

# **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY.**

Becoming Women Who Live Without Partner Abuse:

A Grounded Theory Study

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of

Master in Health Science

School of Psychotherapy

Auckland University of Technology

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August 2004

## ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, 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 due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have not been alone in the creation and completion of this project, and am thankful for the great deal of help, support and encouragement I have received.

I would particularly like to thank my supervisors at Auckland University of Technology. My principal supervisor Helen Curreen, Senior Lecturer in Violence and Trauma studies, has always been available for feedback when needed. She has diligently read my inarticulate, 'stream of consciousness' memos, and seemingly endless drafts and redrafts of chapters, making structural recommendations and offering suggestions to clarify my thinking. Margot Solomon, Head of the School of Psychotherapy at AUT has provided feedback and clarification of my use of Grounded Theory method and methodology and feedback concerning processes of self and identity.

Particular thanks also go to Associate Professor Lynne Giddings for organising the Grounded Theory study group at AUT. Lynne's support and encouragement have been invaluable. Thanks also to Jan Wilson who acts as Lynne's deputy in that group, and to all members of the study group who have shown me by example how to 'do' Grounded Theory while tolerating my frustration with the constraints and confusion about the process. Thanks too, to Julieanne Hall and Gael Mearns who shared information as members of a short-term Grounded Theory critical group, and thanks to Associate Professor Jane Koziol-McLain for her skilful questioning in the pre-supposition interview.

The Maurice and Phyllis Paykel Trust, administered through AUT, provided a partial grant that covered some of the expense of the creation of this thesis and freed me to apply myself to the study more fully. Thanks also to Mildred Marshall Education Trust for paying my course fees and helping me with the expense of maintaining a computer system that could manage the work-load. Thanks to Ray Western for his considerable support with computers.

Special thanks go to friends and colleagues at North Harbour Living Without Violence Collective Inc. who have provided practical help, and been tirelessly supportive of me and interested in the study. In particular I wish to thank Mahadevi (Norris) Peel, Catherine Johnston, Kay Douglas, and Rowena Manning. Thanks also to Jude McCarthy of Te Puna Waiora o Te Raki Paewhenua for advice on cultural matters.

Family and friends have been supportive. Special thanks to my mother and sister for their encouragement and toleration of seeing so little of me over the past eighteen months. And, thanks to my partner, Dennis, who has graciously accommodated to my distraction by doing more than his share of housework and accepting my lack of availability for our usual shared activities.

Thanks also to Moira McGuinness and Jude Meikle who, in past years, have encouraged my academic leanings.

Special thanks most particularly go to participants in this study, whose stories provided the raw material for theory development. Participating women were an inspiration for their courage, their honesty, and their generosity toward other women who experience partner abuse.

## ABSTRACT

Abuse of women by male partners is a significant social problem in New Zealand. Ten participating women, whose experiences span more than fifty years, provided interviews focused on their recovery from partner abuse but including the broader context of their lives. Grounded Theory methodology with a feminist perspective was applied in conjunction with Grounded Theory methods. The study identifies **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY** as the basic psycho-social process of recovery from an abusive relationship. **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY** has three inter-related core categories: FINDING A PATH BEYOND ABUSE concerns experiencing abuse and finding safety; GETTING A LIFE is about interactions with the social world; and BECOMING MYSELF involves personal growth and development. In the first of five phases, FALLING FOR LOVE, women commit to the relationship with unexamined, traditional beliefs in gender ideals. When the partner becomes abusive stereotyped meanings of relationship require compliance as the price of 'love', or result in shame and self-blame. In phase two, TAKING CONTROL, coping strategies of resistance and compliance fail. Seeking help for themselves, or the relationship, results in finding other perspectives and new contexts of meaning, prompting participants to overcome personal, social, and safety constraints to separation. Phase three includes the distress and difficulty of SECURING A BASE. In the fourth phase, MAKING SENSE OF IT, participants seek both explanation and meaning for their experience. By the fifth phase, BEING

MYSELF, participants have constructed new meaning systems and integrated into wider social contexts. They have become women who live by their own values, without partner abuse. Analysis of participants' experience highlights the changing purpose of help-seeking, The paradox of shame and self blame, and processes of meaning-making and coping are clarified. Victim-blaming is identified as a social sanction that supports abuse. Personal growth processes are conceptualised by integrating several developmental theorists.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Choosing This Study**

I have worked as a counsellor in the field of interpersonal trauma and partner abuse since 1995. I frequently worked short-term with female clients in extreme distress and despair without the 'reward' of working through to recovery or healing. I wanted to know more about what happened to women in the long-term. Do women really recover? If so, what processes are involved? What does 'recovery' mean to the women themselves? The assumption that women could not recover if they were still in an abusive environment led to the research question: "What happens to women after they leave an abusive relationship?"

#### **Focus of the Study**

The provisional title of this study was "Becoming women who live without partner abuse". The initial focus was on the experience of women who had left abusive relationships with the hope of identifying the processes they used for recovery and creating a healthy future.

Ten participating women provided interviews about their experience of recovery. However, participants' stories included the broader context of their lives before, during, and after the relationship with their abusive partners. This

information was valuable, providing a life-span context that enabled development of theories that might otherwise remain unrecognised. Participant experiences took place over the past fifty years in a variety of social and historical New Zealand settings that broadened the context of the study.

This study does not include a full exploration of abuse experiences, nor does it assess characteristics and motivations of individual male partners. Participant's concerns about how their children were affected are included, but not the experiences of the children themselves.

### **Aims and Purpose of the Study**

This study seeks to identify processes involved in the recovery of women who have been in relationships with an abusive male partner. The aims of the study broadened with the context to include an exploration of social processes relevant to participants' experience. The purpose of the study is to increase understanding of how women recover and heal from abusive relationships, and thereby improve the effectiveness of support workers and service providers.

### **Focus of Inquiry**

The research question, "What happens to women after they leave an abusive relationship?" is a question about process. Consequently, Grounded Theory was the most appropriate choice for method and methodology. However, I am a feminist and perceive the social world with an awareness of the gendered

construction of women's reality. Grounded Theory attempts subjective neutrality on the part of the researcher, and I knew that feminist understandings would influence both what I did perceive and what I could perceive. Fortunately, with reflexivity, a feminist lens can be integrated into the emergent paradigm of Grounded Theory method. Theory development has benefited by feminist understandings of social expectations of women, respect for diversity among women, and awareness of the potential difference of women's patterns of development over the lifespan.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study identifies the relevance of gendered social identities and the importance of personal identity formation for women who have experienced partner abuse, providing counsellors and therapists with possibilities for constructing effective identity-building interventions. It identifies coping strategies; the purpose of help-seeking at different stages of the relationship; and, longer-term processes of making meaning of the experience of having been in an abusive relationship.

The study identifies social processes of victim-blaming that constrain help-seeking and increase the likelihood of women remaining in relationships with an abusive male partner. Constraints also include social expectations of women that limit the exploration and development of personal values prior to committing to relationship.

## **Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis is comprised of ten chapters. This first chapter introduces the study. Chapter Two provides background material regarding partner abuse in a New Zealand historical context. Chapter Three reviews literature that became relevant over the course of the study, including processes of self and identity, developmental processes, and a focus on women's experience. Chapter Four describes methodology, method, and research processes used in this study. Chapters Five, Six, Seven, Eight and Nine contain the research findings. Chapter Ten compares findings to existing partner abuse literature; theories are developed through inductive reasoning; and implications of the study are considered.

## CHAPTER TWO

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND PARTNER ABUSE

#### ***Introduction***

This chapter defines 'partner abuse' as conceptualised in this thesis and outlines the historical and cultural New Zealand context. New Zealand society is presented as gendered with patterns of violence within families. The size of the problem and government response to the issue is considered. Social and cultural changes with implications for women are included, plus research supporting the potential seriousness of partner abuse for women.

#### **Definitions**

For the purpose of this study, partner abuse is defined as occurring within married or de facto relationships and concerns women's experiences of abuse from a male partner or ex partner. Other studies referred to may use the terms 'domestic violence', 'family violence', or intimate partner abuse/violence. I interpret such terms as inclusive of partner abuse.

This definition does not mean that men never experience abuse from a female partner. The 1995 Domestic Violence Act is not gendered as is such legislation as the U.S.A. Violence Against Women Act 1994 (amended 1998), and Protection Order respondents may be either men or women. However,

studies show that men perpetrate the vast majority of cases of partner abuse (Langley, Martin & Nada-Raja, 1997; Saunders, 1990) and, when violence is assessed, physical injuries are overwhelmingly more serious and prevalent in male violence against women (Browne, 1993). Women's violence tends to be very different from men's violence (Kimmel, 2002) and is more typically in self defence (McHugh, 1993). Importantly, men are seldom afraid of partners, while women are frequently very afraid of abusive partners (Jacobson, Gottman, Waltz, & Rushe, 1995; Kazantzis, Flett, Long, MacDonald, & Millar, 2000; Lapsley, 1993; Morris, Reilly, Berry, & Ransom, 2003; New Zealand Government, 1996). The 1987 Report of Ministerial Committee of Inquiry into Violence (referred to subsequently as The Roper Report) states that, in situations of family violence, "Offenders are almost invariably the dominant adult male family member and rigid adherence to exaggerated sex role behaviour legitimates his behaviour" (Roper, 1987, p.101).

This definition does not imply that partner abuse is a solely heterosexual phenomenon. International studies suggest prevalence rates may be similar within gay and lesbian relationships (Barnett, Miller-Perrin, & Perrin, 1997; Burke & Follingstad, 1999; Letellier, 1994; Renzetti, 1993). Heterosexist prejudices and lack of specialty services add to the complexity of receiving appropriate understanding and support for gay and lesbian couples where partner abuse is an issue.

Domestic and family violence is defined within The New Zealand Government Statement of Policy on Family Violence (New Zealand Government,

1996) and the Domestic Violence Act (1995) as including physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, and children witnessing abuse. Abusive partners commonly use psychological abuse either alone or in conjunction with the threat of violence. Psychological abuse can be subtle and has severe negative effects on victims (Follingstad, Brennan, Hause, & Polek, 1991; Follingstad & DeHart, 2001; Hagar, 2001, 2002; Hoffman, 1985; L. L. Marshall, 1997; O'Leary, 1999; Semple, 2001).

The Power and Control Wheel (Appendix A) shows how violence holds the system of abuse and coercion together (Pence, 1985). Examples of abusive tactics and behaviour referred to on the Power and Control Wheel are; coercion, threats and intimidation; emotional abuse such as name calling and attempts to humiliate; isolation to control contact with others; blaming, and attempting to make her feel guilty; hurting her through her children; sexual abuse; and controlling the finances. Women participants in this study self-assessed their relationship as including partner abuse. This study includes all of the above forms of abuse when referring to 'partner abuse'.

As a feminist, I use the Power and Control Wheel (Appendix A) modified by Paula Abdul (Abdul, 1982) which has an additional rim illustrating that violence and abuse of women partners is supported by societal beliefs of male privilege. Historic patterns of entitlement culturally endorsed in New Zealand society enable an abusive male partner to be dominant. Consequently, he uses power and control dynamics to maintain his privileged position within the family and wider society.

## **The New Zealand Cultural and Historical Context**

Qualitative New Zealand research in the field of partner abuse is limited. Interventions in this field have mainly been developed in 'grass-roots' organisations that are primarily informed by life experience and international research. A qualitative research project that attempts to examine the experience of its participants must consider the social and historical context of participants' experience. Consideration of the New Zealand context may have specific implications for New Zealand women who experience partner abuse.

New Zealand is a small country, colonised by Europeans in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and geographically isolated. New Zealand has committed to biculturalism, via the Treaty of Waitangi, with Maori who represent 14% of New Zealand inhabitants. However, the population includes greater cultural and ethnic diversity with Samoan and Tongan cultures particularly well represented, especially in Auckland (Belich, 2001).

### ***Maori and Pacific Cultures***

Colonisation and the influences of church and state have impacted on Maori by disturbing the values of a collective cultural identity. Urbanisation in particular has disrupted the balance between the individual and the collective resulting in loss of cultural identity for many Maori. Traditional structures and mechanisms of social control have been eroded by the adoption of western concepts of patriarchal hierarchy and the loss of hereditary leadership that held the connection to collective values and traditional responses to the abuse of women (Balzer, Haimona, Henare, & Matchitt, 1997).



Pacific cultures, representing 6% of New Zealand's population, are also influenced by colonisation, with the church having a particularly strong influence. In addition, migration breaks kinship ties, loosens collective support, and complicates cultural identity (Hand et al., 2002).

