

# **THE LIVED REALITY OF MEN WHO HAVE BEEN VIOLENT / VIOLATED**

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for the degree of

**Master of Health Science (Psychotherapy)**

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by

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**Dedication**

For

**The abused and forsaken children of Aotearoa/New Zealand**

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### **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my work. To the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where the due acknowledgement is accredited.

Signed.....

John Bryant

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### *Abstract*

This qualitative research study examines the stories of five men's lived experiences of violence and violation. It is derived from conversations with the men that have been taped and transcribed. These in turn have been categorised into key existential themes and interpreted by myself as the researcher.

The process of data collection, transcription and analysis has been performed under strict adherence to the tenets of a rigorous, ethical and trustworthy qualitative approach to undertaking research. Participant's revelations of their unique experiences of violence have been carefully and sensitively interpreted and given meaning through the lens of my personal worldview informed by a philosophical perspective. I have fully acknowledged my own influences upon the proceedings.

The methodology that has informed this undertaking is based upon Martin Heidegger's (1927/1962) hermeneutic phenomenology. Phenomenology emphasises the search for raw experience buried in the text and takes me to the heart of men's lived reality of violence. Hermeneutics offers me a way of making meaning out of the subtext concealed within men's stories of violence.

Heidegger's philosophy offers me a particular approach for understanding human experience. Van Manen's (1990) existential lifeworld structures guide me towards violence as it is lived rather than as it is thought to be. As such this study emphasises ontological understanding over epistemological examination.

The intention of this work is produce an understanding of the impact of violence on people's lives from the unique perspective of those who have experienced it. Its ultimate goal is to use this information to better understand the aetiology of male violence, and, more specifically, five men whose lives have been situated in the world of violence, so that it may be more effectively prevented.

## Key to Transcripts

**Names:** All names used to refer to participants in this study are pseudonyms. Excerpts from participants' interviews are identified by page reference to the transcription, e.g. (p.9).

***Italics:*** Where excerpts of interview transcripts are included, participants' words are in italics.

**(Parentheses):** Indicate researchers own words to explain context.

..... Indicates a pause in the original material.

...//... Included in interview excerpts to indicate material edited out.

**Sounds:** Relevant sounds are occasionally included to maintain impact in transcripts, e.g. 'BANG' (Colin, p.101).

## CHAPTER 1

### *Introduction and Research Context*

*My brother kneels so saith Kabir  
to stone and brass in heathen wise  
but in my brothers voice I hear  
my own unanswered agonies  
his God is as his fates assign  
his prayer is all the world's – and mine*

(Rudyard Kipling)

A wise and compassionate friend gave me Kipling's poem when I was a teenager. As an uneducated boy expelled from school I had no idea what it meant. However, through the years I have returned to the poem and as I have matured it has slowly revealed new meanings to me. An earlier understanding of the poem was based upon the sense that it seemed to be both criticising the worship of false idols whilst understanding the desperation of those who are deemed to have gone astray, as I sensed I had. As I continue my journey my appreciation of the poem has deepened. The ideas it explores are connected to the work I do in psychotherapy and stopping violence. It resonates with the 'lived experience' of intense and uneasy feelings of criticism and compassion I feel towards the abusive men I work with. To me the poem suggests the false Gods of a macho code that sanctions sexism, racism, male heterosexual entitlement, destructive competitiveness and violence. These are things that I, and the men I work with, may worship during our lives. However, in my work as a psychotherapist and group facilitator I have also seen these men at their most vulnerable. It is during these times that they may show an inarticulate craving to be understood, accepted and loved. The contradictions embodied in the poem have stimulated me to discover who I am and to make sense of my life.

I have told my own story many times in many ways. This telling and retelling focuses my sense of identity and draws me into a deeper engagement with my world. Finding a way

to uncover and make meaning of my own ‘unanswered agonies’ has been the key to healing the past in the present. Perhaps my prayers and my brother’s prayers are not so different.

### ***Structure of the Thesis***

This thesis is presented in eight chapters. Chapter One introduces the research question and sets out the purpose of studying the stories of people who have experienced violence. This chapter highlights the intention of this work to facilitate self-understanding and the understanding of others in relation to violence. It offers varying descriptions of the meaning of violence and outlines a personal background citing reasons that drew me to the study of violence. The scope of the chapter gradually widens with the introduction of an historical background of violence before centering upon the nature/nurture debate. The final part briefly introduces the Heideggerian research methodology before concluding with an overview of stopping violence groups.

Chapter Two offers an in-depth explanation of a range of viewpoints that contextualise violence within the body of existing knowledge in New Zealand and internationally. Chapter Three is concerned with the history of phenomenology and hermeneutics before explaining the Heideggerian methodology that underpins this study. Chapter Four includes Van Manen’s (1990) six research activities for sharpening my orientation to the study and supplies his existential structures as a guide for focusing the methods of this study. Chapter Five concentrates on the methods for undertaking research into the lived reality of participants in the study. Issues of methodological rigour and the ethics of the study are also explicated in a section of this chapter. Chapter Six introduces the study participants through an important initial story of violence. Chapter Seven reveals the understandings that emerge from the data analysis. It reflects the participants’ experience of violence as it is lived and offers an interpretation of those experiences, which have been assembled into various existential themes. Finally Chapter Eight draws the phenomenological themes together and places them in the context of literature on the subject of violence. The remainder of the chapter offers recommendations for dealing with the problem of violence, implications for practice, further areas of research and the

strengths and limitations of a study of this nature. In the tradition of hermeneutic phenomenology separate chapters, which reflect, lived experience, my interpretations and theories of violence come together to create a meaningful whole.

### ***Purpose of the Study***

The title of the study reflects my purpose of researching and understanding violence in New Zealand from the point of view of those who have experienced it: the lived experience of men who have been violent/violated. The emphasis is upon listening to and interpretation of data that I gather in such a way that my own assumptions, judgments and preconceived ideas are activated in a mindful and sensitive manner.

The people who research and write about violence today tend to come from professional or academic backgrounds including the social sciences, politics, the legal professions, theology and moral philosophy (Solomon and Higgins, 1997). Their questions and theories are based in the realm of epistemology and are therefore often abstracted from an actual experience of violence. In asking men who have been both perpetrators and victims about the lived reality of their experiences I turn directly to the source of violence.

Alongside my personal desire for self-understanding, meaning making, and professional development, the ultimate purpose of this study is to help reduce physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Its aim is also to expand resources to assist other workers in the field to resolve some of the problems caused by violence.

### ***The Meaning of Violence***

The causes of violence are heterogeneous in quality, quantity and impact on victims. Physical violence can be the result of impulsive, reactive behaviour or predatory, remorseless aggression. It can be related to intoxication from alcohol or from psychosis or from other neuropsychiatric conditions (e.g., dementia, traumatic head injury). Physical violence may be the result of personal or a cultural (political terrorism) belief system. Physical violence can be sexualised (rape) or directed at a specific victim (domestic violence) or at a specific group (e.g., Asians, homosexuals, Jews). Violence

may be physical or emotional. Indeed, some of the most destructive violence does not break bones; it breaks minds.

A straightforward definition of violence is any act that harms another. Individuals are violated when another person takes action against them that has the power or force to induce them to do, or submit to something they would rather not do. A W.H.O report launching the Global Campaign on Violence Prevention (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi & Lozano, 2002) define a broad spectrum of violence including child abuse and neglect by care givers, youth violence, intimate partner violence, sexual violence, elder abuse, self-directed violence and collective violence.

Ticklenberg and Ochberg (1981) have classified adult criminal violence as follows:

(i) Instrumental violence: motivated by a conscious desire to eliminate the victim. (ii) Emotional: impulsive, performed in extreme fear or anger. (iii) Felonious: committed in the course of another crime. (iv) Bizarre: insane and severely psychopathic crimes. (v) Dissocial: violent acts that gain approbation from the reference group and are regarded by them as correct responses to the situation. These categories can be useful for making distinctions about different types of motivations for violence but they are not always clearly distinguishable.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1996) gives definitions of violence including: (a) treatment or usage tending to cause bodily injury or forcibly interfering with personal freedom; (b) undue constraint applied to some natural process, habit etc., so as to prevent its free development or exercise (p.654).

My work transports me from the abstract dictionary definition of violence to the face of terror. This encompasses real life horrors such as the terror of a frightened child who cowers in the corner whilst a giant “caregiver” stands terrifyingly over him; an uncontrollable urge to strike out; weapons against flesh and bone; bloodshed, pain, fear,

despair and unrequited longing. Perhaps most shocking of all is the complete dissociation that comes from unresolvable despair and helplessness.

Gathering data about violence and interpreting it brings me into contact with men in a visceral, intimate manner. These men are flesh and blood, they have a past and a present, they love, they hate and they suffer and as such they are a part of my world, of my 'being-in-the world.' My intent is to put aside common assumptions about violent men, which underlie a legal and moral system in order to understand and articulate the process of their development. My interest centres upon how these people become who they are and I want to get as close as possible to the subjective core of their lives. To this end the following question lies at the heart of my study: how have violent men experienced life until now, what is its impact on their present lives and what might it mean for the future?

### ***Background of the Study***

#### *My Background*

My personal experiences of violence were defined in working class London by dysfunctional family relations, an absent father, a disdain for education, feeling worthless, skinhead gangs and the adrenalin buzz of power in a powerless, often wretched world. There were 'islands' of kindness, love, generosity and the occasional success but the darker aspects of my world overshadowed these. Looking back at myself as a teenager I can see that I was instinctively looking for evidence of meaning, goodness and the justice of God in both my own life and in the world around. I decided cynically that their existence seemed entirely arbitrary. This was a predicament. Without a God or some other landmark where was I to find the meaning and purpose of my life? Was I fated to remain a rudderless ship endlessly drifting on a vast empty ocean? This question was partly answered in my late 20's by discovering existentialist philosophy. I was interested in the idea that there is no inherent meaning and purpose in life and that if I wish to find some I have to make it for myself. It took me a long time and a lot of soul searching to understand that my search for meaning depended not on a belief in God or for that matter any other external entity such as money, fame, recognition or even a relationship - but upon a belief in myself. As this potential develops in me the world

starts to take on a different tone. I'm more open to the meaning my problems bring to my life and less apt to feel confused and rendered helpless by them. I am less judgmental of others and myself. I am more aware of beauty as well as pain and I have progressively more harmonious relationships. A longing for something better in my own life paralleled an awakening desire to parent my own sons more effectively. The encouragement of key people, education, and the experience of fathering eventually led to my decision to study psychotherapy. Sometimes, in the process of maturing, my internal struggles are amplified by the realisations about myself with which I am confronted. However, uncomfortable as this can be, I have been enabled, at least in part, to transcend my past. It is now possible to offer support and understanding to others from backgrounds that may resemble my own.

My own experiences mean that violence, both physical and psychological, has come to play an increasingly different role in my life. I have a sense of vision about the way in which human beings can transform their lives. If I can do it so can they. They just need support, understanding and discipline along the way to foster and nurture the determination that will carry them on. In the absence of a father, I came across men who were good role models and mentors for me. These men spoke and behaved in a way that has left an imprint. My kind uncle Harry took my brother and myself to feed the ducks at Regents Park. A teacher saw potential in my independent, rebellious way of thinking. When I was a troubled young adult my solicitor told me I was too bright to take the path of crime I had been following. Seemingly small influences played a big part in my development. I could not have become what I am today without the help and inspiration of these people and others whose compassion, insight and belief remained with me when my own may have failed. I have been fortunate in that I have been able to find meaning in a past that might have led me astray and put it to use in my work. I am also



aware that, sadly for some, this help will not be enough and these men may remain destined to repeat the legacy of their past.

### *Psychotherapy*

During my struggle to answer questions about the meaning of my life I was introduced to psychotherapy by chance when I went to a Gestalt workshop at Auckland University. I was immediately attracted to the focus of the workshop on describing people's experience and expressing it in the moment. For example, a 'knot' in somebody's stomach was given a tangible colour, shape and size and a person was asked to speak from the perspective of the knot. This exercise encouraged the individual to uncover its meaning. People held their life experience in the stories they told, not just what they said but also the way that they said it. I was increasingly impressed with the vitality and the healing potential of giving expression to 'lived experience' and was eventually drawn to the study of psychotherapy myself.

As a therapist I have studied many theories of human development, psychopathology and methods of treatment. Various perspectives including psychodynamic theory, and gestalt therapy inform my work. However, with all my years of training and experience I have experienced a gnawing scepticism about aspects of these theories. They seem elegant and plausible but can be, in my opinion, based upon authority rather than evidence. During recent years I have been delighted to support and expand my prior knowledge with understandings in neurobiology and attachment theory. Both of these theories have significant scientific credibility and research supporting them. Knowledge of these theories has helped me to integrate the science and the art of psychotherapy and thereby add another dimension to my work.

My practice of psychotherapy reflects the philosophical emphasis of hermeneutic phenomenology upon sensitivity and relationship to lived experience. Phenomenology searches for raw, pre conscious experience. Hermeneutics examines the meaning and

significance of phenomena. According to Marcel (1949) meaning questions are part of a vital evolving process and cannot be solved and thus done away with. The search for cause, effects and solutions may be a worthy undertaking but perhaps it is the interactive process of careful understanding and meaning making itself that can influence people to be less violent. Eliciting and telling stories can promote the expression of hitherto repressed or unconscious cognitions and affects and in the process instil a sense of security that serves as a foundation for transformation.

### *General background*

For four thousand years of Western history since the time of Plato and Aristotle, Cicero and Justinian, Hammurabi and Moses, lawmakers and philosophers have pondered how to diminish violence. Legislation has been created according to the moral and legal prescriptions at which they arrive. In all societies and cultures, past and present, violence has played a part in shaping our psychological and sociocultural evolution yet the problem of violence prevails and may be getting worse. Whilst a few societies have virtually eradicated violence<sup>1</sup> most have failed. In stark contrast to efforts at resolving violence the 20th century proved to be the bloodiest century in human history with more humans killing other humans than in all previous centuries combined. We now have the technological capability to extinct our species and are indeed destroying many others (Gilligan, 2002).

On a national level the phenomenon of violence and how to legislate for it is one of the biggest and most emotionally polarising issues currently facing New Zealand society. Its importance is highlighted by the high profile of violent crime in the media.

The dramatic effects of domestic violence have long been a theme in religion, art, music and literature. For example, the biblical story of Cain and Abel, ancient Greek tragedy such as Oedipus, Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, Bizet's opera Carmen and many others depict rage, homicide, incest, suicide, fratricide, infanticide and other kinds of

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Anabaptist sects, the Hutterites, Mennonites and the Amish have almost non-existent levels of violence in their communities (Gilligan 1996, p.226).

violent behaviour between intimates. The romance and drama of these works often masks the reality of something much more mundane and chilling.

Human beings are complex and puzzling creatures. We can create, nurture, protect, educate and enrich. Yet we can also degrade, humiliate, enslave, hate, destroy and kill. A man can lovingly sit his stepdaughter on his knee dressed as Santa one day and brutally murder her a few days later (Alley, 2003)<sup>2</sup>. Of all types of violence that I have encountered both personally and professionally, domestic violence is the most difficult to grasp because it is most likely carried out in and around the sanctuary of home and it involves people we would normally expect to nurture and protect.

Statistics suggest epidemic levels of domestic violence including spousal abuse and child abuse, otherwise known as violence against intimates. For example, in New Zealand twelve children are deliberately killed each year (N.Z. has the 4<sup>th</sup> highest rate for intentional child deaths of 23 industrialized countries). In 1960 NZ ranked 6th out of 21 OECD countries for infant mortality. Two hundred children are hospitalized for deliberate injuries. 6 – 8000 children are found, by CYFS, to have been abused or neglected, with 20 – 30000 referrals per year. Family violence affects 1:7 families; that is, 480,000 New Zealanders. Each week 2500 Women's Refuge beds are occupied (Brainwave Trust Newsletter, 2003). During the last year New Zealand Police (Police Statistics bureau, 2002-2003) reported 24,370 cases of violent crime and 1,992 cases of sexual crime. In a study of 2000 New Zealand men, 21% reported at least one physically abusive act towards their intimate partner within the last year and 35% within their lifetime (Leibrich, Paulin & Ransom, 1995).

### ***The Nature / Nurture Debate***

Traditionally, violent behaviour has been attributed almost exclusively to men who, since ancient times, are understood to have been instinctually hunters and warriors. History seems to provide evidence of this theory on an epic and horrifying scale. It is largely

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<sup>2</sup> Related to the murder of Coral Ellen Burrows. Reported in the Sunday Star Times, (December, 14, 2003, p.1)

young men who have participated in the front line of violent activities such as war, colonisation, homicide and so on. Evolutionary explanations for the phenomenon of male aggression have traditionally emphasised a survival instinct encompassing territoriality, competition for food, procreation, the establishment of paternity and the protection of offspring (Wilson & Daly, 1993).

Such understandings provide the impetus for a continuing debate that hinges upon beliefs and theories about whether human behaviour is a product of either nature or nurture. For example, evolutionary psychology supports a view that the crucial variable in violent behaviour is genetic and that upbringing has very little to do with violent personalities and takes the position that violence is part of our design (Pinker 2002). This line of thinking is supported by other scientific researchers such as geneticist Hans Brunner who discovered a defective gene in a family with a violent history (Lemonick, 2003).

“I’m depraved, on account I’m deprived,” says Riff, a gang member, from the film *West Side Story* (1961), based on the book by Arthur Laurents (1957), echoing a differing viewpoint of other commentators on violence who assert that it is an underprivileged background that leads to the development of violence in adults. Many studies on violence prevention inform us that violence breeds violence and not genes. They stress that violence is part of a historical process and not only born of biological determinism (Kalmuss, 1984; Revitch, & Schlesinger, 1981; van der Kolk & Fisler, 1994).

According to Perry (2001) there are multiple pathways to engaging in violent behaviour. Some are defensive, some are predatory and some are impulsive. However, the majority of traumatised or neglected children never become violent. In the final analysis, belief systems are seen as the major contributors to violence. Racism, sexism, misogyny, children as property, idealism of violent heroes, cultural tolerance of child maltreatment and nationalism all unleash, facilitate and encourage violent individuals. Without these belief systems the neglected and abused child would be less likely to transform their suffering into violence (Perry, 2001; Siegel 1999).

The debate continues with many researchers seeming to agree that both genes and environment, to varying degrees, play an important part in determining whether a person becomes violent or not. In an exhaustive attempt to identify different causes of male aggression diverse theories have been developed and elaborated from, among others, psychoanalysis, social learning, sociobiology, cognitive and family system perspectives (Adler & Denmark 1995). In the last decade the science of neuro biology integrated with the discipline of attachment theory has had a major effect on the way we understand violent behaviour.

Many theories have critiqued or expanded biological theory as an explanation for aggressive behaviour by raising questions of upbringing, conditioning, relationships, power, politics, cultural and historical relativity and morality. For example, one of the most influential theories on human behaviour in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, psychoanalysis, propagated through the ideas of Freud, uses a biological perspective to provide a psychological understanding of human behaviour. More recently practitioners and theorists like Peter Fonagy (2002, p.1), a psychoanalyst and brain researcher, propose, “Violence may be seen as an exaggerated response of a disorganised attachment system”. A sociobiological viewpoint hypothesizes that violent behaviour is governed by genetic instruction, which is modified by our social environment to maximise the chances of genes being passed on (Harolombos & Holborn, 1995). A social psychological understanding seeks to explain intimate violence in both men and women in terms of personality characteristics, beliefs, attitudes, intentions and the like. Similarly, interpersonal accounts of violence explain how stored character traits interact with cognitive and affective processes as well as with interpersonal exchanges (Fletcher 2002). A feminist viewpoint looks at violence historically and socially in terms of gender inequality. Gelles (1974) cites systemic reasons for family violence, which include micro and macro influences from within and outside of the family. A shame-based model of violent behaviour looks at deep-seated feelings of inadequacy, low self esteem and helplessness linked to childhood development, social inequality and sexual identity (Gilligan 1996, 2001). There is a strong link between serious violence and socioeconomic status. Some studies claim that men who have lower incomes, lower status jobs and

unemployment are considerably more likely to use physical aggression against their partners (Magdol, Moffitt, Caspi, Newman, Fagan & Silva, 1997; Polk, 1994). Researchers such as Perry (2001) and Siegel (1999) provide extensive evidence of how the brain's development is affected by early interpersonal relationships, which interact with genetic predispositions to determine violent outcomes. Hearn (1998) offers a comprehensive and complex interacting viewpoint on male violence, which includes a psychological, biological and social understanding of interrelations between mind, body and society. From these perspectives a multiplicity of interactive factors for causes and categories of violence emerges.

### *Focus of the Study*

The study aims to capture the essence and meaning of five men's stories of violence and neglect in New Zealand. Heidegger's (1927/1962) hermeneutic phenomenological philosophy provides a methodology with which to understand and interpret participant's information. The existential structures of Van Manen (1990) direct my attention to the lived experiences of those involved in the study. The literature review gives a comprehensive overview of other writings and theories that already exist on the subject of violence, which have expanded and enriched my knowledge. My work as a clinician in the world of violence brings vitality and depth of experience to the study.

### *Hermeneutic Phenomenology*

It is never possible to fully capture the complexity or the unique nature of a phenomenon. An analysis is an approximation of the 'what is it likeness,' of another person's experience but is never able to replicate it in its entirety. Hermeneutic phenomenology highlights the influence of our personal experiences upon the way in which we understand and interpret those of others.

Axiomatic for Gadamer (1960/1982) is the proposition that all understanding involves interpretation. Interpretation can only come from a perspective embedded in the historical matrix of the interpreter's own traditions. I am, according to Gadamer (p.239), a “historically effected consciousness,” and as such I recognize that all understanding is influenced by prior experience and inevitably involves some prejudice. For a study of this nature my contribution is integral to the experience and its outcome – from this perspective there is no purely objective understanding. All accounts of lived experience are perceptions that encompass my own reality.

The peak of my perception, my horizon, is not fixed but is continually being updated and transformed by my experiences with the environment and others. Heidegger describes ‘horizon’ as “future, present and having been” (1927/1962, p.416). Gadamer (1960/1982, p.269) describes ‘horizon’ as the “range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point”. Pondering and then posing a question about violence was not something I had to search out, it comes from my life. Bergum (1991, p.55) states “ I, as researcher, cannot place myself outside the problem I formulate.” Van Manen (1990, p.97) supports this statement: “To truly question something is to interrogate something from the heart of our existence, from the centre of our being.” This study emanates from my heartfelt search for personal meaning and is derived from my own experience of violence and as an academic. An undertaking of this nature compels me to ask: How has my own suffering shaped my life? What has it taught me? How is my learning reflected in other men’s lives? How may my experience be used to benefit others?

### ***Living Without Violence Groups***

As an extension of my psychotherapeutic practice I facilitate Living Without Violence (LWV) groups. The men who attend these groups come for varying reasons. For example, some are volunteers who are, perhaps, tired of the conflict and disharmony in

their lives or who maybe are afraid of losing their families and damaging their children. They are ostensibly willing participants who desire change. Others are forced to come by the courts and are apparently reluctant participants. The description of these positions is somewhat superficial in that the complexity of human interactions often defies such stilted categorizations as willing or unwilling.

The group is the environment in which my life experience encounters participant's experience. This forms a context in which dialogue and, in turn, progress is possible. I bring my philosophical self to my work in the groups as I sit face to face with men whom I alternately inform, challenge, interpret, analyse, support and encourage. In short I educate and, more importantly, relate to them.

In such an undertaking I am aware of some of the dangers inherent in the work. New strategies can be learnt but may, contrary to our best intentions, be used as tools to increase the sophistication of psychological warfare. The effects of reducing self-punishment and shame can be seen as a way of letting people off the hook. Reitz (1999) suggests that whilst violence prevention programmes put men in greater control of their violence, they may fail to adequately address the identity conflicts, which are integrally connected to the cycle of violence. I believe that my training as both a psycho-educationally focused facilitator and a process-oriented psychotherapist allow me the best of both worlds in understanding and coping with some of these issues. Further discussion on this appears in chapter 8.



## CHAPTER 2

### *Contextualising the Study*

*About 4400 people die every day because of intentional acts of self-directed, interpersonal, or collective violence. Many thousands more are injured or suffer other non-fatal health consequences as a result of being the victim or witness to acts of violence. Additionally, tens of thousands of lives are destroyed, families shattered, and huge costs are incurred in treating victims, supporting families, repairing infrastructure, prosecuting perpetrators, or as a result of lost productivity and investment.*

*World Health Organization Report (1996, p.43)*

An analysis of biological, psychological and social approaches is an intrinsic part of any investigation into physical, psychological and institutional violence. In order to place my research within the context of existing knowledge this literature review covers samples of a range of viewpoints. The review emphasises male violence because that is the focus of this study. My intention is to expand and enhance what is known about violence and to give a background to my research. On occasion I will include excerpts of my own experiences of working with violence in order to exemplify theoretical points of view.

Due to the hermeneutic phenomenological nature of this study, which examines the very personal world of the men I interviewed, the emphasis of the review is on how the human mind or subjectivity arises at the interface of biology and the environment. Current understandings in neurobiology and attachment theory are employed to provide important insights into men's violent behaviour and in particular domestic violence.

### *Evolutionary / Biological Perspectives*

Evolutionary perspectives offer an explanation for male violence in intimate relationships. Wilson & Daly (1993) argue that human males have a problem with establishing paternity, and that females are sexually receptive most of the time. Sexual competitiveness amongst men is assumed to produce strong selection pressures that have

influenced the evolution of psychological processes. The need to establish fatherhood and the associated long-term effort in raising children have evolved tendencies in men to take a proprietary view of women's sexuality and reproductive capacity. From a perspective of passing on genes the outcome of sexual possessiveness makes evolutionary sense in that it helped to prevent women from straying and bearing offspring to other men. According to this theory the onus, for women, is upon securing a long-term mate for maximising the potential for protection and provision of resources for herself and her children. From this perspective, whereas women tend to guard the relationship itself more jealously men are inclined towards sexual jealousy. Fletcher (2002, p.246) stresses:

Because men have greater physical strength and aggressive prowess than women they will be tempted to use this resource to exercise control over their partners and to express their sexual jealousy...The tendency for men to be violent towards women is essentially a by product of men's greater physical size and aggression combined with the syndrome of evolved psychological tendencies to view access to their mates as a valuable personal possession to be guarded and protected.

Such an evolutionary account is theoretically consistent with evidence from other studies from different countries, which demonstrate that sexual jealousy and threats of women leaving, or actually leaving, are the most common reasons for men murdering their partners or ex partners (Polk, 1994). Defending themselves or their children against their partner's physical abuse, in contrast, more often motivates homicide by women. The partners in question will be more likely to be boyfriends or stepfathers than the biological father. For example, research shows that African American stepfathers are 70 to 100 times more likely to kill or abuse stepchildren (Daly and Wilson 1996).

The pessimistic aspect of this theory of human nature, especially male nature, can be balanced, in my opinion, by the fact that human beings have a remarkable capacity for overcoming what may be biologically determined. Furthermore, most men do not murder their wives or subject them to extreme violence. Fletcher (2002, p.250) argues:

An evolutionary approach explains “patriarchal terrorism” but does not deal with “normal couple” violence. The use of minor to moderate forms of violence is equally prevalent in men and women in Western countries. The fact that many intimate relationships in Western countries (as high as 50%) are virtually free of any physical aggression should also be kept in mind. Theories that explain the presence of intimate violence should also explain its absence.

### ***A Physiological Evolutionary Approach***

From a physiological standpoint the chronic stress that people experience from simply trying to deal with the pressures of modern life can release a flood of hormones that are useful in the short term but are subtly toxic if they persist. The human brain has evolved a physical reaction to stress known as the “fight or flight”<sup>3</sup> response, which probably evolved to help our ancestors deal with an often treacherous and unpredictable world. When confronted with the imminent danger, say when pursuing prey or defending oneself or one's family, the body had to be ready to defend, attack or flee. The release of hormones prepared the body for action. Then, when the danger passed the response would turn off. However, people subjected to frequent emotional distress, say through an intimate relationship, may have reactions that overwhelm them. They may find it hard to organize thinking and tend to rely upon primitive reactions.

Daniel Goleman (1995, p.139) describes the effects of distress in the individual in interactions that can lead to domestic violence:

The term emotional flooding is often used to describe a susceptibility to frequent emotional distress; the physiological effects of flooding are that the heart rate increases and physical signs such as muscle tension, hotness, shallow breathing and narrowing of focus start to happen. Adrenalin and other hormones keep the body in a state of high stress for some time.

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<sup>3</sup> A term coined by Canon (1914).

There is a swamp of toxic feelings, an unpleasant wash of fear and anger that overwhelms us. At this point emotions may be so intense and the perspective so narrow and the thinking so confused that there is no hope of taking the viewpoint of the other person or settling things in a reasonable way.

In the modern world the fight or flight response has not changed although the ways in which we get stressed have. Sometimes our evolutionary evolved physiological response is still useful, for example, getting out of the way of an oncoming car, but every day stresses can also make us feel out of control. Since the lived space of home can produce some of our most taxing experiences it is not surprising that interactions with the people we are close to can produce the most stressful feelings. Those of us who are prone to escalating tension may easily be triggered into the “fight” response and are more likely resort to violence as a way of dealing with stress. Fortunately, however, alongside blind aggression human beings can also cultivate awareness and modify behaviours. Our homes can be sanctuaries in which we de-stress, relax, share our problems with loved ones and seek comfort and nurturing.

### *Evolutionary Psychology*

From the perspective of evolutionary psychology genes have been strongly implicated in violent behaviour. Time Magazine writer Michael Lemonick (2003) informs us that geneticists have found evidence of a defective gene in a family that produced too much of an enzyme called monoamine oxidase A. This resulted in excessive destruction of neurotransmitters that help keep us calm and happy. This finding excited many scientists in the field seeking a final explanation for violence. However, it was soon discovered that many violent people did not have this gene.

Several studies have taken place to determine the effects of genes upon violent behaviour. Terrie Moffitt professor of psychology and colleagues at Wisconsin University (cited by Lemonick, 2003) carried out a longitudinal study in which four hundred boys had their DNA taken and their behaviours recorded over 25 years. The scientists found that neither

genes alone nor childhood abuse could explain adult violence. However, of the boys who had a certain genetic mutation accompanied by early abuse 85% had committed a violent act as an adult. According to Moffitt the implication is that: “Genes influence people’s susceptibility or resistance to environmental ‘pathogens’”(p.80). Someone with a low genetic propensity may have to be pressured to become violent whereas another individual with a different genetic makeup can easily be triggered. Moffitt and her colleagues are expanding this study because they believe that “there are almost certainly other genes involved and other kinds of life stress that can contribute to violence (p.80)”.

