were more precious and integral to the functioning of the individual and therefore society.

I have been questioned many times by select medical professionals (not all), family members, and friends, why my anxiety from childhood still affects me in adulthood. The query negates the experience of childhood, is a form of passing judgement, and demonstrates the lack of knowledge regarding the long-lasting effects of trauma experienced in formative years.

The years of a childhood spent in the crux of domestic violence are wasted years, they are lost to the need to survive in an adult's world, dealing with adult emotions and behaviours, forfeiting innocence to violence. In childhood, I turned to writing and reading because it was safe. I couldn't be hurt by anything or anyone. I strayed from books and words intermittently into adulthood, only to find myself re-traumatised by life over and over and I continued to return to literature to escape. I wish I could go somewhere, somewhere where the people are nice and the air is calm, where nothing changes. Stillness. That's what I crave. No interruptions.

Emotional health: anxiety

'Witnessing threats to one's mother… extracts a serious toll on emotional stability' (Thomson 2000, p. 54).

One of the effects of coming from a home characterised by domestic violence and victimisation have been experiences of high levels of generalised anxiety, which has negatively impacted life outcomes. My capacity to engage with the world is impeded by anxiety, the levels of anxiety have varied at different stages of life. Anxiety is something that needs constant attention and must be managed, which requires time and energy. Experiences and life outcomes cannot be defined by singular factors, but anxiety has certainly shaped many aspects of my life. Factors such as education, career, interpersonal relationships, and quality of life have been affected by anxiety. In the analysis of lived experiences the disruption to my schooling was described as I recalled the memory of having a panic attack in the toilet block and exiting school, never to return. My insecure financial position, as a working-class single female, is present in the diarised analysis section. The affliction of anxiety as a contributing to factor to my capacity to operate in the social world, has limited my career choices and goals. The analysis of diarised entries showed the deterioration of my intimate partner relationship in my adult life. My experiences within the nuclear family setting as a child have shaped my ideas on spouse dependence and expectancy. The quality of my life has been negatively affected as a result of the impact of my anxiety on education, career and interpersonal relationships. Living is less enjoyable during anxious periods of time, and when insecurity is present due to financial stress and strained social interactions. The world is experienced differently from an anxious lens, opposed to a calmer and less heightened state of mind. It is unpleasant to navigate life with a constant, at times unmanageable, sense of looming danger negating perfectly safe situations. The base level of Maslow's pyramid is physiological needs, followed by safety needs, there are three more stages in the pyramid that need to be fulfilled before self-actualisation is reached. Anxiety is a response to danger, when levels of anxiety are not a realistic reflection of a situation, that is a disordered perspective of reality. The foundation of anxiety is harbouring a sense of unsafety in safe settings, I have been

pulled back to the second phase of Maslow's pyramid time over, due to anxiety. The nature of been stuck in an unproductive and self-damaging cycle, has distinctively restricted my progression in life.

The complexity of the private and social issue

'The law deals with intimate partner violence too uniformly… society demands easy answers to this complex problem' (Showden 2011, p. 38).

Domestic violence is such a complicated issue that conflicting arguments are made in relation to responses and approaches. It has been referred to as a national emergency but is also deemed a sensitive topic to be treated with caution (Salter, cited in Hill 2019, p. 343) resulting in minimal, quite forms of action.

Domestic violence occurs within the private setting of the family unit that exists within the broader social world. The private nature of the issue makes it extremely complicated to research and therefore, limits our comprehension. There is both the need and the space for further discovery on the topic, unarguably more nuanced conception must be applied. It is a complex issue therefore it needs to be treated as such. Further research must be done that explores the various sub-categories of both the family and society. I hypothesis that clear relationships could emerge between the micro institution of the family unit and the macro domain of the society in which the family is trying to function within, that lead us to a deeper understanding of the cause and therefore the solution to the phenomenon.

The violence and victimisation that occurred in my family, I would argue, was a by-product of many, many contributing aspects of the messiness and imperfections of human life. If it was possible to identify one cause and one solution, domestic violence would be easier to resolve.

Moving forward

'The costs of domestic violence are enormous' but are inaccurate due to inept data (Taylor-Browne 2001, p. 332).

Sociologist Elspeth McInnes advises governments on issues of gender, social policy and family violence and assists multiple organisations that work with children and parents (see Sly 2021 for more on McInnes). McInnes (cited in Sly 2021) believes that:

> It's crucial to provide education for the early childhood educators who are at the front line of helping to support affected children and their parents, so we are working to develop a school culture built on kindness and gratitude.

Very similar to McInnes, Thomson (2000, p. 40) has suggested that 'numerous children could be helped sooner, if schools and children's services cooperated to identify child witnesses and provide suitable intervention'.