### ***New Zealand Culture is Gendered***

New Zealand culture is gendered (James & Saville-Smith, 1990), meaning that masculinity and femininity are products of socialisation rather than being born male or female. The dominance of masculinity cultures developed during our colonial past (Belich, 1996; Gilmore, 1990; James & Saville-Smith, 1990) and ideologies of masculinity dominate gender relations in New Zealand, underpinning behavioural expectations for both men and women.

“The social segregation of the sexes in New Zealand has been unusually strong” (Bunkle & Hughes, 1980, p.218). In contrast to the freedom and self-reliance of unattached colonial men, New Zealand women accepted the “Cult of Domesticity” in which her role included “Dependent Woman” and “Moral Redemptress” (James & Saville-Smith, 1990). Women were expected to exercise self-discipline and service “in praise of God and in the service of men” (Head, 1991, p.32). For women, discipline was elevated to a virtue and duty exemplified over love. “Goodness” was expected and freedom was not an option. Not surprisingly, women experience the limitations and inequalities of a gendered culture as oppressive. Since 1893, when the first wave of feminism achieved the right to vote for New Zealand women, women have continued to challenge

concepts of patriarchy that extend relatively exclusive privileges and power to men as a group.

There have been some changes in the dominance of masculinity culture and patriarchy, particularly with the impact of the women's movement in the 1970s. However, re-negotiation of the "gender contract" is ongoing and men remain more invested in traditional attitudes regarding marriage than women seem to be (Connell, 2000; Morton, 1997). The rhetoric of New Zealand men who are violent toward women continues to include fundamental assumptions of male authority, entitlement to power, and dominance over women (Adams, Towns, & Gavey, 1995; Leibrich, Paulin, & Ransom, 1995).

### ***New Zealand Women, Their Families, and Recent Social History***

Family structure has changed dramatically since the 1960s and 70s when teenage pregnancy and marriage reached its peak. Teenagers represented only 3% of brides in 1999 (Statistics New Zealand, 2001). Median age at first marriage is now late 20s, and three in ten partnerships are de facto relationships (Statistics New Zealand, 2003). Law changes have changed divorce processes to 'no fault' dissolutions allowing women to separate from unhealthy marriages more easily (Matthews & Matthews, 1998). There are now state funded benefits for solo parented families (mainly mothers) who represent 20% of New Zealand families (Davey, 1998; Statistics New Zealand, 2003), with the majority of sole parents aged in their late 20s (Pool, Jackson, & Dickson, 1998). Many women are now in part time and full time employment (Sinclair & Dalziel, 2000).

Today, New Zealanders live in a paradoxical society amid rapid social and cultural change. Most New Zealanders believe a successful marriage includes: relationship quality, shown as respect and tolerance; dependability of love shown through faithfulness and shared interests; and, that children are taught to be respectful, responsible, and well mannered (Gold & Webster, 1990). However, we ritualise violence in our national sport and have high levels of social violence within and outside the family. The recent failed attempt toward legislation preventing parents from hitting children demonstrates the intractability of violence as a perceived solution to interpersonal problems within New Zealand society (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1993).

### **The Problem of Partner Abuse**

In common with other countries, abuse and violence toward New Zealand women by male partners “is both hidden and well known and repeatedly revealed and obscured” (Horsman, 2000). Partner abuse is both socially and economically costly. Experiencing abuse can cause significant negative health outcomes for victims and exposure to abusive environments has long-term effects on children’s wellbeing.

### ***Abusive Partnerships and Women’s Health***

Partner abuse significantly effects physical and mental health. Negative health outcomes directly related to the abuse can be considerable and long lasting.

Headaches, dizziness, heart and blood pressure problems, chronic pain, miscarriage, sexually transmitted diseases, gynaecological problems and irritable bowel syndrome are not infrequent outcomes of victimisation (Browne, 1993; Cascardi, O'Leary, Lawrence, & Schlee, 1995). Physical assault during pregnancy is quite common and can result in serious health problems for both mother and baby (Browne, 1993; Elvidge, 1997). Women may have undiagnosed head injuries (Jackson, Philp, Nuttall, & Diller, 2002; Monahan & O'Leary, 1999) or experience sleep disturbances and eating difficulties (Herman, 1992).

Abused women are more likely than other women to have somatic physical health complaints (Gelles & Loseke, 1993). Frequently, when seeking medical help, women are not asked questions that might uncover the cause of symptoms, (Dickstein, Symonds, Braude, & Cohen, 1987; Garimella, Plichta, Houseman, & Garzon, 2000), and medical intervention can be ineffective (Hand et al., 2002).

Frequently, women suffer from a number of difficulties including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Herman, 1992; Kemp, Green, Hovanitz, & Rawlings, 1995; Kemp, Rawlings, & Green, 1991), and additional disorders such as anxiety and panic attacks (Cascardi et al., 1995; Follingstad et al., 1991; Kemp et al., 1991; Rothschild, 2000). PTSD symptoms include intrusive memories (flashbacks and nightmares), psychological or behavioural avoidance (dissociation, denial or use of alcohol and drugs), and hyperarousal (unrelenting alertness to danger) (American Psychiatric Association, 1994; Figley, 1985).

Depression is a well-documented outcome of stress induced by family violence (Kemp et al., 1991; R. D. Marshall, Olfson, Hellman, & Blanco, 2001; Pianta & Egeland, 1994; Rosewater, 1990; Wolkenstein & Sterman, 1998). Strategies for coping with trauma become habituated and beliefs conditioned during traumatic events tend to endure (Rothschild, 2000). Abused women may suffer from a lack of self worth, despair, exhaustion, shame and guilt, paranoia, fear (Haj-Yahia, 1999; Rosewater, 1990), grief, and anger (Herman, 1992; Rosewater, 1990; Tifft, 1993). Women carry grief for loss of relational hopes and other associated losses (Eisikovits, Buchbinder, & Mor, 1998; Mills, 1984, 1985).

There is a close relationship between victimisation experiences and subsequent substance use and abuse, and it is hypothesised that women use substances (including alcohol) in order to cope or relieve the symptoms of trauma (Browne, 1993; Logan, Walker, Cole, & Leukefeld, 2002; Rosewater, 1990).

The effects of prior partner abuse can create multiple health problems and symptoms of distress that persist for many years (Wolkenstein & Sterman, 1998). Others, not understanding the effects of abuse on women, may perceive her responses as pathological rather than reasonable outcomes of living with an abusive partner. Abuse by intimate partners drives women 'crazy' and "there is very little understanding and therefore no appropriate response to this phenomenon" (Hagar, 2001, p.155).

### ***The Size of the Problem***

Estimates of the prevalence of abuse by male partners in New Zealand are high but difficult to quantify. Available figures may be for family violence (and

how is 'family' defined?) or partner violence (and may include only married partners, and/or past or current partners). Definitions of violence vary and sometimes do not include sexual abuse. Differences in research methodology, unwillingness to disclose, non-reporting, inconsistent recording of statistics by agencies working with the problem, and whether figures collected are incident or prevalence reports all contribute toward imprecision. Consequently figures from New Zealand studies, particularly prior to 1993, show considerable variation (Lapsley, 1993).

There is no 'crime' of domestic violence as distinct from charges such as Common Assault or Male Assault Female. Applications for Protection Orders and Family Violence Reports (POL 400's) completed by police since 1995 are the only current records. However, many women do not take out Protection Orders, and reporting to police may be as low as 8% for abuse by current partners and 21% for recent partners (Morris, 1997). Consequently, figures supplied by the police and the court systems are likely to be significantly under-reported. Additionally, offences such as Male Assault Female and Sexual Assault, both of which are frequently crimes by men against women partners are recorded separately by police and court. However, past statistics on New Zealand homicides between 1988 and 1993 show 40% resulted from domestic disputes (New Zealand Government, 1996). Annual homicide figures show a trend downward between 1988 and 2000, with 1999 showing only 12 (22% of total) homicides identified as domestic-related. However, 1998 and 2000 figures of

46% and 51% respectively, testify to the seriousness of potential outcomes for partner abuse (Veale, 2002).

A survey of 2000 New Zealand men on abusive behaviour toward women partners (Leibrich et al., 1995) found that 21% reported at least one physically abusive act in the previous year, and 35% reported at least one such act in their lifetime. In addition, 53% reported at least one psychologically abusive act in the previous year with 62% acknowledging at least one such act during their lifetime. This implies a high prevalence of partner abuse.

The 1994 Report on the New Zealand Economic Cost of Family Violence (Snively, 1994) used a prevalence estimate of 1 in 7 families (defined as meaning 1 in 7 women and 1 in 7 children) or 14%. This report conservatively estimated the range in annual cost of family violence as between \$1.187 billion and \$5.302 billion, depending on whether estimates of unreported violence or lost income are included. While this report is now rather dated, it demonstrates family violence as a costly problem.

Other New Zealand studies estimate prevalence as higher still. The comprehensive New Zealand National Survey of Crime Victims 1996, found 15.3% of surveyed women who had ever been partnered reported some form of partner abuse (Victoria Link Ltd, 1996). A supplementary survey, the Women's Safety Survey 1996, found that 24% of participants with current partners, and 73% with recent partners had experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence from their partner (Morris, 1997). The most recent Ministry of Justice report, Survey of Crime Victims (Morris, Reilly, Berry, & Ransom, 2003)

cites only 3% of women currently partnered experience violence in their relationship. This report seems discrepant in comparison with other studies and the authors note the difficulty in obtaining accurate figures.

Another recent study (Kazantzis, Flett, Long, MacDonald, & Millar, 2000) including only physical (and non-sexual) abuse (and for other reasons may under-report), found that 17% of women interviewed reported physical abuse by a partner at some time in their lives. Kazantzis et al. estimate 12% of psychological distress and 7% of physical illness among adult women in New Zealand may be accounted for by domestic violence (defined only as physical and non-sexual abuse in that study).

The Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development study found 11.3% of 21 year old women reported at least one incident of partner assault in the preceding 12 months (Langley, Martin, & Nada-Raja, 1997). A lifetime prevalence figure is likely to be higher.

The Domestic Violence Act 1995 (Ministry of Justice, 1995) replaced Non-Molestation and Non-Violence Orders with Protection Orders. There were 7000 applications for Protection Orders in both 1997 and 1998 (Ministry of Justice, 1999b). This represents a significant number of women and their children.

Current levels of access to services suggest the size of the problem has not diminished since The Roper Report stated that “family violence is epidemic” (Roper, 1987, p.101) and the home is where most violence occurs in New Zealand society. Half of all serious assaults in 2001 were by males upon females (Morris et al., 2003). The National Collective of Independent Women’s Refuges



(NCIWR), representing about half of women's refuges in New Zealand, gave shelter to 7766 women in 2000, an increase of 13% on the previous year (Women's Refuge, 2001). New Zealand families appear to share characteristics of American families, said to be one of that society's most violent institutions (Gelles & Straus, 1988). "Family violence remains a serious problem in New Zealand" (Ministry of Justice, 1999b, p.10).

### ***Government and Community Responses to Partner Abuse***

Catalysed by the women's movement and feminist analysis that clarified our understandings of family violence, organisations such as Women's Refuge and Rape Crisis became active lobby groups in the 1980's. In 1983, the department of Social Welfare established funding for Women's Refuges. Matrimonial rape was defined as a crime in 1985 and women now had a name for this experience (Kelly, 1990).

Growing community group responses to family violence became more coordinated when government established the Family Violence Prevention Coordinating Committee (FVPCC) that operated between 1986 and 1993 (Pilott, 1996b) and resulted in closer relationships between state and community agencies. The Family Violence Unit of the Social Policy Agency and the Crime Prevention Unit (now in Ministry of Justice) partially fills the role of FVPCC, but there is now no specialist government agency dealing with family violence.

The Roper Report (Roper, 1987) resulted in recommendations to police and justice systems and The Royal Commission on Social Policy subsequently released a report in 1988; "Toward a Fair and Just Society". Some felt that such

studies and reports resulted in little change to the status quo (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1993). However, in the 1990s, the state signalled stronger action. The Statement of Policy on Family Violence (New Zealand Government, 1996) named reduction and long-term prevention of family violence as a goal for crime prevention, and Safer Community Councils were funded to tailor initiatives to local needs (Pilott, 1996a). Amendments to the Guardianship Act in 1995 improved safe access arrangements for children and custodial parents.

The Domestic Violence Act, 1995 (Ministry of Justice, 1995) replaced the Domestic Protection Act of 1982 and improved access for applicants. However, there may be room to improve its implementation by the justice system (Busch & Robertson, 1995; Perry, 2000). Promoting the criminal justice system as the main solution to domestic violence may have created a “false promise of justice” for women (Hatty, 1987, p.6). Respondents may contest Protection Orders and effective application generally requires employing a lawyer to meet court scrutiny. Legal fees, and increasing limitations on legal aid (The Law Commission, 2002), incur considerable or untenable costs for women who are disadvantaged by being employed and who may also carry the financial burden of re-location for themselves and their children. These difficulties for women probably contribute toward fewer applications for Protection Orders and reduce the effectiveness of legislation over time.