A theory that violence is hereditary has been posited by adoption studies and research into identical twins brought up in different environments. The results of these investigations offer compelling evidence that some characteristics are inherited – but that violence is not. Moffitt, Mednick & Gabrielli, (1989) have scrutinized statistics kept in Denmark, which examine the criminal records of 14,427 men adopted into unrelated families from 1924-1947. They compared them with those of their biological parents and “found no significant relationship for violent offences”(p.27). Cloninger and Gottisman (1987) examined two other large adoption studies in Sweden and found similar results. In their review of biological determinants for the National Academy of Sciences, Siegel and Mirsky (1993, p.59) concluded “biological parent-child relationships predicted property convictions, but not violent offences...(This) supports the view that the circumstances leading to the commission of violent acts are more likely due to non-genetic than genetic determinants”.

An instinctual theory of violence suggests that mankind has inherited impulses from our animal ancestors. This means that violence is a drive or force that is discharged according to a predetermined pattern of action in much the same way as a male lion will kill the offspring of another male when it takes over the pride. Students of animal behaviour such as ethologists Konrad Lorenz (as cited in Gregory, 1987), and E.O. Wilson (1975) have promoted the idea that violence is determined by inborn instinctual biological drives. However, Tinbergen in his classic text *The Study of Instinct* (1969) has modified the notion of instinctual aggression with a concept, which reflects the nature of innate unlearned, pre-programmed behaviours that have been observed in many animal species.

He suggests that even in animals violent behaviour occurs only when elicited by a highly specific environmental stimulus, rather than being spontaneously emitted after a build-up of internal tension. He also distinguishes this behaviour from human activity which, he believes, is able to be much more flexible, adaptive and consciously controlled.

### *Psychoanalysis*

Psychoanalytic thinking is derived from the Darwinian (1829) message of man's phylogenetic<sup>4</sup> heritage. This view has greatly influenced a perception about the nature of man's aggression as instinctual. Freud originally offered us an innovative theoretical system of the human psyche as an entity constituted by both conscious and unconscious forces. This theory argues that primitive "drives" of self-centeredness; sexuality and aggression lay behind the veneer of civilisation. These forces are supposed to be restrained by a system of moral injunctions and ego defences such as "repression" and "splitting" (Gregory 1987). Post Freudians who revised and elaborated upon these ideas have also created complex and plausible theories about the way in which human subjectivity is constituted. These views seek, with some exceptions,<sup>5</sup> to explain the tendency for aggression in both men and women in terms of stored personality characteristics, cognitions, affects, beliefs and attitudes. However, sceptics have criticised aspects of this thinking for being based upon authority rather than evidence and for its emphasis upon innate characteristics rather than sociocultural and interpersonal influences as causes for violence. Berkowitz (1993) believes theories proposing that aggression depends on spontaneously generated energy rest on an outdated model of motivation that has received no empirical support. According to Lore and Shulz (1993) the idea of violence as inevitable is consistent with the internal drive model of psychodynamic theory. Researchers who resist this stance take the view that violence and aggression emanate from social influences and can be changed by social sanctions and systems level interventions (Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh & Lewis, 2000; Kelly, 1996). These criticisms have done little to diminish public perception of the power of the psychoanalytic viewpoint, which is often supported in popular literature that focuses

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<sup>4</sup> The history of racial origins.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Winnicott and Sullivan provide interpersonal accounts

upon mankind's struggle with competing internal forces. There have also recently been advances in psychoanalytic thinking as it aligns itself with attachment theory and informs itself with the science of neurobiology (see Holmes, 2002; Levin, 2003).

### ***A Sociological Account***

A challenge for any evolutionary approach is to explain the wide variability, both within and between social contexts and cultures, in intimate violence. Evolutionary psychologists explain these differences by taking the approach that biologically inherited proclivities interact with socio-cultural and environmental factors (Fletcher 2002). The next part of the review concentrates upon views on the social, psychological and environmental causes of violent behaviour, particularly in New Zealand and other Western countries.

Daly and Wilson (1988) and Polk (1994) have undertaken studies in Western countries of the type of men who are likely to commit severe violence, especially in intimate relationships. These men are typically seriously depressed, suffer psychiatric problems, are of low socio-economic status and have drug and alcohol related problems. Severe violence, threats of violence or death threats are seen, for such men, to represent desperate attempts to hang on to the last vestige of self-esteem and social status by means such as preventing the family from leaving.

Research in the United States indicates that wife murder has increased in recent years (McFarlane, Campbell & Watson 2003). This is purportedly because as women have found it easier to leave abusive relationships the level of men's dependency upon them is exposed. Women who leave relationships are afterwards more at risk of stalking, murder, and attempted murder (Tjaden & Thoennes 2000; Mechanic, Uhlmansiek, Weaver & Resick 2000). This reliance upon women by men is seen as chronic and often invisible and is only revealed as women turn off the emotional version of a blood transfusion (i.e. physical and emotional nurturing, connection and sustenance) that they have often

provided for the duration of the relationship. Insecurity together with men's sexual jealousy and sense of propriety over women, seems to create shameful feelings of helplessness and inadequacy combined with a sense of outrage and a compulsion to control the situation. Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1980) have undertaken studies, which show that violence is often deployed as a controlling tactic in relationship conflict, as well as being an expression of frustration or anger.

Violent crime statistics grossly underestimate the prevalence of violence in the home. It is likely that less than 5% of all domestic violence is reported to the police (Koop & Lundberg, 1992; Horowitz, Weine & Jekel, 1995). Domestic violence accounts for the majority of physical and emotional violence suffered by children in the United States. This violence takes many forms. The child may witness the assault of her mother by father or boyfriend. The child may be the direct victim of violence - physical or emotional - from father, mother or even older siblings. The child may become the direct victim of the adult male if he or she tries to intervene and protect mother or sibling. An additional destructive element of this is emotional violence - humiliation, manipulation, degradation, and threat of abandonment or physical assault.

Sociological researcher Gelles (1979) cites further catalysts for domestic violence such as close proximity of people in the home environment, fixed gender roles which may raise tension regarding the distribution of power, being out of public view, being in possession of information with which to wound and blame close family members and stress. The frequency of verbal disagreements and of high levels of conflict in relationships is strongly associated with physical violence (Stets 1990).

Other studies which show factors that predict violence are: More violent individuals in relationships are below 30 years of age (Carrado, George, Loxam, Jones & Templar, 1996; Pan, Neidig & O'Leary, 1994), less well educated, more likely to be unemployed, more likely to abuse alcohol and other drugs, and more depressed and anxious (Magdol et al., 1997). In New Zealand most of these factors are, from personal observation, linked to the high rates of violence amongst certain sectors of the Maori population and may



account for the fact that Maori feature highly in statistics for violent crimes. New Zealand Department of Justice statistics demonstrate that Maori men accounted for 4305 convictions for violence, Pakeha, 4080, Pacific Island, 429 and other, 8. Young men from all populations aged between 20 and 29 accounted for about half of these offences<sup>6</sup>.

Professor David Ferguson (as cited by Coddington, 2002) of the Christchurch School of Medicine who has been studying a cohort of some 1200 children for over 20 years informs us that the risk of child abuse increases substantially in families where both natural parents are not present. His study shows that by the age of 15, children with behavioural problems including conduct disorder, contact with the police and substance abuse tended to come from generally disadvantaged backgrounds with particularly high rates of family instability and sole parenthood<sup>7</sup>.

Gilligan (2002, p.22) suggests targeting certain populations for interventions to reduce violence and includes factors for high risk groups such as; “ children of unmarried, uneducated poverty stricken teenage mothers; survivors of child abuse or other family violence; residents of high crime neighbourhoods; people who are uneducated and unskilled; high school students after school lets out; people who involve themselves in one way or another with the illegal drug trade; and people addicted to alcohol”.

Alcohol use is often implicated in the violence of the men I work with and is a contributing factor to violence in some of the stories from the men I interviewed for this study. Studies show that alcohol consumption is associated with increased risk of all forms of interpersonal violence (Wikström 1985; Farrington 1998; Rodriguez 2001). Heavy alcohol consumption by men (and often women) is associated with intimate partner violence, although not consistently. Alcohol is thought to reduce inhibitions,

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<sup>6</sup> Department of Justice, New Zealand, (November 1997, p. 45). Conviction and Sentencing of Offenders: (1987 - 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Ferguson 2002 cited in North and South Magazine Sept. (2002, p.38).

cloud judgment and impair ability to interpret social cues. Research on the social anthropology of alcohol drinking suggests that connections between violence and drinking and drunkenness are socially learnt and not universal. Some researchers have noted that alcohol may act as a cultural "time out" for antisocial behaviour. Thus, men are more likely to act violently when drunk because they do not feel they will be held accountable for their behaviour (Gelles, 1974). In some settings, men have described using alcohol in a premeditated manner to enable them to beat their partner because they feel that this is socially expected of them (Jewkes 2002). It seems likely that drugs that reduce inhibition, such as cocaine, will also have similar effects to those of alcohol with intimate partner violence, but there has been little population-based research on this subject. Although there is a growing body of evidence which points to the withdrawal effects of drugs such as pure methamphetamine (known as P) and even marijuana being linked to violence<sup>8</sup>.

From the discussion so far it appears that reasons for violence are complex, varied and interactive. However, research emphasises one factor that predicts a rise in overall violent crime as well as in domestic violence - poverty and its related psychosocial problems. Gilligan (2001, p.39), for example, asserts:

The most powerful predictor of the homicide rate in comparisons of different nations of the world...is the size of the disparities in income and wealth between the rich and the poor. Some three-dozen studies, at least, have found statistically significant correlations between the degree of absolute as well as relative poverty and the incidence of homicide.

Hsieh and Pugh (1993) did a meta-analysis of thirty-four such studies and found strong statistical evidence for this viewpoint. On a worldwide basis, the nations with the highest inequities in wealth and income, such as many third world countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia, have the highest homicide rates. Among the developed nations the United States has the highest inequities in wealth and income, and also has by far the

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<sup>8</sup> Marlborough Alcohol and Drug Service manager Eileen Varley (2003).

highest homicide rates, five to ten times larger than the other First World nations (Smith and Zahn, 1999).

In September 2003 UNICEF (cited by Davies, 2003) issued a table of child maltreatment deaths in rich nations. Of the 27 nations listed the USA was number 25. New Zealand was 23<sup>rd</sup>, about six times higher than countries at the top of the table. This statistic coincides with a recent comparative study of child benefit packages in 22 OECD countries in which New Zealand was ranked in the worst of four groups of countries. Dr Emma Davies (2003), programme leader for children and families at the Auckland University of Technology's Institute of Public Policy states, "There is little doubt that our shameful record in addressing child poverty in the last 20 years has contributed to our high child mortality rates. Poverty is clearly associated with severe physical abuse and neglect"(p.15).

It is not just poverty per se that seems to predict elevations in violent crime but relative poverty. This is the kind of poverty that makes us compare ourselves with others who are better off and generates feelings of envy, inadequacy and shame. Clinicians and researchers into violence such as James Gilligan and Thomas Scheff in the United States have made a strong case for the cause of violence being related to shame. Gilligan (2000) informs us that the underlying feelings related to the class system, which, in real terms, is based upon those who have access to resources and those who do not, are implied in the Latin meaning of the words 'lower' and 'upper classes'. Lower means inferior, the Roman word for the lower classes was 'humiliores'. Upper means superior and is related to the word for pride, the opposite of shame. Inferiority and superiority are relative concepts. This is why shame is reduced when people's aspirations match their level of achievement. Shame is synonymous with feelings of inferiority; and inferiority is a relative concept based on an invidious comparison between oneself and my group and other individuals and their groups. For example, in a community in which everyone is poor people may feel more equal and shame is not such an issue. However, when all around us there are signs of "success" and the message is that if you don't achieve you must be lazy and stupid it is easy to feel inferior. Mishel, Bernstein & Schmitt (2001)

report, that the U.S. has the most unequal income distribution and the highest violence rates among all the advanced economies of the world. Galbraith's (1998) longitudinal study from 1920-1992 makes strong links between unemployment rates and homicide rates in the United States. Gilligan (1997, p.196) calls preventable poverty "structural violence" in that inequality causes suffering and gives rise to feelings of inferiority, which can easily turn to violence.

...every 15 years, on the average, as many people die because of relative poverty as would be killed in a nuclear war that caused 232 million deaths; and every single year two to three times as many people die from poverty throughout the world as were killed by the Nazi genocide of the Jews over a six year period. This is, in effect, the equivalent of an ongoing, unending, in fact accelerating thermo nuclear war, or genocide, perpetrated on the weak or poor every year of every decade throughout the world.

Working with men who have been violent in the poorer suburbs of South and West Auckland I am aware of the effects of relative poverty. These men are typically from lower socio-economic groups, often from ethnic minorities<sup>9</sup>, may be unemployed or, conversely, are often working long hours (some work two jobs day and night) for relatively low pay. They have family stress because of money issues and they spend little quality time with their children. The low self esteem that accompanies these factors is often numbed with drug and alcohol abuse. Under such circumstances it is difficult to see how the fundamentals of relationships associated with commitment, intimacy and passion would thrive. Stress and disillusionment would be more likely.

Gelles (1974) promotes an influential theory explaining that the relationship between poverty and intimate partner violence is mediated through stress. He argues that men living in poverty are unable to live up to their ideas of "successful" manhood and that in the resulting climate of stress they may attack intimates.

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<sup>9</sup> Dearwater, Coben, & Nah (1998) have undertaken research, which explains that education and income were factors underlying intimate violence rather than belonging to a minority ethnic group.

Social learning theory accounts maintain that violence against women is a learned response to stress - supported by immediate rewards (i.e. feelings of agency and control, the cathartic expression of anger, or the ending of an argument) (Dutton, 1995). Further studies demonstrate that poverty and associated stress are seen as key contributors to intimate partner violence and that although violence occurs in all cultures and social groups, it is more frequent and severe in lower socio-economic groups across such diverse settings as the USA, Nicaragua, and India (Hotaling, & Sugarman, 1986).

Some social scientists have become especially interested in the effect of poverty on male identity and relations between male vulnerability and violence against women. They have argued that such relations are mediated through expressions of crisis in masculine identity. These are often infused with ideas about honour and respect that men feel they are lacking (Moore, 1994; Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1994). Bourgois (1996) described how Puerto Rican men growing up in New York slums feel pressured by versions of successful manhood that emphasise consumerism. Trapped in urban slums, with little or no employment this model of masculine success is not attainable. In these circumstances, ideals of masculinity are reshaped to emphasise misogyny, substance use, and participation in crime. Aggression becomes a social norm in which men are violent towards women they can no longer control or economically support.

Violence from this perspective is not understood as an expression of male attempts at power and dominance over women, but also as being rooted in male vulnerability. This vulnerability stems from social expectations of manhood that are unattainable. From this perspective male crisis, in my opinion, looks very much like deep-seated feelings of shame. Violence against women can be a means of resolving this crisis because it allows expression of power that is otherwise denied.

### ***A Feminist Approach***

Feminist writers and commentators have been closely involved in the study of violence and given us important insights, particularly into violence perpetrated by men upon women. According to this approach violence in relationships is mainly caused by men and is related to their dominant role in society (Kurz, 1997; Yllo & Bogard, 1998). This

view that relates the oppression and mistreatment of women in violent relationships to a patriarchal social system of male privilege and dominance is an important aspect of the feminist perspective.

Some commentators insist that feminists are diverse in their approaches to research and that there are no particular methodological approaches or theories that can be separated out as purely feminist (Tong 1989; Olesen, 1994; Reinharz 1992). Others point to the common ground and enduring principles on which feminists stand with regard to their research on women (Stanley & Wise, 1990). Feminist approaches tend towards a postmodernist orientation and critically examine historical and current contexts, discourses, language and power differentials. They promote critical and proactive attitudes towards intimate violence, focus on power relations, empowerment and emancipation and advocate political and practical action rather than purely objective research methods (Grbich, 1999).

The focus of feminism upon the oppression of women and the identification of differences in power that men have traditionally had, particularly in relation to sex, intimate relationships, marriage, women's roles and issues of equality are valuable to understanding the dynamics of private and community violence. For instance, a report from Dobash & Dobash (1995, p.458) examines “ a unique and innovative Violence Against Women Survey carried out by Statistics Canada for Health Canada. This study of 12,300 Canadian Women over the age of 18 is the most comprehensive survey yet conducted on the nature of violence and coercion experienced by women in public and private settings”.<sup>10</sup>

Whilst acknowledging their importance in the field of violence prevention feminist approaches have also been criticised. This is mainly because they tend to adopt a broad-brush sociological level of analysis that has little to say about the subtleties of power

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<sup>10</sup> Also see Rachel Jewkes (2002) article on Violence against Women, Intimate partner Violence: Causes and Prevention.

relationships within a patriarchal system. For example, why are many relationships in Western society devoid of violence, why does the incidence and extent of violence vary so much within and between cultures and are there ways in which women contribute to violence (Fletcher 2002; Grbich 1999)?

### ***Neurobiology and Attachment Perspectives***

*A child forsaken, waking suddenly,  
Whose gaze afear'd on all things round doth rove,  
And seeth only that it cannot see,  
The meeting eyes of love  
(George Eliot)*

This section will examine how the science of neurobiology and the theory of attachment are combined to provide an integrated perspective on the aetiology of violence.

“Human infants are born to bond” (Fletcher 2002, p.149). This statement is predicated upon an understanding that from birth babies can recognise and tune into familiar faces, voices and smells. The developing relationship between caregiver and child is a process of mutual attunement known as attachment. The whole relationship of self - other is incorporated into the child’s developing psychic structure.<sup>11</sup> The originator of attachment theory was childhood development researcher John Bowlby [1906-1990] who concentrated upon the influence of the emotional environment of the home as a major influence on the future development of infants (Karen, 1998). Rigorous research on attachment theory has been carried out by pioneering theorists such as Mary Ainsworth who created the ‘strange situation’ (Ainsworth, Belhar, Waters & Wall, 1978) as an instrument for measuring children’s responses to their parents in laboratory and natural surroundings. Mary Main also made major contributions and invented the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) (Main & Goldwyn 1995) to evaluate and predict the relational styles of adults. In the last two decades or so researchers of neurobiology have discovered strong evidence that the way in which infants and their caregivers relate has a

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<sup>11</sup> Some theorists refer to intrinsic self-other perceptions as ‘internal working models’ (Bowlby, 1982) or ‘core relational schemas’ (Baldwin, 1992).

significant effect on neurobiological development and, as a consequence, upon the child's future functioning (Siegel 1999; Fonagy 1999; Perry 2003).

When working with individuals or when speaking to the men in my stopping violence groups who are resistant to taking responsibility I explain that children's brains are likely to be damaged by both verbal and physical violence directed towards them or towards others in their environment. I sometimes show them pictures, which depict the effects of violence upon the brain's neural pathways and discuss the effects of this in relation to children's future including relationships, education, job prospects and so on. This intervention has induced a shift in perspective of many of the men I work with.

Research demonstrates that the most vital area of intervention must be in the early stages of development. It suggests that even the intrauterine environment is not necessarily a protective factor against violence and that prenatal stress may have a significant impact upon neurodevelopment (Amaro, Fried, Cabral & Zuckerman, 1990). Brain researchers generally see the first three years of infant development as of primary importance because "of critical and sensitive periods of brain development" (Perry 1993, p.16) during which more than 85% of neurobiological development takes place. It is a time of prime importance when gene activation signals vital parts of the brain to develop neural pathways that determine the future function and structure of the brain. A Brainwave Trust newsletter article (2003) describes the development of children who live with chronic stress as being in a constant state of arousal in which they are watching for signs of danger. These children tend later to develop behaviour problems and are easily triggered into aggression towards others. The part of the brain that is responsible for impulse control and emotional self-regulation is compromised by the stress response:

Their responses are now maladaptive and another set of brain-mediated responses deepens their disadvantage. In boys hyper-arousal is common as the persistent firing of the stress response; its heightened sensitivity and responsivity lead to an internal state of anxiety and arousal...Boys are likely to have a high pulse rate, high blood pressure, slightly higher temperature, higher metabolic rate sleep disturbances and irritability. At



school this cluster of symptoms compromises learning and is often mistaken for ADHD<sup>12</sup>. These boys: lack access to the cerebral cortex<sup>13</sup>...seem unable to pay attention or listen...often display sudden outbursts of anger, violence and defiance...the children themselves are unaware why this happens; why they are suddenly fearful, confused or need to lash out (Brainwave Trust Newsletter 2003, pp.1&2).

Perry et al. (1993) support the notion that there are marked gender differences in response to violence. Females are more likely to dissociate and males tend to develop aggressive, impulsive and hyperactive symptoms. Males are seen to be more externalizing in their way of expressing inner turmoil, while females internalize more as anxious, dissociative and depressive. In adult males the state of hyper arousal is often unrecognizable because on the outside it is hidden by a sense of composure. These men numb themselves to anxiety and it is only after trust is built up that they may feel free to gradually expose themselves. Perry (2001) informs us that he sometimes cannot tell that children in his clinic are in an internal state of hyper arousal until he measures their heartbeat.

According to attachment theory the primary function of early object relationships is to provide the infant with a sense of security in environments that induce fear (Bowlby, 1973). Fonagy, Moran & Target (1993, p.74) give a developmental explanation<sup>14</sup> for violence connected to the child's need for parental contingency:

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<sup>12</sup> Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

<sup>13</sup> The cerebral cortex is responsible for, amongst other things, aspects of concentration, thought processing, impulse control and emotional self-regulation.

<sup>14</sup> Object Relations theory describes the child's mental representation of the mother (object) child relationship. The originators of this theory include Klein, Fairburn, Winnicott and Balint (as cited in Karen (1998).

The angry outburst of the toddler is not mainly a call for protection, it is also a self-protective response to insensitivity on the part of the caregiver, felt at the moment to have undermined the child's nascent self-image...The normal anger response, however, turns to aggression when insensitivity is pervasive. The defensive shield of anger is called for so frequently that the oppositional response becomes integrated with the child's self structure. Self - assertion immediately yields aggression.

This passage conveys the pattern of building aggression that probably becomes a normal feature of the person's life as he ages. Normally anger can have an important function within the attachment relationship for limit setting but an elevated level of aggression threatens to break the attachment bond. In Bowlby's (1973) formulation this type of aggression – known as dysfunctional anger - lies at the heart of insecure attachment. However, many children become anxiously attached but do not become violent.<sup>15</sup> Fonagy, Moran & Target (1993) argue that in order for aggression to turn into physical violence another crucial component must predispose such individuals to act on bodies rather than minds alone. "It is this inadequacy of their capacity to think about aggression in relation to attachment that pushes them into violent acts in intimate relationships (Fonagy 1999, p. 3). At the core of an attachment theory account of violence is the caregiver's persistent failure to recognize the child's subjective state in infancy. The ability to reflect upon and interpret the mental states underpinning the behaviour of others, known as reflective function (Fonagy 1999), is developed in the presence of and through caregivers. It is responsible for the growing discovery that we have an internal sense of ourselves that experiences wishes and desires which are constrained by beliefs and expectations. According to Fonagy & Target (1997) the capacity for reflective function is responsible for whether or not we are securely attached and whether, if we are insecure, we develop the propensity for violence. Those who become violent are assumed to have frequently been victims of childhood abuse. They cope by refusing to conceive of

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<sup>15</sup> Broussard (1995) researched working class samples of children who are anxiously attached but who did not subsequently become violent.

their attachment figures thoughts and thus avoid having to think about their caregiver's wish to harm them.

From a neurobiological perspective understanding violence in the adult mind requires recognition of the principle of the brain's development. Perry & Azad (1999) argue that exposure to violence activates a set of threat responses in the child's developing brain. This in turn causes excess activation of the neural systems involved in the threat responses and can alter the developing brain. Finally, these alterations may manifest as functional changes in emotional, behavioural and cognitive functioning. The roots of violence-related problems, therefore, can be found in the adaptive responses to threat present during the violent experiences. The specific changes in the brain's development and function and the factors that predispose these men to violence depend upon early influences including: the child's temperament and the way in which he perceives the threats, the specific nature of the violent experiences, and other factors such as family support, wider community involvement and so on.

The brain is a use-dependent organ. "The activation of neural pathways directly influences the way connections are made within the brain" (Siegel 1999, p. 13). Experience shapes the activity of the brain and the strength of neural connections throughout life. Early experiences may be especially crucial in organising the way in which basic structures of the brain develop. Thus, abused children have elevated baseline and reactive stress hormone levels because the brain has built in a heightened stress response. When a child is in a persistent state of fear and alarm that results from exposure to violence, the primary areas of the brain that are processing information are different to those in a child from a safer environment. The child who is in a state of alarm is less efficient at processing and storing information being provided, say, at school. This means that hyper vigilant children from chronically violent environments are more vigilant for non-verbal cues and have a better capacity for understanding these in proportion to their verbal skills.<sup>16</sup> "Children raised in the vortex of violence have learned that non-verbal information is more important than verbal (Perry 2001, p.11)". They also often misinterpret non-verbal cues, feel threatened by eye contact, misconstrue

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<sup>16</sup> These people are often called 'street smart'

friendly touch, as an antecedent to seduction and rape, feel easily shamed and are quick to react violently if they perceive an insult in whatever form it takes. For example, I remember one man telling me he seriously injured his wife because she dropped his cup of tea that she was carrying during an argument and he took this as a personal affront. The kind of perceptions that others present some kind of imminent threat or slight may have been accurate in the world these men came from but are now often out of context.

### *Summary*

A diversity of understandings into the causes of violence illustrates that individual reasons for violent behaviour can only be seen as one constituent of a complex psychological, biological and sociocultural matrix. These include factors in the internal state of an individual such as an evolutionary proprietorial tendency and related sexual possessiveness, attachment issues, shame, drives, genes, hormones, and neural factors. Social influences such as psychosocial disadvantage, unstable and violent parenting, male identity conditioning, poverty, alcohol, drugs, patriarchal culture and media violence<sup>17</sup> are also implicated in violent outcomes.

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<sup>17</sup> Even with solid emotional, behavioural, cognitive and social anchors provided by a healthy home and community, pervasive media violence increases aggression and antisocial behaviour (Lewis, Malhou & Webb, 1989; Myers, Scott & Burgess, 1995) and desensitises children to future violence (Comstock & Paik, 1991).

## CHAPTER 3

### *Research Methodology*

*“The power of taking hold of an experience and turning it round slowly in the light”*

(Virginia Woolf, Mrs Dalloway)

In this chapter I describe Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodology of enquiry for exploring men’s lived experiences of violence. I map out a history and give a basic explanation of the philosophical principles employed in this study. As I proceed I demonstrate how I intend to apply these ideas to the process of gathering and interpreting information.

I argue in favour of this methodology because it is underpinned by a philosophy that deals with the dynamic processes of human activity as distinct from ideas and notions about human behaviour. It highlights perceptions and feelings that may be hidden and emphasizes the experiences, views and meanings of the participants rather than imposing theories, assumptions and beliefs upon them. Attempting to understand the lived experience and meaning of violence in the lives of men represents a shift in emphasis from an epistemological understanding to that of an ontological one.

I am also drawn to hermeneutic phenomenology because of its compatibility with the way in which I practice psychotherapy as a way of understanding and helping to relieve suffering. My work combines the science and art of understanding and interpretation.

### *A Historical Perspective on Hermeneutic Phenomenology*

A proposition that the rational - intellectual part of man rules the irrational is a philosophical inheritance that goes back beyond Plato and Aristotle. The 17<sup>th</sup> Century Enlightenment heralded an era of scientific-materialist explanation of events and phenomena. Theories from philosophers and rationalists such as Descartes, Hume, Kant and Leibniz cut man off from his surrounding environment and created a split in Western thinking and attitudes. Man was considered to be rational and objective (Solomon &

Higgins, 1997). Based upon this understanding man believed he could disengage himself from his surroundings, including his own physical reality, and not be influenced by his fundamental connections. That there is a great schism between man's 'inner world' and his 'outer world' was to become the normal way of considering 'reality'. This state of affairs existed until the understandings of Darwin (1859) made us uncomfortably aware of the degree to which we share our life force with the animals, and Freud (1923) exposed the extent to which we are ruled by the irrational. Alongside the scientific rationalist worldview there was also a reaction to the disenchantment of the failure of the political upheaval of the French Revolution to totally undermine the religious hegemony of the times.

Out of the disillusionment of the Enlightenment was born another movement of writers, artists and thinkers such as Flaubert, Cervantes, Constable, Shelley and Byron who were known as the Romantics. They protested against the submission of all phenomena to a higher purpose whether religious or scientific. Romantics looked to the past for a better state of affairs beyond the Industrial Revolution and outside of the zeal of Judaeo-Christian tradition to ancient Greece and its myths, finding within these expressions of the irrational in man. They rejected the idea that the forces of nature and man could be explained according to rational principles. They searched for the mysterious and the unknowable in human beings (Solomon & Higgins, 1997).

### *The Beginnings of Phenomenology*

Likewise early phenomenologists thought that the value of man and truths about him were to be found within and believed that the excursions of rational science could not detect what is quintessential in him (Speigelberg1960). In attempting to return to the essential nature of the "noble savage" philosophers constructed an intellectual discipline. I believe many so-called "primitive" cultures had already evolved this understanding in their rites and customs as a way of life. Practitioners of esoteric religions had also been trying to live in the 'now' of daily experience or 'mindfulness' for thousands of years through meditation, incantation, prayer and ritual. Ultimately the project of phenomenological reflection and explication is an attempt to develop more direct contact

with experience as lived. Phenomenological philosophers attempt to capture through reflection, questioning and writing what others searched for through their way of living.

In searching for the spirit of things Edmund Husserl [1859-1938] developed a method of philosophical inquiry into the nature of necessary truth called phenomenology. He defined this as the scientific study of the essential features or meanings of consciousness (Solomon and Higgins, 1997). Husserl's notion was that all meaning is mediated through consciousness and that the world has no meaning without consciousness and vice-versa. In his phrase, "to the things themselves," Husserl (1982, p. 32) means that phenomenology is a discipline that must describe what is given to us in immediate experience without being obstructed by pre-conceptions and theoretical notions. Merleau-Ponty (1962, p.xvi) states, "The world is not what I think, but what I live through". He makes a distinction between appearance and essence because phenomenology always asks questions about the nature or meaning of something rather than offering empirical or theoretical observations or accounts. Phenomenologist William Dilthey (1976) distinguishes between scientific experiments and human affairs by illustrating that we may explain nature but we must understand human life.

### *Modern Phenomenology*

Mays and Pope (1995) define the goal of qualitative research as the development of concepts that help us to understand social phenomena in natural settings. Phenomenology is a qualitative research methodology that does not set out to give us a theory to explain the world but prefers to offer us "the possibility of plausible insight which brings us in more direct contact with the world" (Van Manen, 1984 p.38). The philosophy of phenomenology takes a viewpoint that the subjective imagination is the key to the 'truth' and distinguishes itself from the sterile formulae of 'facts'. Alternatively quantitative research takes us into the laboratory in order to dissect and explain phenomena and has traditionally relied upon objective methodologies that contribute to an epistemological understanding of the issue from the researcher's perspective. In contrast imagination, intuition and spontaneity are the research instruments of the phenomenologist. Using these tools to understand and interpret human being's experiences the purpose of

phenomenology is to grasp the neglected ontological aspect of an issue – in this case male violence – so that an event comes together as a meaningful whole. As a phenomenological researcher I am more interested in hearing individual accounts of how men experience violence than gaining an objective understanding of what violence is.