In my opinion, McInnes and Thomson's approach is a reactionary measure that places the onus of children's welfare onto educators. I believe that systematic, social change needs to occur to *prevent* children and women from experiencing violence in the home, I believe that domestic violence needs to be bred out of families and individuals over generations and that can only happen within the family setting. Prevention is the only way out of this. The family, as a social institution that does not function well, is where the focus of further studies, policies and any other possible preventative measure should be. Socialisation begins in the home; the home should be a violent free environment for the next generation. To eliminate domestic violence, children need to live free from it, from the womb.

Prevention and response

Response strategies are a strain on resources, and although necessary it would be better to avoid having to respond. More importantly, responding to men, women and their children cannot undo the trauma that has been done. Responding is trying to manage the effects, it is not a solution.

Prevention is a more desirable way to deal with the issue because it protects families from living within the perils of violence, but what are the most effective prevention strategies?

I have attempted to theorise the benefits of; re-thinking the nuclear family; focusing on childhood as central to the domestic violence debate; and, understanding generational patterns of violence and victimisation as the core reason why the social issue will not seem to resolve. The problem with writing the theoretical is that the practical implementation seems out of reach.

Kashani and Allan (1998, p. 82) proposed that for children, 'social support and self-esteem… merit further examination as targets of intervention and prevention.' Kashani and Allan (1998) have based this idea on their findings regarding resilience as a key coping mechanism. From personal experience, not professional expertise, I agree that resilience is a way of overcoming trauma. It would be ideal if children didn't have to be resilient, it would be better if they never witnessed violence and victimisation at home.

Timely nature of violence in the home

In 1974 Steinmetz and Straus (p. 322) concluded their book of essays with reflections on the how the future of family violence would be understood and regulated, they suggested that it would take approximately a decade of work by both social scientists and funding agencies to vastly extend the knowledge in the field.

> Unfortunately, there is little likelihood that the massive research effort needed for a breakthrough in a decade will take place. In addition, even if we could know that such a research effort were to take place and that it would reach a successful conclusion in only ten years, we need not and should not wait the ten years. A decade may be a short time in the history of science, but it is a long time in the life history of persons exposed to violence (Steinmetz & Straus 1974, p. 322).

Over four decades later, research into domestic violence has persisted, but there have been no major breakthroughs: the same theoretical frameworks have been continually used. The rates of domestic violence have not decreased. Government policies and plans have not assisted in reducing statistics. The same gaps in knowledge exist. One of the most disappointing findings of this research is that the lives of women and children have not improved since the topic of violence in the family was first written about. I, like Steinmetz and Straus noted in 1974, am rather unhopeful for future advancements in research in the field. I too, believe that theoretically, within the world of knowledge production, a decade is not a lengthy period of time, but for people living in violent homes, it most certainly is.

Closing comments

'Big pictures are constructed using lots of little people. Individuals need to be our focus and they need to emerge from varied social classes, genders and races and from within specific social, economic and cultural contexts' (Evans 2011, p. 68).

When I began researching, I wanted to understand *why* men wanted power over women, but my curiosity wanned when I realised that what I was asking myself to understand was too complex for one person's comprehension. I realised that I could only discuss what I knew and what I discovered in the data sets and field texts. I still believe, that if the reason why men want to dominate women to the point of abusing them in their homes could be unravelled that that would be the greatest breakthrough in the field because we would have the ability to resolve the source of the problem. I think we are far from understanding the constructs of male domination, even though we think we are across it.

This thesis has recorded a moment in time that describes what it is like to be a woman raised by a violent man and victimised woman within a particular social climate. The effects of the conditions of an unstable childhood have been represented and narrated in a thematic manner, the powerlessness of children has been demonstrated. Domestic violence grossly interrupts the process of childhood and the effects of that exposure to violence perpetuates into adulthood. The narrative of childhood is changed in circumstances of domestic violence because there is a need to mature to survive, it could be argued that a childhood is lost in domestic violence. Processing the dynamics of domestic violence and implementing tools to escape and survive the family home is damaging. Being acutely aware of anxieties around insecurity and danger is damaging. Installing coping mechanisms to deal with the unspoken behaviours, emotions and actions of the adults in the home is damaging. Growing within a setting that should provide security but is instead unstable is damaging. Not having the agency or capacity to act in a dangerous setting is damaging.

> If our children did begin, to exercise agency, because they themselves were disgusted at what was happening at home. If they did turn up at school and say "everybody help me, this happened this weekend" we'd be disgusted, shocked, disconcerted. It's going to take something like that, it's going to take something as revolutionary as that, as a child standing up to be a critique of the conditions in which she or he was growing up. And it will happen (Greer, cited in The Policy Shop 2017, 51:35).

In preparation for writing the concluding chapter I took time to reflect on the body of the thesis, in doing so I realised I had to conclude my arguments by making it very clear that the domestic living conditions for women and children in Australia are dire. Of course, not *all* women and children are living in insufferable conditions but the literature, statistics and commentary from industry professionals show that a large portion are. The issue of domestic violence has been plaguing women and children for too long.