Police charges for a breach of a Protection Order showed large increases after the inception of the Police Family Violence Policy 1987. This policy (updated in 1993) takes these positions: violence is a crime, regardless of aggressor/victim

relationships; there is a responsibility to protect victims of violence; and family violence is not a private matter (Pilott, 1996b). Instigators of domestic violence are now more likely to be charged. However, penalties for breaching a Protection Order are light. In 1998 only 14% of breaches resulted in a custodial sentence and the average was only 2.9 months (Ministry of Justice, 1999a). Such custodial sentences are for offences against the administration of justice, not for abuse perpetuated against the partner.

Since 1998, government guidelines for health sector practice include protocols to recognise family violence (Fanslow, 2002; Ministry of Health, 1998, 2003) and current government health objectives (Ministry of Health, 2001) include reducing “violence in interpersonal relationships, families, schools and communities” (p.3). Whether strategies to recognise domestic and family violence will result in effective intervention is not yet clear. Independent ‘third sector’ providers (Crampton, Woodward, & Dowell, 2001) continue to improve community response at primary care level and Doctors for Sexual Abuse Care Inc. (DSAC) have created comprehensive response resources and training for general practitioners.

The Hamilton Abuse Prevention Pilot Project (HAIPP), and The Domestic Violence Education Intervention Project (DOVE) in Hawkes Bay, both became models for programme provision to both respondents and applicants of Protection Orders. Child Youth and Family Services (CYFS) and Family Court fund such programmes. Men for Non Violence Network became the National

Network of Stopping Violence Services (NNSVS) which coordinates policy for safe and ethical practice among community service delivery groups.

The Victims Rights Act 2002, which replaces the Victims of Offences Act 1987, offers hope of improved provider treatment for women who seek help by accessing public services such as the police. However, systems are still largely geared toward the offender (Robinson, 2003).

The New Zealand Government, under Te Rito New Zealand Family Violence Prevention Strategy, instigated a five year plan in 2002 which details eighteen specific areas of action (Ministry of Social Development, 2002). This has resulted in some extra funding for community agencies but strategies are still under development and it is too early to assess outcomes.

### ***Summary***

Partner abuse is contextualised within married or de-facto relationships, and perpetuated against a woman by her male partner. New Zealand has a gendered culture with more lifestyle options available for women in recent decades. Despite difficulties in assessing the exact size of the problem of partner abuse it is demonstrably serious. Although partner abuse has received considerable attention and response from government and non-government agencies, New Zealand women continue to experience abuse from their partners in substantial numbers. Women who have experienced partner abuse may face severe and long lasting negative health outcomes.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### SELF, IDENTITY, AND DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESSES

#### *Introduction*

Theory construction in this thesis focuses on structure, process, and content of self and identity. This chapter backgrounds the theoretical concepts that will emerge from the findings.

Theories of self and identity relevant to this study are summarised. A Symbolic Interactionist construction of the social self as a meaning-making entity is considered in both historical and cultural contexts, and social roles and identities are defined with emphasis on gender roles. Needs of the self are described; including attention to self-concept, self-esteem and self-consistency. Making meaning of self in the world, and our beliefs and assumptions are considered.

Developmental models of the self utilised in theory development include James Marcia's identity status model (Marcia, 1993a), elaborated from Erik Erikson's life-span stage theory (Erikson, 1950). Robert Kegan's concept of orders of 'consciousness' and concepts of evolving processes of meaning making are important (Kegan, 1982, 1994), as are Belenky et al's (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986) theories on women's ways of knowing. Women's development is

given particular emphasis, with consideration for ethnicity and historical contexts.

### **Self and Identity**

Models, theories, and concepts of the development, content, and processes of self and identity have been selected to support theory development. All are analogous, correlative, or consistent with Symbolic Interactionism, which underpins Grounded Theory methodology.

“Symbolic Interactionism focuses on the nature of social interaction” (Charon, 1998 p.27).

### ***The Social Self***

George Herbert Mead (Mead, 1934) proposes that an individual has a self “only in relation to the selves of other members of his (sic) social group; and the structure of his (sic) self expresses or reflects the general behaviour pattern of this social group to which he (sic) belongs” (p.164). This implies the self is socially created. The self proposed by Mead is a primarily cognitive social process with two phases.

William James described two forms of self we can be aware of: self-as-subject, “I”, and self-as-object, “me”. This distinction is usefully demonstrated by: “our being able to think of subjectivity as such, *to think ourselves as thinkers*” (James, 1890/1952 p.191). The self-conscious self is a phenomenon of reflection that, “as an actuality disappears unless one is actively reflecting on it” (Aboulafia, 1986, p.24). In reflecting on



thinking, the “I” reflected upon is a memory of itself a second or more ago, and in reflection self-as-object is created from what was self-as-subject. The “I” responds to and defines the “me”, but the meanings that can be known or made by the “I” are limited by both content and structural development of the “I”. This study concerns both self-as-subject and self-as-object.

Social interaction is a continuous meaning-making process built upon interpretation of symbols or symbolic actions as we “seek to understand the meaning of each other’s action” (Blumer, 1969, p.9). Decisions are based on situational interpretation of symbols. Language is primarily symbolic and words, representing agreed meanings, create shared social realities that we must learn in order to function within particular societies and cultures. “Symbols create and maintain the societies within which we exist” (Charon, 1998, p.62). Language is not value-neutral. Dominant cultures, such as masculinity cultures, name and thus symbolically define the expectations and experiences of those living within the culture (Kelly, 1990; Spender, 1980). We “learn by social interaction what to see in objective reality and how to define what we see” (Charon, 1998, p.42).

Perspectives are points of view that make sense of the world and guide our definitions of reality. In interaction with others we take their perspective, the “role of the other” (Mead, 1934), view ourselves as objects, and act towards ourselves by appraising, controlling, and

communicating with ourselves. In reflection we create unique realities which are socially defined and include interpretations of what one means to one's self (Cooley, 1964/1902; Mead, 1934; M. Rosenberg, 1979).

For women, the "looking glass self" (Cooley, 1964/1902), reflects judgements influenced by gendered social attitudes. Culturally normalised beliefs in men's 'ownership' of women's bodies and services, and assessments of inferiority in the status of women's work, behaviours, values, perception, feelings and thoughts are reflexively internalised by women. We know ourselves by others responses to us, evaluate ourselves as others do, and usually act according to expectations.

### ***Society, History and Culture***

Social structures give form to our consciousness and shape the reality of everyday life (Berger & Luckman, 1967). The events of history change social structures and cultures. Changing social values, reflected in laws and policies, affect the nature and availability of opportunities for the individual. Individual life and history are relative to each other with experiences and expectations differing between generations.

The "organized community or social group which gives to the individual his (sic) unity of self may be called "the generalized other". The attitude of the generalized other is the attitude of the whole community" (Mead, 1934, p.154). Within the larger society, groups of others with similar characteristics (eg: age, gender) form "reference groups", sources of norms and values, which become internalised

situated standards for self-comparison (Baldwin, 1992; Gecas, 1982; M. Rosenberg, 1979) that are important for self-esteem (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983).

Membership in minority or ethnic groups within society requires adherence to the norms and values of those groups. Many non-Western cultures construe the self as interdependent (Kanagawa, Cross, & Markus, 2001; Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and will expect adherence of members to values of collectivism which may place stronger constraints on individual deviation from tradition.

### ***Roles and Identities***

Processual Symbolic Interactionists, such as Mead, consider identity negotiation a central task of the individual's construction of reality. Structural Symbolic Interactionists emphasise the influence of social structure, and identities are viewed as internalised roles derived from membership in social categories (Gecas, 1982 p.10). 'Identity Theory' considers identities (also known as role-identities) " "parts" of self that exist insofar as the person is a participant in structured role relationships" (Stryker, 1980/2002 p.60).

A human being has "*as many social selves as there are individuals who recognise him* and carry an image of him in their mind" (James, 1890/1952 p.190-191). Identity Theory proposes we categorise and name ourselves and others as occupants of roles and have as many identities as we have roles within distinct social groups. An identity is a set of

meanings which serves as a reference for who one is (Burke, 1991).

Shared meanings are the link between identity and socially expected behaviour. Behaving 'out of role' disrupts shared meaning, and challenges the status quo. Shared meanings preserve and reaffirm the existing social structure (Stets & Burke, 2000).

Personal identities are internalised meanings associated with external role expectations (Stryker & Burke, 2000). The meanings of role identities and meanings of personal identities may overlap through shared meaning. For example; a feminine gender identity includes meanings of helping others and may be internalised as a 'helper' personal identity. "To some extent the merger of role and person is imposed on the individual in the course of social interaction" (Turner, 1978 p.4) and "individuals tend to merge into their persons those roles by which significant others identify them" (p.13).

Identities within self are hierarchically organised and valued. "Salience of a role for an individual's identity may be a critical factor in determining his or her commitment to the role" (Tallman, Burke, & Gecas, 1998 p.320). Connectedness increases the salience of an identity and when identity is attached to relationship with a specific person, loss of commitment to the relationship is reflected in loss of the identity formed by that relationship (Stryker & Burke, 2000).

Gender identity is a role identity with meanings associated with being male or female (Stets, 1995). "Sex category and gender are

managed properties of conduct that are contrived with respect to the fact that others will judge and respond to us in particular ways” (West & Zimmerman, 1987 p.140). Jean Baker Miller (Miller, 1976) describes gendered society as constructed from models of dominance and submission. For example, women are designated roles of acquiescence to other’s needs. Cultural expectations for girls are to fill the roles of wife and mother, accept subservience, and try to be pleasing to men. Thus the socially prescriptive becomes the socially proscriptive.

Many human characteristics are derived from gendered social expectations (Cross & Madson, 1997) and culturally polarised along lines of desirable (masculine), or undesirable (feminine), behavioural styles (eg: independence and dependence). Masculine values, ways of knowing, wants, and needs are proposed as normative in ways that render feminine perspectives and values invisible and of no importance, or define women as deviant and women’s experience as pathology (Archer, 1992; Kaschak, 1992).

The social evaluation of roles has implications for individual self-esteem, particularly for salient identities (Stets & Burke, 2000). Gendered meanings attached to behaviour, and roles, create internal and external expectations. Most women’s sense of self and identity is strongly influenced by gendered role expectations.

### ***The Needs of the Self***

The need to belong is fundamental to being human (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), as is the need to feel effective in our lives. These two needs of “agency” and “communion” (Bakan, 1966) are commonly dichotomised and have gendered prescriptions, although these basic needs are not mutually exclusive in either men or women (Fritz & Helgeson, 1998; Helgeson, 1994). “Agency” is considered a more ‘masculine’ orientation toward individual existence and includes assertion, self-direction, and an achievement focus. Women’s orientation, consistent with gendered constructs of “femininity”, is more likely to be “communal” meaning an orientation toward cooperation and connection. Communal orientations are the norm in many non-Western cultural contexts.

To orient ourselves in relationship to self and other, we need to make meaning of our experiences. Baumeister (1991) proposes four needs for meaning. These are: a sense of purpose related to future fulfilment; feelings of efficacy which contribute to perceptions of control and stability; valued actions which satisfy moral justification; and, a positive sense of self-worth which protects from fear of interpersonal rejection.

### ***The Self-Concept, Self-Esteem and Self-Consistency***

“For the self to have a sense of self it must consciously experience itself as bounded, as *not* the other, *not* the world” (Aboulafia, 1986, p.74). Boundaries are established through limit-setting which differentiates self

from not-self. This process creates an experience of self as a separate person who is able to reflect on what is not-me (Aboulafia, 1986).

The self-as-object includes identities or “self-concepts”, ideas individuals hold about themselves physically, socially, spiritually and morally (Gecas, 1982). Rosenberg’s model of Self-Concept consists of: “the extant self (how the individual sees himself); the desired self (how he (sic) would like to see himself); and the presenting self (how he (sic) shows himself to others)” (Rosenberg, 1979, p.9).

The desired self-concept includes an idealised self-image; a reference point, against which the extant self-concept is judged. Incongruity between the idealised self-concept and the self-image motivates change in behaviour to maintain self-esteem (Gecas, 1982). Discrepancies between how we see ourselves, how we want to see ourselves, and how others see us can result in depression or anxiety (Higgins, 1987).

The self-concept is a motivational system for maintaining and protecting self-esteem and self-consistency. “All of an individual’s values are organized into a single system the preservation of whose integrity is essential. The nucleus of the system around which the rest of the system revolves, is the individual’s value of himself (sic)” (M. Rosenberg, 1979, p.57). Dispositions such as abilities, values, and attitudes are part of the self-concept as are social identity memberships in groups or categories.