A universal, causal and logical account of violence will evoke statements such as “violence is bad” or “violence causes suffering.” These are self-evident truths for most of us. However, phenomenology has another agenda which is to grasp the meaning that is hidden or neglected and may be brought to light in statements such as “I need attention,” “I’m in despair” or “I can’t bear these intolerable feelings.” It is this “unsaid side of our statements” (Gadamer 1960/1985 p.13) for which I am searching as I uncover experiences of violence that reflect Heidegger’s fundamental question about the meaning of being.

### *Hermeneutic Phenomenology*

Hermeneutics takes its name from the Greek god, Hermes, whose task was to communicate messages from the Gods to ordinary mortals (Van Manen, 1990). It can be “traced back to the ancient Greeks studying literature and to biblical exegesis in the Judeo-Christian tradition,” (Crotty 1998, p.89). Scholars and esoterics used this methodology in order to interpret hidden ‘truths’ of religious documents and writings.

A line of philosophers from Heraclitis [536-470 B.C.E.] to Heidegger have argued that concepts are static and one sided (Solomon & Higgins, 1997). Such philosophers promote the idea that in reifying human experience we fail to understand its development, its context, its constant becoming – in other words its life. They believe that human life cannot be dissected and analysed and that human experiences are filled with infinite angles and endless moments. An encounter with a phenomenon like violence is a part of life that cannot be frozen and understood in isolation. In attempting to capture the essence of an experience phenomenology focuses on the detail of everyday life, or the ‘life-world.’ Hermeneutics takes a broader view, which gives voice to the past and the future, and broader cultural factors (Rundell, 1995). The task of hermeneutic phenomenology is



to turn phenomena or appearances into something richer, more vital, more complete - closer to the reality of human existence.

Schleiermacher [1768-1834] saw hermeneutics as a theory of interpretation with which to combat misunderstandings that arise from taking texts literally. He achieved this by seeking to uncover the original impulses that give rise to thoughts. Dilthey (1976), Schleiermacher's biographer, focused upon studying 'lived experience' rather than attempting to understand the fundamental thoughts of an author. He stresses the historical character of human existence (Marias 1967). Crotty (1998, p. 100) discusses two aspects of Gadamer's hermeneutics; "firstly, that our consciousness is affected by history and tradition; secondly, that language is at the core of understanding".

### *Heidegger's Hermeneutics*

Heidegger's (1927/1962) hermeneutic phenomenology attempts to reveal the meaning of being. According to him, phenomenology questions what underlies phenomena and looks for that which "for the most part does not show itself at all" (p.59). Hermeneutics reveals phenomenological insights and articulates this hitherto preconscious experience into existential structures and then Being itself. There is no clear delineation between phenomenology as a descriptive methodology that elicits commonalities and shared meanings from lived experience and hermeneutics that interprets and makes meaning from information. The 'facts' of lived experience are always meaningfully experienced and need to be captured by an interpretive (hermeneutic) process through language (Van Manen 1990).

### ***Key Notions of Heidegger's Hermeneutic Phenomenology***

Central to hermeneutic phenomenology is the idea that everyday experience is worthy of examination. Heidegger's quest was to give us a philosophy for understanding experience and to chart how this is intertwined with the meaning of Being. Some of Heidegger's key ideas are now introduced to demonstrate the insights I am using to inform this study.

### *Epistemology versus Ontology -Thinking versus Being*

Heidegger argues that the theoretical, reflective and detached mode of knowing the world overlooks every day occurrence and as such he makes a distinction between taken for granted daily reality and theoretical abstraction. Heidegger himself had a telling experience of the difference between ideology and lived reality when he joined the Nazi Party. Ideologically he began by agreeing with the party that promoted self-fulfillment as possible via heroic integration within a national cause. Fortunately he recoiled at the reality of its horror and violence (Howard, 2000).

Examples like ‘collateral damage’ used to define people killed in war or ‘restructuring’ used to affect people’s lives and jobs exemplify the phenomenological objection to our emphasis in Western culture on abstract or theoretical ways of defining experience. These abstractions seem to do no justice to, nor begin to describe the actual reality of the violence and destruction of real people in war or the experience of unemployment on human lives. Can such terms shed light on the experience of the Iraqi child who recently lost his arms and legs, his mother, father, brothers and sisters in a bomb explosion? The closer we get to the experience of the consequences of phenomena such as war or job loss the more of a collapse of such notions about experience occurs and the lived reality of events moves us. When I ask a man ‘what is it like?’ I search for his lived experience of violence, not an idea about violence. I treat whatever he reveals with respect and reverence because his disclosure makes me aware of his vulnerability and, consequently, his humanity.

*Dasein: Being - in - the - world.*

Dasein describes the experience of being-in-the-world. It is the term Heidegger (1927/1962) uses to designate the kind of beings we are prior to the reflective, conscious ego of the Western tradition that conceals, reifies and rationalizes the inclusiveness of everyday existence. Steiner (1978, p.83) interprets the meaning of Dasein as “to be there da-sein and ‘there’ is the world: the concrete, literal, actual daily world.” Being, according to Heidegger, simply ‘is’, it is the here and now, the present and everything in it. Being is the culmination of every thought, feeling and action of a life and everything that has influenced that life through the ages.

Heidegger (1927/1962) reminds us that we do not notice Being in this way as we go about our daily lives. Everyday experience permeates our lives and yet is largely taken for granted as “we already live in an understanding of Being and that the meaning of Being is still veiled in darkness”(p.23). The aim of hermeneutic phenomenology is to shine a light into the darkness so that the primal nature of an experience under examination is revealed and subsequently sculpted into meaning through the persistent efforts of the researcher.

As a researcher of the experience of being and the meaning of being I am not so interested in talking about violence as I am in the contextual understanding of violence of ‘what it is like’; the thoughts, the feelings, the attitudes, the things, the sights, sounds and states of that person at the time violence is perpetrated. In other words what else is there beneath the act of violence. There is no sense of certainty in my conclusions. The participant brings me his world and his being is revealed, his humanity exposed.

### *Self/ World*

The hermeneutic phenomenological viewpoint differs from the Cartesian notion, that dominates Western thinking and understands self as a possession (self-possession). In this view both self and world are seen as objects. Human beings are seen to have a set of characteristics, traits and behaviours that belong to them. As such self is assumed to be involved in a causal interaction with the world. This is an autonomous, disengaged and rational self that chooses actions on the basis of cognitively held principles and values. In contrast the phenomenological world of Heidegger is one in which the self is continuously affected by a “ meaningful set of relationships, practices and language that we have by virtue of being born into a culture” (Leonard, 1989, p.43).

Heidegger’s world is based upon the unique historical, socio-cultural context from which we inhabit the present. The present is, furthermore, influenced by the way in which we embody the future. Human beings use language to articulate and manifest the world of

things. This creates the possibility for particular ways of feeling and of relating that make sense within a specific culture or sub group.

World cannot be described by trying to enumerate the entities within it; in this process world would be passed over, for world is just what is presupposed in every act of knowing an entity. Every entity in the world is grasped as an entity *in terms* of world, which is always already there. The entities which comprise man's physical world are not themselves world but *in a world*. Only man has a world (Palmer, 1969 p.132-133)

Man is born into a world that both constructs and is constructed by him. He is not born into a vacuum in which he consciously decides to take up the meanings, linguistic skills, cultural practices and family traditions by which he is defined. From this perspective men who use violence to control their own world and the world of others do not realize that they are victims of their own heritage in whom, through no will of their own, violence resides. I often ask the men in my groups to consider how violence lives inside them on a daily level permeating their bodies and their lives and robbing them of vitality.

*Thrownness – The Lifeworld in which a Person becomes Situated.*

Heidegger uses the idea of “thrownness” to explain how human beings are constrained from being radically free, independent arbiters of meaning because of their *situatedness* in a world of history, culture, purposes, values and language that influences who they can and cannot become. From this standpoint a client of mine is not violent just because that is what he chooses, as if it were from free will, it is because he is thrown into a complex mixture of life-world matrices that influence every facet of his being. How he views violence depends partly upon his history, partly upon his cultural background and partly upon his social environment and his own make-up - any outcome for an individual is based upon a transactional process between this person and his world. Each of the choices he makes based upon his situation shapes how his life will be seen as a whole. For example, if violence is viewed as a culturally sanctioned means of protecting a man's honour then this will contribute to the way in which he thinks and feels and, in turn, will affect how he

exercises the choices that will define him. Hoffman (1993) reminds us that we are intrinsically connected to all that has preceded us:

My past is nothing other than my ‘thrownness’ that is, my rootedness in a culture, my already established preferences, skills, habits and so on and it is precisely in terms of this thrownness that my present experiences get to be organized and endowed with meaning (p.208).

*Significance – Assignment of Meaning and Value*

Heidegger (1927/1962, p. 159) states, “ Each one of us is what he pursues and cares for. In everyday terms we understand ourselves and our existence by way of the activities we pursue and the things we take care of.” He has a perspective that what makes us uniquely human is that we make meaning and assign value to the things around us and ourselves. This means that a basic characteristic of Dasein is that things show up as threatening, or unattractive, or stubborn, or useful, and so forth. Things show up as mattering because we give them importance. When things lose their significance it is because our engagement with what is important has become cut off or attenuated in some way. This idea fits with my experience of finding that men who have connected to their own culture or found meaning through religious, cultural or some other meaning making practice have improved prospects for rehabilitation.

*Embodiment – To Feel or not to Feel?*

An American soldier discussing fighting the Japanese in the Second World War described himself and his men as ‘killing machines’ (Hell in the Pacific-TV1, 2003). The men I work with often treat their bodies as detached objects or machines with which they do such things as work, feed or have sex and so on. This sense of disconnectedness that pervades much of our culture is derived from the Cartesian notion of a duality with the self as subject that has an object called a body, which is “driven by mechanical causality extrinsic to the essential self,”(Leder, 1984, p.29).

It is perhaps the belief that somehow the body can be separated from concrete actions of self in the world that allows men to be conditioned to reframe other human beings into

objectified enemies or aliens towards whom they have little or no empathy. As we have seen the phenomenological view is one of connection in which rather than having a body, we embody. Within this framework we act with intention in a meaningful world and we are living manifestations of what existentialist Merleau-Ponty (1962) calls “bodily intelligence”. This understanding is that the body is not merely a machine whose sole purpose is to do the bidding of the self-directing self but as Leder (1984, p.41) says “our living center from which radiates all existential possibilities”. If this is so then I as an hermeneutic phenomenological researcher, psychotherapist and ultimately as a human being must approach all other ‘bodies’ as meaningful and value laden. That is as people who are linked to something much greater than the sum total of their experiences.

#### *Self Interpretation – People as Meaning Makers*

Heidegger (1927/1962) believes that being-in-being is non-theoretical and non-cognitive and that people are engaged in and constituted by their interpretive understanding that emanates from linguistic and cultural traditions. In other words human beings inherently make meaning of whatever appears to them in light of their backgrounds. This is a view in which being is self-interpreting. Palmer (1969, p.136) tells us “what appears from the ‘object’ is what...the thematisation of the world at work in his understanding will bring to light.” Fonaghy (1999) in speaking of men who perpetrate violence upon women reflects this understanding in the notion of ‘mentalisation’ whereby small children through daily interaction with their environment build a mental representation of schema with which to make meaning of their world as they develop. If through abuse or neglect this faculty is impaired and hence their ability to make meaning is damaged then there is a much greater chance that they will resort to violence or other forms of pathology in order to escape the oppression of emptiness, meaninglessness and general existential anxiety. My job is to understand and interpret people’s experiences, determined by their situatedness, and to facilitate them in re-interpreting their lives in a way that suits their expectations.

*Temporality - Human Time.*

The Heideggerian notion of temporality is once again based upon connection. Human time is not a series of 'now moments' devoid of content. Each instant and consequently each experience is based upon past experience and directed towards the future. It is also relational and applies only to beings and not to physical objects. From this viewpoint temporality is constitutive of being. Heidegger describes human time thus:

The Dasein can as little get rid of its bygone-ness as escape its death. In every sense and in every case everything we have been is an essential determination of our existence. Even if in some way, by some manipulation, I may be able to keep my bygone-ness far from myself, nevertheless, forgetting, repressing, suppressing are modes in which I myself am my own having-been-ness (Heidegger, 1985, p.365).

The being-in-time is not a context free element who can be examined without considering his order or meaning in relation to the past, the future and to others. For example, however unlikely this may seem one of the men in my groups may anticipate prison as a haven from the struggles of the having-been-ness of his world, a place where the bigger his crime the more he will be accepted. His expectation of 'doing time' is different from another who has had a better experience of being on the outside. The perceptions and expectations of both of these men have been composed of past experience and future anticipations that will colour their responses to how they act with regard to violence in the moment. The meaning of each violent action is composed of many factors and chronological progression described by our clocks is only one aspect of human time that describes events

*The Hermeneutic Circle – The Meaningful Whole*

"The hermeneutic circle", a term originally applied by Schleiermacher (cited in Crotty 1998, p.95) to represent the art of understanding, is a significant feature in Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology. Heidegger (1962) offers a personal version of the hermeneutic circle in which there is a constant state of flux created by a movement from

previous understandings to new understandings. What is sought in the movement within the hermeneutic circle is an ever-deeper understanding of human affairs. This arises from delving into the meaning that arises from the interplay between the continually emerging parts and the whole that inform each other. I choose an incident of violence and ask myself what is the text saying about this particular man's world and how does this world compare with other worlds and how does this influence...and so on. There is certainly a point at which my interpretation is committed to paper but I can never say I have fully understood a phenomenon. In this way understanding stays open to growth and change and does not become static or fixed. Being within the hermeneutic circle means that we cannot strip human actions from their context by taking a privileged position of 'objective' knowing. People cannot be understood on the basis of a certainty beyond subjective intuition as "all knowledge emanates from persons who are already in the world and seeking to understand other persons who are also already in the world" (Leonard, 1989, p.50).

### *Applying Hermeneutic Phenomenology*

My sense of the hermeneutic phenomenological methodology is that it brings others and myself closer to the truth of our existence. People, from this viewpoint, cannot be seen as entities to be studied as an objective reality that can be reduced into components and described. They are the culmination of multiple events and relationships that continue to evolve. From this profoundly respectful perspective understanding is a process of relating to people, attempting to know them, and not treating them as specimens from which we will glean certain 'facts.'

As a researcher I recognize that as I collect and collate the data of my study participants I am not a minimal influence trying to establish quantitative research independence but an integral part of the exercise. I make no secret that my own historical consciousness and cultural influences are included in the process. My main interest in interviewing and analyzing these men is to gain a deeper appreciation of their experiences of violence and the meanings lying hidden therein. As such, I move from beliefs and judgments into an



attitude of reflection and understanding and ultimately to deeper sense of knowing. Interpretative or hermeneutic phenomenology, in keeping with my own aims, is ultimately concerned with empowerment through awareness of new meanings in lived experience (Sorrell & Redmond 1995). The participants are open to me because they know that I am doing this work in order to help other men and because I listen with the emphasis upon understanding where they come from.

As a person who has chosen psychotherapy as a vocation I believe this way of considering the people I work with to be conducive to their well-being. It is for these reasons that I have chosen the Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenological research methodology as an appropriate qualitative approach for the description, analysis and understanding of men who have both perpetrated and suffered from violence.

## CHAPTER 4

### *Van Manen's Phenomenological Guide to Research Methods*

Heidegger's (1927/1962) philosophy provides me with a methodology for studying human experience. Van Manen in his text 'Researching Lived Experience; human science for an action sensitive pedagogy' (1990) offers a dynamic interplay of six research activities that focus my use of the methods in this hermeneutic phenomenological research approach. Van Manen (1990) stresses that these activities are not just a mechanistic set of steps to follow but rather a dynamic, flexible guide to approaching the study. In keeping with this advice in this chapter I provide a personal response to each of these guidelines.

#### *1. Turning to a Phenomenon that Seriously Interests us and Commits us to the World.*

My orientation towards psychotherapy comes from my interest in understanding human psychology. My life experiences attract me to the phenomenon of male violence. My commitment and passion for deeper understanding and meaning making have produced a desire to meet with men who have experienced violence, to experience being with them, to understand them more fully, to understand myself more fully and, ultimately, to reduce violence. Instinct infused with logic informs me that I would not feel content to study violence without being integrally involved with those whose lifeworld is permeated by it. This is why I work in the field as well as write about violence.

#### *2. Investigating Experience as we Live it Rather than as we Conceptualise it.*

Phenomenological research requires that the researcher be directly involved in the world of living relations and shared situations whilst actively exploring the phenomenon under investigation. I use the topic of violence as a lens to gain depth and perspective into the lives of my participants. I am not just a student examining a phenomenon but also a participant in the reality of it. Hermeneutic phenomenology appeals to me as a methodology because it immerses me in the world of violence and its meaning.

### *3. Reflecting on Essential Themes.*

As I conduct my analysis of the data I listen to the recorded interviews and read and re-read the transcripts. I reflect upon the significance of certain experiences in order to clarify and distill themes that emerge. This process enables me to tease out the meanings from experiences and compare them with other experiences so that more complex understandings can be developed. For example, when an interviewee tells me that he numbs himself during an experience of violence I must ask myself what this means in the context of his life. Does numbing protect him? Does it make it easier for him to commit violence? In what context does numbing become part of his world? I must also consider whether the theme of numbing occurs in other men's stories.

### *4. The art of Writing and Re-writing Interpretations of Stories of Violence.*

Van Manen (1990, p. 126) reminds us "that in order to conduct phenomenological research a certain form of consciousness is necessary, a consciousness of reading and writing". Literacy expands our ability to articulate experience. To do research in a phenomenological sense is seen as thoughtfully bringing to language, most commonly through the activity of writing, the phenomenon under investigation. In this case recorded interviews of stories of violence told to me have been transcribed in order for aspects of lived experience to be selected and thematically worked and re-worked through the application of reflection and a gradual process of refining my writing.

### *5. Maintaining a Strong and Oriented Relation to the Phenomenon Under Investigation.*

It has been important for me to maintain a firm orientation to the issue of violence I have chosen for phenomenological investigation. I must remain involved, fully present. The emphasis is upon what emerges from the data rather than theories about experience. To carry out this study neither is it enough just to recall experiences. My task is to construct a possible interpretation of their nature. When I return to the taped interviews and transcripts I must listen with my knowledge and intuition to the way in which things are said, things that are left out, pauses, repetitions, intonations, slips of the tongue and so on in order to stay engaged with the meaning of participant's experiences of violence. This involvement

is necessary so that my own experience of understanding is maximised and inventive thoughtfulness, interpretive sensitivity and scholarly skill are brought to bear on the interpretations I use to enrich my data.

*6. Balancing the Research Project by Considering the Parts and the Whole.*

When I look out of the window of my house I am given a perspective through the juxtaposition of bush close by and sweeping views across a valley to the sea. One feature of the landscape comes into view as another fades into the background. This observation makes me aware that my view of the world is derived from the contrasting ebb and flow of my perceptions.

The data must always be examined in light of the parts and the whole. As I involve myself I am affected in a visceral manner. I plunge into depths of the stories but I must rise to the surface, draw breath and gain a perspective that includes both my emotional and my intellectual engagement as I begin my interpretations. There is consciousness of a constant coming and going whilst remembering to stay focused on the task of making lived experience tangible and accessible to other readers.

Keeping a balance between analyzing the parts of interview material with reference to the whole prevents me from getting bogged down or led astray by too much speculation and theorizing or, using my bush analogy, of not being able to see the wood for the trees.

***Van Manen's Lifeworld Existentials as Guides to Reflection***

Writing about lived experience is a difficult task because the tools of examination; language, reflection, analysis and writing are themselves already one step removed from the actuality of experience. An experience, which is 'owned' by the person involved in the experience, is appropriated by myself as the researcher. By way of recording, listening to, writing and analyzing it is I who interprets the meaning of another's experience.

Van Manen's (1990) lifeworld existentials help keep me engaged with lived reality and remind me of the of the human mind's susceptibility to abstraction. Van Manen (1990, p.

101) asserts, “All phenomenological human science research efforts are really explorations into the structure of the human lifeworld, the lived world as experienced in everyday situations and relations.” He goes on to describe four fundamental lifeworld themes that pervade all human experience, regardless of historical, cultural or social situatedness, that he calls the lifeworld existentials. I have found the themes of lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality) and lived human relation (relationality) very useful as guides for illuminating the research process.

*Lived Space:* Human space cannot be measured mathematically or in three dimensions because lived space is the place in which human beings experience themselves. From this perspective space confines us or liberates us, is safe or dangerous and so on. Although there are common features to the way in which we understand space the way in which we feel it is entirely subjective. For example, in groups we practice an exercise that brings members attention to our sensitivity to space as we live it. The men line up in two rows facing each other and move slowly towards each other. The experiences of the men are always different. One feels threatened as his opposite comes closer, another is able to hold his ground and yet another feels aggressive towards the one he feels is invading his space. The way in which we internalize the space we call home is of particular interest because this is where so much domestic violence takes place. Bollnow, (1960 cited by van Manen, 1990 p.102) says, “ the home is a very special space experience which has something to do with the fundamental sense of our being. Home has been described as that secure inner sanctity where we can feel protected and by ourselves” The experience of participants in this study often does not mirror these sentiments.

*Lived Body:* The human body is the interface between the self and the world. It is the container of past heritage, social and cultural experiences and present responses to internal and external stimuli. I as a researcher inquire into how men embody experiences of violence.

*Lived Time:* This is subjective time and cannot be measured by a clock or a calendar. For example, when I am late for an appointment time seems to speed up as I try to will the

clock hands to remain still. One of my interviewees described an incredibly violent incident in which he was involved as having the quality of a movie in slow motion.

*Lived Other:* This is the interpersonal domain in which we are altered and transformed by others. Some people are nervous in groups. Many of the men I work with describe the powerful effects that others have on them, “she’s so frustrating,” “I want to kill him when he does that,” “she made me do it”. In groups I speak of an invisible piece of rope that others hand to us as a way of engagement and look at the possible options and consequences we have as to how we connect with it. My question to the man who has lived with aggression is “how is it to experience others”?

These four existentials can be spoken about separately for the sake of understanding them but in reality they are intricately interwoven, each one calling forth the others. For example, as a facilitator of stopping violence I embody, among others, the qualities of compassion, empathy and challenge in the presence of the men I work with. This embodiment takes place in and affects the space in which men gather in order to talk about violence and its consequences. This gathering is a direct experiencing of lived relations, lived space, lived body and includes each man’s here and now experiences of time that incorporates past, present and future.

### ***Summary***

Van Manen’s (1990) six phenomenological research activities provide an orientation towards the study. His existential structures offer a signpost towards lived experience. These ways of seeing help myself as the researcher to centre the skills of interviewing, reflection, analysis and writing upon the research question.



## CHAPTER 5

### Study Design and Research Methods

In phenomenological research, methodology and methods are understood as different entities. Methodology refers to the philosophical framework that must be assimilated so that the researcher is clear about the assumptions of the particular approach. Method refers to the research technique and the procedure for carrying out the research (van Manen, 1990). Caelli (2001, p.275) reminds us “as with all qualitative research, the way of proceeding or method that is chosen must be defensible from the philosophical and epistemological positions that guide the study.”

My methods, underpinned by a methodology that orients me to lived experience, are the ‘doing’ of the work of attempting to gain a sense of what it means to be a human being involved in violence. In this chapter I discuss the research design and include a description of the sampling procedure, data collection and analysis. A section on rigour that underlines the credibility of the work is included. The chapter begins with the principles that form the ethical foundations of this study.

#### *Ethical Considerations*

Due to the sensitive and highly personal nature of the subject matter with which I am dealing, ethical considerations of the study are a major issue. All participants have been both violent and subjected to abuse and/or neglect. Some of them have been imprisoned for their offenses and may even be publicly identifiable. Most of the men are still bound by Protection Orders. None of them are, to the best of my knowledge, currently violent nor are charged for a violent offense at the time of interviewing.

In the interests of their safety and well-being, participants in this research have a principal right to freedom from harm, freedom from exploitation, respect and justice (Polit & Hungler, 1997).



Men who have used violence or had violence perpetrated against them may have concurrent mental health issues including PTSD<sup>18</sup>, interpersonal difficulties, substance abuse, anxiety and depression. Ethical dilemmas regarding these concerns may occur and every effort has been made to keep harmful effects to a minimum. To this end strategies for support have been ensured. I have discussed the possibility of memory trauma arising, and offer appropriate support and referrals if necessary. If, for example, an experience of childhood abuse and/or sexual violation arises I have the experience and knowledge including ACC funding, support groups, psychotherapists and counsellors to deal with this. I am conversant with DSMIV<sup>19</sup> as a diagnostic tool. Some of the men have stressed the therapeutic effects of our conversations and asked for further counselling. In order to avoid boundary infringements in my different roles as researcher and therapist I have offered them appropriate referrals. Ethical reasons dictate that none of these men will have received nor will receive ongoing therapy from me within the timeframe of the research project. I have made it clear that I have a wide range of referral sources if further need should arise and I have followed up by phone, upon agreement, a few days after our interviews to ensure safety standards are met. Besides potential problems it is expected that there will be beneficial spin-offs to the men in question from understanding and expression of distressing life events and satisfaction that they are participating in a process that may help others (Polit & Hungler, 1997). From the latter point of view interviewees have seemed particularly keen to be part of the study.

Due to the fact that I will be discussing the topic of violence I am aware of the possibility of hearing disclosures that unnerve myself and/or the participant and they may even test the boundaries of legality. It is my task as researcher to ensure that the “therapeutic imperative (advocacy) takes precedence over the research imperative (advancement of knowledge) if conflict develops” (Munhill, 1993, p.396). There could be a conflict of interest if, for example, I discover during the course of the interviews that current violence was occurring and I have an obligation to report this to the relevant authorities. Participants will be warned of this issue and given a written assurance of limited

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<sup>18</sup> Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

<sup>19</sup> Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (1996) for diagnosis of psychopathology.

confidentiality (Appendix 1). Names will be changed to comply with the right to privacy.

It is my responsibility to ensure justice and respect at all stages of the study. In practical terms this means I have approached my interviewees with an attitude that although I may judge some of their behaviours I do not judge their character. Peterson (1998) makes the point that negative stigmatisation can be challenged by using a participatory methodology (in phenomenological research the participant is central to the research process), being aware of individuality, and promoting the use of appropriate non-labelling language. I am mindful that these men have shown considerable courage in electing to be interviewed and that they all, to varying degrees, are actively seeking rehabilitation.

Fair treatment and freedom from exploitation is further achieved by honouring agreements entered into with the participants. For example, facilitating a meeting between a participant and a group of adolescents, following up with phone calls and offering the men an opportunity to give approval to their material before it is published.

This study was carried out in New Zealand and is therefore subject to the guiding principles of the 'Treaty of Waitangi'. It was culturally appropriate that I should be able to meet the safety needs of this group because Maori are included in the interview process. Through my training as a psychotherapist, stopping violence facilitator and as a Restorative Justice Court facilitator I have an understanding of Treaty issues and Maori culture. I also have access to support from a local Marae as well as to Maori counsellors, Kaumatua and workers in the field of violence.

As indicated I have, through the groups, had a direct involvement with the men I interview. I am aware of the power dynamics that could arise in asking this group of men to participate. I may have been able to influence their decisions but I considered the men I chose to have enough assertiveness to be able to say 'no' if they wished. In fact one of

the difficulties in working with aggressive men is often in attempting to get them to do anything they do not want to. I also made my position with regard to this issue clear to the ethics committee. In my follow up calls all of the men stated that they had found the interviews a positive experience to date.

A respect for human dignity and the right to autonomy determine that verbal clarification, a letter requesting informed consent and an information sheet explaining the nature of the study and involvement in it (Appendix 1) was given to each participant for his consideration. This informed each man of the possibility of emotional distress occurring and of his right to withhold information or to withdraw at any stage of the process (Polit & Hungler, 1997).

All information including tapes, transcripts and personal notes are securely stored. Finally, this study was subject to the approval of the AUT ethics committee before it was authorised to proceed.

### ***Data Collection***

#### ***Sampling***

For this qualitative interpretive study I interview from a large pool of potential candidates a purposive sample of five men who have completed Stopping Violence programmes that I run from designated agencies in South and West Auckland. I have verbal and written permission from the agencies in question to interview these men.

I had to weigh up the pros and cons of using larger or smaller samples and decided upon this number because of the relationship between sample size and data analysis techniques. Van Manen's (1990) method of vigilantly selecting data that is thematic of the experience under review can lead to rich 'generalisable data,' from a relatively small sample (Maggs-Rapport, 2001). Patton (1990) discusses the merits of using purposive sampling for this type of study because it aims to select information-rich cases for in-

depth study to examine processes, meanings and interpretations. Morse & Field (1995) and Leininger (1985) justify a small sample for phenomenological research because it aims to elicit meaning from experiences rather than measuring or explaining the distribution of characteristics within a large specified population. From my own discipline of psychotherapy I can cite the contribution of Freud and many others' single case studies to the general knowledge of pathology and personality.

Locating the men for this study was relatively easy because they come from the stopping violence groups that I run. These men have already learned the value of talking to other men about their experiences in the groups. Sharing personal aspects of their lives with other men was something many of them have rarely if ever done before participating in the groups.

Two of the men are New Zealanders of European extraction, one described himself as part Maori, part Pakeha, one is Maori and one is Dutch. The participants have been subject to a minimum of a Protection Order during their lives and some of them have been in prison. Some of the men have a long-term history of very violent offending and others have committed fewer, more moderate offenses. All of the participants are aged from 35 and up, chosen because of the length of their life experience and their maturity. Other selection criteria, in the interests of both safety and data collection, include a commitment to non-violence, an ability to think critically and develop self-awareness, an ability to identify neglect and abuse as factors in their behaviour and a willingness to share experiences of violence as perpetrators and victims. These measures are decided by my observation of the men in groups that I have run over a 10-20 week period. I have eight years of experience in running these groups and ten plus years in assessment and treatment of issues regarding violence.

### *Interviews (Conversations)*

Data collection techniques for this phenomenological hermeneutic inquiry involve informal unstructured conversations with participants. I choose this method of interview because I am sensitive to the fact that many of the men I work with live outside of what is

determined as social convention. As a generalization they are transient, they make verbal, casual agreements and they avoid commitments. They prefer informality as opposed to structure and rules. Because of their histories and their lifestyles these men are used to being constrained and controlled and they have often cultivated a disrespect for certain kinds of authority figures (hence names such as 'pigs', 'filth' and 'screws' used to describe the police and prison wardens). I have to find a balance between my role as an academic and the need to relate to these men. Van Manen (1990) identifies the conversational relation as an important aspect of phenomenological research. He suggests that a conversational interview is particularly appropriate to the task of understanding the meaning of an experience because of its collaborative nature.