Inquiry

Whilst trying to write her dissertation on her lived experience with fatherlessness, Jago (2002, p. 750) found herself unable to write about the intended topic but a different story emerged, her depression story.

I have inquired into both the world I live in and the world I came from, and the social contexts of those worlds. I have inquired into who my mother was. My mother was a woman who lived a life of internal struggle but external enjoyment, she was emotionally alone for majority of her life but surrounded by people. My mother died too young, she died young enough for her youthful beauty to deteriorate before me, she died old enough to have experienced the effects of a childhood filled with loss and male violence. She died old enough to bear children, but too young to be able to raise them. Inquiring into my mother as a person living out her own genealogical sufferings taught me that I am immensely afraid of dying too young to be able to overcome her legacy. I want to experience life how she may have wanted to, free from male dependency and the subsequent abuse caused by the desperate vulnerability of a woman like my mother who was targeted by the wrong men and used for their own benefits. The inquiry into my father's violence led my further away from him, and closer to my mother's experiences because they were integral to this study and because I could relate them. We were destined for similar lives because we came from the same family, existed in similar social and cultural worlds, and shared the same gender.

The process of autoethnographic inquiry develops and transforms, it changes as it occurs, it is not linear or predictable. I thought that this research would be entrenched in my emotions about violence and domestic insecurity, but what materialised from the field notes was my residual anxiety from childhood. The research captured the *effects* of domestic violence on childhood which were strongly tied to notions of identity. These preliminary and subsequent findings were demonstrated in the field texts and the genealogical data sets.

Two major narratives emerged during inquiry, my connection to my mother's experiences of violence and victimisation and my marriage and divorce to J. My mother's life and her death haunt me, I am traumatised by her presence and her absence, I am conflicted by her choices and her reasons. My experience with committing to J led me to realise that monogamy and the nuclear family are socially constructed norms that trap women and children, and dare I say it men.

The family and the economy

Further investigation into the relationship between the nuclear family and the economic and social systems that it operates within would benefit and extend knowledge on domestic violence. The conflict between the family, the economy and society are contributing factors to the conflict of domestic violence. Marxism and sociological theories have been used to expand the notion that domestic violence occurs in a private sphere without external influence. The nuclear family does influence and is an influencer of the economic construction of societal norms. This direction of thinking would be best extended by researchers from different disciplines to mine, to provide a linkage between domestic violence as a private issue and the contexts outside of the domestic sphere that affect and are affected by the social phenomenon.

*Why hasn't feminism solved the **domestic violence** crisis?*

The tireless work that has been conducted in the feminist field since the 1970s has not yet solved the crisis of domestic violence in Australia. It seems nothing more than common sense, that the issue of domestic violence requires urgent attention and most certainly a fresh lens through which to understand the social epidemic.

The predominate argument made in this thesis substantiates that domestic violence and victimisation is generational by nature. Based on this argument I have suggested that to resolve the cyclical crisis we should shift the focus from women to the experiences and protection of children. I hypothesis that this approach would slow down the perpetuation of the familial, social issue. It would be fair to argue that the nature of feminism, at its core, is adult centric. The experiences and livelihoods of *women* are central to feminist thinking. I propose the idea that this has been a barrier for gaining insight into the generational aspect of the problem of domestic violence, because children's experiences have been (for the most part) treated as secondary to their mother's.

Gender equality and women's rights were first fought for on a macro level in the 1970s. Focusing on women for five decades has not protected subsequent generations of females from experiencing domestic violence. Despite abundant efforts made within society to embed gender equality into our social worlds, and having seen improvement in this space, domestic violence is still occurring at alarming rates. The crux of feminist theory is founded on protecting women. In the case of domestic violence, I have argued that protecting children is protecting the next generation of women, and therefore shifting the focus from this current generation of women to the *children* is a critical move. I also propose that we, as theorists, ask ourselves *why* feminist theory has not resulted in a reduction of the domestic violence epidemic. Important answers may be discovered during this type of analysis.

I propose that the current focus on gender roles in intimate partner relationships as both the cause of and the solution to domestic violence should be placed to the side. An investigation into the prevention of exposure to domestic violence in childhood should ensue. Our attention must shift to another facet of the domestic violence issue, we have drilled into the notions of gender and power for five decades without positive results, the progress has been inadequate. In 2012 Germaine Greer referred to equality as a conservative and delusional goal. Equality does not protect women or their children from

men in their homes. Historically, feminism has improved the conditions of women's lives. The work conducted by generations of feminists has changed, and continues to change, the way that women live today. The conditions have improved, but domestic violence remains.

Children

I will conclude by using the same Shakespeare quote Moore (1975, p. 566) used to describe the effects of witnessing domestic violence in childhood: 'To be imprisoned in the viewless winds, and blown with restless violence round about the pendant world.'

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