Social categories have socially defined characteristics and standards of assessment, for example; the “good” woman, wife, or mother. Self-esteem may depend on achievement of such role-ideals (Josephs, Markus, & Tafarodi, 1992). We seek support for our roles, “identity must be won and re-won continually” (McCall & Simmons, 1966 p.168).

“The most peculiar social self which one is apt to have is in the mind of the person one is in love with. The good or bad fortunes of this self cause the most intense elation and dejection” (James, 1890/1952, p.190). In close relationships, trust and commitment is built on credible verification of one’s self-view, to be seen as we see ourselves (Burke & Stets, 1999). We generally seek self-enhancement, but congruent self-verification is particularly important in intimate relationships (Cast & Stets, 1999; Swann, De La Ronde, & Hixon, 1994), perhaps because it maintains perceptions of predictability (Cast & Stets, 1999; Swann, Stein-Seroussi, & Giesler, 1992). Authenticity is important (Gecas & Mortimer, 1987), and people will continue in a relationship if they believe the relationship validates the ‘real me’ (S. Rosenberg, 1997).

The presenting self, or the self we show to others, is mainly concerned with impression management (Goffman, 1959). We hope to establish and protect our self-image and seek consensus validation for how we want to see ourselves. This is particularly important for adolescents who are in the process of testing self-hypotheses and need others’ responses for confirmation of who they might be. “Without some



picture of what he (sic) is like, the individual is virtually immobilized” (Rosenberg, 1979, p.59).

The self-concept changes slowly. Ongoing social interactions allow us the impression that we are the same today as we were yesterday creating a sense of continuity and stability of self (Foddy & Kashima, 2002; Humphreys & Kashima, 2002). Our sense of existing, or “existential identity” depends on the sense of continuity of self which is maintained through reconstructing the past and anticipating the future consistent with the perspective of the present. “The self is a producer, as well as a product, of one’s life course” (Gecas & Mortimer, 1987, p.267). Maintaining self-concept stability promotes effectiveness as, “without a clear conception of who and what one is, action becomes confused, uncertain or even paralysed” (Gecas & Mortimer, 1987, p.272).

Self-esteem is derived from feelings of self-worth, self-acceptance, and self-respect (Rosenberg, 1979). Self-confidence contributes to self esteem through a sense of self-efficacy, being effective in the world as an active agent in one’s own life. Constraining contexts affect the degree of control available for expressing self-efficacy, and those without power “may be more dependent upon the opinions of others (especially of those who have power over them) for their self-esteem” (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983, p.82). Some activities may be socially and personally devalued (eg: housework) with less esteem from their performance. The hierarchy of contexts of action “can be traced, in part, to belief systems that are rooted

in relations of domination and subordination” (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983, p.84).

Beliefs about lack of controllability may lower aspirations, and self-doubt sets in quickly after perceived failure. Social influences and stereotyped gender roles limit women’s belief in their capacity to be effective agents in their lives (Bandura, 1999). During the adolescent transition to adulthood, self-efficacy and self-esteem are very influenced by the “degree of autonomy which the context allows the individual” (Gecas & Mortimer, 1987). To become autonomous “one must either have been, or be recognised as, capable of autonomy: one must have been responded to as a person” (Aboulafia, 1986, p.104).

Sources of self-esteem reflect differences in socialisation for men and women. Men’s socialisation emphasises separateness, independence, and individual autonomy. Women tend to define themselves in terms of relationship to close others (Block & Robins, 1993; Cross & Madson, 1997; Foddy & Kashima, 2002; Kashima, Foddy, & Platow, 2002), and women’s self-esteem is closely linked to successful maintenance and harmony of close relationships (Cross, Bacon, & Michael, 2000; Josephs et al., 1992). This has important implications for women’s well-being when relationships become dysfunctional.

Social values, particularly moral values, are internalised as standards and guides to conduct. Often these have an “ought” quality and may be used to rationalise or justify behaviour (Rokeach, 1973) Values

are evaluative beliefs, ie: are either prescriptive or proscriptive, and value systems consist of means (instrumental values) and ends (terminal values). Moral dilemmas could result when necessary ends conflict with the means for achieving them. There are two kinds of instrumental values; moral values which have an interpersonal focus and result in guilt if not met; and competence values which have a personal focus and result in shame if not achieved (Rokeach, 1973).

Shame is a global devaluation of the whole self, while guilt is devaluation of a specific behaviour. When feeling guilty one can make reparation and regain self-worth. Shame results in tendencies to externalise responsibility and avoid scrutiny by others (Baumeister, 1991). Guilt can result from perceptions of causing suffering which arouses empathy, may cause anxiety about social exclusion, and can be induced in or by others to manipulate demonstrations of concern (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994).

Value orientations tend to be gendered with females more concerned with responsibility for the well-being of others (Beutel & Marini, 1995; Gilligan, 1982/1993; Kaplan, 1991; Miller, 1976; Surrey, 1991). "Identities anchored in values and value systems are important elements of self-conception, perhaps among the most important, since values give meaning, purpose, and direction to our lives" (Gecas, 2000, p.94).

### ***Making Meaning of Self in the World***

Meaning is derived from our beliefs about the world, the self, and the self in the world (Park & Folkman, 1997) and people are most happy when the need for meaning is satisfied (Frankl, 1959). How we make meaning and understand ourselves and the world depends upon our ability to stand apart from our experience in order to reflect upon it (Kegan, 1994).

Making meaning is not just *what* we know, rather *how* we are able to know what we know. When embedded in the meanings, values, and beliefs of our socially constructed reality, we identify with them and cannot reflect upon them as differentiated from our selves. Without critical examination, such externally authored meanings are experienced as 'Truth'. If we do not define our own meanings, other's meanings will define us. This is the nature of assumed, taken-for-granted, reality. The ability to construct our own meanings is a developmental achievement considered later in this chapter.

"People must find a way to make sense of events whose implications contradict their personal meanings" (Sommer & Baumeister, 1998, p.144). How people think, feel, and act, is influenced by beliefs in the capacity to exercise control over events that affect one's life. Invalidation of such beliefs disrupts value systems, resulting in emotional disturbance.

When people experience harmful stress in social interactions, any of three forms of coping are used: attempts to change the stressful

situation; controlling the resultant stress; or, controlling the meaning of the experience to prevent the experience of stress (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). Controlling the meaning of an experience is limited by both what we know and how we are able to know it. Life crises lead people to re-examine their sense of purpose, intrinsic self-acceptance, and affiliations (Emmons, Colby, & Kaiser, 1998).

### ***Beliefs and Assumptions***

Among the beliefs of most people are the fundamental inter-related assumptions that the world we live in is benevolent; life is meaningful; and the self is worthy (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Such implicit beliefs include concepts of justice, deservingness, and predictability that give us perceptions of control and promote goal-setting and well-being.

Traumatic events violate our sense of control and confidence in the future. To counter destabilisation we seek to regain a sense that our world is safe, life has meaning, and we are worthy. Doctrines of individual responsibility in Western cultures (Allport, 1958) require attributions of causality to negate evidence that the world is not as it 'should' be. Consequently victims may be blamed by construing events and, "the personal attributes of the victim, so that the victim appears to 'deserve' his (sic) suffering" (Lerner, 1980, p.12). Such processes are also internalised and victims may blame themselves for their distress in order to meet the need for perceived control of their world. Because these fundamental assumptions are closely interrelated, attempts to manage disconfirming

evidence in one sphere will impact on other beliefs. “Often attempts to regain self-worth conflict with other needs for meaning, most often needs for efficacy or control” (Sommer & Baumeister, 1998, p.155).

Other tactics to eliminate threats to the belief in a just world include denial or minimisation of the injustice or trauma (Lerner, 1980), or belief that a ‘higher power’ will provide ultimate justice in the long term (Maes, 1998). Observers, especially if identified with the victim (eg: same age, same gender), are at particular risk of disruption to their world-view.

Beliefs of how close relationships ‘should’ be influence our perceptions and expectations. Some New Zealand women, groomed for the role of “Moral Redemptress”, believe their responsibility is to reform or tame their husbands (James & Saville-Smith, 1990). Women are also subject to “romance narratives” (Towns & Adams, 2000) promoting ‘loving him more’ as the solution to marital conflict. To preserve beliefs, we may construct comforting and idealistic illusions about our partners and the nature of our relationships (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996).

Notwithstanding illusions of self-consistency, self is a process, not a static entity. We are dynamic, always becoming, always in the process of being socialised. “People are actively testing and reassessing their truths” (Charon, 1998, p.23). Perceptions of truth change, symbols and their meanings change, rules change, perspectives change, the past changes and views of the future change.

## **Developmental Models of the Self**

Ideas about the self, the self-concept, emerge in the years prior to adulthood and are derived primarily from early socialisation and attachment to significant others. Children identify with significant others and internalise roles and attitudes as their own. “The significant others in the individual’s life are the principal agents for his (sic) subjective reality” (Berger & Luckman, 1967, p.150-151). Significant others continue to contribute to our self-knowledge throughout life although “not all significant others are equally significant, and those who are more significant have greater influence over our self-concepts” (Rosenberg, 1979, p.83).

Several theorists have proposed developmental models of the self over the life-span. Considered here are Erik Erikson’s and James Marcia’s theories on personal identity development; Robert Kegan’s concept of ‘orders of consciousness’; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule on ‘women’s ways of knowing’; and additional theorists who have specifically explored women’s development.

### ***Erikson’s Concept of Identity Formation***

Erik Erikson proposes “eight stages of man (sic)” (Erikson, 1950), an epigenetic model commencing at birth with each stage representing a specific developmental task. The nature of resolution for each stage is dependent upon negotiation of the previous stage, with ongoing possibilities for resolution throughout the life-span (Archer & Waterman, 1990; Grotevant & Cooper, 1998). The fifth stage, Identity v. Role

Confusion is the subject of exploration in this section, with particular emphasis on James Marcia's identity statuses.

Childhood identifications with others in the environment create expectations for adult identity. Identity (also known as ego-identity) formation "begins when the usefulness of identification ends" (Erikson, 1968 p.159). Identity formation occurs in late adolescence when society implicitly and explicitly creates expectations of commitment to adult roles promising future stability (Erikson, 1968). Identity content is, "highly responsive to the role changes that are experienced during this phase of life" (Gecas & Mortimer, 1987 p.275). Late adolescence is currently approximated as between ages 18 and 24 (Marcia, 1993b) although identity formation may be less dependent on chronological age than "cultural moment" (Baltes & Nesselroade, 1972).

### ***Marcia's Identity Statuses***

James Marcia (Marcia, 1987, 1993a; Schenkel & Marcia, 1972) has identified four identity statuses as outcomes of adolescence. Statuses are defined over four domains: occupational choice; the ideological beliefs of religion and politics; and sexual-interpersonal beliefs (attitudes toward sex-roles and sexuality). Identity status is process-determined according to the degree of exploration and subsequent commitment in each domain and may vary in achievement over domains.

The four identity statuses identified by Marcia are defined as; Identity Achievement, premised on commitment following a period of



exploration; Moratorium, the period of exploration that precedes Achievement; Foreclosure is commitment to childhood-based values with minimal exploration; and Diffusion means neither commitment nor active exploration. Each status has particular characteristics with implications for longer term psychosocial development.

The Identity Achieved person has completed a Moratorium. They have explored and considered future options prior to committing to goals, values and beliefs which give direction and purpose in life. Flexible and adaptable to change, people in the Identity Achieved status believe they can achieve goals and cope with adversity. Identity Achieved people are more empathic, compassionate, and ethical, balancing concern for their own freedom with the well-being of others and will have developed a capacity for intimacy (Marcia, 1993b).

People who are Identity Achieved have negotiated psychological separation from their family of origin and approach the future on their own terms. Identity is synthesised from experience, needs, skills, social appraisal and childhood identifications. "The experience of having an identity is that one has a core, a center that is oneself, to which experience and action can be referred" (Marcia, 1993a, p.7). Self-esteem is usually high, based on personal attributes rather than ideals, and responsibility is more internally assigned. Identity Achieved people conform less, tolerate discomfort more easily, and are resistant to external pressure (Marcia, 1993b).

Both Moratorium and Identity Achieved people enjoy being alone with their thoughts, are able to process extensive stimulus information, and are more willing to risk social disapproval by being direct and assertive. Identity Achieved and Moratorium statuses are most evident between ages 18 and 24 years, noticeably between ages 21-22, although this may be earlier in some domains (Marcia, 1993b).

The process of Moratorium can be a distressing and confusing time when nothing seems certain, yet pressure to make commitments is strongly felt. The time allowed for this process is socially institutionalised and varies according to technological or educational demands, and wealth of the society. In complex societies the anticipated duration may extend from puberty to young adulthood (defined as between age 25-30) (Marcia, 1993a).