An initial introduction to explain the motivation, scope and purpose of the inquiry and sign the consent forms takes place prior to the interview. I prefer to do this at the time of the actual discussion so that the information disclosed is fresh and can be discussed face to face. It is also practical to do it in this way as these men are often difficult to contact, may work long hours and may have limited availability.

I realise that as we progress in the 60-90 minute interviews our conversations are producing a rich source of data. After an initial hesitation in getting started and with prompting from me all of the men are very forthcoming. My impression is that they have been holding it all in just waiting for an opportunity to talk. Consequently I have to do very little prompting. Occasionally I direct them to the area of experience in which I am interested, eliciting information about the timing and detail of events, clarifying their thoughts, feelings, insights, concerns and perceptions but mostly sitting silently and listening with minimal interference.

In conducting the interviews I am aware of the respect I have for these men as they participate in what is likely to be an anxiety evoking undertaking of disclosing information that may make them feel vulnerable. I sense their respect for me and I share some of their anxiety too. A brief chat and the offer of a cup of tea help put us at ease and

oil the wheels of self-revelation. I believe that having previously known the men in the groups' works to our advantage, as they trust me and we quickly develop a rapport during the interviews. For example, three of the men I spoke to cried, something they all confessed they rarely did, especially in front of another man. The contrast between the violent acts of these men and the way in which they reveal their vulnerability during our conversations leaves me with many and varied feelings. These include feeling wary, skeptical, admiring, empathic and moved. I have noted this several times in my reflective notes on the interview process that I keep after each session.

In order to focus my interview questions I am guided by Van Manen's (1990) life-world existentials. I look to the domains of space, time, the interpersonal and the intrapsychic for lived reality. To ascertain a natural flow and rapport I use open-ended, non-invasive questions intended to allow freedom for participants to explore what is important to them thereby, "increasing the likelihood that their responses are spontaneous"(Spradley, as cited in Leinenger, 1985 p.125). Phenomenological questions about experiences of violence include: "Tell me about that time in your life when your father beat you up?" "How did you feel during that fight?" "What was it like to wait to be beaten?" "How was it to hear your parents screaming at each other?" "What was your experience of being left alone?" Questions such as these stay as close to specific experiences as possible and avoid interruption from me, straying from the topic, opinions, judgements and thoughts about experience. I notice that we move away from the central theme of lived reality when we focus on beliefs or thoughts about experience. When this happens I gently move the process back to the immediacy and presence of lived reality as opposed to theorising and ideas. In editing the stories I include statements from participants that show their own understanding and interpretations of events when they do arise. In my interpretation I am mindful of the fusion of horizons that occurs between the storyteller and myself.

As stories are revealed strong emotions are often expressed including sadness, anger, longing, loneliness, regret and remorse. I am prepared for this because in my job as a therapist talking about experience invariably leads to catharsis. Some of the men cry or become angry and it is at these times that my training and experience as a therapist and

facilitator is useful. I have learned skills such as containing and managing anger and empathizing with vulnerability. I know how to remain silent when silence is required and how to intervene when necessary. It seems to me that the time passes quickly and that the interviewees are finding this opportunity to talk about themselves a rewarding experience.

Single interviews are sufficient because of the richness of data provided by the men. There are several stories of violence in each interview. Four of the taped conversations have taken place in my office in spite of my offering to meet participants at their chosen venues. My office is a safe, private, tranquil environment set up for face to face psychotherapy and the participants felt that this venue would be most suitable for confidentiality. One of the interviews was done at the interviewee's home in a spare bedroom for his convenience.

I transcribe all of the taped interviews myself because of the highly sensitive nature of the information I am collecting. Although time consuming, transcribing also offers an opportunity for me to listen again to the nuances in the voices, familiarize myself with the data and begin reflecting on relevant stories and themes for the study. Tapes are securely held and will be destroyed when I have finished the thesis.

### ***Data Analysis***

Stories people tell me about their lives are examined in light of my own intuitions, perceptions and experiences of human nature. I feel that my training and my work as a therapist support me in the art of listening with my 'sixth sense' to language and meaning that develops from stories and texts. This sense has been honed over many years and is evolved from paying attention, of looking and listening to what is not said as much as what is said and of matching unseen felt meaning with what is seen. Heidegger (1927/1962) reminds me that a phenomenon is something for the most part does not show itself at all but something that lies hidden.

To support my experience and my intuitive insights I have recourse to theories and scientific research on human development including psychodynamic psychotherapy, integrative gestalt, attachment theory, and neuro-science. As a psychotherapist analysing people's narratives I carry out a very similar function to that of a hermeneutic phenomenological researcher analyzing data or textual narratives. Both include interpersonal skills (for data gathering), intuition, philosophical insight and theoretical knowledge of how people are affected by their history and culture.

Lo Biondo-Wood and Haber's (1990) statement reflects my idea of the confluence of aims in both psychotherapy and phenomenology: "The primary concern in phenomenology requires the researcher to design ways of transcending the automatic interpretation people customarily adopt and accept as truth" (p.198-9). For example, if I come across a violent man who lives out of a 'reality' that makes him believe that he is a worthless failure and conducts his life accordingly it is my job to offer him ways for reflecting on the 'truth' of this account of his existence. Implicit in this undertaking is the possibility of other choices for conducting his life. Although the crucial focus of therapy is on the well-being and improvement of psychological functioning of the patient and that of hermeneutic phenomenological research is on understanding and interpretation of what people say about their experiences, I feel, that they are both searching in the end for something very similar. Hermeneutic researcher Maggs-Rapport (2001) argues that the ultimate aim of hermeneutic research is "empowerment through awareness of new meanings in lived experience" (p.379). It should be recognised that this endeavour to empower has been extended through the explicit intentions of thinkers like Habermas and Gadamer who developed critical inquiry to inform hermeneutics as a way of deliberately provoking social change (Crotty 1998).

### *Themes*

The chapter on analysis and interpretation of data will examine key phenomenological themes that have emerged from the stories I have gathered and written down. Van Manen (1990, p.107) remarks upon this phase of the analysis: " In determining the universal or



essential quality of a theme our concern is to discover aspects or qualities that make a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is”.

Hermeneutic phenomenological analysis involves reading and re-reading of texts and the use of intuitive hunches in order to glean units of analysis (Rice & Ezzy, 1999). Units are pieces of information that emerge as themes from the narrative as “knots in the web of experience, around which certain lived experiences are spun”(van Manen, 1990, p.90). Themes say something significant about different notions that arise from the text, they give shape to shapeless notions such as “feeling helpless”, they describe the content of such notions and seek to understand their core. In order to unlock as closely as possible the ineffable aspects of a notion I have chosen a mixture of interpretive methods outlined by Van Manen (1990). These are called “the three approaches toward uncovering or isolating thematic aspects of a phenomenon in the text”(p.93). These approaches incorporate searching for a succinct phrase that captures the main significance of the text as a whole, the selective reading approach that highlights essential statements or phrases and the detailed reading approach which looks at sentence clusters in order to ask what does this excerpt reveal about the experience being described.

Using these guides I isolate thematic statements and ask questions such as “ What statements seem essential about the experience being described”? “ What does this sentence uncover about the experience”? “What does this experience mean in the context of this man’s whole life”? Once isolated each theme must be committed to the creative hermeneutic practice of being secured in writing and ‘reworked’. Therein the essential aspect of themes of individual accounts is compared with experiences from other men’s stories and commonalities and differences are examined. This process is consistent with Benner’s (1985, p.9) notion that “whole cases can be compared to other whole cases”. The results of these comparisons are integrated into an exhaustive phenomenological description. The skill of interpretation leads to the connections and tensions between the parts and the whole of the hermeneutic circle that moves from raw experience to meaning and back to raw experience in an ever-deepening spiral of “knowing” the world of those

concerned.

### ***Rigour***

Quantitative research models that emphasise causal relationships described in terms of observational statements, verification and prediction have proven to be very successful in attempting to gain factual evidence about the meaning and nature of Universal phenomena. Qualitative research is concerned with the multi-layered often-intangible interactions of human beings who bring history, culture, social relations and subjectivity to the undertaking (Porter, 1996). Qualitative research emphasizes understanding the subjective ‘truth’ of human experience rather than explaining empirical ‘facts’. Koch (1996 p.176) recognizes that in this type of research, rather than relying upon researcher objectivity, “data generated by participants is fused with the experience of the researcher and placed in context”. He continues to discuss the importance of demonstrating that research is both trustworthy and believable and proposes that researchers need to “develop the most appropriate criteria for their particular study”(p.176).

The question is how to establish the authority of a report that is based upon the uncertainties of human interactions that involve often immeasurable and intangible qualities such as ambiguity, idiosyncrasy, hunches, instinct and interpretation. Criteria for recognizing some of the different purposes, goals and philosophical assumptions for reporting on the world of lived reality that may not be addressed by positivist science alone are inherent in the constructivist approach to scientific understanding. This approach maintains that meaning or ‘truth’ cannot be described as simply ‘objective’ and that “meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world” (Crotty 1998 p.43). A mix of objective scientific knowledge and subjective intuitive experience support my work as a therapist and I feel it would be remiss at best and unethical at worst to discount either way of ‘knowing’ the world. My own subjectivity cannot be left out of the equation, yet there is more to it than me. It is the matching of received knowledge in the form of science, plausible theories and my personal experience that reassures me of the rigour of this research process.

My own philosophical standpoint is supported by definitions of reality that are based upon Heideggerian principles of research. This is a belief that knowledge of human experience is never independent of interpretation and research findings are never considered to be ultimately true or valid (Draucker 1999). Given that the ‘facts’ of my research cannot be fully validated by traditional methods of quantitative research it is incumbent upon me to demonstrate the ‘truth’ of my findings.

In order to comply with the criteria of trustworthiness for my report I begin by acknowledging that it is not possible to avoid observer bias. I argue that my familiarity with the subject of violence may in fact reinforce my interpretations of the data. It is through clarifying my position with regard to my own subjective influences that I am more likely to distinguish personal and professional meanings from meanings of participants. In terms of ethical standards my awareness of this makes me more capable of transcending differences of power, culture and class.

Chenail (1995) stresses the importance of the relationship between researcher and audience in establishing credibility. In order for my study to meet the criteria for trustworthiness the reader should be able to evaluate the events, influences and actions of myself as researcher (Koch 1996). This includes matching views of my participant’s construction of reality with how I establish this reality, examples of my personal experience in undertaking the research, demonstration of my relationship to the phenomenon I am studying, appropriate supervision for different aspects of the study (for example, phenomenology, violence and psychotherapy), receiving feedback from those in community who both work and live with violence, discussion of literature reviews on violence and the inclusion of material that is relevant to findings in similar situations (Draucker 1999). In the end the study will speak for itself as “validity is demonstrated in the product’s capacity to illuminate and penetrate, via the persuasiveness of a personal vision”(Eisner 1981, p.6).

#### *Self/ Other awareness - A Fusion of Horizons*

As I write this report I am often taken back to my experience of the men I interview. As

time lapses I realise that even though I have forgotten much of our interactions when I think of the men, I experience glimpses of these fleeting visitors in my life. I retain something of the essence of each unique individual. Together with my impressions I am left with notes, tapes and transcripts to re-evolve the past. I will now present some examples of my lived experience of the interview situation so that the reader may grasp the thread of my reflection as we enter more deeply into the life of each man and ultimately into the lifeblood of the study.

These vivid, thumbnail sketches are reminders of the meeting of horizons of researcher and interviewee, our history and our traditions. I intend that they give an insight into the spirit of each man as well as my awareness of my inclusion in the project.

*Vince sits nervously on the edge of his seat, he looks down as he tells me of the death of his fondly remembered father, and his mother's continuing lack of 'real' interest in his life. He reveals his nervousness about the interview process by making dissonant jokes and laughing out loud. Like a proud son impressing his father he shows me hand made candlestick holders and pottery and he plays the guitar beautifully. There is sadness behind his youthful enthusiasm, a need for acceptance. His vulnerability evokes the urge to nurture but I am conscious of maintaining a professional distance.*

*Mac is cooperative. In his eagerness to please he fumbles his words, stutters and repeats himself. I wonder if his nervousness is partly due to a childhood in which he and his brother hid under the bedcovers to blot out the sound of screaming and breaking plates as his mother and stepfather fought. Stories of violence and macho demeanour barely disguise his sensitivity. During this interview he discloses a secret that is simultaneously quite shocking and yet strangely expected. This is something he hid from the group for fear of ridicule. I am aware of keeping my composure as I process this novel information.*

*Ric recounts his story in a flat, monotone voice that has little variation in pitch or tone. He oscillates between 'disappearing' into silence and non-stop talking. He acknowledges that he has learned to suppress grief. His parents abandoned him at birth. He comes across as subdued and emotionally stifled. He reveals how his insecurity leads to dependency, possessiveness, extreme jealousy and uncontained rage. His sense of shame feels slightly overwhelming.*

*Bill is small but powerfully built. He has a constant impish smile on his face, which he loses when he describes stories of extreme violence that inhabit his past. His rage is tempered by boyish charm. As a child he saw his mother brutally beaten by his stepfather. He describes how his life has been shaped from a young age when he made a silent pledge to get even. Innocence coupled with the potential destructiveness of this boy/man engenders a sense of protectiveness and slight anxiety.*

*Colin is a very big, tattooed, intimidating looking man on first appearances who has spent the greater part of his life in prison. He soon dispels his fearsome exterior by being friendly and talking freely, calling me 'mate' on several occasions. He is pleased to tell me of his violent past, not in an eager to please way but rather as a confidant. He realises that he has alienated those who mean something to him, he is remorseful and wants to make amends for the suffering he has caused. His facial contortions match his words as he shows the difficulty of a relentless struggle with the legacy of his past and his desire to change. He doesn't naturally respect vulnerability either in himself or in others. My feelings of warmth towards him are laced with a robust masculinity.*

### ***Sharing Information***

I bring a cautionary note to the sharing of information about my inquiry. Ideas that are not open to challenge are delusions. Bollnow (1974, p.12-13) recognizes the importance of talking about phenomenological research with interested parties “the community and universality of truth means that we engage with others in full reciprocal openness”.

For this work to be recognized by other academics, workers in the field or, perhaps, lay people interested in the subject of violence I need to receive feedback on the study's strengths and limitations. To this end my research may be offered to students, supervisors, workers in the field of violence, therapists, counsellors, interested organizations and agencies and publications. I may present aspects of my findings at workshops on the etiology of violence and interventions that I present to other professionals working in the field of violence throughout New Zealand. The results of the study could be drafted and used by agencies that run anger management courses and integrated into training programmes. They could be presented at the New Zealand Association of Counsellors or Psychotherapists Conference and/ or publications. I will use the information in courses on anger and gender studies that I run at Manukau Institute of Technology as part of the Diploma in Counselling. As a Restorative Court Justice facilitator I feel the work could be useful in helping to understand the dynamics underlying perpetrator violence and in training other facilitators how to work with aggression.

To date I have presented aspects of my findings to academic staff and peers at the Auckland University of Technology, Faculty of Health Studies Research Centre in October 2003 and received affirmation of my work with the phenomenological ‘nod’ from those present. I have also presented some of my findings to a Trauma Studies Colloquium at AUT in November 2003. My presentation evoked a positive response from both audiences for the application of my research process to the emotional data. Furthermore, I have presented some of the work at Lifeline Interchurch Counselling Services and Youthline Counselling Services workshops on childhood trauma in 2003. I have been asked to return to present them again in 2004.

*Summary*

This chapter has demonstrated how I can bring my professional and personal skills to bear on the methods of interviewing, data collection, data analysis and thematic interpretation used for executing this research study. Procedures for ethics, rigour and reporting the outcomes have also been established.

## CHAPTER 6

### *Introducing the Text*

*Violence is every bit as much a public health issue for me and my successors in this century as smallpox, tuberculosis, and syphilis were for my predecessors in the last two centuries.*

*C.Everett Coop, M.D.,  
Surgeon General of the United States  
(1984)*

### ***Being Violent***

Seeing violence in a newspaper, on TV or in a movie creates a vicarious yet removed sensation in most of us. Shielded from its true effects we understand violence as a notion from a safe distance. We recognize that it is antisocial and yet sometimes have an ambivalent mixture of pleasant and unpleasant sensations. Perhaps this is why violence is so popular as entertainment. In this setting we can escape or have a muted response to feelings such as fear, pain and horror. However, most of us have an uncomfortable feeling that violence is also an undeniable part of our daily reality. We acknowledge somewhere in the back of our mind the disquieting fact that murder, rape, torture and maiming of men, women and children are happening in the world around us everyday. Fortunately, many of us do not come into direct contact with violence very often. Unfortunately, for all of the men in this study, this is not so. Violence has been a dominant feature of their lifeworld since early childhood and its legacy is still with them today.

I am acutely aware of wanting to be faithful to my task of presenting the men as they are and neither as a form of spectacle nor just as specimens that I am studying. With this explicit intention in mind I notice upon examining the data that there is an anomaly.



There is an increasing level of abstraction between the interview situation in which I am gathering stories of experiences of violence that are in the past, and now. During the interviews these men are mostly telling about past actions. They are not recounting their present actions and as such they are once removed. The interview situation is about the lived reality of the interview not about actual violent episodes, although these men are the living embodiment of a life world that includes all of their past thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Furthermore, as I tape, transcribe and interpret stories of violence the lived reality of events is not only removed from their actual happening, it is removed from the central character of the storyteller. As such the notion of capturing lived reality is a misnomer, what I actually capture is interpretations of the lived reality of violence. These are men's memories and recounting of events that I witness and suffuse with my own interpretations. Professor David Allen (personal communication September 17, 2003) at an AUT research tutorial claimed, "we can only report the lived reality of experience as a perception". Gadamer (1986 p. 68) says, "When we interpret the meaning of something we actually interpret an interpretation". The final results of this study are about interviewee's interpretations of past thoughts, feelings and actions followed by my insights into their interpretations. Important questions for me are: Do I interpret what I witness and perceive to most closely represent the experience? How do I reveal, according to my own knowing, what the experience of violence means in the lives of these men? How does my own horizon impact upon the fusion of horizons that produce this inquiry? To illustrate this fusion of horizons I provide a short excerpt of my own lived experience in relation to the data:

*This Sunday morning I turn on my computer to look at my data. I have just prior been holding my 3 year old daughter, kissing her, making her laugh, she making me laugh and gently chiding her for being too demanding. Suddenly, I am cast into a world dominated by white blood spattered walls and a little boy listening to the wailing of his mother being dragged by her hair along the hallway. I am struck by the discomfort I feel as I straddle two worlds of tenderness and terror. I don't want to know yet I feel compelled to act. I am afraid that as time diminishes the presence of these perpetrators*

*and victims of violence I shall become less able to relate to the human context of our meetings. I may retreat into ideas about violence and, in the process, become prey to my mind's desire to search for the easy comfort of judgment and condemnation.*

I approach this thesis with an agenda to present an accomplished, worthy report and to use my learning to reduce violence in our community and in the world at large. As the Greenpeace motif says, 'act locally, think globally'. As someone who has a passion to comprehend the phenomenology of violent people and a will to diminish it I have a desire to emphasize the process of discovery rather than merely searching out confirmations of my own hypotheses or the received wisdom of other writers on the subject. If I emphasise my preconceived ideas, or the notions of others I may overlook the individuality of each human being and the unique meanings behind each story. Van Manen (1990 p.79) tells us that "human science research is connected with meaning – to be human is to be concerned with meaning, to desire meaning". I want to understand the meaning of violence in the context of five men's lives.

It is time to focus upon the essence of the study - men's stories of violence. In order to concur with the research title I will introduce each man through a 'being violent' story. I will allow the life world existentials to guide my interpretations as I apply the interpretive method outlined above. These stories are very important because they have stuck in the men's minds and are the first responses to my simple question: "tell me about a time when you were violent".

Vince:

*Yeah um It all started on a busy day on the farm in spring what we call calving time and um we agreed that I would go to one side of the farm and S my ex wife would go to the other side of the farm. She was on a 4 wheeler and we'd agreed at a certain time to be at a certain place and I was there and S didn't show up and I was worried because she was with the 4 wheeler and where she went it was quite steep and I was worried*

*that she'd fallen over. When I saw her she was doing something else and she was quite um .. she acted as if nothing was the matter. That made me very angry because I'd been worrying about nothing I felt that she didn't take me serious at all and I was abusive to her in the presence of the farm hand and um I guess I must have been um charging myself up during the day and in the evening when we were alone I ah I started on the subject and I think I was fired up very quickly, charging myself up very quickly and I suddenly lashed out, hit her in the face with the back of my hand. I remember saying if you don't hear me then you'll feel me. She immediately stood up and went to the toilet and I followed her and kept on hitting and punching her whilst she was on the toilet. It was actually so bad that her head smashed a hole in the wall in the toilet. After that was done I was still abusive to her and I was abusive in a verbal way the physical violence had ceased but that time I was still verbally abusive and I denied her to sleep in her own bed she stayed outside during the night and um as I was lying in bed I became worried that I'd gone too far... and I started looking for her and I went outside and called out her name and called out her name again, walked up and down the drive but I couldn't find her and the next morning she had gone she'd taken the keys of the car and she fled...//... At that time I was only afraid of the consequences that it would have for me. I wasn't I didn't have too much empathy for S at that time...//... I think my biggest concern was yes I remember my biggest concern was that I would lose her because she left a note on the table saying I'll never come back you'll hear from my solicitor, at that moment I was very worried.... (Vince, p.1)*

During this episode Vince embodies many contradictory feelings including being worried about his wife and becoming agitated by her absence before losing control and abusing her. Only some time later he experiences fear of the consequences of his actions. Initially the troubled feelings of 'worrying' become troublesome as the 'not taken seriously' self is filled with 'charging or firing up' feelings that precede violence. Vince's charging up is

linked to his perceived lack of importance in the eyes of his allegedly dismissive wife, “she acted as if nothing was the matter”.

There is a sense of ‘timelessness’ in Vince’s experience as the tension grows. He does not indicate the length of time he is waiting and worrying, was she away for fifteen minutes or an hour? His sense of lived time is preoccupied with reacting to his own concerns. When, in this episode, does worry as concern turn into more sinister feelings? As well as this distortion of chronological time I have a sense of the contrast between the spaciousness of the farm, a place in which it must be easy to lose track of time and distance, and Vince’s obsessive narrowing focus on the present situation. As time passes Vince seems increasingly unable to maintain space between his feeling self (worrying and charging up) and his acting self (physical and verbal abuse).

The length and intensity of Vince’s violence seems interminable as he lashes his wife both physically and verbally. He seems to have lost all sense of perspective as he goes far beyond the bounds of feeling “not taken seriously.” Vince’s terrible edict “if you don’t hear me then you’ll feel me,” demonstrates his propensity to turn feeling disregarded into violence. Feelings generated by his perception of not being heard turn into intense frustration and rage. It is only when Vince has been away from his wife for some time that he starts to feel worried again. He does not embody remorse or empathy but rather a fear for himself that he has gone too far this time and that he may lose her for good. Perhaps paradoxically it is because Vince needs her so much that he takes feeling rejected so personally and hurts her. Vince’s life world is consumed with his own subjectivity; he seems unable in this situation, to be able to take in the fact that there is the dimension of lived relation, which involves a self other than his.

Mac:

*It was an accumulation of several different events related to stress buildup through my employment um involving my female friend D, um she had different views and I always felt that at times she didn’t believe what I was trying to put across to her so there was the stress of trying to make myself understood at work and with her and it got to the stage if we were*

out in a restaurant or whatever and my employer or company or whatever  
 got mentioned I automatically started getting upset um and ah she she  
 had, still got this habit of coming out with things out of the blue that  
 would surprise me and set me off and um like she was having contact with  
 the manager, direct contact and um she wouldn't tell me um because um  
 she felt it wasn't important but when she did say something I would say  
 why didn't you tell me why am I just finding this out now and do you  
 believe what he's told you you know you haven't even told me so I can say  
 this is actually my side of it you know and anyway this one particular  
 night we were in this restaurant not far from here and one of those  
 occasions had arisen and um so we were having quite heated words and  
 um . . this this guy at the next table sort of had got up and he'd said  
 something or done something that gave me the trigger to want to take my  
 anger out on him. She felt he didn't say anything and I said yes he did and  
 um in my mind I'm certain he said something. As he slid along the back  
 bench and there wasn't much of a gap between the two tables, it was  
 fairly close but my focus was on what she was saying and whatnot and I  
 was just aware of him sliding and having a funny look on his face and  
 then he I'm sure he said something but I can't honestly recall but it was  
 the trigger and I just (clap) went into my clench fist into my hand and I  
 said "I'm gonna kill him" and got up and followed him to the toilet to do  
 that. It was a release but funnily enough when I walked away..um and got  
 to the toilets and I thought what the heck am I doing here and I went to  
 the toilet and walked back and um ..no funnily enough I think the people  
 at his table must have said something because he gave me an odd look a  
 couple of times and um because they'd seen me go. I believe now from  
 what I've been told I'd been raising my voice a bit too. Unbeknown to me  
 D told me the people behind at the table had sort of been making eyes our  
 way too...you know she felt quite embarrassed about it too so you know..  
 um just that I felt that nobody was believing me that um like she is one of  
 the things that um she throws up at me at times if that's the correct way to

*put it. She says that I imagine a lot of things that are happening that aren't happening or that I read a lot into a situation that isn't there um and I've said to her well sometimes maybe I do but that's my make up you know.. I'm I want to see all the facts and if I only get bits and pieces it sort of annoys me I sort of think no there's something else happening here um you know and sometimes I'm right and sometimes I do make mountains out of molehills...(Mac, p.9)*

Mac's story describes some similar themes to Vince in this story in which he discusses not feeling understood, stress building, automatically getting upset, not having his feelings acknowledged as important and a loss of control.

Mac embodies a paranoid sense that people are conspiring to persecute him. His subsequent reactions are fuelled by the fear of not feeling understood. Emotionally he seems unable to separate himself from his suspicions or to control his intensifying impulse to react to the unfolding events. The confused, unstructured flow of his narrative and the reliance on his memory of his partner's account of events in this story reveals a chaotic sense of loss of internal control. His sense of linear time seems muddled and repetitive and his lived body is the container of this disorganization. Existentialist philosopher Jean Paul Sartre (1947, p. 45) in his play, 'Huis Clos,' explains, "l'enfer, c'est les autres" (hell is other people). Mac embodies this hell through relationships as he feels victimized by others and wants to persecute them in return. Spatially the constrained, claustrophobic atmosphere of the restaurant mirrors his inner feelings. He feels hemmed in as his repertoire of choices for action diminishes and tension rises. As a way of relieving what I imagine to be this very unpleasant inner experience he becomes enraged, "I'm gonna kill him". A necessary discharge ensues before his violent feelings abate, "what the heck am I doing here." It is interesting to note that Mac told me much later in the interview that during this episode he was dressed as a woman. Here deeper layers of phenomenology are revealed. Is he reacting to his inability to control his partner, the feeling of being shamed by being mocked in some way by the man in the restaurant? Does it take an unrelated stress to make him somehow aware of his disquiet

about his sexuality? What was his reason for not telling me in the recounting of this story? Was he afraid? Was it not important for him that the fact that he became enraged may have been related to his sexuality? These questions cannot be definitively answered but they nevertheless demonstrate how the phenomenology of any event is subject to the ever-revealing spiral of the hermeneutic circle.

There is a sense throughout this episode that Mac's lifeworld is preoccupied with psychological disintegration associated with feeling persecuted. Gilligan (2001, p.72) states "violence always represents self-defense to those who engage in it - defence of that vulnerable and threatened psychological construct, the self."

Ric

*When we arrived in New Zealand and we was living in Howick and in front of the children this was which makes it worse um I don't whether she knew I was having an affair with her best friend at the time which I was and we was having a real big argument. She's not a small woman and I just grabbed her by the throat and pinned her against the wall and I had a fire tong in my hand and there was a voice inside saying go on give it to her she deserves this but as I came down on her head and like a voice about that far from her head said what do you think you're doing..and I stopped it stopped that far away. I can smile about it now because I think I still to this day can't understand where that voice came from. It saved me because if I'd have done that I would have if not killed her really hurt her bad um and I can hear in the background my daughter in hysterics running all around the house in fear...she was about 10 to 12 and she was in hysterics and I look back on that and it's not a very pleasant time for me and um it wasn't a very pleasant time for my wife then.. Yeah it was a real bad time and I was just uncontrollable, completely uncontrollable in this particular situation. I just let it go when she tried to calm Angela down. (Ric, p.1)*

In a family the parents are meant to be the system of protection, provision and nurture both for each other and the children. Ric is having an affair, which indicates that all is not well in his lived relation. Perhaps he hates his wife, maybe he feels guilty and ashamed. These and other factors all shape his lifeworld preceding this violent event. This terrifying incident happens in the lived space of home. Home is a place that human beings traditionally create as a sanctuary. It is supposed to be a place of safety and nurturing, that is why it has walls and doors that lock, it is a place of warmth and soft fabrics where we are nourished and in which we spend time at our most vulnerable including sickness and sleep. In this case the safe haven of home is violated. It has become a place of fear and hysterics. It is the innocent child's presence as a witness that makes this a particularly poignant tale. Being subjected to such terror one wonders if she can ever feel safe again. She does not know when or if there will be a next time. Ric has lost control but embodies awareness of the lived relationship of deceit, hatred and rage towards his wife and the protectiveness he feels towards his daughter. His horizon contains contradictory feelings of rage and care. He is thrown by his thrownness into the present situation and his vision of the future is temporarily lost. His lifeworld is populated by the conflicting voices of, "go on give it to her," and "what do you think you're doing". They seem simultaneously like the voice of his rage towards his wife and the voice of his innocent child.

Bill

*The last time I was violent yeah it would have been two years ago um ..it was outside a shopping mall yeah I remember it now after..I'd seen my now ex wife with the kids I'd had a bad morning um which is no excuse but I shot off to the cashflow in south mall and I saw the wife go past with the kids and then when she caught up to me stopped in south mall we ended up having an argument.. and she drove away with the kids and two young guys had pulled up in a car and were mouthing off you know because they'd obviously seen us having a few words and yeah that was yeah, I dealt to both of them. Ah you know mouthing stupid stuff like uh tell the bitch bro and all this and that, they were a couple of Maori boys*



*um its yeah you tell her bro and I just saw red and as she drove away they were the only thing there, people there um I assaulted the driver first and managed to get around to the passengers side before he got out and I assaulted him as well. Nothing came of it though they just took off. The driver made the mistake of having his window down....so.. um I didn't count how many times I hit him but..but they were short sharp quick ones and ah punches in the head, elbow as well. I've been trained and all that sort of stuff, close quarter sort of stuff and I've done it before when I was younger and ah the rapidity and the ferociousness of the attack always freaks out the other guy and normally he like I said before they just sit there for a while till theyr'e 'jesus what's going on' and then it's too late I'm around the other side of the car. He was half way out so he was totally vulnerable so by the time the driver had collected himself the other guy I'd forced him back into the car and they just took off....I only use red as a cos I don't actually see anything..ah yeah I was like verbally raked up with my wife and um some of my mates have said it too there doesn't seem to be too much of an out looking physical change apart from the verbal and then I shut down and the blinkers are on so that's it ah I'm not sure ah if you feel anything at the time..um.. your peripheral vision cos I used to box as well and when you get in the square circle it's um your peripheral vision just shuts down you know because you're concentrating on what's in front of you.. um yeah remember I mentioned in the course about the emotion about the emotionless violence that's um like everything shuts down, I suppose it's so I can deal with it I don't have to worry about repercussions until after the act.(Bill, p.6)*

The language we use often discloses the underlying attitudes and beliefs that we embody. Bill reveals in his language an objectification of others from the start as his wife or 'my wife' has become 'the wife'. Bill's lived relation to others in this incident is characterized by conflict and an increasing lack of empathy.

Although this attack was somewhat provoked its ferocity is chilling. Bill uses terms such as 'emotionless violence' and 'shutdown' to describe the internal process behind his actions. Perhaps this is something to do with the fact that, as he subsequently told me, his targets were generally other men who were his sworn enemies rather than his intimates. Like the soldier who is trained to objectify his 'enemies' in order to murder them there is a marked emotional distance between Bill and his victims. Bill's dissociation from all feelings makes him feel like a cold killing machine as he turns his attention from his wife to the men he assaults.

Colin

*No I refer to her as my baby she's my youngest she's 14 no but apparently after assaulting K. I actually went inside the house looking for her so I've had different skirmishes with her as well you know um 6 weeks um 1998 I was released from jail and within 6 weeks of moving back home I had actually assaulted um T. ah. Um um yeah I asked her to put out the rubbish and she did but she opened up the kitchen window and threw the rubbish out the window in that manner and um I says to her why did you do it like that why did you put the rubbish out like that for, she says oh I always do it and I says ah well you know there's the door you open up the door you take the rubbish outside you bundle it up and put it down nicely you know anyway one thing led to another and I just lost it and um so I assaulted her then and then ah. Ah it was a combination of punching and slapping her I just grabbed her hair and pulled it backwards and then me sort of demanding an explanation and ah because she was so frightened because at that stage she had never ever experienced any sort of anger in that manner or violence ever in her life ever so she was petrified and um and*

*um she wet herself and stuff and ah you know I just sort of I don't know for some reason I just um it made me stronger and it made me want her her being submissive and um blah blah just made me more angry and um yeah first of all it was a back hander and she was backing away and um I just approaching her and pushing her and kicking her in the shins and yeah just twatted he round the head a couple of times and ah that was it.*

(Colin, p.9)

Colin's lifeworld has been saturated with a long history of violent reactions, drug and alcohol abuse. He has spent much of his life in prison. His life has been shaped by this lived space of maximum security with steel doors, metal detectors and highly regulated systems that tell prisoners when to eat and when it's time for lights out. There is the atmosphere of continuing surveillance reminding prisoners that they are not free. This is a dehumanizing environment in which men suffer the daily humiliation of being subjected to authority whilst simultaneously attempting to establish a hierarchy of dominance over fellow inmates. It is a place where sanctuary is rare. Colin's lived relation to others is so conditioned to seeing them as potential rivals that subjectively he could not distinguish between dominating real opponents and his own 14-year-old daughter. Trust and safety are desecrated, as a loved one becomes the object of violence in the sanctuary of home. Colin's world is so permeated with this type of behaviour it is as if there is no other way. His horizon informs his world. In every day life we are involved participants in the world and there is little need to doubt our interpretation of that world. Being-in-the-world occurs through our experiences, beliefs, attitudes and values. Colin's situatedness in violence is so all pervading that his increasing aggression as a response to his daughter's submissiveness is not, at the time, abnormal for him. Abuse of this magnitude against the defenseless child is hardest for those of us who do not share Colin's thrownness because it goes against the protective instincts of caring and nurture that we have for our children. From a neurobiological perspective Perry (2003, p.5) states, "the more any neural system is activated, the more it will modify and 'build' in the functional capacities associated

with that activation”. In other words feelings and actions that lead to violence reinforce violence. In hermeneutic terms the lifeworld of violence into which Colin has been thrown is self perpetuating. On this occasion he embodies something that flies in the face of our humanity.

### ***Summary***

I have introduced these initial stories under the heading ‘being violent’. Heidegger’s (1927/1962) self-world is founded on an historical, socio-cultural context that is unique to each person. This is based on the notion that the self is not a stand-alone entity but rather a being that is both formed by and transforms its environment. The ‘historicity’ of these men has until now determined that being-in-the-world in relation to others is likely to end in violence. The horizon that they occupy is most often the one where the self feels shamed, triggered, persecuted and threatened, often by seemingly very trivial stimuli. The lifeworld of these men is characterized by narrow perspective and limited choice. They feel forced to preserve their integrity in the face of overwhelming dissolution. They don’t choose violence because violence has already chosen them. Violence expert James Gilligan (2001, p.53) states “ violence occurs when people see no means of undoing or preventing their own humiliation except by humiliating others; indeed that is the underlying purpose of inflicting violence on others”.

## CHAPTER 7

### *Why Violence?*

*There is an empty place  
in my metaphysical shape  
that no one can reach:  
a cloister of silence  
that spoke with the fire of its voice muffled.  
On the day that I was born,  
God was sick.*

Cesar Vallejo

In this chapter I will examine the themes that emerge from the data connected to violence. When a person violently loses control it seems as if he is attempting paradoxically to gain control. If this is true what is it that must be controlled? What is the world in which these men have been situated that leaves them so little choice in how they regain control? How is their lifeworld defined by experiences that often evoke violence? The following themes that emerge from the data provide a schema for complex exploration and in depth interpretation of such questions.

### *Shame and Violence*

Shame can attack the very heart of our being and the power of shame to bring about the most violent of reactions is often evoked in myth, tragedy and other writings. For example, Delilah's reproach to Samson leads her to the very violent act of blinding him, because it is in his eyes that she feels shamed, "Behold thou hast mocked me, and told me lies" (King James Bible, Judges 16:10). Sophocles' [496-406 B.C.] Oedipus turns the violence inwards as he blinds himself in guilt and remorse at the discovery that he has murdered his father and married his mother. Oedipus' shame was embodied much earlier

when he was left on a hillside, with a stake through his foot,<sup>21</sup> to die by his parents, Laius and Jocasta. In *King Lear* (Shakespeare, 1603-06). Edmund arranges to have his father Gloucester blinded for visiting shame upon him by fathering him out of wedlock and for humiliating him further by declaring, “Do you smell a fault? Yet... the whoreson must be acknowledg’d” (I.i.16-24). Sartre (1946, p.47) writes, “Now shame, as we noted is shame of self; it is the recognition of the fact that I am indeed that object which the ‘other’ is looking at and judging”. Tomkins in his book “Affect Imagery Consciousness” (1963, p.133) poses the question: “Why is shame so close to the experienced self”? He replies, “It is because the self lives in the face, and within the face the self burns brightest in the eyes. Shame turns attention of the self and others away from other objects to this most visible residence of the self, increases its visibility and thereby generates the torment of self-consciousness”.

Gilligan (2001) asks why feelings of shame are so bottomless and chronic, and almost ineradicable in the most violent men. He informs us that in his experience it is due to extremes of childhood physical and/or emotional abuse and neglect. He reports that many violent criminals spoke of how gratifying it was to see fear in the eyes of the shaming other, as if this somehow temporarily relieves their own suffering. The need via lived relation to be heard, understood and believed or ‘seen’ is echoed time and again in participants’ of this study’s words. For example, in Vince’s ominous threat, “if you don’t hear me then you’ll feel me”. The fact that much of this mythical violence seems to focus on the eyes through which we see and are seen by others may be linked to strong evidence from developmental psychology (Holmes, 2002) that early baby / parent eye contact provides emotional resonance which is essential for building a secure, healthy sense of self.

Heidegger’s (1927/1962) notion of ‘Dasein’ (being there) means that we are at once both connected to and distinct from others. The resulting tension is an essential aspect of being-in-the-world. The philosopher Hegel [1770 – 1831] identified the desire for recognition as a major motivating force behind all human history, in his view the self is

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<sup>21</sup> The name Oedipus means ‘swollen foot’

socially constructed, created in interpersonal interaction, and what people need is “not only security and material necessities but mutual recognition” (Solomon & Higgins 1997, p.96). ‘Recognition’ which means literally to be ‘looked back at’ (re cognise) is a synonym for respect, pride, honour and attention. The German word *Achtung* means both attention and respect. Shame is the emotion people experience when they do not feel recognised or respected. Inattention or disrespect is to be ‘dissed’ in the vernacular of many ‘staunch’ men. ‘Dis’ is the old Roman word for the underworld. It occurs often in psychological literature in the word dys-function and certainly creates hell in those who embody the lived reality of feeling unworthy, unloved and misunderstood (Gilligan, 2001).

One common theme that emerges from the data is that these men often feel easily affronted in terms of not being heard, understood or listened to. It is as if there is some kind of fundamental injury to the self in interactions that contravene the embodiment of self-respect. The integrity of the self cannot be maintained in the face of perceived or real contempt and eventually a susceptibility to feeling humiliated may become part of the daily world of unfortunate sufferers. Viktor Frankl (1946) in “Man’s Search for Meaning,” states in response to a beating he took in a Nazi concentration camp: “The most painful part of beatings is the insult they imply. Indignation is not about cruelty or pain, but about the insult connected with it” (p.44).

Vince’s relationship with his mother illustrates how insults to the self may be embodied:

*There were lots of incidents where my mother hit me if she said I had a big mouth because what she did was she, she started unloading as I called it she started saying what I’d done wrong today and then she went on about what I’d done wrong the day before and the day before that and it always ended up what was wrong with me. Not only what I’d done wrong but how I was wrong and how I was not worthy and I was not a good son to have and um usually as she was loading herself up and getting rid of her anger. ...//... I was not heard and I think that was the biggest abuse that my mother did,*

*not necessarily the whacking, not necessarily calling me a dork or saying I wish I never had you but just the fact that she showed no interest in me at all.* (Vince, pp.5& 6)

For Vince a childhood memory of not feeling heard is more potent than painful physical and verbal abuse. It is as if the greatest hurt of ‘no interest in me at all’ is symbolic of some kind of much more fundamental and destructive force - perhaps a long slow murder of the self. Frazier (1974) discusses the debilitating effects upon those who had not experienced extremes of physical abuse or neglect but had experienced a degree of emotional abuse in which parents projected their own shame onto their children that was just as damaging. The 1995 Domestic Violence Act in New Zealand changed, upon evidence of damage to the developing brains of children, to include verbal as well as physical abuse as grounds for legal protection.

The consequences of childhood shame are evident in Vince’s later life.

*I felt that she was..doing something not right on the farm..and I kicked her in the face in the paddock. I can’t remember but it had to do with the fact that she wasn’t listening to me..I felt unheard or not listened to...*  
(Vince, p.8)

Vince is unable to create a space between the painful feelings of shame that his childhood lived relationship with his mother has engendered and the feelings he embodies at a perceived rejection from his wife. He is overwhelmed as the horizons of past and present meet and his words echo through the years his feelings of being “unheard”. What he takes as a personal insult turns to rage and then violence in an attempt to stave off shame producing rejection. As these feelings are evoked it is as if lived time has frozen, at this moment childhood and adulthood are undifferentiated. The once protesting and powerless little boy is now a man – a lethal destructive force.



Mac offers another example of the process of experiencing not being listened to and believed as a personal insult.

*I always felt that at times she didn't believe what I was trying to put across to her so there was the stress of trying to make myself understood at work and with her...//... Sort of focused in on one thing and its like tunnel vision where I've got my point of view, I'm angry, nobody's seems to listen and nobody wants to believe in me. I'm going to really push my point, to hell with everybody else...(Mac, p.1&2).*

Mac's words "nobody wants to believe in me" are ironic. His expectation of lived relation is that he desperately needs to be believed in by someone else because somebody 'in him' does not believe. Being believed and believed in are to Mac forms of recognition. It is this lack of belief (shame) in himself that makes it so vital for someone else to believe in him and ultimately, if he feels that this does not happen, the need to make his point may drive him to uncontrollable rage and violence.

*I'm aware now that it's a building up of stress to the stage where um I can be described as like a rubber band being stretched and stretched and then eased and then stretched and stretched and then sooner or later that rubber band's gonna stretch stretch and snap and that's how I felt that I'd been stretched out and snapped and somehow I was put back together enough to come back but I was broken...//... I left my brother for dead. I don't recall but I lost control and was physically violent with my brother...//... He said something and and I just lost my cool and attacked him and um all I can remember was from him coming out and saying something and I don't recall what it was but um he was lying in the garden and I just went out and packed the car up drove out and he was still lying in the garden. I wasn't angry with him I wasn't angry with him it was the stress of M my wife and everything going wrong and all that and the pressures and stress until snap,*

*until he happened to be the poor bugger that gave me the excuse to snap.*  
(Mac, pp.3&12).

In using the metaphor of the rubber band that stretches and snaps Mac is describing a process of uncontrollable feelings building up as a result of 'stress' until they are expressed in a violent interaction with his brother. The coming back together was the release of aggression that left his brother "for dead" whilst he "just" walked away, got into his car and went on holiday. Perhaps such a process of 'tuning out' to the severity of his actions is designed to provide relief from toxic feelings of shame and guilt. What kind of world would Mac have been thrown into that could have predicted his violent action? Perhaps we can find a clue from an excerpt in which Mac discusses a revelation he had from some work he did in the group.

*I couldn't talk to anybody no and to make matters worse my stepfather sexually molested me I can't recall once or twice and I blamed me "what have I done wrong" you know " why did I deserve this". I don't know but that's how I felt because I was having trouble with trying to sort out who I was. It's hard enough I believe for a normal person to go through puberty without throwing in the gender thing um you know and I honestly didn't know where I was at. So I honestly didn't trust them as such you know I sort of I avoided I withdrew into my private bedroom private world...// ...And it was like one word I think, desertion? Was the main word and not being accepted. Like my birth father deserted me, or the whole family, but I'm talking just about me. He deserted me um you know and and to this day he didn't even make an effort to get to still know his children so he deserted me. On top of that um um my wife, as soon as you know I came out um she basically packed her bags and um deserted me um you know when um um I thought wait on this is just a little hiccup lets talk this through and see what's what but no she's outta here. Um so I was angry with her for a while and um you know a bit bitter and twisted about that. Um and then er acceptance for who I am for who I am um I've made*

*mistakes along that road too but at the end of the day I'm still a human being and um so um you know um the church minister wanted to cure me um I felt angry with him that he couldn't accept me as a person couldn't just hey you know like I asked to be christened, "no I can't christen you, not till I've cured you " but I don't need curing, ya know um I'm happy, I'm entirely happy, don't try and cure me, you know. (Mac, pp.10 & 12).*

Mac has realized that sexual abuse<sup>22</sup> by his stepfather as well as his biological father's desertion has contributed to his feeling 'unacceptable' or ashamed. His wife's abandonment of him when she discovers that he is a transgender compounds his sense of humiliation, as did the minister's refusal to accept him as he is. There are many other instances of Mac's not feeling acknowledged around his confused sexuality. His sense of embodied turmoil derived from feelings of rejection come across in the disoriented way in which he recounts these episodes.

Professor Dan Siegel (2002) considers the soul and a person's subjectivity to be synonymous phenomena arising at the interface of the biological processes of the brain and its interaction with environmental experiences. The implication is that if developing self-esteem becomes too impoverished through environmental influences the self collapses and the soul dies. Mac's lived experiences since early childhood include parental abandonment, violence, alcoholism, sexual abuse and a troubled sexuality. Through lived relation Mac has embodied so many painful experiences of rejection or injury that his violent reactions are likely to originate as an attempt to reinstate dignity in a self that is easily overwhelmed by painful feelings of shame and humiliation.

The process of becoming shamed, which is embodied through injury to the self, either real or perceived, often seems to be the mechanism that sets off the alarm bells that lead to violence. Scheff & Retzinger in "Emotion and Violence" (1991) theorize that shame causes a breakdown of the integrated self. In this schema bypassed, unacknowledged pain is not available to be looked at due to the self-protective defences of 'avoidance' and

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<sup>22</sup> Several studies link both childhood physical and sexual abuse to adult male violence (see Groth, 1979; Burgess et al., 1987; Seghorn et al. 1987)

‘denial’. By means of dissociation from and repression of the bad feelings there is a distance created from the intensity of shame with a cover up of "I am not this needy. This is not I. I cannot feel this vulnerable." Subsequently this protective mechanism of avoidance becomes a part of the dynamics of lived relationships because others feel so threatening to the integrity of the self. People are kept at a distance both spatially and psychologically, except on a superficial level that often involves the use of social lubricants such as drugs and alcohol, and intimacy is eschewed. Tension is discharged partially through substitute emotions like aggression but the core of shame grows even bigger as the individual engages in unhealthy behaviour. The embodiment of shameful feelings and thoughts such as "I am bad" or "I am unworthy" is thought to be the trigger to seek relief from the suffering of such an intolerable state.

Shame blocks positive information from coming in. The person feels bad about his explosive outbursts that give him the attention that he cannot get from healthy sources such as achievement and friendships. The aggressor has the mistaken belief based on past experience that lived relation represents being controlled and disrespected by others. It is paradoxical that his anger and fear keeps intimacy away and denies the love that the person desires most. The ability to accept kindness and love from someone is a skill that has been missed out on. The basic skill deficit of the antisocial self is trust of others.

Ric, as an adult, offers examples of how his embodiment of mistrust leads to violent thoughts and feelings.

*..that my mate who is my boss as well and my best man didn't believe me and now him and P are best friends. And so that's what really upset me the most made me angry there so I thought well I can't really go there and speak about that because if he wants to believe that then ..so there's all that turbulence going on in my head as well...//... I thought this guys lying to me and he's a friend and I I was I had to clench my fists and then well both be sacked because it's on work premises. I thought you know I've just got a just walk away and I just said look rather than connect it with*

*me in my mind I thought if I connect it with me I'm gonna punch him.*

(Ric, p.10)

The turbulence in Ric's head is linked to a paranoid process of not being believed. He embodies lived relations in a way that leaves him feeling jealous and suspicious. He feels entitled to receive a response that fits with his sense of what is right "this guys lying to me and he's a friend" and cannot tolerate his own sense of reality being undermined. I sense that others become "the They" of whom Heidegger (1927/1962) speaks when referring to the judgment some people feel in lived relation to others. The capacity for others to control Ric in this way is likely to result from a lack of ability to self validate. This probably means that something within undermines his self-esteem and arouses a concurrent drive to destroy the source of his shame - those from whom he believes he cannot attain the validation he desperately seeks.

In this instance Ric realizes that there is too much at stake for him to act on his feelings. His experience offers an example of an internal struggle to create a space between his feeling self and his acting self. It is our ability to make this distinction that offers us the opportunity to modify our self in relation to the world. Heinz Kohut in "Analysis of the Self"(1977) describes the self as the center of the individual's psychological universe. It is what 'I' refers to when we say 'I feel such and such, and I do so and so'. "We may describe the nature of what the self-experiences and the actions that the self undertakes as a consequence of previous experiences"(p.311). Robert Stolorow (1987) distinguishes the self that experiences itself from the self that takes action. In this instance Ric manages to make such a distinction "if I connect it with me" and walks away. This is not really a case of Ric owning his feelings but is a better option than violence. Unfortunately this is not always the case:

*we were having an argument trying to keep it down and low key and I just turned round and I came back to her and I just walked up to her and I just went slap like that. And she was like you know I always promised I'd never hit her, I'd never raise a hand to her or anything and I broke that promise.*

*It was like the look of horror on her face you couldn't believe it..it wasn't a hard slap but it was just I may as well have punched her full in the face because that's how hard it hurt her .. (Ric, p.9)*

In this incident Ric seems to be struggling with his surprise and disbelief at his wife's shock. He seems shocked by her shock. His promise in this case has been, for his wife, a guarantee of safety from violence. In lived relation the words we use sometimes do not match our actions. It is saying what we mean and meaning what we say, whether explicit or implicit, that builds trust and intimacy which are the cornerstones of bonding and goodwill in relationships. Ric knows his propensity for violence and this is why it was necessary for him to give this reassurance. The "look of horror" on his wife's face is probably as much about being shocked at Ric's breaking his word and what this means for the relationship as the pain and fear of the slap. In a never-ending spiral Ric's actions will probably mean that he embodies feelings of unworthiness, which perhaps compel him to act similarly in future situations that trigger a need to be in control. This behaviour means that meaningful relationships that offer him the inner security of intimacy and recognition that he desperately craves may continue to remain elusive. He will be forced to seek attention in ways that are detrimental to himself and others and, contrary to his wishes, his shame will be amplified. In the next excerpt Ric offers some insights into his past that may shed light on his present behaviour:

*...was my brother's father and he was a very violent man. I don't know whether he knew whether I was her illegitimate son but he used to beat us all up against the wall...//... He was a very aggressive man. May be that's where I get my aggression from. I don't know because I never met my father. I don't know what my father was like. I never met him...//...I was bullied at school. And you felt like although the playground was crowded you felt all alone. Like you were solitary, no one there to help you, no one came up to help you. (Ric, pp.11&12)*

Ric's life world contains many of the hallmarks that may predict future violence including parental abandonment, bullying and violence. If a fulfilled and happy life is distinguished significantly by meaningful connectedness to others then it is likely that this heritage has left Ric with a daily reality of distance and feeling like an outcast in relation to others. I wonder if not fitting in means that Ric lives in a state in which he is always looking for signs of rejection and when, inevitably, he finds them he somehow confirms his own reality and justifies his actions. If trust is an ability that those who have been shamed are lacking then Ric's lived relationships are characterized by disappointment and alienation that was both real as a child and is perpetuated by his own paranoia in adulthood. Neuro-scientist Bruce Perry (1993, p.18) offers a psychobiological explanation for such phenomena:

If the child is raised in an unpredictable, chaotic, violent environment it is highly adaptive to have a hyper-vigilant, hyper-reactive arousal system; if primary relationships are characterized by violence, neglect and unreliability, intimacy becomes maladaptive; if a young child is frequently assaulted, it becomes adaptive to over interpret non-verbal cues, to quickly act on impulses, and to strike out before being struck. The symptoms of hyper vigilance, cognitive distortion, physiological and behavioural reactivity, intimacy avoidance and dissociation commonly seen in traumatized children were all, at some time in the lives of these children, necessary, adaptive and appropriate responses to traumatic stress.

Colin's savage beating of his wife threatens every meaningful relationship in his life:

*I wondered where she was and why isn't she home and um I got a phone call 6 in the morning from a very good friend a mutual friend of ours and she explained that I was the biggest asshole on earth and blah blah blah. "What have I done, what have I done," "oh K's in hospital you've broken her rib you've fractured her sternum you know you've kicked her you know blah blah blah and you're nothing but an asshole". So that's*

*when I you know it really hit me, it really hit me and then um within 48 hours K had actually called me and sort of said she still loved me despite the fact this is what I've done and I always promised her that I'd never ever hit her and I've done shit loads of bad stuff but this was it. She had a make a stand and she says to me if you don't get help this is the end of our relationship you know because "you're too much of a risk not just for me but also for our baby and everyone". (Colin, p.6)*

Until a friend calls Colin seems unaware of the damage he has done to his wife. This is an example of the need to deny the consequences of his violence. He had made a pledge to keep his family safe from his unmanageable impulses and broken it. He had certainly hit someone precious to him and then something "hit him". Lived relation including a friend, his wife and his baby mirrors his shame back to him. In Colin's world violence is not selective, it is always imminent. This makes him extremely volatile and dangerous:

*I've got violence in me at the most inopportune times, you know, where there's been shit loads of people on a happy occasion and I've let rip. You know and I've hurt people seeeriously you know and I've just destroyed everyones faith...//... I've lost a lot of respect from family members, even friends and I'm talking about friends of old and that goes right back to when I was 10. I think I'm on the right track now. (Colin, p.17)*

Colin speaks of the violence "in me" as if it is embodied constitutionally and can control him even when he does not need it for protection. He has finally realized that the consequences of his actions have cost him the people he needed the most. It is clear that he has seen the error of his ways and does not want to keep on repeating his history. Yet his thrownness into a world of violence since an early age has had a profound effect upon his destiny:

*I was being a bit defiant you know she ended up getting this ruler and she dealt to me. I was waiting for the ruler to break which eventually it did but she found another one and she broke that on me too but it*



*didn't have any impact on me no and I never looked on it when I got the beat up from mum that she didn't love me never no I knew it was punishment because I'd done wrong. I knew I'd done wrong and ah well you get punished for it and that was it. Yes well my (stepfather) her husband he was my uncle he died when I was very young but apparently he was very very violent to all of his bros and to mates .... but he died in 1961 I was only 5. But when I screwed up at college and I went home to mum and mum says "ah well I've had enough you can go down and live with your father" down in C. Crescent. I went down there and lived and it wasn't too long and he was giving me hidings you know I was about 14 coming on 15. Oh real hidings what I would call real hidings nothing like what mum was giving me. Certainly that was the first time ever that I really experienced a man you know really giving it to me. (Colin, p.11)*

Colin's life world is one of family violence that seems to be intergenerational. Violence is certainly a part of his daily-lived reality. Many would describe a child having a ruler broken on them as extreme abuse. However, for Colin it is relatively minor compared to future beatings. Having been situated in conflict for most of his life violence is the only way Colin knows how to deal with it. At 49 years of age he is attempting to come to terms with the cost of such a life. He has alienated loved ones, estranged from his culture, has many enemies, has few assets and his ability to control his impulses is severely curtailed. He wants to change but has great difficulty in adapting to new ways of relating to the world. His sense of alienation both from himself and others means he has a long way to go to recovery.

Brain researcher Daniel Siegel (2002) informs us about the feelings behind such violence by explaining that pervasive insensitivity or lack of contingency on the part of the caregiver often leads to a gradual embodiment of toxic shame in the child. Aggression is an attempt to fend off painful feelings of injury to the self. These feelings are often so acute and unavailable to conscious rational thinking that the sufferer feels others are treating him with contempt and disdain even if they are not. For men who are at the more

extreme end of the violence continuum, violence is not necessarily sporadic or carried out in a fit of rage. It is a way of life, an event waiting to happen. For those who continually use violence as a means of offsetting shame even a minor sign of disrespect can trigger a brutal reaction. It seems that the less self-respect people feel the more they are forced to seek it from others.

### *Summary*

In this section on the theme of shame men's stories offer examples of how early development influences the way in which we make meaning as adults. It demonstrates how this may be a significant factor in the embodiment of shame and its consequence of violence. Just as positive experiences in a nurturing environment will facilitate the development of a secure sense of self-esteem, our thrownness into a life world of negative experiences will likely have the opposite effect. Feelings synonymous with shame such as being disrespected, abused, mocked, scorned, rejected or not taken seriously seem to start early in life and are triggered by familiar configurations in later life.

### ***Fathering and Violence***

*The fathers have eaten sour grapes and their children's teeth are  
set on edge*

(Jeremiah, 31:29)

If the way in which we embody influential people at a young age gives us a blue print for future thoughts, feelings and actions then, at least in our culture, it is self evident that parents and caregivers would have a significant impact upon a child's development. In this section I give an insight into the meaning of parenting, with the emphasis upon fathering, in the lives of the men in this study. I recognize that the influence of mother figures is at least as important as that of father figures and will sometimes speak of parenting generically. However, following the lead of most of the men who participated in this study who tended to speak of the way in which important male figures model the meaning of manhood I will emphasise fathering. The notion of fathering that I use will include other figures that have had a fathering role. Men and women may tell their sons how to be men, may help them to become men but on a daily basis only men can show them.

Van Manen (1990) discusses the etymology of the word parenting as having connotations of origin or source. To parent (parere) means to originate, to be the source, the origin from which something springs. He speaks of the pride of bringing a child into the world but recognizes it as a gift emanating from something "larger" than oneself that made it possible to have this child in the first place. Marcel (1978) expresses the gift as a call to make a response. Van Manen (1990, p.60) describes this call:

In providing bearing for their children parents teach the very young something without which growing up or even the living of a life becomes quite impossible. Parents, who bear, give bearing to children, make available space and ground for being. They teach their children that the world can be experienced as a home, a place for safe dwelling, a habitat in which human beings can "be," where we can be ourselves,

where we can have habits; ways of being and doing things. So to bear children is, in a broad sense, to provide place and space for them to live, to be. The child is carried, borne inside the womb at first, then it is borne into the world where it remains, for a while at least, most helpless dependent, in need of nurture, warmth, caresses, holding fast and safe outside the womb.

Van Manen (1990, p.60) concludes his talk on the nature of parenting with, “Conversely it is in the worldly experience of separateness, lostness, without a bearing, without the security of safe ground that the primordial nature of parenting can be intuited”. On a more sombre note he also tells us, “ A child who feels abandoned by the parent may never receive the meaning of inner rest of being guarded by the existence of a center, a safe haven” (p.84). As a loving parent who is concerned with my children’s well being I recognize that it is important to teach them not to need me. My hope is that through the daily reality of fathering I have instilled a sense of security that they have embodied for the rest of their lives. Vince illustrates the importance of his embodiment of fathering:

*He died from a heart attack suddenly on the way to the hospital in an ambulance.....I don't think I had this feeling of being unwanted before he died. That's the biggest difference. The feeling of being unwanted crept in after his death, which was exactly the situation. My mother would never admit to the fact that I wasn't planned. I was probably quite welcome in the beginning but when my father died from that moment on I was too much and I felt that very much.....We went for walks in the park feeding the ducks and it was the father's job to go and feed the ducks on a Sunday that's what the father did. A father reads the paper, earns the money and um has important discussions with your mother and on Sundays he takes you to the ducks, that was the fathers role... and I enjoyed those trips to the Domain and had some old crusts of bread and feed the ducks..... (Vince, p.8)*

It is the loss of his father that highlights Vince's awareness of the meaning of his presence. This embodiment of the "feeling of being unwanted" is the legacy of the loss of his father to Vince and demonstrates the power of our parental figures to shape our world even in their absence. I remember the experience of the loss of my own father at a similar age to Vince, which I experienced as a rejection. I idealized my father as protection against the shame of feeling unwanted by him. I believed naively that if he were around my family and I would be happy. These feelings shaped my lifeworld for many years. Yet it is the memory of my uncle occasionally taking me to feed the ducks that looms large, even today, as a contrast to feeling unwanted. Sunday walks in the park for Vince, with his father, create a transcendent gestalt of lived body, lived relationship, lived time and lived space. This meaningful whole becomes the beingness of parenting and being parented, of being wanted. Below Vince discusses the role of fathering as both discipline and protection:

*There were many times that she said, "I wish I'd never had you" um and she condoned it with" if father was still alive", my father was referred to as father, the old fashioned way. "If father was still alive you would sing a different tune", along those lines while at that same moment I was thinking if my father was still alive hopefully he would protect me from you..... There is little that I can remember of my father. When I look at pictures of him I can see that physically we are very much alike...character wise I have inherited my mothers temperament which is probably the reason why my mother and me clashed so hard later on.*

(Vince, p.4)

In this excerpt the theme of role stereotypes is raised in Vince's mother's portrayal of his father as the disciplinarian and Vince's own depiction of him as a protector. It is important to note that his mother encourages this perception of his father as a disciplinarian Vince probably embodies a tension between his mother's perception of his father and his own. This is demonstrated by the way in which he portrays his father as a protector and his own behaviour as a disciplinarian in his own marriage. His confusion is reinforced by his embodiment of his mother's "temperament". The belief that the man

should be the authoritarian figure fits with the masculine stereotype that men should be strong, tough and aggressive with other people, including their children. Even, as in Vince's case, the daily reality of being fathered can contradict such stereotypes. Although these roles are more complex and more involved than mere either/or definitions, it appears historically that the tendency for males to nurture their children is often discouraged or forgotten.