People in Moratorium are in a crisis of actively exploring their world and experimenting with who they might be. Vacillating between focus on the past or future, they are intense, painfully honest, and sensitive to interpersonal and moral issues. Often anxious or excited, frequently ambivalent toward their primary family, people in the process of Moratorium are sometimes rebellious and sometimes conforming.

People with Foreclosed identities subscribe to unreconstructed authoritarian values, based on unrealistically-idealised and internalised authority figures. They tend to cognitive rigidity and cannot integrate multiple perspectives (Marcia, 1993b). Goals and expectations are based

on family of origin values from which they have not differentiated and they try to live up to pre-conditioned ideals. If failure seems likely, they try harder (Marcia, 1966). The primary family is usually described in positive terms, and continued close contact is maintained with family members. Relationships tend to be gender stereotyped.

A Foreclosed Identity is a sum of childhood influences, rather than a synthesis. Security and stability are very important and, unless unexamined beliefs are challenged or prescribed tasks cannot be fulfilled, self-esteem is usually high and anxiety low. Both males and females with a Foreclosed Identity are obedient, prefer a strong leader, and believe their way is right. "Even if one has not moved out of Foreclosure during late adolescence, there are plenty of disequilibrating events in a life cycle to elicit identity crises" (Marcia, 1987, p.165).

People in the Identity Diffusion status have no clear goals, are compliant, and often swayed by peer pressure. They may be cognitively disorganised and anxious. Self-esteem is easily manipulated by others, experiences are defined by circumstance (Marcia, 1993b) and responsibility is usually externally assigned. They focus on the present, and they can be impulsive. They may be interpersonally isolated and experience their families as rejecting.

Identity Diffused people may construct identities later in life if in a supportive relationship, although identity is likely to be conferred by the partner. Someone in Identity Diffusion "might form a 'shell' of an identity by

allying him or herself with a large corporation (or controlling partner!) that dictates what one believes, how one dresses, where one lives, and the correct form of one's domestic arrangements" (Marcia, 1993a, p.10).

Awareness of identity often comes to the fore when it is challenged by events that do not confirm it. Then identity structure may then be modified to accommodate new experience. People in Identity Diffusion may become Moratorium or Foreclosed Identities; Foreclosed Identities can become Moratorium or Diffused; Moratorium can become Achieved or Diffused; and people with Achieved Identities may move into Moratorium or Diffused statuses (Waterman, 1982).

Parenting style influences identity formation. Two dimensions of parenting practice, demandingness and responsiveness, create four classifications of parenting styles (Baumrind, 1967 cited in: Berk, 2001) Of these, the 'authoritarian' style (demanding and unresponsive) seems of most relevance to this study. This style places a value on conformity and obedience to adult authority. Those from authoritarian families may rebel and have an identity crisis or may become Foreclosed. Protective and indulgent families can produce conformity (Foreclosure) or insecurity (Diffusion) in adolescents. Foreclosure is also produced in homogeneous communities and social group memberships requiring acceptance of external authority (Waterman, 1982).

Identity conferred in childhood is based on family and group identifications, skills and needs. Identity only becomes self-constructed

when the individual makes choices about who, what, and how to be. Beyond mid-adolescence the process of identity construction is often not confined by chronological age (Kroger, 1989). However, the first configuration of Identity Achievement is likely to be followed by further Moratorium and Achievement cycles (Marcia, 1987). This process becomes more difficult with age due to lack of social supports, the need to live up to internal standards for self-esteem, and external expectations of behaviour.

Concepts of social identity proposed by Symbolic Interactionism, interrelate with Erikson's concept (Erikson, 1950) of a personal Identity formation. Individual formation and outcome of the identity process is a response to the social requirement that we commit to being 'somebody'. The 'somebody' we become is created in social interaction, with socially conferred components, expectations, and limitations. It is often role-defined. Kegan's fourth order of consciousness (Kegan, 1994) and Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule's 'Procedural Knowing' (Belenky et al., 1986) also correlate with the achievement of identity.

### ***Robert Kegan's Constructivist-Developmentalism and 'Orders of Consciousness'***

Kegan believes that Erikson has missed a stage, Affiliation vs. Abandonment, between Erikson's stages four (Industry) and five (Identity) (Kegan, 1982). Kegan's proposed stage (Affiliation vs. Abandonment) is

similar to Marcia's Identity Diffusion and Foreclosure statuses which are common in younger adolescents (Kroger, 1989).

Kegan (1994) describes the process of psychological growth as the "unselfconscious development of successively more complex principles for organizing experience" (p.29). His theory defines "subject" as embedded in the context of the developmental balance with which one is identified. Like the "I" (self-as-subject) this subject is without self-consciousness because it cannot be reflected upon (James, 1890/1952; Mead, 1934). "Object" is not a person, but is the meanings and relationships that were central to the person's previous developmental balance, and can now be reflected on.

Kegan proposes five principles of meaning organisation, or "orders of consciousness". Those of most relevance here are the third and fourth stages. In his own theory of meaning-making and individual social development he places Erikson's proposed missing stage (Affiliation vs Abandonment) parallel to his third 'stage', the 'Interpersonal' balance (Kegan, 1982).

The Interpersonal balance is characterised by highly invested one-to-one relationships embedded in mutuality. This is not to be confused with the intimacy that is possible in adulthood. The Interpersonal includes the capacity for abstract thought, is interpersonally role-conscious, and intrapersonally subjective. Kegan suggests women have more difficulty

emerging from the Interpersonal and are more likely to experience the loss of a relationship as an unbearable loss of self (Kegan, 1982).

The Interpersonal meaning-making structure does not permit owning or expressing anger. To know oneself in this way threatens the Interpersonal balance because it is experienced as a declaration of differentiation from the relationship. To experience anger may require separation from the interpersonal context, and experiences of victimisation in this stage are more likely to result in feelings of sadness or of being incomplete (Kegan, 1982).

Kegan's transition between third and fourth orders of consciousness may most commonly happen during adolescence, although it can take much longer. Meaning-making is a lifelong process, with late adolescence presenting a greater range of individual meaning construction.

The fourth stage, or Institutional balance, includes understanding abstract systems, is interpersonally conscious of multiple roles and intrapersonally self-regulating and autonomous. While values are simply learned at the third order of consciousness, the fourth order requires the ability to generate them. It is not possible to make sense of the next stage in the evolving process until one is in the process of differentiation from embeddedness in the previous state.

### ***Women's Ways of Knowing***

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) propose that women have several ways of knowing. Although Belenky et al. do not define this as constructivist developmentalism, Kegan notes the similarities (Kegan, 1994).

Belenky et al propose women are socially conditioned to silence their voices and, in accepting external authority, they become 'Received Knowers'. For women in the 'Received Knowing' category, attempts at self-definition are constructed from social expectations defined in concrete roles. 'Subjective Knowing' is a transitional state in which women search for their own inner authority or 'voice'. For women who are 'Procedural Knowers', authority has become internal but with respect for the authority of larger systems and an understanding of how to utilise them. Procedural Knowing has two forms, separated and connected; sometimes an outcome of personality style, although connected knowing usually follows separated knowing (Belenky et al., 1986).

Kegan's orders of consciousness and Marcia's identity statuses can be correlated with women's ways of knowing (Belenky et al., 1986). Marcia's Foreclosed Identity resembles Kegan's Interpersonal stage and Belenky et al's concept of 'Received Knowing'. Marcia's Moratorium Identity status correlates with Belenky et al's transitional state of 'Subjective Knowing'. Identity Achievement correlates with Belenky et al's 'Procedural Knowing' and Kegan's Institutional stage. To expand these beyond Identity Formation processes, Erikson's stage 6 Intimacy,



correlates well with Kegan's stage 5 Interindividual relational model (although not necessarily the Inter-Institutional order of consciousness), and with Belenky et al's Connected Knowing.

### **Women's Identity Formation and Development**

Substantial research demonstrates specific differences in the process of identity formation and construction for women. Roles and life-contexts of women produce differences in both identity content and formation. Devaluation of these differences reinforces masculine social and cultural values which contribute to women's experience of difference (Archer, 1992).

Girls are actively encouraged by both parents from a very early age to accept 'femininity' and women's roles (Chodorow, 1989; Miller, 1991). The mother-daughter relationship is centrally important to women's development (Chodorow, 1989). Sons must build a masculine self, based on being not-female and striving toward independence. Daughters are encouraged to 'be like mother', a process of identification, which requires attunement and responsiveness to other's feelings and needs (Miller, 1991).

Consequently, a women's sense of self is more likely to be interdependent, and construed as self-in-relation (Cross et al., 2000; Cross & Madson, 1997; Jordan, 1991a; Jordan, Kaplan, & Surrey, 1991; Kaplan, 1991; Miller, 1976, 1991; Stiver, 1991; Surrey, 1991). Women's

role of caretaker of relationships requires training in the skills of relating. “Relational competence” means developing empathy, mutuality (Jordan, 1991a, 1991b), and awareness of “cognitive and emotional intersubjectivity” (Surrey, 1991).

During the period of identity formation, women may experience expectations of ‘independence’ differently, and “relationship *and* identity develop in *synchrony*” (Surrey, 1991 p.63). Concepts of individualism and separation are anticipated male norms incompatible with women’s socialisation into gendered roles of caring for others (Stiver, 1991). Clarifying values on sexual roles and behaviour is an important part of women’s identity, as are views on religion and morality (Schenkel & Marcia, 1972). However, gender and culture limit women’s opportunities for Moratorium exploration, and consequent identity status (Schwartz & Montgomery, 2002).

Women want to feel effective in the world *and* connected to others (Josselson, 1996). However, women may be perceived as ‘deviant’ when constructs of identity and intimacy, the intrapersonal and interpersonal, remain defined as gendered and dichotomised (Archer, 1992). Women are delegated to the world of immanence and ‘being’ with destiny ordained, while men are allocated transcendence, the world of ‘doing’ and choice over destiny (de Beauvoir, 1949). This sets up a double-bind for modern women who are instilled with masculine goals of success and

achievement but fail as women if they are successful in the world (Chodorow, 1989).

Kegan (1994) proposes women's process of differentiation within relationship as a stylistic orientation. One need not separate, but differentiate by refashioning relationships rather than being defined by them. ““Deciding *for* myself” does not have to equal “deciding *by* myself”” (p.222). ‘Autonomy’ for women may mean self-regulation in the service of maintaining connections.

Differentiating self from others (the underlying process of identity formation) may require women to merge processes of identity formation and developing the capacity for intimacy (Garbarino, Gaa, Swank, McPherson, & Gratch, 1995; Winefield & Harvey, 1996). Women may move toward a sense of self *within* relationship and the nature of the relationship may help or hinder this process. “It appears that women’s experiences of loving and being loved are integral to their sense of themselves” (Patterson, Sochting, & Marcia, 1992 p.21).

Women struggle with conflicts between their rights and the responsibilities of caring (Gilligan, 1982/1993; Skoe, 1998; Wark & Krebs, 1996). An ethic of justice (rights) assumes equality, while “an ethic of care rests on a premise of non-violence” (Gilligan, 1982/1993, p.174). So, confronted with inequality and hurtful behaviour, women must make a moral choice between fairness and caring and may choose to silence their voice rather than hurt others.

For women, decision-making must include consideration of the impact of their actions on other's needs and feelings. Women and girls often carry guilt and responsibility for the well-being of their relationships (Chodorow, 1989; Williams & Bybee, 1994) and experience an absence of intimacy as a "*failure of the self*" (Kaplan, 1991 p.218). Women are more likely to internalise conflict than express it in action (Helgeson, 1994; Jack, 2001; Jack & Dill, 1992), and will tend to accommodate to other's wishes rather than promote their own individual needs.

### ***Women and Ethnicity***

Fixed components of identity that cannot be changed, such as ethnicity or gender, provide an important context for choices considered available to the individual (Grotevant, 1992; Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992; Tallman et al., 1998). Negative stereotyping impacts on ethnic identity as well as gender for women in minority groups. American studies show being a member of an ethnic minority is more likely to result in a Foreclosed identity (Archer & Waterman, 1994; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). The structure of identity is relatively trans-cultural, while process and outcome are culture specific (Schwartz & Montgomery, 2002).

Minority group values impact on identity formation, particularly in collective cultures that place a higher value on communion than agency. "Differences in women's interpretations of a situation may be understood

not only in terms of structured categories like class and race but also historically, culturally, and generationally” (Chodorow, 1989 p.200).

### ***Women’s Development in Historical Context***

The concept of self with a distinctive personal identity arose only recently in Western history as a result of changes in social, legal and philosophical constructions of the individual in society (Baumeister & Muraven, 1996; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). Individualism, emphasising separateness, was highly valued by the end of the eighteenth century and had particular influence on Euro-American cultures.