Feldman (1982) supports the notion that, consistent with this mode of structuring the father - child relationship, children have typically construed their fathers as more punitive and less nurturing than their mothers. Some researchers reinforce the experience of many families, that fathers have been less involved in the day-to-day care of their children than mothers (Kotelchuck, 1976; Pleck, 1979). This goes with role conditioning, which determines men to be good economic providers, protectors and authoritarians whilst the lion's share of the nurturing is supposed to come from the mother. Mac expresses the effects of paternal deprivation:

*I think after my birth father left, so I was basically the man of the house um I think about 7 maybe 8 I'm not too sure. I remember he was a truck driver but I don't recall what he looked like or anything about his nature apart from that he'd come home after the six o'clock swill and um we never actually saw it but we heard the plates and fights and you know with the plates being thrown. Well I didn't feel, but I was told I was the man of the house. I had to chop the wood, I had to mow the lawns, I had to you know like when the church organized a trailer load of wood I stacked it in the back. I remember an old corrugated drum and I had to stack the wood in that to keep it dry in winter. I would come home from school and get in and do quite a bit of work. I suppose now in hindsight I was sort of a bit a bit angry about that, you know that my birth father left me in that position. I still to this day don't know why he left you know, and he forced me into a situation that I probably wasn't ready for and that really pees me off at times when I stop and think about it, you know. (Mac, p. 3)*

At this stage Mac's stepfather enters the picture:

*I honestly felt as if he was gonna take over my position of being man of the house. He was intruding into my environment which even though I was angry that I got put in that by my father, birth father, he was all of a sudden a stranger that was gonna take over and we had to call him dad...I was developing into quite a loner um I would draw into my own bedroom and enjoy my own company. I didn't fit in, you know. (Mac, pp.4 & 5).*

Mac develops the traditional male roles at an early age and describes the transitions and tensions that transpired as different father figures become the "man of the house". He has been shown early in his life some of the hallmarks of fathering such as the six o'clock swill, violence and finally abandonment by his birth father. This identification includes the embodiment of toughness and control that prepares him for manhood. Mac is also conscious of other feelings that he has been carrying throughout his life, including, "in hindsight", both anger at his father's abandonment and being left with the burden of becoming the father figure. He has an ambivalent possessiveness of this premature role as a parental figure, which is illustrated by his sense of being usurped as another father figure enters the household. For consolation Mac grudgingly finds solace in another so-called male role; the unsupported loner. Until recently he has been unaware of just how much his lifeworld has been shaped by such forces. His growing childhood disenchantment and embodied shame promulgates a resentful, brooding, paranoid self

and low self-esteem that will characterize his future development. Mac's sense of disempowerment is compounded by his stepfather's authoritarianism:

*He was very strict very um um strict in the sense that he was an engineer and he has the most amazing tool collection. But we weren't allowed in the garage weren't allowed to touch a tool. If we to borrow something to fix our bikes or something we had to ask permission and make sure that tool went back. He found it easier in the end as we were getting into teenage years to give us own toolbox and tools because he didn't want us touching his. He is the type of person that believes that he should um show somebody or tell somebody how to do something once and once only and if you don't get it you've missed the boat um so you know I remember at times trying to fix my first car and whatnot when I'd go over and see dad and said "how did you do such and such"? He'd say "I've already told you" and mum would say well "look he's not as quick as you go and show him again" and it would be a hassle like you could read his mind "I can't be fucking bothered," you know. "I've had my day at work I don't need to go out and show him". (Mac, p.5)*

The understated comment, "he was very strict, very um um strict" speaks volumes about the way in which Mac has embodied the experience of being parented by his stepfather. My guess is that this is his 'man's' way of articulating his suffering without exposing himself too much. Mac can hardly speak as he remembers his stepfather's stringent manner. A world of vulnerability is easily overlooked by these stumblings and hesitations. This is a characteristic I have become increasingly aware of in all of the men's stories. Even as a listener one automatically tends to sift out the "ums" the "ahs" and the silences aside in order to get at the 'meat' of the story. It is only in the transcription that these are picked up because they interrupt the flow of the narrative. Once again I am reminded of Heidegger's (1927/1962) powerful understanding that a phenomenon is something for the most part does not show itself at all but something that lies hidden.



In this excerpt Mac describes the lived reality of his relationship with his stepfather who exercises his role as teacher in a rigid, inflexible manner. Perhaps, from an evolutionary perspective, his motivation to connect with the inquisitive young boy is limited by the fact that his investment in him will not further his gene pool. This lack of patience is contrasted by the more sensitive approach of his mother who adds nurturing to the interaction with “show him again”. I wonder how often she has tried to soften tension between stepfather and stepson. This interaction highlights the sense that the traditional role of father as teacher needs to be balanced with the tenderness of the so-called “feminine” role of nurturing in order for fathering to be fully embodied. Mac shows what can happen if the nurturing and safety aspect of fathering goes awry:

*He'd been to the pub or something for a shout and he'd been drinking. Anyway and he'd come home and we're sitting there watching this programme and he was being stupid and making a lot of noise and I turned round and said, "do you mind, I'm trying to watch this programme". "Will you be quiet or shut up or something". Next minute he hit me with a closed fist. I can't recall what the words were but anyway I ended up knocked out on the floor. He came in crying and asking for forgiveness and all that later on but you know he should have put me off school for a couple of days cos my mouth, my face was all swollen. So you know one hit but it was a good one (Mac, p.6).*

Mac tells this story in a matter of fact way that is almost accepting of the ‘man’s’ way of dealing with conflict without vulnerability. His stepfather’s drunkenness, subsequent violence and pleas for forgiveness support the notion that abusive fathers have generally been described as rigidly traditional, authoritarian men with low self-esteem, low frustration tolerance and poor impulse control (Tyler (1986) as cited in Meth and Pasick, 1990). Mac’s experiences demonstrate the dangers of these negative qualities being introduced into the family:

*To make matters worse my stepfather sexually molested me. I can't recall*

*once or twice and I blamed me. From what I've read and heard I believe that it's a normal thing for a child whose been sexually molested blames themselves "what have I done wrong", " why did I deserve this". I sort of I avoided; I withdrew into my private bedroom, private world...//... The only other person I've told this to is D, not even my former wife. (Mac, pp.9&10)*

To add insult to injury Mac receives further confirmation of parental betrayal. One of the main roles of fathering is to help our children to feel confident and secure in their sexuality. Our lived relations with our children teach our sons how to treat women and our daughters how to be treated by men and vice-versa. It seems Mac's future sexual identity confusion has been defined by a lack of guidance as well as the abuse he receives from those responsible for this vital aspect of his development into a secure adult. Sexual abuse may further contradict and therefore confuse and shame the growing boys masculine self-image because of the belief that if he were a real man he would not, indeed could not, be abused in this way. His shame about this event has meant that he has blamed himself for this betrayal of his innocence. This remains locked up inside him as a secret that he has barely been able to divulge. Mac's experience of being fathered by his stepfather who came to his role relatively late in the picture fits with research indicating that men who are sexually abusive with their children have typically been less involved in the care of their children than men who have not (Herman1986; Parker & Parker, 1986).

The effects of family violence and abuse have a profound effect on Mac's perception of himself as having the potential to be a safe parent:

*Yeah I remember funnily enough, at that stage I used to share a room with my younger brother and when things like that happened we used to say " come on let's let's bury ourselves under the blankets," you know get right in under the bed and it would all go away - getting emotional here...  
...anyhow but yeah yeah like he would come home and he'd probably be drinking and mum would probably say something about his drinking or*

*something.....yeah (sobbing) and we'd just try to hide away from it .....sorry, I didn't actually see it but the sound of it .. I would never pick anything up and throw it across the room you know cos I know what it sounds like to. You know the trauma and everything else....does affect them eh? ..That's probably why one reason I haven't had children....couldn't guarantee I'd be there for them....I made that commitment to myself so many years ago before I even met my wife because of the trauma.....I used to say to say " just close your ears and get down under the blankets and cuddle your pillow and just go to sleep it'll be alright". (Mac, p.6)*

Fletcher (2002) explains from an evolutionary perspective that humans, compared to other animals, are dependent on their parents for an exceptionally long time before attaining adulthood. They also require a tremendous amount of informal and formal education from their parents to attain the cultural, practical and social knowledge necessary for survival and reproductive success. Mac's lived experience of being parented has profoundly affected his own blueprint for becoming a parent. His insight as an adult and the persistence of the effects of trauma demonstrates that his role models have ill prepared him for the responsibility of fatherhood. He understands the trauma and fear of a small boy involved in his parent's violence towards each other and how it has coloured his outlook. In spite of his fears of being a parent his insight into the limiting effects of his own childhood experiences could be beneficial if he were to become a parent.

In this incident the sanctuary of the lived space of the house is once again narrowed down to the bedroom. As if somehow the noise and its fearsome meaning will go away under the protection of the blankets. Mac also takes on the parental role of protecting his brother in stark contrast to an earlier description of "leaving him for dead" when they are adults. When under stress Mac's protector role is absent as the desire for destruction takes over and this propensity in himself is what, I feel, makes him fearful of taking on the nurturing role of the parent. Perry (2003) informs us that childhood is a precarious

time in which the taken for granted sanctuary of home and protection of adults can easily be upset:

The home is the most violent place in America...These children must adapt to this atmosphere of fear. Persisting fear and the neuropsychological adaptations to this fear can alter the development of the child's brain, resulting in changes to physiological, emotional, behavioural, cognitive and social functioning....The brain's impulse-mediating capacity is related to the ratio between the excitatory activity of the lower more primitive portions of the brain (brainstem and diencephalon) and the modulating activity of higher, sub-cortical and cortical areas. Any factors that increase the activity or reactivity of the brainstem (e.g., chronic traumatic stress) or decrease the moderating capacity of the limbic or cortical areas (e.g. neglect, alcohol intoxication or brain injury) will increase an individual's aggression, impulsivity and capacity to be violent (pp.3&4).

Based upon this analysis the following excerpt may give us an insight into Bill's extreme violence in adulthood:

*I must have been about 4 when my dad left. I've got a photo of him but when he was 16, he was an alcoholic... I've never seen him I don't remember ever physically seeing my father. And um yeah my stepfather was the one I remember being violent. I was scared of him up until my early teens and I slept with a knife under my pillow from about for about six years, I've even said to people if I ever met him I'll kill him. ...//... I wonder if there's truth in it because they used to say I was dropped on my head because for years I had a sleeping disorder. They said that's*

*because I'd been dropped on my head by the old man....//... One particularly violent occasion, she was in the bath. She was having a bath and you know they'd had an argument and D. my stepfather um I remember him yelling at her and he always used to say things like "ask yourself woman" ..he had really weird anecdotes and stuff. I must have been about 13 then..and I got up from my bed and he grabbed her by the hair cos I heard the pshh of the water and he pulled her out of the bath and she was menstruating. So while he's dragging her along the linoleum floor and he's punching her in the head and she's just bleeding out of the mouth and nose but I can remember.....(crying)...sorry mate...her bleeding out of the head, and the vagina at the same time...you know all these punches on her, 17 stone big man, big hands...just raining..raining down on her .....it's like he was painting the floor or something yeah was yeah I came in and said what the fucking hell are you doing man and he would stop, yeah he would stop as I got older he would stop violence...//...A counsellor once asked me how long have you been angry mate and with such a candid question it took me aback and I thought about it and I said probably for most of my life (Bill, pp.11, 13 & 15).*

An environment such as this must have been very toxic for Bill as a young boy. A stepfather capable of such terrible violence dramatically compounds the loss of his real father. The young boy's daily environment is pervaded by the sense of a terrifying giant of a man who is out of control. How would he know when the next outbreak of terror would occur? How would he be able to go to school and concentrate, let alone get a decent education? I imagine that he would have been in an almost constant state of hyper-vigilance. Through the reactivity of his brainstem and the reduced moderating capacity of the limbic and cortical areas of his brain his concentration is narrowed down. Lived time, which includes a future perspective of vision, hope and expectation for most of us, is telescoped into dealing with the constant threat of danger of the immediate present. In

Bill's childhood there would probably be little time for peaceful, reflective play and stimulation for creative imagination that is so vital to a child's development. An environment of abuse shaped his world:

*Apparently I was beaten when I was toddler when I was a baby by my genetic father I don't remember that. I received copious backhanders and that from my stepfather when I was stopping him bashing my mum. At home I had things more done to me, like my brother would lock me in suitcases, lock me in cupboards um things like that yeah. I still harbour a certain amount of resentment towards my brother because of all that and he used to say I was deformed; I was a dwarf and all that sort of stuff (Bill, p.8).*

Bill's limited responses to threat were forged in his environment:

*I shut down and the blinkers are on. Your peripheral vision just shuts down you know because you're concentrating on what's in front of you... Um yeah remember the emotionless violence that's um like everything shuts down (Bill, p.2).*

Bill's own violence in adulthood bears testimony to his learned response to the world:

*If it hadn't all happened so fast they started to push and shove and then the screwdrivers came out and we laughed at*

*them and out came the knives and one lost his eye, he was 17 N cut him through the cheek, through the eyeball up the forehead and I remember the white concrete wall of the supermarket, I used to be a car painter and that's the only way I could describe it fanned across the wall on the side, so he was down and the other guy got stabbed in the neck and he went down and we chased the other guy down the carpark and stabbed him a few times in the upper body and in the arm and ah yeah the guy lost his eye, the other bloke was in ICU for a couple of weeks with a neck wound and the other guy lost the use of his arm for a little while(Bill, p.3).*

Bill's life experiences have conditioned him into being triggered into a mode of functioning much like a reptile would behave under threat. His being-in-the-world is reduced to the very primitive survival strategy of fight or flight. David Schnarch (2000, p.135) informs us:

In the past when prehistoric animal's lives were at stake, fast primitive responses served best. Unfortunately threats to our identity and emotional security often trigger similar responses. As tension intensifies we become anxious and survival reactions 'hard wired' into the reptilian and mammalian parts of our brain take control from the neo-cortex.

Although Bill is responsible for what he does at such times his ability to choose is compromised because the part of the brain responsible for a range

of options is no longer in control. Because of his need to fight in order to maintain his self-esteem and his sense of masculinity Bill, in adulthood, often seeks situations that trigger his already highly aroused condition into extreme levels of emotional shutdown and violence. In his childhood optimal conditions for adult maturity including; safety, security, dependability and stimulation were missing and instead actually encouraged a state of chronic alarm. The consequences of this kind of fathering can also be seen in Colin's world:

*I was the closest and whup hit me on the nose right up against the wall BANG fuuuuuck. One thing with dad he was very strong he was short and stocky a very powerful man he could lift me up with one hand you know he could grab you round the throat and he could lift you up he was very strong and very intimidating...//... The jugs with a real thick base and I've seen him use those no big deal...//...He was a man's man and he was respected by a shit load of people (Colin, p.14).*

In this excerpt Colin is reflecting upon what it was like returning to live with his birth father in adolescence. There is a mixture of his fear of his father's violence and an admiration for it. This respect/fear is linked to Colin's perception of his father's masculinity. In the following quote he is describing his earlier life with his adoptive father:

*My adopted father he was the most violent that's what I got from all my aunties. He was violent to my real mother and*



*even the sheila that he got in after mum died and um violent with all of us kids. (Colin, p. 16)*

What does all this mean for Colin as a father?

*I've hit every one of them every single one of them and I 've hit my eldest the most and then I hit my next eldest the next most and everyone has become less you know I suppose that's a good thing. I thought about saying sorry but I just ain't got the balls. Oh you know I'm letting myself down. I'm being submissive, you know, fathers don't' apologise to their kids and anyway I'm sure they deserved it and they've forgotten about it and moving on so that's my attitude...But I'm not real proud of what I've done and you know... It's just sometimes I don't know what to do, how to make things right how to fix things up so I just don't do nothing... (Colin, p.16)*

Colin illustrates the tension he holds between being, “a man’s man” and having remorse for his violence towards his own children. Ironically the desire to not be seen as submissive leads him to feeling emasculated “I just ain’t got the balls” rather than as a much needed confirmation of his manhood. Colin feels guilty for his former actions but his inability to show remorse to his children leaves him feeling ashamed. His present lived reality is that he is caught between the way his past has shaped him and how he wants to be.

### ***Summary***

At the beginning of Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus is sitting on the seashore in the midst of his unplanned travels following a long, difficult war, wishing to be home with his son, his father and his wife. In his longing and melancholy he asks the question: "Does any person know who his father is?" It is a question people ask in various forms. If my father is dead, or if he was absent and cold, or if he was a tyrant, or if he abused me, or if he was wonderful but is not there for me now, then who is my father now? Where do I get those feelings of protection, authority, confidence, know-how and wisdom I need in order to live my life? How can I evoke a father in a way that will give my life the governance it needs? (Moore, 1992).

In this section I have discussed the influence of parenting, particularly fathering, upon the development of men's own propensity for violence. There is an emphasis on examining how the internal representations of childhood experiences are enacted in adulthood. There are several examples from the men's stories of the intergenerational, psychosocial and biological influences upon a violent outcome. These demonstrate the power of the shaping effects of the lifeworld into which we are thrown. Too often in my work and in society in general I come across men who struggle to find a vision for their manhood and, as a consequence, whose lives bear testimony to Odysseus' famous question.

### ***Pride and Shame -Violence as Proof of Masculinity***

In this section I examine the relationship between society's perceptions of masculinity and shame and pride. I will discuss how these phenomena are in turn linked to aggression. Questions about the psychological, biological and socio-cultural causes of violence are explored with direct reference to the study participants.

Since ancient Greece man's honour has been linked to violence. "The Greek word for masculinity *andreia* also means 'courage'. The root of the Latin word *virtus* (virtue) or courage is 'vir' which means both man and soldier" (Gilligan, 2001, p.56). Soldiers have committed socially sanctioned violence upon children, women and particularly other men

throughout history. An essential condition of the masculine code in this world dictates that to preserve one's masculinity one must be brave or 'staunch' especially around other men. To put it simply to be a 'real' man a male must behave like a soldier. Consider the conditioning of boys and men in cultures such as our own. Highly asymmetrical gender roles assigned at birth and reinforced by many institutions in our society mean that men may be seen as "violence objects" just as women can be seen as "sex objects". The differing gender roles make it possible for men to ward off or undo feelings of shame, disgrace and dishonour by means of violence, whereas that is significantly less true for women. Traditionally, masculinity in the stereotypical sex-role of patriarchy has been defined as involving the expectation, even the requirement, of violence, under many well-specified conditions. For example, in time of war, in response to personal insult, in response to extramarital sex on the part of a female in the family, while engaging in all male combat sports and so on.

Males are particularly socialized to cover over feelings of shame; the sense of being weak, powerless, helpless, impotent, or incompetent. Rather than experience these painful feelings, men usually go blank or get enraged. Hitler provides an example of the latter path. He experienced the defeat of Germany in 1918 as a humiliation, both for him personally and for Germany. His entire political career was built on the need to regain pride for himself and for his country, by transforming shame to rage and outward aggression (Scheff 1994). Men are taught to a large degree that an essential condition of being male is to be rational, independent, brave, physically strong, not vulnerable, sexually dominant and be able to solve problems (or to ignore problems they cannot solve). This type of 'masculinity' is reinforced by a system of rewards for behaving in 'male' ways such as being protective and competitive and being shamed as punishment for not conforming. The most effective way to shame a woman is to question her chastity. There are many words such as 'whore' 'slut' 'tart' and so on with which to do this. On the contrary there are no words that denigrate men for having heterosexual encounters. In fact such men are often praised as being 'studs'. To insult a man we must question his masculinity by ascribing to him so called feminine qualities such as 'wuss,' 'poofa,' 'girl,' 'fairy,' 'faggot' and so on. My own experience of working with sexually abused

men supports a view that male sexual abuse is often exacerbated by a myth that the male shamefully must have in some way complied with the abuse. “The message to the male victim is not simply that if he was abused he must not be a man, but also that if he is a man he must not have been abused” (Mendel 1993, p.25). Researchers frequently cite men’s distrust or fear of femininity and conclude that this fear is responsible for the way in which men act, feel and behave (Balswick, 1979; O’Neil, 1981). A lawyer friend who often acts for violent criminals offered an explanation for the contradictory phenomenon of homosexual behaviour in prison where, as one might imagine, the male code of masculinity is most prominent. I was informed to be made more acceptable amongst violent inmates the person being abused is dehumanised to an extent that he is no longer defined as a man. He is an object of sexual gratification and as a non-being he has no gender. This distortion of reality means that the perpetrator can obtain sex without the stigma of being seen as homosexual.

In order to conform to the ‘masculine’ stereotype men are often treated as violence objects that must not back down in the face of aggression. The court marshalling and execution of men who throughout history have tried to escape battle are testimony to this fact, as is the shaming of conscientious objectors. Gilligan (2001, p. 57) states “men can prove their manliness...when it has been called into question by an insult or sign of disrespect, by means of violence; and their failure or unwillingness to engage in violence can throw their manliness into doubt, and expose them to shame”. The levels of violence that some of the men in this study both perpetrate and subject themselves to offer evidence that supports this argument:

*You’d say it was a gang of older boys that were just bullying. I made a resolution that I’m going to be bullied I may as well fight back and go down fighting. As the years went past I got to seventeen I went on a bodybuilding course. (Ric, P. 10)*

Fighting seems like an issue of pride for Ric. He body builds as a way of expressing his masculinity. In this way the body becomes a both a sign of physical superiority and a weapon for inflicting violence upon other men. The myth of male invulnerability is one reason why so few men report violence towards them from a woman. The 'real' man must be seen to be able to dominate the weaker woman. Many men in the stopping violence groups that I run report a fear, often based upon prior experience, of being laughed at or put down by other men, including the police sometimes, if they report this type of violence.

Mac as a man who has had to straddle conflicting worlds illustrates the power of the code of masculinity:

*I'm ok apart from having a cry, ah well it's not the manly thing at times, is it? Well it's not supposed to be. That is to really understand what I mean, is I'm gonna have to I'll be honest with you I'm transgender. All my life since, I shouldn't say all my life, since puberty since about 11 or 12 I've felt I was the wrong person in the wrong body, I've struggled and struggled so what I've done, because I couldn't talk to mum and because I didn't have a father as such that I trusted or that I could talk to. I've thought well hey that maybe my brains got this all wrong and this is who I am so I've worked real hard to be a bloke and blokes don't cry. Blokes are tough blokes you know like they go out racing, jet boats and rally cars and you know um having sex with girls and you know so I worked bloody hard to be a bloke and it's only in the last few years, six or so years, that I've, the other person in me 's come out and I've had to re-evaluate my whole self um and been honest with myself and that's one reason why I feel um I feel that um if I hadn't opened up to find my true self um I probably would have carried on going through life working very hard at being a male and when I did get angry or whatever I would have dealt with it in my manly way but I wouldn't have gone looking for help. I would have hidden it away like 80% of men. I've come to know it's the best thing for you, to know yourself. (Mac, p.12)*

As this interview progresses Mac breaks the macho code of ‘real men don’t cry’ in response to talking about his childhood. In his vulnerability he feels free to reveal a deeply held secret to me. The fact that he never did this in the 20-week stopping violence programme he attended shows how profound his fear of being misunderstood or feeling humiliated is. In order to keep his shameful secret he leads a double life. Mac illustrates the isolation of the “manly way” and understands how it is for many other men. He is wounded by the confusion about his sexual identity and lack of support from his family. His world has been defined by the repression of so called ‘feminine’ emotions such as vulnerability and by the dominance of anger, an emotion that is acceptable to the code of masculinity. With a strong feminine side that he has suppressed for many years he has “struggled and struggled”. The shame and self-denial must have been intolerable at times and it is not surprising that the rubber band did not take much to snap.

Denial of unacceptable emotions is often compensated for by an exaggerated sense of pride. This allows the person to build up feelings of superiority for the purpose of denying shameful feelings of self-reproach, disgrace and dishonour. The individual reduces his own shame by feeling better than others; he elevates his status by putting others down. Prejudice, bigotry and grudges towards others are mechanisms that keep the self from knowing and experiencing the shame that is embodied. Individuals who engage in antisocial behavior have a great capacity for the denial of shameful feelings. Sadly, those who are violent describe feeling respected by their peers, often for the first time in their life (Gilligan, 2001).

Colin dramatically reinforces the viewpoint that respect from others is vital to his sense of self-respect. In fact, in prison his survival depends upon it:

*I got the beat ups but he didn't break any bones and  
neither was I um I could get up and wipe myself down which  
I did right and um because X amount of people witnessed  
that and my mate right I thought right I'm not gonna lie*

*down to this and what I did is I got one of those little um patter bats they're little wooden bats that you sort of play squash in the gym um I got one of those and I went straight up there and I hit him from behind right and I dealt to him. I hospitalised him when he got out first time um he was in my wing again and um went and had a shower I smashed him again and I broke his leg that time and I says to him ever fuck with me again I'll kill ya, I'll kill ya you cunt. He had all these sort of um ah pen inscriptions on his arm right for like it's like a prayer to protect him and on this side it's like a black band right and that too was gonna protect him and I knew that straight away and I thought um no way so that was another added motivation for me. The first time I bashed him I didn't get any real satisfaction um cos I wanted blood big time I wanted to take him out. Well he had humiliated me and he hit me from behind and he did he gave me a bit of a dush you know and I was a bit sore and he give me a bit of a black eye and a tooth that was loose that I pulled out in the end. I had to get round with a black eye for two weeks and that's ugly mate not in jail it's no good you know because people think, oh yeah. That's why you gotta back up in a scenario like that because otherwise it reflects on your credibility it reflects on your reputation you know, it reflects on your mana you know especially in that environment you know you've got to fix it straight away. Otherwise um you're not looked at with the respect maybe you deserve or you feel you deserve. You're just a heap of*

*shit you're a heap of shit like you're nothing in Maori terms "he tangata kore take" is a person that has no substance, you're worthless, you're a slave right, "you do this, hurry up," anyone can say that to you you've gotta do it because you're nothing right, ah," gimme your shoes, what you got in your canteen this week. That's mine you better give it to me otherwise I'll come round I'll do this I'll do that right". You intimidate people like that. You threaten them with their whanau. "Don't get any ideas cos I'll smash her in the visiting room right you tell her you're in debt. You want the money and if you don't get the money she better not come up again right because she's gonna get it tell her". Oh yeah you have to do it what comes out of your mouth you must do. Especially in there cos you are judged by what you do and what you say. (Colin, pp 7&8)*

In the inhumane environment of a maximum-security prison with rigid rules, sterility and other violent men lived space is a continual reminder of the need for vigilance and the imperative to gain respect. For Colin, a Maori<sup>23</sup>, the macho code of masculinity in jail gets confused with mana or genuine self-other respect. A Maori colleague discussed his personal understanding of mana as that of earning the respect of others and a consequent embodiment of self-respect through human qualities such as wisdom, compassion and courage. However, the type of mana that Colin is describing is founded upon fear. It is knowing that others fear you and fearing that they do not that motivates the drive for power. In this world no one is immune and just about all self worth, according to Colin, is predicated upon notions of power over others, fear and revenge. The lived reality of "what you do and what you say," is omnipresent and nothing is forgotten in a bid to avoid

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<sup>23</sup> Indigenous population of New Zealand.



the humiliation of being seen as subservient, of becoming “he tangata kore take”<sup>24</sup>. Everything in the paranoid lived space of prison involves maintaining and promoting proof of masculinity.

For Maori there is perhaps an added dimension to the violence that one cannot fully appreciate unless he is a member of that culture. Heidegger (1927/1962) hypothesizes that our world is based upon the unique historical, socio-cultural context from which we inhabit the present. According to Van Manen (1990 p.79) “to be human is to be concerned with meaning, to desire meaning”. What happens if in some way we are cut off from culture and meaning? Does our connection to our history; our society and our culture make us feel meaningful and its absence leave us feeling meaningless? Are the consequences of this deficiency to make us feel mean? Perhaps Colin and others like him carry an intergenerational legacy of shame and resentment handed down since colonisation and subsequent cultural alienation. Does this contribute to the fact that domestic violence is higher amongst Maori and that a much higher proportion of Maori men per capita are in prison for violent offenses<sup>25</sup>?

The code of masculinity is evidenced by Colin’s ideas about gender:

*Well you know like um there’s so many people that I’ve hurt really it’s gone like a blurr um. How sometimes I’ve experienced it with um all the women I’ve hit and T my baby and I’ve felt a little bit of remorse ahhh but men no it’s different you just don’t care you know it happens and you forget about it you just don’t sort of dwell on it. The only things I remember is when I got the serious bash right. (Colin, p.9)*

Colin’s attitude towards difference between men and women supports the viewpoint that it is reasonable to treat men as violence objects in his world. The extent that he feels the

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<sup>24</sup> Maori for ‘a person of no substance’.

<sup>25</sup> Refer to statistics of violent crime amongst Maori in the literature review.

need to admit that “little bit of remorse,” for women and children he has hurt is a token to the violence implicit in his code of masculinity.

In the following extract Bill reinforces the macho code of masculinity in relation to women:

*..a few good punches and stuff but I didn't fight back cos they were girls. As much as I wanted to I didn't cos I don't do that. I can be quite honest and say I've slapped women ah three in my whole life because they've slapped me and nothing not a full on whack or anything just lopped back at you sort of thing yeah. (Bill, p. 7)*

In Bill's world hitting women has to be justified and minimalised because ideally violence is a male only preserve:

*I tapped her on the arm with a small, nothing like half a broom handle something like that it was a small stick. Her words to my sister were he hit me on the arm with a stick and that was assault with a weapon and carried 5 years on its own. The police had said it was a 1.8 metre pole and I'd run around the house and was gonna smash her head in and it was actually a tap, I did tap her on the arm and I said to her look at me when I'm fucking talking to you and that's the extent of it, my kids were there. (Bill, p.11)*

The 'noble' notion that hitting women is unacceptable seldom matches the reality of the circumstances. Just as war is meant to be about soldiers inflicting violence upon other soldiers this is rarely the case. The recent deaths and maiming of innocent men, women and children in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq bear witness to this fact. The argument for 'just wars' put forward by military proponents and politicians is morally ambiguous and sanctions the 'right' kind of violence for the 'right' reasons. There are often 'good' reasons for violence in the minds of perpetrators. However, these reasons are of little

consolation to innocent civilians maimed and killed in wars or battered wives and children. The argument for selective violence does not hold water and neither does Bill's. For a start the level of terror embodied by the victims, including the children, is probably not going to be appeased by the knowledge that this enraged man is going to be more lenient than if it were another man. In reality Bill has to justify violence on women because it is seen as unequal, unjust and, therefore, unmanly to hit a woman.

Proof of the tokenism inherent in the kind of thinking in the macho code's promotion of the protection of the 'weaker sex' is borne out by the fact that in the last 20 years the incidence of wife murder in the United States has doubled (Gilligan 1997). This is thought to be because more women than ever are leaving<sup>26</sup> their partners thereby bringing into the open many men's dependence. The reason behind this is that women provide many men with the emotional equivalent of a blood transfusion. Gilligan (1997, p.131) states:

Many man are so deeply ashamed of their wishes to be loved and taken care of, which they equate with being infantile, passive and dependent that their feelings of shame motivate them to repress and ward off these feelings, often by going to the opposite extreme. Those who batter and/or kill their wives are precisely the men who experience a life-death dependency on their wives and an overwhelming shame because of it".

Contradictory factors in the male code of masculinity that purports to protect women and children from violence are often manifested as a sense of entitlement and sexual jealousy. An evolutionary perspective on intimate aggression supports evidence of an evolved male sexual proprietorial tendency, with a set of features that are virtually ubiquitous across cultures; namely, institutions of marriage with rights and obligations, the valuation of female faithfulness, the 'protection' of women from outside sexual contacts, the

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<sup>26</sup> Reasons why more women are leaving are given in the literature review-Chapter 2.

conception of adultery of women as property violation, and the special case of a wife's unfaithfulness as a "justifiable" provocation for male violence ( Wilson & Daly, 1993). Historically society has generally construed women as property and explicitly promoted the social domination and privileges of men. Violence against women, except in its most extreme forms, has been implicitly condoned and legitimized (Gordon, 1989).

Attitudes that concur with this viewpoint are in evidence today in New Zealand. Leibrich et al (1995)<sup>27</sup> undertook a survey of 2000 New Zealand men looking into men's attitudes towards violence in intimate relationships. In-depth follow up interviews of 200 of the original participant's survey results suggested that although New Zealand men would support attempts to stop physical violence in intimate relationships, most tended to condone the use of violence, particularly psychological, in certain circumstances. These interviews identified self-esteem, social constructs of masculinity and the failure to meet expectations of the masculine code of behaviour, as resulting in a sense of powerlessness and the need to regain power as the main causes for violence. As discussed previously according to the masculine code of masculinity, powerlessness and the shame it engenders is likely to invoke the need to take control.

Vince discusses his violence in relation to ownership:

*...thinking back it must have been shortly after we got married..and I ..punched her and she had a black eye, she went to the police and the police came to the house and checked out whether any further abuse was going on. The police felt that it was safe to leave her there and they disappeared and I felt that it was ridiculous of S to call in the police. That was in my view not the way to deal with it. In my view the way to deal with it was to stay low, look down until it all blew over. I was surprised by her way of reacting.. I had no notion that ah going to the police for her was real...That for her it was very surprising or very unusual I had no notion of that. For me it was a normal thing to be hit and to lay low that was the solution, not to call in a third party. It was normal for me to experience*

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<sup>27</sup> A study commissioned in 1995 by the New Zealand Department of Justice.

*that..... there was a difference after we got married but in hindsight I would think there must have been unconsciously for me...Issues of ownership come to mind. Ownership of her carrying my name, her ah getting married to me means she is chained to me.. can't escape it is safe for me to do some(violence). I think, for me, in this whole wedding thing, this whole wedding concept there was an issue of ownership connected to it. I did feel proud that she practices her signature...made me feel wanted.....feeling wanted is still very important to me..... (Vince, p.9)*

Vince's embodied sense of ownership means that he is surprised that his wife would try to protect herself from him. Lived relation is to him a sense of her being, "chained to me". He feels proud of his possession and in his mind if you own someone it is perfectly normal to dominate her with violence when he perceives her not to be conforming to his ownership. A clue to Vince's intrapsychic functioning is in his need to be wanted. He needs his wife to be the vehicle for the frightened, dependent part of himself. There is evidence that such men find it intolerable to be alone: They report feeling vulnerable and abandoned (Dutton, 2002). Osherson (1986, p. 123) suggests, "perhaps in our need to defend and constantly protect women we are trying to tiptoe past the rage we feel if they leave us too much alone". Ric's possessive jealousy and fear of being left is dominant throughout his stories of violence:

*...I think because its my fault normally I like to smash and grab syndrome – I feel like sex I'll grab your tits...//... she's stopped and just started chatting to a bank teller who she doesn't know and she might say something like ...oh that's an unusual accent isn't it and I'm waiting there to be served and these two are chatting away and um "what's going on, what's all this about," and it's quite innocent it's just in my mind and I suppose it takes on another meaning, this is what I really don't understand..so I come out of there and I'm pissed off and I think well is my company so boring that you have to walk over to someone else and start chatting...//... she's over at the counter talking to this young boy he must be about 19, 20 or something like that and it goes on for ages and*

*ages and ages and every time I and now she can get free coffee..from this guy so I think ok “what’s all this about” so it’s like everywhere she goes she’s got to make a male friend. I start thinking am I missing something here or and then I start getting sort of um pissed off and that and I’d say jealous...//... Because I’ve realised that ..I’ve got a jealousy problem and I can’t really understand where the problem’s come from...//...whenever we have an argument I just throw it back at her just oh why don’t you go and fuck P he’s more your type than I am. ...//... as she came in she could see I was in a real bad mood..and I was drunk and she saw that. I said “I wish I could have a smile like that” and all things like that and it was just compounding getting worse and worse and she said “I think we should go, don’t you” cos she could see I was really pissed and I was just on a short fuse and the fuse was burning really fast. P shouted out I’ll see you S and she puts her arm up to wave so I grab her arm and pull it down and we get outside and she went one way and I started to walk the other way and she said something and I just turned round and said “ fuck you” I shouted um most of the pub must have heard me and then I walked home..or staggered home.(Ric, pp.2, 6&7)*

Ric’s sense of entitlement extends to the use of another’s body for sexual gratification, without intimacy or reciprocal sensitivity. His oppressive jealousy and possessiveness is not an expression of love or even desire, but a desperate attempt to keep his partner captive and available to regulate his embodied state of insecurity. The trigger for an abusive attack is often incidental but, almost inevitably, a reminder of his wife’s psychological separateness. A word or a smile in the ‘wrong’ direction that expresses interest in someone other than himself reminds Ric that she is a woman in her own right. When he feels he has controlled her there is an ambivalent sense of relief and probably shame, as she becomes the vehicle, once again, of his pathological projective processes. In this state other men and even Ric’s male ‘friends’ become competitors. In a more secure, mature state, if his wife was in reality, as disloyal as he perceives her to be he

would be able to demonstrate his vulnerability and his anger in a non abusive manner and perhaps reevaluate his desire to be in the relationship.

Mac offers another view of the need to control his partner:

*I automatically started getting upset um and ah she she had, still got this habit of coming out with things out of the blue that would surprise me and set me off and um like she was having contact with the manager, direct contact and um she wouldn't tell me um because um she felt it wasn't important but when she did say something I would say, "why didn't you tell me, why am I just finding this out." Anyway this one particular night we were in this restaurant not far from here and one of those occasions had arisen and um so we were having quite heated words and um ... this this guy at the next table sort of had got up and he'd said something or done something that gave me the trigger to want to take my anger out on him...(Mac,p.1).*

Mac feels he cannot control D's interactions with others and becomes increasingly frustrated. In lived relation there is a stifling sense of little or no space for a separate self to exist. There is also a sense of the dependence on other validation to compensate for the lack of his own. He cannot control his increasing anger because she "had different views" but opts in this case, according to the code of masculinity, for the more acceptable target of his rage...another man.

Bill gives an example of the degree of violence of which he is capable towards other men:

*Yeah I was known to um probably cos I 'm a little guy and I was bullied for years um when things turned around for me so to speak and I became the bully I always took it to the extreme. If a guy was beaten I always put in one more..one, one more...a damaging hit or something just to stamp my mark on him give him the message that you don't do it again. I'd something severe for them to remember. A*

*particular instance was ah a guy who said oh you're no bloody good and that so I took him outside and we found out who was the better of the two of us and he was beaten um and he was on all fours and he was um he must have been concussed he was like gonna throw up. I said "alright mate" and he said " yeah" and I said "are you sure" and he said " yeah" again so I stepped back and kicked him and broke his cheekbone and his nose I hit him so hard that the leather sole of my shoe came off and it flapped and hurt my foot for about two weeks. That's how hard I hit him and even C who was with me said "Jesus that was a bit extreme mate"... I didn't think anything of it though.*  
(Bill, p.4)

Bill's violence in this episode goes beyond self-protectiveness. It is extreme. There is no sign of compassion or even of anxiety about the consequences of his actions to himself. There is no apparent reason to take the violence to this level. It seems as if his only motive is blood lust and in terms of lived relation showing his dominance over the victim and gaining the respect, or fear, of others. This type of behaviour makes me wonder how Bill locates himself in lived relation to others. Does the suffering of his victims somehow relieve him of his own anguish? Does he feel so inferior that somehow he is driven to prove his superiority by going into overkill?

### ***Summary***

In this section men's stories have offered support for some of the evolutionary-biological, socio-cultural and psychological explanations of masculinity and its relationship to experiences of shame, the need to control and violence. Shame derived through the male code of masculinity in the form of perceived disrespect or a lack of recognition and the need for an overstated sense of pride are indicated as prime motivators in the aetiology of violence. Eliciting fear in others is seen as one way to gain a vicarious sense of respect or power as a substitute for admiration or self- respect. There is a revelation that beneath a controlling façade of male proprietariness and its violent manifestations a vulnerability and dependency on women is exposed. The men's stories



have underscored how socially sanctioned violence and a macho ethos maintained by repression of so called 'female' emotions and the dominance of 'masculine' ones has given a quasi legitimate status to the use of violence as a way of expressing aggression. Gilligan (2001, pp. 35-36) suggests the purpose of violence is to force respect from other people, "for without a minimal amount of respect from others or the self, the self begins to feel dead inside, numb or empty, and it is clear that this is the most intolerable of all feelings".

### ***Numbing***

Most of the participants in this study describe a process of numbing in relation to violent episodes. This is a way in which I describe the internal process of repression, becoming 'hard', shutting down and forgetting of some men before, during and after violence. In this section I ask: What is this process of numbing and what is its meaning? How does numbing relate to violence and how does it shape the lifeworld of those who experience it?

Mac discusses an occurrence of numbing or the closing down of consciousness:

*I was driving in the fast lane and she said something again about my job and all I can remember is flying off the handle. I can't remember from around Green Lane through to parking the car outside the restaurant in Herne Bay and I remember walking into the restaurant. She thought she was gonna die and from what she's told me, I was crying, I was yelling, I was um bashing heck out of the steering wheel and the dash and I was still driving but I can't recall you know and that's when she had me into the doctors and to psychiatrists and on to anger management. I suppose, I don't know if blackout's the correct word I just don't recall but I obviously drove us in safe manner from Greenlane in the fast lane on the fast side of the motorway to Herne Bay but I don't recall doing it I don't recall...(Mac, p.2).*

In this incident Mac's violence was to drive in a terrifying manner that made his partner feel as if she was going, "to die". His blacking out alters chronological time by freezing it. He has no recall of a large chunk of time in which he was in a state of extreme distress. I have a hunch that this was different for his partner who may have felt lived time as agonizingly slow, in contrast to the speed of the car, as she feared for her life. He describes being highly energized as reported by his companion, " I was crying, I was yelling, I was um bashing heck out of the steering wheel and the dash". At the same time he has no consciousness of this. His lived experience during this time is of nothingness.

Numbing is a defence that floods Mac. Based upon this perceived insult to his self, he overreacts: "She said something again about my job, and all I can remember is flying off the handle". This process is automatic and shrinks the range of his world. It represents a way of blocking off aspects of the environment and his own senses so that he may be able to cope with his suffering and fend off shame. He is unable to maintain a coherent state and hence his ability to use language in a rational manner to make his point is not available to him." Traumatic memories constructed under conditions of high arousal are 'pre-narrative,' consisting of unintegrated sensations and perceptions" (R.Neimeyer personal communication September14, 2002)<sup>28</sup>. His forgetting of this incident and many others not only protects him from painful memories and feelings but also shapes his world. Because of this need to defend himself Mac has not, until relatively recently, been able to bring his traumatic embodiment of the past under conscious control. His thrownness into a childhood of insecurity and consequent internal representations of lived relations has conditioned him to respond to stressful stimuli with rage and numbing. Responsibility or response-ability is a stage of development that is not attained by those whose trauma is not available to consciousness. This means that Mac, and others in his position, are condemned to react automatically to stress producing situations until they are able to gain conscious control of their present state and make choices about how to respond.

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<sup>28</sup> This quotation is from the notes from a workshop given in Auckland in 2002. It was entitled Trauma, loss and the quest for meaning.

Bill describes the phenomenon of numbing as shutting down or becoming automatic in response to the extreme violence in his prior account of kicking a beaten man in the face:

*I always shut down when it comes to that physical confrontation I just concentrate all my efforts on what's in front of me. I think it becomes almost automatic now um and funny now that you say it it's almost like I I think it was because that's how I dealt with um the beatings my mum used to get ..Because it was out of my control physically I had to you know not let it get to me like that as well. (Bill, p.8)*

Bill describes the violence as “automatic” and “out of my control” as if his will or his ability to choose is no longer available to him. He appears machine-like without qualities of empathy and compassion that we normally associate with being humane. It is clear from Bill’s realisation that the way in which he numbs himself to his own violence was learned in relation to the deadening of emotion he experienced as a child. This was a way of handling his stepfather’s violence towards his mother. Distancing<sup>29</sup> himself from such emotions as compassion, empathy, fear and shame seems like a familiar defense against the feelings associated with extreme violence Bill embodied as a child as well as feelings engendered at inflicting this upon someone else. He knows that it was wrong for his stepfather to abuse his mother in this way and it is likely that he feels wrong somewhere inside for his own violence. Otherwise why would he attempt not to allow it “to get to me”?

In the above excerpt Bill makes a link that involves an insight into his life’s circumstances in relation to numbing. It is useful to return to notions of ‘horizon’ in order to discuss this point. The ‘horizon’ is not a static phenomenon, it is linked to our evolving consciousness, as well as external events “it is something that is always in motion. It moves with us and we move into it” (Gadamer (1960 /1982, p.271). Bill realizes that time has telescoped and the past is enacted in the present; he makes meaning for his violence

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<sup>29</sup> Distancing seems to be the direct opposite of what Siegel (1999, p.188) calls “reflective function” (see literature review for fuller explanation).

linked to what he witnessed in his childhood. With this ‘new’ horizon he can make sense of processes connected to his violence. This developing consciousness can offer Bill a vision of a different kind of future. Gadamer’s (p.239) notion of humans having a “historically effected consciousness,” is now part of Bill’s understanding of his lifeworld.

Vince also understands numbing as a requisite to violence and brings his consciousness of the effects of this embodiment to light.

*It is accepted practice to have hammer with you and ram in the skulls of of ah newborn calves, calves that are probably not worthy to go to the works..so there’s one practice which is already bordering on the abusive. Horrible, first time it feels horrible..then you get numb. Do you know this song of Pink Floyd um comfortably numb..comfortably numb. That’s how you make yourself comfortable by becoming numb and that’s what it does to you and I think that it’s a very dangerous environment for someone who has the abusive blueprint so to speak.*

*I guess my hardening came out in the fact that I didn’t care about hitting the calves on the head but the relief that they were all dropped and out the gate was much more important to me. One little thing of conscience did come out of it, my refusal to eat veal, I still don’t eat veal. I have no problems um with the concept of eat and be eaten and that we’re on top of the food chain but I do have a problem with eating an animal that never had a chance to live. Quite amazing that I had that little thing (Vince, p.10).*

Vince suggests that there is a connection between the lived space of the “dangerous environment” and his blueprint for abusiveness. His comparison of numbing with hardness depicts coldness and control rather than the explosive heat of anger. It is as if the steel of red-hot rage has been tempered into something more solid. In this case, the process of numbing probably dampens or switches off feelings that would make it harder for Vince to be violent towards his wife in future. He gives us an insight into his

ambivalence when he informs us that he embodies a tension between becoming both harder and more caring. His feelings towards the animals are expressed in his violence towards them and in his subsequent refusal to eat veal. Perhaps a sense of moral conscience and empathy is telling him that it is wrong to hurt another sentient being unnecessarily. Yet, as a confirmation of his ambivalence, at another moment he could unleash terrible violence upon his wife. He explains the other side of these complex feelings in this excerpt as he discusses how insensitive he was about his wife's suffering.

*I think it expressed itself by the fact that I didn't care about her pain, I was much more involved with my pain. I was only concerned about S not coming back, about me being alone, about the police coming on my doorstep. At that time there was not a moment that I truly was concerned about her..... numbed out a different word might be hardening... (Vince, p.10)*

Vince speaks of the numbing or hardening process in dealing with the aftermath of his violence to his wife. I wonder if the way he distances himself from his emotions by deadening them is his way of dealing with the injury to his self-structure that he often experiences in lived relation. In the above excerpt Vince illustrates the expansion of his horizon as he speaks about a former self that has not yet encompassed the qualities of reflective function and empathy from the vantage point of one who has. This type of insight has liberating implications for Vince and is one of the main aims of the psychotherapeutic process. It suggests that he can stand outside of his problem and see that it has a deeper meaning. He is now using a uniquely human capability of self-awareness to understand his lack of empathy and compassion for his wife and thereby advances his horizon. This awareness offers him greater choices for future relationships. These are choices Vince has not always had.

*...what happened further was days of absolute shame. I had to explain to the farm owner why S wasn't there. I had to explain to the farm worker and the nanny why S wasn't there.. and I had to I had to make a new contract with the farm owner because we were not a couple. I was a*

*single share milker so a new contract was drawn up ....I guess the thing that was most on my mind was the fact that I was suddenly alone, that hit home really hard.....For one second the scenario of suicide passed by and I immediately wiped it off the table thinking “no, that’s not me”.....I was I was very scared of being alone... I was very ignorant, I’d been abusive before and things always came right after that. Things coming right for me meant the bruises disappearing and we didn’t talk about it....and I I I knew that this time that was not an option any more so yeah it was very scary and very very lonely.....(Vince, pp.2&3)*

In remembering this event the silences and repetitions give us an insight into the subtext of his words and express his continuing shame and despair. Vince’s lifeworld was characterized by alienation and ignorance. He was not used to talking about his violence towards his wife. The meaning and purpose of his relationship with her was subverted in order to maintain and protect his centeredness, which he felt was under attack. Existentialist philosopher and psychoanalyst Rollo May (1964) proposes that all beings are centered in themselves, “and an attack on this centeredness is an attack on ones existence”(p.370). Vince was able to hide his shame, to remain ignorant and wait for the bruises to stop reminding him but later he was forced to be witnessed and thus shamed by others. Like others in this study perhaps this unwelcome confrontation was the first step in his recovery.

At present Vince’s horizon has evolved considerably. He is much more self-aware and articulate than he was at the time of these recounted events. It is hard to think of it being the same person who was so violent. The process of Vince’s development has taken many years and although he has relinquished physical violence from his life he still struggles with the issues that underlie his violence.

### ***Summary***

In this segment numbing has been described as a way to screen out or dissociate from the chronic effects of violence, fear and shame that the child has to endure during crucial

developmental years. It is also a mechanism for preventing men from having to deal with their feelings as they perpetrate violence upon others. Numbing performs differing functions for the men. For example, for Bill, Vince and Colin it is an attempt to shut out feelings of compassion and empathy for the victim and fear within the self so that the necessary hardening that accompanies violence can be produced. For Mac it is described as more of a way of protecting his centredness. For all of the men there is a discounting or distancing from feelings that is connected to developmental suffering. Numbing intensifies as experiences that are not acceptable to consciousness accumulate throughout the lifespan. When the effects of their own violence and suffering have become too great for them to endure these men have sought healing through attempting to become more conscious of the effects of their behaviour upon others as well as to the damage it has done to their own lives. Fortunately, the effects of self-awareness and remorse are also self-perpetuating.

***Self-Knowledge and Remorse – The Road to Freedom***

*If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we would find sorrow and suffering enough to dispel all hostility.*

(Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1857)

In this section I will examine the effects of insights of participants into their own histories, the degree of their realisation of the cost of violence in their lives, and feelings of remorse that accompany their efforts to reduce violence.

Until now I have demonstrated only the destructive aspect of shame that arises from the data. Alan Schore (1994) proposes that not connecting with a child's active bid for attunement<sup>30</sup> leads to toxic shame. Siegel (1999, p.280) proposes a different type of shaming interaction: "These types of transactions are necessary for a child to learn self-control and then to modulate both behaviour and internal emotional states in prosocial ways. Shame, in this very specific sense, is not damaging".

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<sup>30</sup> Attunement is the need for a child to feel secure that his/her caregiver is in touch and actively interested in their wellbeing.

Scheff (2001) offers an important distinction about shame. European languages other than English have two kinds of shame. In German, for example, there is *schande* (disgrace shame) and *scham* (everyday shame). French makes exactly the same distinction, *honte* and *pudeur*. Everyday (or benign) shame usually carries no offence; a tacit understanding of everyday shame (a sense of shame) is usually treated as a necessary part of one's equipment as a functioning member of a society.

Shame in the everyday meaning of the word is a key component of conscience, the moral sense. It signals moral transgression even without thoughts or words. Shame in this sense is our moral gyroscope: "The nanny asked me where S was and the farm hand asked where S was and I tried to sort of talk around it because I felt very ashamed.....I can't remember exactly what I said"(Vince, p.2).

Vince is confronted with his actions and he feels ashamed. This is different to the kind of shame that is embodied, often unconsciously, when the self is attacked or injured by a personal insult such as being hit or put down. In this moment Vince is made acutely aware of how others see him. His shame is no longer invisible. His own judgment is amplified as it is reflected back to him in the eyes of others. Just as shame can reinforce intransigence and defensiveness it can also be a catalyst for developing his sense of right and wrong. This feeling is a painful reminder to Vince of his transgressions and could perhaps seed the self-knowledge he will need to change his behaviour.

Long before Freud, the Greek philosophers proposed that the goal of philosophical thinking was knowledge of the self, and by implication, that human folly is a result of a lack of self-knowledge. The fact that people do not like to be shown their ignorance can be attested to as far back as Socrates [469 BC]. His quest to challenge the people of Athens to find out who they were cost him his life (De Botton, 2002). For at least three thousand years, stories, myths, fables, satires, and more recently, novels have explored the theme of the dire consequences of lack of self-knowledge. This theme is epitomised in a line in Goethe's (1789, p.51) drama about Italian poet Torquato Tasso:



The gift of the great poet is to be able to voice his suffering, even when other men would be struck dumb in their agony.

Just as a lack of knowledge of self lies at the heart of the emotional drive toward intractability, so lack of knowledge of the other is the key to alienation. We learn about self through knowing others, and vice versa. Impairment of knowledge of the other damages knowledge of self, and vice versa. In a state of unawareness of what is being experienced by both oneself and another it is highly difficult, if not impossible, for the repair that needs to occur when a rupture has taken place. Repair is a key aspect of successful lived relations and is a vital component of healthy parent to child transactions (Karen, 1998). Vince expresses the double bind of this inability, “S and I were together for 20 years by that time...and at that time I did not have any knowledge of the depth of the damage that I had done to her” (Vince, p.11.) This statement reveals that Vince’s embodiment of ignorance and alienation started long before his wife’s departure.

Bill demonstrates an evolution in the way he thinks and feels about violence: “At the time I thought it was justified you know somebody said something and I’ve cruised in and taken them out and just went back and sat down and had a drink or whatever”(Bill, p.2). However, he later experiences the consequences of his violence:

*The way she did it though was one hell of a surprise. The police turn up one Sunday morning, half an hour, packed an overnight bag, “touch nothing in the house,” was escorted out of the street, “that’s it you cant come back here”. My home. The cops turn up with four protection orders and when I read the statement I felt sick, I couldn’t believe it. I was totally unaware of and she would say things like “I’ve got twenty witnesses that will stand up in court” you know to rubbish my character and that. I’ll never forget that, the day that that happened. The first two days after that a bit of a blank but I’m not one to go on a binge, drugs or alcohol. I shut down. I’ve suffered from depression for a couple of years now but I don’t take medication. I try and work I see when it comes now*

*and I try to motivate myself to do other things you know to stop it getting any worse because I just sit down and stop, everything stops (Bill, p. 10).*

Bill has embodied feeling “sick” and lived time has a sense of the surreal as he goes into a state of disbelief, shutting down and depression. In reporting this event he has not yet spoken of sorrow but only of his own suffering. In retrospect, he shows a keen awareness of his own state of mind from the vantage point of his new horizon as he attempts to stem the effects of his depression. The following excerpt demonstrates a deeper sense of responsibility for what he has created in another:

*I hit him three times with it, just an arm shot, the body and the head and one of his associates had moved behind me and he'd stood up and I turned around and cracked him one with it smashed the place up a bit and then left... Now when I see him, it bothers me because I see young M and all I just see is fear on him now and I but go up to him” hi how ya going mate if you want any work give me a call” and he doesn't, he goes “yeah, yeah, yeah” at the time and I feel bad he feels like that now (Bill, p.6).*

It is promising that Bill has embodied feeling “bad” as a response to his violence, that he takes no satisfaction in the other man’s fear and his remorse is a sign of his recovery:

*that really changed the way I looked at a lot of things.....I've also seen a lot of domestic violence with my mates..and their partners. I remember S chasing J with an axe, if I hadn't of stood in his way he would have killed her...He's never done anything about it and his partner M says “you should go with Bill. We talk about it and I say to him “you're losing the battle mate, every time you touch her you're losing the battle with yourself” and sometimes I think its clicking with him but it doesn't last, it doesn't last..I look at it the way that I think of it*

*it's like my real father's alcoholism you've gotta be aware of it all the time. But because I am aware of it has served me so much better...//...I've still got a lot to learn that's so much those courses have been excellent you know. I sing their praises to all the guys and I've had my mates partners say to their other half you should go and I've said it's not for everyone it might not work for you you've gotta want it (Bill, pp. 13 &14).*

Bill's expanded horizon offers him the capability of also being able to influence other people's lived relations by helping to generate a consciousness of the "battle within", knowing that "you have to be aware of it all the time". "It" is the underlying emotions that may lead to depression or violence. The beauty of self-awareness is that it is self-perpetuating and just as toxic shame fuels itself so does self-esteem. The brain is a use dependent organ. The neural connections needed to develop the ability to be self-aware are activated by constant practice. Just as in learning a skill such as playing the piano the more you practice the better you get. Bill is embodying wisdom and compassion as a growing sense of wanting to help his friends whilst retaining a sense of realness and humility in knowing his limitations.

Mac also has become aware of the importance of self knowledge: "I do have anger problems you know but I think that's part of me on this learning curve about my anger and about getting to know me, owning up. I've come to know it's the best thing for you, to know yourself" (Mac, p.10). Mac embodies "owning up" and his horizon has developed to encompass a "learning curve" about his "anger problems" and a growing ability to make choices of how to deal with this:

*...pressures and stress until snap until he happened to be the poor bugger that gave me the excuse to snap... So what I recognize now is I've got to keep that calm if I start to get stress I say to D now "hey I don't want to talk about this, you know, let's leave it"... I would rather be comfortable with me as my former wife used to say when I was*

*comfortable with me then I'd come and talk to her. I wasn't aware of that. I am now. Your courses are good. (Mac, p.12)*

This is an encouraging sign that Mac is developing the ability to regulate his emotions and to curb his impulses to lash out. He is able to take measures to calm down, take time out and finally to express his feelings. He is accessing his unique human capacity for reflective thinking and changing his behaviour.

How does this awareness develop? If this capacity is lying dormant what is the catalyst for self-awareness and the development of higher human qualities such as empathy, compassion, wisdom and sensitivity to others? It seems that the catalysts for such transformation are connected to feelings of extreme suffering embodied by the perpetrators of violence such as shame, grief or the loss of important others. I also feel that as one gains a growing sense of his 'thrownness' and an ability to think about the self and the self of others a person discovers the meaning behind his thoughts, feelings and actions. A person's invisible, unformulated sense of worthlessness, fear and uselessness is given a shape and a form. Colin responds in an entirely new way as he gets in touch with feelings about his own father:

*I always enjoyed his company but I never had that father-son relationship that I wanted and I told him that as he was dying you know "it's a real pity dad that you and me couldn't have been what I wanted". Ahh I just wanted him to say things like...well you know.....yeah (crying) .....yeah.....I think ah ...I think all the boys were like that they wanted.....more.....Yeah if I had my time over again I'd do things differently you know with him I probably tell that him that I loved him..... that might have...see we didn't talk.....no we didn't talk (Colin, p.15).*

Sharing feelings on this level is unheard of for Colin. His lifeworld has been permeated by the male code of masculinity, which shames men for feeling vulnerable. This way of being encourages the suppression of feelings such as remorse and grief. Colin, until recently, has been condemned to a life of silence and suffering, “we didn’t talk,” that he has managed and contained with alcohol and violence.

Shame and grief are not only precursors to but also an integral part of developing a conscience. Remorse is a painful memory of wrongdoing. Lewis (1971) promotes the idea that shame is inherently a social emotion. Her formulation was biopsychosocial. She asserted that human beings are social by biological inheritance. She implied that shame is an instinct that has the function of signalling threats to the social bond. Just as the instinctual emotion of fear signals danger to life and limb, shame also signals a potential threat to survival, especially for an infant, as a threat to a social bond. Shame dynamics are part of the interpersonal bridge that connects individuals who would otherwise lead isolated existences. Offering men an insight into physiological, psychological, social and cultural damage they cause is one powerful way of engendering conscience, remorse and consciousness. It is also a strong motivator to kick-start the process of reducing violence: Colin speaks here of his mother:

*I was just angry at her I was just angry and unfortunately I took it out on her. I have assaulted her several times and she was an older woman she was um slightly deaf and she was quite a big woman, oldish you know she died when she was 60 so you know in the last ah 5 years of her life I would have been...20 I think (when mother died). I mean I’m not real happy you know I’m not real happy with um, the last words that come out of her mouth was um you know “grow up son” that was the last words that come out of her mouth “grow up son, just take note of what I said and one day you’ll grow up” you know and she walked out and that was the last I seen of her.....yeah I really regret it, really regret it .....But yeah my attitude is well I’ve done a lot of bad shit in my time but I’m now for what time I’ve got left on this earth I sort of*

*want to be more productive and um you know get rid of this mind set and know how to deal with my anger in a more constructive way as opposed to acting on it straight away. (Colin, pp.16 & 17).*

### ***Summary***

This segment examines the intractability that arises from lack of knowledge of self and other that encourages and fosters denial of suffering. Acknowledgement of at least a small part of the men's alienation and/or hidden emotions, in a way that leaves some dignity intact means that real progress can be made.