When Erikson (1950,1968) developed his concept of identity, he believed a woman’s identity was “to be completed in marriage and motherhood” (Patterson et al., 1992, p.14). Foreclosed women, committed to prescribed feminine roles, may have quite high self-esteem, and Foreclosure seems adaptive for many women (Prager, 1982).

For some women, a self-constructed identity can only eventuate when the social prescriptions of wife and mother have been fulfilled and children reach school age. Prior to then, identity may only be known and valued through the eyes of others. When or how the synthesis of identity is undertaken, it is clear that identity formation may be a more complex task for women (Archer, 1992).

Technological advances, the women’s movement, globalisation, mass media, and increasing secularism have profoundly affected the Western world. Transition markers for adult role status, such as “economic

independence, leaving the parental home and the establishment of a family with children” have changed with social diversification (Adams & Shea, 1979, p.89). Cultural change has produced fluctuations in the commencement age and duration of marriage, increasing de facto relationships, widespread use of effective contraception, lowered birth rates, and increased employment opportunities for women. However, tradition exerts strong influences while men’s gender role conceptions remain unchanged, and many women still carry most of the responsibility for care in their private lives (Turner, 1990).

Changing historical contexts create both limitations and opportunities for women’s conception of possible identities. Jane Kroger’s research on New Zealand university students in 1984 and 1990 clarified the impact of economic uncertainty on identity status. She found the later group of female subjects were less Identity Achieved and more had opted for the security of Foreclosure on most domains (Kroger, 1993). A retrospective New Zealand study showed historical influences (particularly the Women’s Movement) accounted for 33% of all Moratorium transitions (Kroger & Green, 1996).

In the fifty years since Erikson proposed his “eight stages of man (sic)” and the concept of adolescent identity formation, social change has been rapid. Affluent societies prolong the duration of education, delaying adult responsibilities and extending the potential Moratorium period. There is now more perceived choice for how identity might be constructed and

what that identity might be. “Yet this same freedom has increased the burdensome pressure on individual adolescents to find a basis for making these crucial choices” (Baumeister & Muraven, 1996, p.406).

In the past, guidance on moral issues was sought from priests and elders, or was held within community values. Secularisation, social or geographic mobility, family breakdown, and the relative insularity of modern life have reduced access to traditional values and sources of wisdom, and traditional authority is less effective in an increasingly complex world. The resulting “value gap” in modern Western society exacerbates the individual’s difficulty in making life meaningful. A perceived moral duty to the ‘self’ is an outcome of this value gap. Notions of romantic love and romanticism, particularly relevant in inter-ethnic romantic relationships, are also ‘modern’ Western values (Gaines, Buriel, Liu, & Rios, 1997).

For both genders, and across cultures, the ability to think for one’s self has become necessary for individual well-being. Modern life *requires* us to develop the ability to have ideas about our ideas, to conceive ideas as objects and reflect on them rather than accept the assumptions upon which they are premised (Kegan, 1994). Psychological independence means creating our own authority, rather than unquestioningly investing in externally imposed authority for the meaning we make of our lives. Kegan’s exploration of our ability to create our own authority shows that many cannot, and for others the process is ongoing over the life-span.

This negotiation of Identity Achievement may be a necessity to manage the complexity and insecurity of modern life.

### ***Summary***

The self has been presented as a social product whose meaning is found in interaction and reflection. Self-meaning is derived from the interpretation of symbols (primarily language) or symbolic actions. Via the perspectives of individual or collective others, we perceive ourselves and often identify ourselves as occupants of roles, acting in accordance with expectations. We have as many selves, or role-identities, as we have social group memberships. Social identities are organised into a hierarchy according to their value to us. Gender roles and ethnicity limit the form and content of women's experience. History, culture, and changing social structures provide the context of possible self-definition (identity).

We seek to fulfil our needs for self-esteem, self-consistency, belonging and effectiveness via social interaction. Meanings, assumptions, beliefs and values we hold all influence the satisfaction of those needs, as do individual processes of knowing or consciousness.

Developmental models of the self have been considered, particularly those most relevant to adolescence when an internally constructed individual identity may first be formed. Identity Achievement is defined as commitment to future goals after a period of exploration or Moratorium. Constructing a personal sense of identity provides a sense of



stability to the self. Women's experience of identity formation differs in both structure and process, and is influenced by culture and history.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

#### ***Introduction***

This study seeks to identify evolving processes experienced by women in the context of living without partner abuse. Grounded Theory method and methodology is particularly suitable for answering the question: “what happens to women after they leave an abusive relationship?”

This chapter explains Grounded Theory methodology, including the philosophical framework and Symbolic Interactionism. An explanation for the application of a feminist lens to this study is provided and epistemology is considered. Grounded Theory method is described, including the process of data analysis. Ethical considerations are clarified. The research process is explained, including sampling strategies, participant information, and the experience of being a researcher. A brief conclusion is preceded by consideration of rigour, reflexivity and the trustworthiness of the study.

#### **Grounded Theory**

Grounded Theory as both methodology and method was developed in the 1960s by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss for the purpose of generating theory which was grounded in reality. Glaser and Strauss came from

different backgrounds. While Glaser had more positivist leanings, Strauss was particularly influenced by Herbert Blumer's development of Symbolic Interactionism, which was philosophically informed by pragmatism (Crotty, 1998) and theorists such as William James and George Herbert Mead.

### ***The Philosophical Framework of Grounded Theory***

Grounded Theory is a qualitative interpretive paradigm. The intention is to generate rather than to verify theory, to "see what emerges and not preconceive the research" (Glaser, 1992).

A grounded theory is an abstract conception, usually about social and psychological phenomena. It includes concepts, and propositions about relationships between concepts. A theory attempts to interpret, predict and explain the phenomena under study (Chenitz & Swanson, 1996). Grounded Theory is ideally suited for the identification of basic social psychological processes (BPSP) and basic social structural processes (BSSP). "A BSSP abets, facilitates or is the social structure within which the BPSP processes" (Glaser, 1978 p.102).

Symbolic Interactionism explains psycho-social processes and is the main philosophical tradition underlying Grounded Theory methodology.

### ***Symbolic Interactionism***

Herbert Blumer (1969) proposes that human actions are motivated by the meanings people construct when they interact with one another. Meaning derived from social interaction is modified through continuous engagement with the

interpretive process. Blumer viewed social interaction as an incessant meaning-making process built upon the interpretation of symbols or symbolic actions. Actions are based on decisions made by interpreting and assessing factors involved in the situation. Our actions are always caused by how we conceive 'what is happening here' (Blumer, 1969).

Individuals are situated within cultures and societies and "seeking the meaning of experience becomes an exploration of culture" (Crotty, 1998 p.74). Symbolic Interactionism also considers cultural understandings of phenomena, derived from social interaction, and proposes that these interpretations guide our actions. Consequently, it is anticipated that the social context of participant experience has a direct relationship to participants' subjective understanding of their experience.

Consistent with the views of Mead (1934) and Blumer (1969), theory development in this study includes exploration of processes relevant to participants' social experience of self and identity. I have utilised ideas regarding structure of the social self in addition to Mead's process model of the self. This allows consideration of the content of self. For example, roles are contextual conditions affecting the interpretation of situations, and identities can be differentiated within the 'multiple selves' postulated by William James (James, 1952).

### ***A Feminist Perspective***

I am a counsellor who has often worked with women in distressing circumstances. Awareness of gender influences on women's lives is an integral

part of my understanding of women's experience. A feminist perspective increases sensitivity to domination and exploitation, and promotes an appreciation of diversity. Holding a feminist perspective heightens awareness to social issues influencing the psychological processes of the individual. In the spirit of reflexive practice, I acknowledge the data will unavoidably be filtered through this feminist lens. I perceive that New Zealand culture conditions women to incorporate ideals of femininity and that this influences women's contexts of action. Consequently, I did not assume objectivity and anticipated possible tension between my subjective experience of being female in a gendered world and participants' experience that may not include these perceptions.

As a feminist, I know that one woman cannot claim to speak for all women, nor can any researcher claiming to be feminist remain unaware of her particular place within the framework of feminism. One's social situation both privileges and limits what one can know, rendering the unknown 'invisible' to those who do not live it (Harding, 1993). This research attempts "giving voice to the silent" (Oakley, 2000, p.47), by seeking to articulate the perceptions of women who have experienced realities that are frequently ignored, silenced or marginalised in New Zealand society.

Feminism is a perspective rather than a research method and can be applied within the discipline of traditional methods (Reinharz, 1992). Feminism applies three underlying principles. These are that the research should be useful to participants; the method should be reflexive; and not oppressive (Wuest, 1995). Feminism also requires "avoidance of universalising narratives and

respect for complex, diverse and perhaps contradictory experiences” (Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2001b). A feminist perspective requires that I understand women in their context, be inclusive, and welcome diversity. These tenets are also supported by Grounded Theory methodology.

In spite of apparent complexities noted above, there are common themes in projects claiming a feminist perspective. “All research is tied to values” (Saunders, 1990, p.91-92) and this study is not value neutral. I attempt to work within “antiauthoritarian, antielitist, participatory, and emancipatory values” (Harding, 1986, p.27).

A feminist perspective includes a specific set of meanings in the context of partner abuse and there is “a consensus that sexism in our society and families is fundamentally linked to violence” (Yllo, 1990, p.28). Michele Bograd (1990) notes that a feminist perspective on partner abuse considers and includes: constructs of gender as explanatory tools; the social-historical situation of the relationship; understanding and validating of women’s experience; and the use of research to benefit women.

“Grounded Theory methods are not bound by either discipline or data collection” (Glaser, 1992, p.163). Consequently, the principles of feminism are easily incorporated into the method. In addition, the epistemological underpinnings are compatible in that both reflect respect for participants’ subjective interpretation of experience, both acknowledge the contextual and relational nature of knowledge, and both recognise the necessity for the researcher to accept responsibility for any influence of bias in directing research



questions and in analysis (Wuest, 1995). Transparency is required if tension arises when including a feminist perspective within Grounded Theory methods.

### ***Epistemology***

It has been argued that Grounded Theory methodology is based on a constructionist epistemology (Crotty, 1998), and it may equally be defined as constructivist. The basic psychosocial processes identified using grounded theory are constructivist because reality is interpreted by both the participants and the researcher, inclusive of consideration for limitations imposed by the social structuring of external reality. Constructivist attitudes are implicit in the experiences of participants, and in the recall of those experiences, as a process of “reflection in action” (Hoffman, 1991). The individual process of making meaning of the “reality of everyday life” (Berger & Luckman, 1967, p.19) is subjectively constructed by the individual based on their assessment of their situation. Social and cultural influences are part of the context and conditions of individual perceptions that influence both comprehension and action. “The organisation of a human society is the framework inside of which social action takes place” (Blumer, 1969, p.87).

Consideration of the influence of culture as a matrix of collectively-generated meaning on individual perspectives is a constructionist viewpoint. This process is bidirectional: people’s actions reciprocally influence culture and result in changes to the social structure that affects them. Constructionist and constructivist epistemological positions are functionally inseparable within this study which considers both the cultural construction of social reality and

subjective perceptions and responses that create individual realities within that construction.

### ***The Grounded Theory Method***

The original Grounded Theory method developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) has been adapted further by Anselm Strauss, in collaboration with Juliet Corbin (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). Other researchers have created variations in procedure resulting in several possible systems of analysis. During the course of data analysis, I explored a range of techniques as dictated by the process itself and found personal strategies for managing “the fascinating but drowning minutiae of ‘qualitative’ data” (Oakley, 2000, p.32) in order to generate a theory.

### ***Data Analysis***

Data was primarily sourced from one-hour, taped and transcribed interviews. Initial interviews were lightly structured with open-ended questions that allowed participants to answer in terms of what is important to them (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1997). Questions were amended as emerging concepts refined and focused the direction of study.

An initial line by line analysis of the data identified concepts, or ‘codes’, representing phenomena in their context. Codes were clustered into sub-categories of similar phenomena in context, and these were subsumed under larger and more abstract categories. Categories were refined according to their

properties, which define the category's meaning; and their dimensions, which specify the range of variation to the properties (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Data collection and analysis were alternated in a process of constant comparison whereby theory emerging inductively from the data was compared deductively with new data to clarify and refine developing conceptual frameworks. This "strategy of comparative analysis for generating theory puts a high emphasis on theory as process: that is, theory as an ever-developing entity" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.32). As patterns of properties emerged along the various dimensions of categories, data was reassembled according to connections between categories. Fortunately, data collection was able to be continued until "theoretical saturation"(Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.61) and no new properties, or relationships between categories, emerged from new data.

The final stage was to integrate and refine theory with the aim of clarifying a central 'core category'. The core category is an abstracted main theme having the analytic power to pull all categories together to form an explanatory whole that explains any variations (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The Grounded Theory method requires that emergent theory is grounded systematically in the data so that data collection, analysis, and theory are closely related (Glaser, 1992). The initial approach is as atheoretical as possible. Consequently, a literature review was delayed until several initial interviews had been analysed and theory was beginning to emerge. Literature was used as a data source for on-going comparison with emerging theory throughout the latter part of the analysis.

The resultant theory should make sense to participants and those who practice in the area (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

### **Ethical Considerations**

Auckland Ethics Committee granted ethical approval for this study in March 2003. (Approval number AKX/03/02/050.)

Ethical criteria for qualitative research are subsumed under the commonly utilised principles of ethical research practice: no harm is done to participants; participation is voluntary; informed consent is given by participants; there is no deceitful practice; and confidentiality is maintained (Tolich & Davidson, 1999). Feminist research includes particular emphasis on non-exploitative practice plus an emphasis on contributing, in both process and outcome, to the welfare of women (Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2001b). In addition, it was necessary to consider obligations to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the possible inclusion of Maori participants.

### ***Do No Harm***

The context of the study raised issues requiring special consideration. Participant safety may be an issue, and the initial approach was made with care so as not to place any woman at risk. The interview process may uncover old wounds for participants, and post-interview counselling was made available in addition to a follow up phone call after the interview. Continued care is taken that research findings are not used to harm participants or others.

### ***Voluntary Participation and Informed Consent***

“Participants decide how much they want to invest in the process” (Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2001b, p.167). Participants were fully informed regarding the purpose and processes of the study (refer Appendix B) prior to signing a consent form (refer Appendix C). No payment was made to participants and they could withdraw at any time.

### ***No Deceitful Practice***

Participants received a summary of emergent theory for comment, and a summary of the findings will be provided. They will have access to a thesis copy and any research report.

### ***Confidentiality***

There is no personal identification on any record and all material is in locked storage. Some use of transcription services required a confidentiality agreement. False names are employed and potentially identifying details are not used in any written material.

### ***Maori Participants***

Bicultural research principles incorporating ‘participation’, ‘partnership’ and ‘protection’ were utilised in order that the study may benefit Maori (Thomas, 2000). Special provision was made for Maori participants and consultation was undertaken throughout the study. Small participant numbers influence the way any ethnic participation is made public.

## **The Research Process**

### ***Initial Sampling Strategy and Theoretical Sampling***

A small number of participants were initially accessed and further selection refined to clarify emerging conceptual frameworks. The requirements of “theoretical sampling” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.45) influenced participant sources.

Participants were sourced via notice-board invitation, by letter invitation via a stopping violence service, and by referral from a counsellor or therapist. All potential participants received an invitation ‘pack’ comprising an information sheet (Appendix B), a consent form (Appendix C), and a letter with response form (Appendix D). The letter inviting participation defined selection criteria as women who: speak English; have been separated from a long term abusive personal relationship for more than one year; feel they have had some success in rebuilding their lives; were at least 25 years old. Women currently misusing drugs and alcohol were excluded. Participants self-assessed for partner abuse and success in creating abuse free lives for themselves.

Participants were initially sought via a notice placed on several Auckland University of Technology notice-boards (Appendix E). This source was hoped to provide relatively ‘naïve’ subjects (ie: had not necessarily had counselling or other interventions that might have provided an external analysis of their experience).

Four participants were sourced in this way. The first three were mature women, out of their relationship for many years, who offered good descriptions of

the longer term process. The fourth participant was younger and closer in time to the separation experience, thus much more immediately involved in the process.

I became concerned that lengthy duration since separation might influence participant perspectives. Firstly, a long-duration hindsight perspective could create revision. Secondly, that maturity itself might change the relevance of issues that were urgent and pressing at the time. Thirdly, that even remembering many years later might be an issue. In addition, participants from a tertiary source may not be representative and a different sample was sought. I was looking for younger women, women still 'in' process, women who used Protection Orders and/or community services, and hoping for Maori participation.

This theoretical sample was sought via North Harbour Living Without Violence Collective Inc. Potential participants were women who had attended a twelve week women's support group programme. Some group participants had signed agreements to be contacted regarding possible participation in research. The Women's Programme Coordinator assessed for current safety by phone and forwarded information packs to a small number of women who had attended a group at least a year prior. Potential participants responded to me directly. I had no prior relationship with them as a facilitator or counsellor.

This community source provided three possible participants. One was declined in consideration of a potential dual relationship. Of the remaining two, one identified as Maori, and one woman was Samoan. Both were in their forties and relatively recently out of their relationship. One had taken out a Protection

Order but reconciled with her partner after several years separation. These two provided valuable insights.

Differences arising from historical context were becoming apparent and I hoped to find participants whose experience was in different decades. Themes related to identity development were emerging and I wanted another younger woman. As well, and because the experiences of mothers were so difficult, I sought participants who did not have children to the abusive partner. I created theoretical interview questions and sought participants via collegial networks of counsellors and therapists. Eight further women came forward. Potential dual relationships or inability to make contact left five participants. Three of these were women in their fifties and sixties who had separated many years previously. Unfortunately, one of these later withdrew her consent and all record of her participation has been destroyed. Another woman was in her late twenties with a Protection Order, and the other in her forties, but not long separated. Two of this group of women had not had children with the abusive partner.

When an identifiable theory had emerged, all participants were consulted for comment. Seven participants provided written or verbal feedback that was included in the data, and minor refinements were made.

### ***The Participants***

Open ended interview questions were used to “access peoples ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words” (Reinharz, 1992, p.19).

Demographic detail was recorded when volunteered by participants during the



interview. Participant information, when offered, is given to provide context for participant situations.

Information about participants' childhoods was not sought and is therefore incomplete. Seven women spoke of family conflict in their childhoods with five specifically identifying this as family or domestic violence. Six spoke of being physically punished as a child. Three were estranged from their natural mothers as children, mainly due to family conflict. Three others spoke of conflicted relationships with their mothers with two identifying their mothers as abusive.

Four women had close relationships with their fathers although two of these, plus a further three, spoke of their fathers as abusive or violent. Four women spoke of other forms of abuse as girls or young women. Such difficult childhood histories are not uncommon in New Zealand (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1970, 1993, 1997).

Table1. Relevant ages and durations for abusive relationship.

<b>Age at commencement</b>	<b>Duration of relationship</b>	<b>Age at separation</b>	<b>Length of time since separation</b>
21	5 & ½ years	26	Almost 2 yrs
23	17 years	40	2.5 years
36	4 & ½ years	41	11 years
17	11 & 1/2 years	31	22 years
39	2 years (off/on)	41+	4 years
19	7 years	26 - 28	46 - 48 years
21	2 & ½ years	23+	3 years
22	21 years	43	19 years
34	Almost 13 yrs	47	5 yrs,
17	14 years	30+	11 years

Table 1. Duration within the abusive relationship, spans two to twenty-one years. Duration since separation spans two to forty-eight years and covers both short and longer term processes.

Table 2. Children involved in the process.

<b>Previous Children</b>	<b>Children to partner</b>	<b>Children's age at separation</b>
N/A	One	2yrs
N/A	Three	14, 11 & 9 yrs
Two (had left home)	Nil	N/A
N/A	One	8 yrs
N/A	Nil	N/A
N/A	Two	6 & 2 yrs
Two (+ one adopted)	One	6yrs, 3 yrs, & baby 5 mths
N/A	Two	17 & 15 yrs
Two	One	25 (left home), 18 & 10 yrs
N/A	Two	11 & 8 yrs

Table 2. The majority of women had children to the partner. Some had children from a previous relationship. Two women had no dependent children at separation.

Table 3. Participants' other relationships

<b>Prior relationship/s</b>	<b>Time between prior &amp; abusive relationship</b>	<b>Duration to a post-separation relationship</b>
Serial monogamy	Days	None at interview
Nil	N/A	None at interview
Married "young"	Unknown	About 2 years
Nil	N/A	15 months
Serial monogamy	Unknown	Enabled separation
Engaged	Months	2 years
At least one	Unknown	None at interview
Boyfriends	Months	6 years
Married 10 yrs	Immediate	Reconciled 2 years
Nil	N/A	1 year (known prior)

Table3. Relationship/s prior to commencing the abusive relationship. Duration until commencing the abusive relationship and duration until the next serious relationship after separation.

Six of the women referred to very traditional and Christian childhood backgrounds. While New Zealand is becoming increasingly secular, such backgrounds could be defined as culturally and socially normative during the relevant historical periods. Other similarities and differences are discussed in the analysis where they appear relevant.

### ***Researcher as Instrument***

Analysis is the interplay between researcher and data. Grounded Theory research is a discovery process, neither based on pre-conceived ideas, nor solely on intuition which could be dependent on such ideas. Analysis is more than description, or simply the naming of something already known to the researcher. A “distinction between the processes of recognition-recall and analysis” is necessary (Schatzman, 1991, p.303). Common sense impressions, fitting new data to an early over-all grounding, and thematic analysis are not Grounded Theory. Theory development is a recursive, reflexive, engrossing process and “detailed grounding is painstaking and *takes time*” (Glaser, 1978, p.16). It calls upon such “cognitive processes as interpreting, defining, comparing, evaluating, and deciding..” (Schatzman, 1991, p.303). Possibilities for generating categories “are limited only by the social psychological limits of the analyst’s capacity and resources” (Glaser, 1978, p.3).

I commenced data analysis with a line by line analysis of the data derived from interview transcripts (Browne & Sullivan, 1999). The plan was to ‘fracture’ the data by identifying micro-processes, generating a collection of ‘codes’ which were to eventually be sorted into ‘categories’. For example:

Data	Context	Codes
And then I think that something inside of me snapped. And I said, “I’m not gonna do this anymore”.	Decision to separate	Making sense of a memory. Realising suddenly. Reaching a limit. Deciding to stop

I had decided against the additional learning curve of mastering software to help with this process. So, initially I entered codes onto a spreadsheet, along with a source reference. However, with over 300 of these after coding interview two, and wanting to cluster similar codes while not being able to see everything on the screen at once, I needed another way to manage the mechanics of the process.

My intention was to seek understanding of participants’ process post-separation, and I had a lot of other information. So, I broke the codes into clusters – not as categories, but as temporal themes, eg: before the relationship, early in the relationship, and etc... This helped, but interview three found me still wallowing in data that I couldn’t see all at once, and cross-referencing codes and data sources was becoming more unwieldy with coding revision. I needed a better way to ‘look’ at the data.

I am primarily a visual person and I prefer to see what I’m doing. Prior to this point I had resorted to drawing maps and diagrams on a large desk pad. However, I rapidly became frustrated with repeated redrawing. Fortunately, what eventually became two solutions arose at about the same time.

A colleague in the Grounded Theory study group showed me a format I liked. Data was entered into the first of four columns with the other three columns containing context, code and theoretical memos. The plan was that eventually these would be cut up and clipped together with other, similar codes in order to create categories. Codes, context, data and memos were visible together, so I could revise and reconsider codes without constantly amending references back to data. I reformatted the first four interviews, again reviewing codes, and proceeded with this plan. I wanted to 'keep the space open', to allow ambiguity, and not leap into category formation too soon, and so delayed the cutting up process.

Simultaneously with this I began using an old software programme I already understood (Publisher '98) to create a process map. This allowed me to 'see' everything all at once, to add categories (in ever-reducing font size), and move them around without losing anything. At last, I could see the big picture and the detail, all on one 'page'. An early example is shown in Appendix F.

After coding interview four, and with my head full of thoughts that I diligently recorded in memos, I had a sense of a "sensitising concept" for category formation. I sought to clarify the "emerging conceptual framework" (Glaser, 1978, p.39) and began comparison to literature that might extend and elaborate the analysis for further testing. It was making sense, and it was exciting. I delved into my 'read later' box in search of further data and was shocked when I sighted an abstract that might represent something similar to my own study. Not wanting to be influenced, I did not read it but contacted my

supervisors and pondered what to do. I then realised the points of difference I could offer. This was a New Zealand study, and included a New Zealand cultural and historical context, and my own personal and professional history was different. It was possible these differences in perspective would unearth something new, and of local relevance. I refocused on the New Zealand context.

I had originally thought I would use the techniques suggested by Strauss and Corbin (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). They had seemed clear when I read them, but what did they look like? I wanted an orderly format to clarify codes and categories. Still with a focus on the post-separation process, I came across a diagram utilising dimensional analysis that seemed to ‘work’ for this part of participant experience (Bowers & Caron, 2000, p.312). The diagram contextualised process in terms of strategies. It looked good, it made sense.... but I had concerns. What if the strategies were only conceived by participants as such in hindsight? What if they were not consciously chosen? Were they still ‘strategies’? I did not want to over-manage the data. I took an adapted sample to Grounded Theory group (refer Appendix G) and was referred to Glaser’s concept of “coding families” (Glaser, 1978, p.72). This was helpful, but I was still confused. Depending on context, several coding families could apply, and what do the different families *look* like? I was beginning to recognise the tyranny of a primarily visual process.