Experiencing benign shame and grief are integral to the men developing a conscience with regard to their violence. Remorse often seems to go hand in hand with men understanding their own backgrounds and making meaning out of the past is an implicit part of the healing process. The men's telling of his-stories seems to indicate that remorse and self-knowledge lead to diminishing violence and the gradual process of transformation.

## CHAPTER 8

### *Drawing the Strands Together*

*When the truth you found to be lies*

*And all the joy within you dies*

*Don't you want somebody to love*

*Don't you need somebody to love*

*Don't you love somebody to love*

*You'd better find somebody to love*

(Jefferson Airplane, 1967)

In the previous chapter I have extracted the themes that give shape and meaning to the 'lived reality' of men's stories of violence. I have used the Heideggerian (1927/1962) hermeneutic phenomenological methodology to inform my interpretations. From Heidegger's viewpoint themes cannot be understood in isolation because they are continually interacting and transforming each other and are, thus, emphatically interrelated. The themes that have arisen out of this study of violence are not in any way exclusive or new. However, the source from which they emerge is unique. Interpretations of men's lived reality, produced from a meeting of horizons between academic study, my personal and professional experiences and men's stories of their lived experience, are infused with the essence of each man.

In this chapter I will gather my themes in order to demonstrate how diverse aspects of lived experience interconnect. I will compare my findings with the body of knowledge that already exists and discuss what is revealed. This will lead to an exploration of ways to review, enhance and support the practice of working in the field of violence. I will examine the educational prospects for the study and identify possibilities for continuing research. Finally, I will identify the strengths and limitations of a study of this nature.

In the first part of the data chapter shame was identified as a major theme in the aetiology of violence. Heidegger's (1927/1962) proposal, that people are a product of the tension

between being both connected to one another and separate allows me to introduce the way in which shame may be insinuated into the developing self of an individual. In Bowlby and Ainsworth's (1965) terms blueprints for future existence are determined by early attachment experiences. Toxic shame is the result of a legacy of mistreatment that accumulates in the early years of a person's development. It steals away the sense of well being that accompanies a secure self and leaves the sufferer exposed to both real and perceived external injury. Lansky (1999, p.351) proposes, "Shame is intimately connected with disorders of the self".

The factors in the data that are identified with this "disorder" of the self cover the spectrum from neglect to abuse. Some examples are: Vince's inner sense of his mother's denial of his right to be heard and acknowledged, Ric's abandonment at birth and the violence of his uncle, Mac's loss of his birth father and subsequent sexual, physical and verbal abuse by his stepfather, the severe beatings Colin took as a boy and Bill's witnessing of extreme violence towards his mother. All of these experiences deny these men's birthright to be loved, safe, secure and creatively stimulated. They contribute to the complex jigsaw that makes up the profile of their adult violence.

The study's data also highlights the theme of men's compulsion to establish proof of their masculinity. It seems that the more they have been shamed the more they need this confirmation of their manhood. This obligation is perceived as being tied to the individual's need to embody pride as a potential way of offsetting shameful feelings of inadequacy, impotency and worthlessness. Aspects of the data demonstrate that it is likely that an evolutionary based male proprietorial tendency and a cultural imperative that dictates 'manly' behaviour reinforce this requirement. A feature of the confusing nature of the code of masculinity for men is demonstrated by Mac's need to hide his shame by not revealing his so called feminine side. Another example is Colin's statement "a man doesn't apologise to his kids" for beating them. At the same time he acknowledges contradictory feelings for not apologising: "I ain't got the balls". The macho code that promotes a fear of appearing feminine perpetuates the myth that genuine self-respect is linked to being staunch. This includes the ability to both tolerate and inflict violence. For



example, the role modelling of Colin's father has taught him that self-respect is gained through engendering fear in others. However, the consequences of such behaviour, which paradoxically reinforces Colin's shame and self-loathing and causes the loss of loved ones, are becoming increasingly apparent in his life.

The code of masculinity also promotes the notion that it is weak or cowardly to hit women. This righteous notion contradicts the high incidence of violence towards women. The reality is that being staunch often hides men's dependency on women. Fear of separation is shown to be a strong contributor to male on female violence (Gilligan, 2001). An example of this fear is Ric's paranoid jealousy when his wife chats to a bank teller or a young man in a coffee shop. Researcher and psychoanalyst Peter Fonaghy (2002, p.7) offers an explanation:

In adulthood, disorganized self-representation still manifests as an overwhelming need to control the other. Violent men have to establish a relationship in which their partner acts as a vehicle for intolerable self-states. They manipulate the relationship to engender the self-image in the other that they feel desperate to disown. They resort to violence at times when the independent mental existence of the other threatens this process of externalisation.

Evidence of the fear and vulnerability that men really experience beneath their macho exteriors appears often in the men's stories. Ric's gym honed physique hides a pathological fear of abandonment that threatens to cost him his marriage. Mac loses control at the wheel of a car because he cannot control his partner and Bill's attempts to dominate his wife by force bear testimony to the power of men's feelings of both the reliance upon women to acknowledge their wishes and the need to control them. Instead of being really in control these men are captives to their unresolved suffering. As Beth in the New Zealand film, based on the book by Alan Duff (1995), "Once Were Warriors" (1996) says to husband Jake Heke, "you're a slave to your fists, to the booze and to your self". In contrast Jake's son Boogie seeks liberation by sublimating his suffering and his potential for violence into the physical and spiritual dimensions of his culture.

Stress and shame induced by poverty are linked to the masculine self-image and are also implicated in the generation of violence. According to Gilligan (2001) it is not poverty per se that causes violence but relative poverty. Shame, humiliation and feelings of inferiority are linked to failure to attain certain socio-economic dictates of male potency and success (Moore 1994; Cornwall 1994; Bourgois 1996; Morell 2001 as cited by Jewkes 2002). Poverty and concomitant stress are also strongly associated with other issues that predict violence including, paternal absence, alcohol and drugs, poor education and physical and emotional abuse (Magdol et al, 1997).

Because of its influence on childhood development, parenting has arisen as an important factor in predicting future violence. Although the impact of all caregivers is seen as significant the focus is predominantly upon fathers as the parental role model for how to embody manhood. Fathering is considered in light of Odysseus' question "Does any person know who his father is"?

Too often it seems as if the men I have interviewed have been denied a genuinely masculine role model to guide them in their own search for manhood. Many of the men's stories express the absence or loss of authentic fathering in a way that is reflected in their own qualities as men and fathers. For example, Bill only recalls the legacy of violence and alcoholism left by a father he never knew. His stepfather is particularly brutal and Bill's own future is determined by violence. Colin's key male role models were extremely violent too and this is re-enacted in his violence towards his own children. Mac's father figures left him with a heritage of violence and confusion around his sexual identity and awareness that his own ability to be a father has been compromised. Vince's father died when he was young and left him to the mercy of his critical mother. Ric's genetic father left before he was born and his uncle was very violent. Biller (1982) reports:

Low father involvement in nurturing parenting and rigidly traditional<sup>31</sup>  
fathering impede the development of children's self – esteem, frustration

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<sup>31</sup> Rigidly traditional means authoritarian and punitive.

tolerance, impulse control, cognitive functioning and interpersonal relationships. Children experience lack of father involvement as rejection; they experience paternal rigidity and punitiveness as condemnation. These reactions undermine the development of self-acceptance and self-esteem and stimulate feelings of frustration and helplessness. When the degree of “paternal deprivation is severe, children and adolescents manifest a high incidence of behaviour control problems, drug or alcohol abuse and depression.

Several studies make the common observation that violent men often have a history of abuse in childhood (Kalmuss, 1984; Revitch, & Schlesinger, 1981; van der Kolk & Fisler, 1994). In order to cope with this abuse they may undergo a process of emotional distancing or numbing. This seems to originate in the way that the men have learned to suppress or deny the suffering they have experienced in themselves or caused in others. It becomes a way, in later years, of hardening themselves so that they can vent their rage and enact their destructive impulses. Each man describes this process differently. For example, Mac numbs to preserve his ‘centredness’ or the core of his existence that he fears may disintegrate under the weight of paranoid feelings about his acceptability. Vince goes “comfortably numb” when killing calves on his farm, or “hardens” himself to brutally assault his wife. Colin forgets or dismisses his violent binges, Ric is overtaken by paranoia, jealousy and blind rage and Bill becomes an automaton capable of “emotionless violence”. All of these men use numbing as a way of distancing themselves from feelings associated with vulnerability such as fear and shame and in the process diminish relational abilities of nurturing, compassion and empathy. Both literature on violence and the data suggest that the capacity for numbing so often linked to violence, starts early in life and is continued in a recursive<sup>32</sup> manner. For example: Levinson and Fonagy (1998, cited in Fonagy 1999, p.4) have examined the attachment interview narratives of violent men in a prison study. These interviews were characterised by:

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<sup>32</sup> “Recursive” means that the effects of the elements of a given state return to further influence the emergence of the state of mind. We are in a perpetual state of being created and creating ourselves”(Siegel 1999,p.221).

A pattern of dismissiveness and overtly denigrating or disavowing of attachment relationships, and a high prevalence of early unremitting trauma...by far the most marked feature of all of these interviews was the refusal of almost all the violent offenders in the sample to either spontaneously or, under interrogation, comment on mental states in the context of attachment relationships – either their own or those of their caregivers.

The process of being able to reflect upon the mental states of self and others is known as ‘reflective function’ (Fonagy 2001, p.7). This faculty is seen as vital for having understanding, compassion and empathy for others and for internalising qualities of emotional self-regulation and impulse control so often lacking in men who are violent. Levinson and Fonagy (1998) suggest that this function becomes impaired by childhood abuse and neglect when children learn to avoid thinking about and experiencing their caregiver’s wish to harm them. Dismissiveness and an inability to think and feel are variants of numbing. Numbing is certainly ubiquitous amongst the violent men I have worked with. For example, a man tells the group that he does not care that he is going to prison. I ask what the others in the group feel in response to this admission and some of them mirror my own feelings of sadness. We feel, I believe, what this man cannot allow himself to feel.

The final part of the data deals with the present state of the lives of those men who have contributed to the study. They have attended stopping violence groups and are making progress in their attempts to give up their violent lifestyles. The data deals with the themes of self-knowledge and remorse.

I have looked at this theme from the viewpoint of benign shame as a catalyst for change. Out of their suffering these men can learn to feel the kind of responsibility that sets them on a path to reform and leads them to remorse rather than the toxic shame that perpetuates denial and violence. The men feel a sense of accomplishment when they learn to gain some mastery over their emotions and actions and they become increasingly motivated to persist. During this process unused parts of the brain are activated as new

neural pathways are forged to develop the necessary skills of self-awareness, emotional self-regulation and impulse control. For example, Bill tries to motivate himself to climb out of shame and despair and discusses feeling bad about his violence. He has used the groups to foster his self-awareness and is now able to promote non-violence to his friends. Mac talks through his problems and takes time out if he needs to. He comments on the value of knowing himself. Colin realises the suffering that his relationship with his father has caused him and wants to deal with his anger in more constructive ways. Vince is acutely aware of the shame he has visited upon himself and the damage he has inflicted on the women in his life and Ric is becoming conscious of his problem with jealousy. Developing consciousness will help these men to feel remorse not only for the cost of violence to their own lives but also for the damage they have inflicted on others.

The daily reality of this journey is long and arduous and many of the men will often be tempted to return to the violent ways to which they are accustomed. Many of these men have never before had the opportunity to share feelings of vulnerability in an environment where robust and sensitive masculinity is encouraged and macho bravado is discouraged. Many of them have not had their worldview respectfully and skillfully challenged. In order to maintain their violence free lifestyles the men will need support structures such as family, groups, spirituality, friends and counselling. They will need to cultivate a vision of how the energy of anger can be redirected into vitality and assertiveness and give them a meaning and a purpose for life.

### *Summary*

In this section I have shown how different themes in the men's lives impact upon each other. This study suggests that violence is connected to key phenomenological themes that play an important part in an individual's development and behaviour. Inherited factors combined with environmental stressors determine the men's perception of their world and how to cope with it. This affects their own potential as fathers, partners and members of the community. The facilitation and encouragement of self-knowledge and remorse are seen as considerable contributors to improving the men's self image, and helping them to relinquish violence.

### *Recommendations*

An in-depth discussion on vital measures for the large-scale prevention of violence is beyond the scope of this study. However, it has become apparent to me that intervention at the level of governmental policy and targeting at-risk groups are of primary concern.

Parents, caregivers, professionals, public officials and policy makers need to consider the indelible relationship between early life experiences and cognitive, social, emotional, and physical wellbeing. The implementation of programmes that can enrich the lives of children and families and programmes to provide early identification of at-risk children and families would curtail the destructive effects of violence perpetrated in later life. Dealing with stress factors including poverty, alcohol and drug abuse and perceptions of masculinity as well as surveillance of our children and community initiatives for effective parenting and education are essential if society is serious about making inroads into the reduction of violence.

Violence has been discussed as a complex multi dimensional phenomenon incorporating psychological, biological and sociological factors. It seems from the scientific knowledge and experiential practice of working with violence as if psycho-educational and therapeutic intervention is the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff.

### ***Implications for Practice***

Workers in the field of violence are charged with the task of trying to prevent future violence. As a therapist I am tuned in, both instinctively and intellectually, to internal states that lead to violence. The neurobiological hardwiring of adult men has evolved from their experiences in the past (Perry, 2001; Siegel, 1999; Fonagy et al., 1993). Their capacity to learn new information and to develop more complex ways of interacting and thinking that is not rigid or chaotic but flexible, adaptive and stable is often inhibited by traumatic occurrences in the past that persist in the here and now (Siegel, 1999). Men who attend stopping violence groups may be defensive and/or volatile. They have learned ways to avoid responsibility, to minimise, justify and rationalise their offences, to pretend to be listening, or even to show that they do not care. Occasionally men fall asleep in the group, do not show up, come stoned or drunk or become aggressive. Some men do want to be there but lack the skills to stay present, concentrate, take in information and participate. In spite of this many men (and as an offshoot their families) gain great benefit from the work. For example, the participants in this study are often suffering from catastrophic life events that have accumulated over time. They are estranged from loved ones, in trouble with the law, have alcohol and drug problems or financial problems. Their ability to relate in ways that foster trusting, caring relationships has been compromised. Yet, their crimes and their suffering have led them to an examination of

their being-in the world. It is this world that the therapist or facilitator must enter into. Dealing with our own responses and reactivity, our prejudices, using our knowledge, experience and education and modelling what we aspire to impart in this environment is at the heart of the work of stopping violence.

### ***Improving Practice***

There is a dearth of specialists working in the field of violence. Whilst there are many practitioners who encompass working with violence under the generic umbrella of professions such as therapy, counselling, group facilitation and social work there are very few practitioners with a high level of academic training to match their experience working specifically with domestic violence out in the community. There is often a division between researchers and theorists who have technical insights into violence and its causes and those who experience the reality of working with violence.

Current trends in stopping violence programmes tend to offer psycho educational or didactic programmes with facilitators who are trained to deliver the methods and techniques from a manual. Although there may be a high level of proficiency in this type of delivery there is not necessarily the scope and depth of training in relationship skills that are based upon reputable and substantial theories of human development. Optimal interventions require those who work with violence to be conversant with models of psychopathology as well as models of wellbeing so that they know what they are dealing with. For example, promoting techniques for stopping violence to someone with a narcissistic personality disorder would have a limited effect. He will already 'know' that he never did anything wrong and even if he did it was someone else's fault and he is well aware of how to stop being violent and does not feel he needs the likes of a facilitator telling him how to live his life and so on. "Research has shown that if the content and quality of the therapists interventions are poor, then this is detrimental to the patient and may actually harm them" (Truax & Carkuff 1967, p.65). Confronting certain perpetrators of violence head on or offering them a technique may distance them or, worse still, reinforce their old beliefs of how to cope in the world. For facilitators to know how to get

through to these people they must possess scientific knowledge of the process of human maturation alongside the art of skilful, tactful, persuasive and firm intervention. Facilitators also need also to have a high level of self-awareness so that we know when and where we are triggered into our own egocentric defences and to know our own limitations. This is to realise that we cannot help everyone and that our interventions are sometimes just best stated and moved on from. We need to know when to stand firm and when to back off. Facilitators may be well meaning and have natural people skills. However, it is naïve to think that we can enter into the arena of violence without the knowledge and confidence of a thorough training programme.

### ***A Context for Violence Prevention***

For men who have been violent and/or violated some basic prerequisites for helping to change a lifestyle that is familiar and has been developed as a way of protecting themselves from shame and abuse are vital. These men have often learned to be hyper vigilant, feel ashamed to speak up in public situations and are unable to concentrate. These characteristics are mostly born out of less than optimal conditions for the attainment of healthy attachments which are, according to attachment theorists, safety, security, dependability, sensitivity and stimulation (Karen, 1998).

To begin the process of creating positive relationships we must create what psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott (1965) called a secure holding environment. This environment is created in lived space and lived time with lived relationships. It involves a context that is safe, secure and comfortable in which to practice. Structures around time such as when we meet, when we take a break and when we leave can instil a sense of safety and containment for the group. Basic rules are made by consensus about being respectful, confidential and safe. We need to instil a sense of hope that there is an end to these programmes<sup>33</sup> and that what we impart may prevent them from coming back, unless it is voluntarily, from damaging their loved ones or going to jail.

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<sup>33</sup> The programmes are usually between 10 to 20 weeks duration



### ***Involvement in Relationships***

The most important aspect of the secure holding environment is relationships. Because violence in the lives of these men has often caused severe disruptions in their attachments they often have a history of lost or strained relationships. They are prone to inevitable feelings of shame and have learned to distance themselves from those in whom they fear rejection. The practiced therapist can recognise dynamics of the past repeating itself in the present and act to reduce the client's sense of alienation so that the basis for a more trusting relationship may emerge. The context of group relations can facilitate men's consciousness of their own symptomatic arousal <sup>34</sup> and may permit the development of self-soothing responses, and the gradual construction of a more adequate account of experience that gives it meaning for self and others. Studies of combat victims and survivors of mass murders suggest the elaboration of meaning regarding traumatic life experiences plays a crucial role in mitigating continued symptoms (Sewell, 1996).

A truism conveyed in the attitude that men are guilty and must learn not to be violent does, in my opinion, very little to reduce violence. It begs the question whether we want to punish men or stop violence. Of course the epidemic of violence that has gripped our society must stop. However, as seasoned workers in the field have discovered techniques for reducing violence are more effectively delivered through a positive relationship and not the other way round. Laing (1965, p.35) remarks "there seems to be no agent more effective than another person in bringing a world for one's self alive, or by a glance, a gesture, or a remark, shrivelling up the reality in which one is lodged". This quote highlights the importance for the practitioner to create a safe and respectful relationship, to produce an environment in which men may not only learn to stop using violence but one in which they can learn to be fully masculine, potent, aware and sensitive to the needs of others. These are qualities that they should have embodied in their early years but through circumstances were prevented from acquiring. This stance in no way denies a man's responsibility for violence, which is a crime whether it is physical or emotional. Actively violent men need to be constrained. It works on the principle that constructive

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<sup>34</sup> For example, building panic, fear of showing vulnerability, repressed feelings and stimulus that evokes anger.

relationships facilitate more lasting solutions to violence prevention and that robust, potent men can be robustly and potently challenged when the need arises.

People with a propensity for using violence to get what they want or to fend off a perceived attack need to be able to talk through their problem with someone who knows how to contain them psychologically and who can facilitate them to discover their own resources for changing behaviour. They also need to be made aware of what is happening to them and why it is happening when they become violent. This will help them to understand the physiological and psychological components of their behaviour so that they can gain mastery over the thoughts, feelings and actions that lead to violence.

In order to foster safety, expression of vulnerability and containment of strong emotions practitioners must be aware of issues pertaining to the fact that many of these men are compulsorily obliged to attend stopping violence groups. Furthermore, a power imbalance may exist between the man and the facilitator as an authority in the sense of being a representative of the judicial system as well as an 'expert'. These factors are potential obstructions to the progress of some individuals in the group and to the group procedure as a whole if not handled early in the process. In my experience the skill and commitment of the facilitator in building trust and rapport coupled with his genuine passion for helping members of the group to achieve their objectives of stopping violence will have a marked effect in overcoming this obstacle. Once this preliminary aim is achieved the process can move purposefully towards establishing the necessary requirements for an optimal group experience. Such an approach requires an outlet for the expression of negative sentiments about being in the group or in an individual session as well as an acknowledgement that it is acceptable to harbour such opinions. Respect must be earned and sometimes those involved have to learn to agree to disagree. If we ignore such interactions we risk sabotaging the healing potential of the relationship and miss the opportunity to model ways of being-in-the-world to those who are most in need of staying safe both for themselves and for those around them. We may leave these men with a toolbag of techniques that, supported by a solid sense of relationship in the context of a therapeutic environment, can be used with skill, self-awareness and determination to move them towards a sense of self discovery and meaning in their new way of being-in-

the-world. We may also leave them with an empty experience of having been reprimanded once again by the 'system', a diminished capacity to use the techniques or as something they quickly forget outside of pressure to conform in the course.

### *The Caregiver's Care*

Dealing on a daily basis with the issue of violence can be a burden for the practitioner. The vagaries of this profession mean that one can experience the highs of success and the lows of failure. One can witness a man who has become conscious of the dangers of letting his child see him and his partner fighting or offering support for a fellow group member. However, the lows can also be demoralising. It is for this reason that the practitioner must be aware of the danger of becoming over invested in the progress of participants. Whilst forming relationships is vital, it is important that the practitioner also retains a degree of personal and professional separation from the men and their developmental journey if he is to reduce the risk of burnout. The violence worker must, in listening to sometimes-horrific stories, realise the limits of his power to solve the world's problems whilst focussing on the immediate task of reducing further violence. The real job of the practitioner is to accompany each individual towards steady and sometimes halting progress. Clinical supervision for debriefing, working through and sharpening practice is an absolute priority for the responsible therapist.

### *Study Outcomes*

The study results will be shared with other professionals who work in the field of violence with the intention that it will provide a deeper understanding of the nature and meaning of unique and individual experiences of male violence. I anticipate that the participant's revealing stories in this work will increase awareness of factors behind violence and the need for early intervention. It will also highlight the requirement for highly specialised training of facilitators, therapists and other workers in the field. This thesis could be used to guide further research and promote the development of a structure for improved therapeutic and psycho educational programme planning and treatment for people involved in the process of violence prevention. On a wider scale it could be used to contribute to persuading those who influence childhood development, social mores and values, political decisions and the production and dissemination of media to address

“widespread ignorance of the intimate relationships between cultural belief systems, childrearing practices and the development of violent behaviours which will doom any attempts to truly understand and prevent violence” (Dodge, Bates and Pettit, 1991; Richters and Martinez, 1993).

### ***Areas for Further Research***

A study such as this, which attempts to understand violence from the unique perspective of those who experience it, is, in my opinion, quite rare. I have attempted to find others but have only found a few. For example, Reitz offers a phenomenological study on, “Batterer’s Experiences of Being Violent (1999, p.143)”. This relative scarcity and the benefits of a study of this nature that hones in on a particular viewpoint highlight the necessity of expanding such research. It brings the attention of lived experiences of violence to mental health professionals and agencies dealing with the epidemic of abuse that plagues New Zealand. Understanding the phenomenology of violent men in this way helps to uncover richer, more complex and improved ways of delivering stopping violence programmes, therapy sessions and agency interventions. More research of this nature would increase social awareness of what is needed to prevent violence and help those who can affect outcomes to see beyond criminal behaviour towards a more optimistic vision which encompasses early treatment strategies and resources for working with those already disposed towards violence. For example, given the over representation of Maori in violence statistics it seems that, in consultation with representatives of this culture, more research into their lived experience is warranted.

A further avenue for exploration would be to interview mental health workers involved in working at the coalface of such a fascinating and difficult profession. This would give them the opportunity to discuss the lived reality of tensions that arise. For instance, fear of violence towards them, responsibility for other people’s safety, dealing with family and friends who may feel protective or even angry with them for working in this field. Discussions and research would help to optimise the effects of aspects of collegiality, cross fertilisation of information and intervention techniques.

### *Limits of the Study*

Researching experience or 'lived reality' is fraught with the uncertainties of human existence. No matter how plausible and appealing the philosophical framework that clarifies assumptions of a particular approach to research or how carefully techniques and methods to carry out the research are designed in the end there is no external or objective proof of their effectiveness. The researcher's phenomenological quest for hidden meaning is at the mercy of the opinion shaping effects of evolving socio-political and cultural dynamics as well as the vagaries of human processes such as mood, memory, attitudes and beliefs. The only certainty is the tension that exists between the opportunities and constraints that this endeavour presents.

It is not difficult to deduce that interpreting stories is a risky undertaking. Firstly the veracity of stories is dependent upon the recall of the person telling the story. Secondly it relies upon his desire to tell it as accurately as he can. Finally, it involves myself as the interpreter and meaning maker with my own prejudices and viewpoints translating this information for the reader. In all this there is room for a wide margin of error. However, in counterpoint there are well-researched and highly reputable studies on the subject of violence that support and authenticate many of the findings that have emerged. For example, many studies show the correlation between male violence and paternal role models (Biller, 1982; Revitch & Schlesinger, 1981; van der Kolk & Fisler, 1994).

In keeping with the in-depth nature of phenomenological research the number of participants in the study is small. The research examined the experiences of a group of men who have been violent in a contemporary and specific setting in New Zealand. The size and the homogeneity of this sample limit the application of these findings to other groups. For example research on women, homosexuals or Pacific Island people could extend our knowledge of the lived reality of violence through the emergence of different stories and undiscovered themes. Furthermore, I have chosen to interview men who have been seriously physically violent because this is the most obvious and measurable type of violence. What would the outcome have been if I had chosen to interview men who were emotionally but not physically violent? What would happen if I structured the study to gather data from men who suit other categories such as mild or moderate violence? The

study of mob or national violence also encompasses much wider phenomena than the small sample in this thesis. In the final analysis researching a small group may not necessarily provide the same evidence of a range of phenomena in the way that study of a wider or more varied cross section of the population could offer. It is also important to note that even the men I interviewed were all able to speak of violence in a way that showed understanding of their behaviour. Many of the men I work with are not at a stage of psychological development in which they have such awareness. The points raised above indicate the limitations of a small study as well as areas for further research.

Another factor that could influence the research findings could be that I have been involved in the past with these men in stopping violence groups as a facilitator. I selected men with whom I have a positive relationship and assume that this has been a constructive influence on the process of interviewing and interpreting the data. Nevertheless my prior relationship has probably made a difference to the way in which stories were told and interpreted and I have discussed the strategies with which to deal with issues of my influence in Chapter One. Furthermore, I have had to rely upon my own process of reflection, my commitment to being professional, self-awareness and consultation with my supervisors and colleagues to support me in the integrity with which I approach this undertaking. I feel that these assurances have reinforced the value of the study rather than diminished it. In the final analysis I feel that the study gives a fuller picture of what we are dealing with and how to intervene effectively. It promotes a more profound awareness of the mechanics of violence, encourages strategies to reduce the causes and informs and improves the interventions of those who work in the field of violence.

### ***Being-in-the-world of Violence - Conclusion***

The philosophy of hermeneutic phenomenology emphasises understanding the world of human beings in terms of what constitutes their present lived reality. This study has helped deepen my understanding not just of theories but also of the people whose world is permeated with violence. It has made me think about the prevention of violence on a wider scale. It has taken me into a deeper knowing of my profession as a psychotherapist and group facilitator and given me a more profound insight into how to work with

violence. Hopefully it will provide insights for others who are involved in the work of preventing violence. Perhaps most of all by expanding my horizon this thesis has reinforced my desire to search out the often invisible humanity inside each man I work with. My sentiment is poignantly expressed in *West Side Story* (1961) “We never had the love that every child oughta get. We ain’t no delinquents, We’re misunderstood. Deep down inside us there is good”!

## **Appendix 1**

### **Participant Information Sheet**

**Invitation from John Bryant:** You are invited to take part in a study about the effects of the past on men who have been in Stopping Violence Group.

**What is the purpose of the study:** To understand how the past affects our adult lives and relationships, particularly in relation to violence and violation.

**How was a person chosen to be asked to be part of the study?** Men who have attended Stopping Violence Groups and who are currently subject to a Protection Order.

**Can I join the study?** Only those who have been invited may participate.

**What happens in the study?** I will be asking questions to men about their experiences of their own upbringings, particularly related to violence. I will be asking you to tell me stories of times when you have abused others and if you have been abused yourself.

**What are the discomforts and risks?** Some of the material we are covering may bring up painful or uncomfortable feelings. There is also a very small risk, as in any counselling situation, of the tape and/or transcript being subpoenaed. You would need to keep this in mind in deciding what stories to tell me.

**What are the benefits?** This exploration may help you to understand how your past experience has influenced your subsequent behaviour and attitudes. It may be useful to people working in the field of stopping violence and it may also contribute to a less violent society.

**How is my privacy protected?** There is a confidentiality agreement. The only reason this agreement will be broken by myself is if I believe yourself or another to be under threat of harm.

**Opportunity to consider invitation:** I would appreciate feedback within three weeks of you receiving this invitation if you wish to participate.

**Participant concerns:** Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor (Dr. Liz Smythe 917 9999, ext. 7196). Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTECH, Madeline Banda, [madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz), 917 9999 ext. 8044. Thanks for considering this invitation.

Yours Sincerely

John Bryant

**Approved by the Auckland University of technology Ethics Committee on March 11, 2002. AUTECH Reference number 01/118**



## Appendix 2

### Consent To Participation in Research

**Title of Project:** The lived experience of men who have been violent / violated

**Supervisor:** Dr. Liz Smythe

**Researcher:** John Bryant

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that the interview will be audiotaped and transcribed. I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way. If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- All the information in that is obtained during interviews is subject to limited confidentiality. I will transcribe the interviews myself. My supervisors, editors and examiners will read the material. If during the interviews I discover something, which may prove harmful to yourself or another, I will report this to the relevant authority. In order to preserve confidentiality as much as possible I will change names and places.

Participant Signature: .....

Participants Name:.....

Date:

Project Supervisor Contact Details: Dr. Liz Smythe, Phone 917 9999 ext 7196

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on March 11, 2002. AUTEK Reference number 01/118.**



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