Meanwhile I sought participant variation in theoretical sampling. I had tried to focus only on post-separation processes, yet participants were telling me stories with beginnings, middles, and ends. I realised that participant’s

contextual history was highly relevant to developing theory. There was a bigger picture I needed to understand. I created theoretical questions to clarify theory development (refer Appendix H). Participants frequently provided some of this information without being asked the questions.

I explored Leonard Schatzman's method of dimensional analysis and this was the process I eventually used to clarify categories (Kools, McCarthy, Durham, & Robrecht, 1996). This model allowed me to test individual categories by using each in turn as a perspective on the other categories in the process in order to find the best 'fit' (early examples in Appendix I). Better still, the model could be applied to all the different processes I was working with and overcame the dilemma of several possible coding families.

I continued to create memos almost daily (sample Appendix J). Stream of consciousness questions, comments, ruminations and impressions, a non-linear, internal dialogue asking questions of the data, asking questions of myself, coding and recoding, warily considering what resonates with what I 'know', noting ideas for literature comparisons 'later', not wanting to 'force' the data, aware of the responsibility undertaken on behalf of participants, aware of so many women's struggles, wanting to 'get it right', and aware of my own anxiety too (Chatzifotiou, 2000).

I spent considerable time thinking about my thinking and struggled with the frustration of not using what I 'know' cognitively in terms of theory, so as not to preconceive the data. I was frustrated too in not being able to use the skills of my training for interpreting the subtleties of nuance in gesture, phrase and tone,



when such subtleties seemed too unwieldy and subjectively interpreted to use as data.

Cross-referencing data was still a problem and I needed another system. It was time to do some cutting up. I had created separate memos so I deleted the outside column of the data analysis format and printed each formatted and analysed interview onto coloured paper. This allowed me to identify both participant and variation at a glance. I cut up the interviews and mounted them on pages that were thematically organised (usually sequential and related to context), but not as categories. Now, for practical purposes I could cross-reference data to the explanatory matrix with just a page number, although original transcript codes were used for recording. Memos could also be cut up and clustered to cross-reference them to the matrix. I had a workable system.

Meanwhile, I was refining theory. What could explain participant processes and still include variation? I found the focus on data, rather than the women providing the data, difficult to reconcile and this required some personal adjustment. I was training myself to shift from contextualising information as a practitioner whose task is facilitating a resolution for a person in difficulty, to contextualising as a researcher whose task is to generate theory.

To acknowledge their expertise in their own experience, I offered participants a summary of emergent theory for evaluation and comment. Participant feedback was positive, with some minor idiosyncratic variation. Unfortunately, one participant withdrew at this point. I then took the emergent theory to my Maori consultant for verification. She offered some ideas on how

parts of the process might be generalised to Maori, and otherwise accepted the theory. Colleagues at North Harbour Living Without Violence Collective Inc were consulted as a group and also accepted the theory. I was ready to commence writing up, knowing this process too would create further refinement.

## **Rigour**

### ***Reflexive Research***

Reflexive practice is consistent with and appropriate to methodologies which recognise that the process of knowing is “embedded in a reflexive loop that includes the inquirer” and within this circularity “we contextually recognise the various mutual relationships in which our knowing activities are embedded” (Steier, 1995. p163). The analytic process was recorded in the form of memos to clarify understanding, to uncover possible researcher bias, and to develop insights and direction as an ongoing part of the research process. This supports reflexive practice. Throughout theory development I have tracked my thinking processes and memos have been shared with supervisors.

I was particularly aware that my professional experience in the fields of domestic violence and trauma might influence my perceptions, resulting in selective attention to data and potential bias due to idiosyncratic values (Sadler, 2002). Consequently, a taped interview of my expectations was created with an experienced researcher prior to commencement of the research. This was undertaken to deconstruct prior conceptions (Denzin, 2002).

On reviewing the pre-supposition interview I found some of my assumptions fitted with this group of participants. For example, I have worked in this field for about eight years and was not surprised by participant reports of confusion within the relationship, or that they blamed themselves. But I was surprised at both how strongly I had bracketed those assumptions from my awareness, and the clarity of the processes arising from the study. For example, I had avoided concept words like “safety” until they arose from the data.

Reviewing that initial interview, I noted psychological thinking, with a practitioner focus of applying existing theory to the task of helping women through their difficulties. My task as a grounded theory researcher was creating new theory by thinking more sociologically. This is quite a different way of paying attention to individual women’s experience but fitted with the more social focus of a feminist perspective.

I am aware of the influence of my understanding of developmental processes. These would probably not have been recognised without that prior knowledge and training. I had not expected that developmental processes would be part of the outcome, and would probably have started with different models for comparison if I had. I know that my awareness of the influence of gender also affected my perception of participant contexts. However, while most participants did not identify themselves as feminists, most spoke of gendered expectations of women and data was not forced to fit a feminist analysis.

I have done my best to be reflexive, but must acknowledge that I am a product of a particular culture, situated as a fifty-something woman within this

particular historical period, and privileged with some knowledge and life experience. I cannot assume that my history and subjectivity have not influenced my understanding of participant experiences. I leave it to the reader to decide theory validity.

### ***Trustworthiness of the Study***

Widely cited criteria for rigour in qualitative research are those described by Lincoln and Guba (Krefting, 1990). They define four criteria: credibility; transferability; dependability and confirmability. Strategies to meet these criteria were put in place.

#### ***Credibility.***

Credibility is consistent with Grounded Theory method: allowing theory to emerge from the data rather than 'forcing' it to confirm researcher assumptions or hypotheses. Participant's subjective understanding is reported accurately and is authenticated by quotes where relevant. Those who experienced the phenomena are most able to assess the truth value of theories derived from this study and credibility was supported by participant review of emergent theory. To avoid bias, researcher assumptions were clarified in a taped interview with an independent skilled researcher. Triangulation of data sources (eg: participant interviews, literature review) created a convergence of perspectives which support credibility.

#### ***Transferability.***

The question of whether findings apply to other participant groups is clarified by providing information about participant characteristics and contexts.

Some detail, necessarily limited to protect confidentiality, is provided for the reader to assess application to other populations.

### ***Dependability.***

Research methods must be consistent with findings. To this end, a comprehensive description of method and underpinning methodology is reported. In addition, a clear record of researcher decision-making process in the form of memos provides an audit trail.

### ***Confirmability.***

Well-documented reflexive practice allows for findings to be confirmed. Throughout the duration of the study, memos record my own process of analysis, thoughts, interpretations and questions about further data collection. These include my subjective experience of reflection on the study and any personal assumption that becomes apparent. These strategies, plus supervision, allowed reflexivity and minimisation of potential bias. In addition, non-identified raw data, memos, documentation, and notes relevant to the development of categories are retained to provide an audit trail if required.

## **Conclusion**

This is a Grounded Theory study undertaken by a researcher who has a feminist perspective. This chapter clarifies methodology and includes discussion on epistemology, philosophical underpinnings, and using a feminist perspective in a Grounded Theory study. Consideration of ethical concerns and rigour is demonstrated. Participant information is provided. The research method is

described and the research process outlined, including attention to the subjective experience of the researcher and reflexive practice.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### FALLING FOR LOVE

#### Introduction to 'Findings' Chapters

This is the first of five 'findings' chapters. The original intention of this research was to explore and define processes of women who were no longer living in an abusive relationship. However, participants provided a broader context for their experience by offering many unsolicited details of their earlier life experience. This volunteered information unexpectedly provided data for the development of a 'bigger picture' theory.

Participants' stories provided detail of the entire process of the abusive relationship, from its beginning to its aftermath. The women who participated in this study no longer live in abusive relationships. They have become wiser, stronger, more aware of themselves, and are actively choosing how they will live in their world. I have named the basic psycho-social process experienced by the women **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**. This process is comprised of three interactive core categories. FINDING A PATH BEYOND ABUSE concerns becoming involved in an abusive relationship, separating from it, and maintaining an abuse-free future. GETTING A LIFE includes doing what is necessary to have a future that is meaningful and rewarding. BECOMING MYSELF is the process, and struggle, of choosing and defining who and how to be in the ever-changing context of a life.

This inter-active process includes five identified temporal phases. FALLING FOR LOVE considers circumstances at commencement of the relationship, and the earlier stages of the relationship. TAKING CONTROL concerns the multiple processes involved in deciding to separate, and actually separating from the relationship. SECURING A BASE includes the experiences of creating a sanctuary after separation. MAKING SENSE OF IT concerns participant's understanding of what has happened so it will not happen again. BEING MYSELF is the final stage of the process. There is not always a clean break between phases, and some phases include partial processes of earlier or later phases.

All five phases include processes that interact across core categories. Consequently, constructing chapters around core categories would require considerable repetition. In order to minimise confusion, chapters follow the natural sequence of phases or perspectives.

Accommodating the more encompassing basic psycho-social process of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY** within the limitations of a Masters thesis requires elaboration of processes relevant to that process only. Categories and codes of other processes are provided with minimal elaboration.

This chapter, and subsequent 'data' chapters, are constructed in sections comprised of dimensions/categories and sub-categories. A table of dimensions, categories and sub-categories illustrates the perspective relevant to each chapter. The chapter is structured in sections corresponding to the

category of each dimension, and sub-sections elaborating sub-categories and relevant substantive codes. Participant quotations illustrate categories, sub-categories, and relevant codes. Formatting for dimensions, categories etc. is as follows:

**BASIC PSYCHO-SOCIAL PROCESS;**

CORE CATEGORY;

PERSPECTIVE (AND PHASE);

**Category (and Dimension);**

***Sub-category;***

*Code.*

This chapter focuses on the first of the five phases, or perspectives: FALLING FOR LOVE. Figure 1 shows core categories and phases, and the place FALLING FOR LOVE has in the overall process of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**. Figure 2 shows colour-coded interaction of processes across the core categories within this phase.

INSERT fig 1

INSERT FIG 2

## ***Introduction***

FALLING FOR LOVE is the name given to the beginning phase of participants' experience of an abusive relationship. This chapter considers participants' history prior to commencement of the relationship and the possible influence of previous life experience, or lack of it, on relationship development. The main factor identified is the process of being in transition. Most participants were young when they met the man that would become an abusive partner. Others were in transition from a prior relationship that had commenced at a relatively young age. Expectations of their own role within a committed relationship appear shaped primarily by traditional gender prescriptions and romantic ideals of how a committed relationship 'should' be.

This chapter shows the attractions of courtship and romance, and includes responses to warning signs identified in hindsight. In the early stages of the relationship, participants accept their role and work hard to meet expectations. The male partner becomes more abusive and they become more isolated, they lose other perspectives on their situation. Participant efforts to make the relationship work become ineffective, and the women become confused and bewildered by their experience. Gradually, the abusive partner comes to define participant reality and the women begin to believe they are to blame for their own increasing misery. The phase, FALLING FOR LOVE, commonly lasted months and sometimes years.

## PERSPECTIVE: FALLING FOR LOVE

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Sub-categories</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Wanting Another for Transition.</b>	<i>Knowing an Authoritarian World</i> <i>Being in Transition</i> <i>Needing Another</i>
<b>Condition</b>	<b>Falling For Love.</b>	<i>Romancing the Courtship</i> <i>Committing to Ideals</i>
<b>Process</b>	<b>Loving in Blindness</b>	<i>Being Naïve to Abuse</i> <i>Being His Partner</i> <i>Taking Responsibility for the Relationship</i>
<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Enduring Abuse</b>	<i>Experiencing Abuse</i> <i>Blaming Myself</i> <i>Becoming Nothing</i>

Table 4. FALLING FOR LOVE. Dimensions, categories and sub-categories of the perspective FALLING FOR LOVE, the first phase in the basic psychosocial process, **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**.

Processes within this phase are considered from the perspective of FALLING FOR LOVE. Categories are structured as dimensions of this perspective: context, condition, process and consequence. In this chapter, and subsequent chapters, each dimension is presented separately with its subcategories and codes.

### **Context: Wanting Another for Transition**

Participants fit broadly into two categories. One group were young, this was their first committed relationship, and they had close contact with their family of origin when the relationship began. Most of this group had seen very little of the world beyond the primary family. The younger participants were aged between 16 and 23 when the relationship started. They were between mid-adolescence and young adulthood, and making the transition to an adult world. The second group had previous unsatisfactory relationships that commonly began at a young age.

Participant backgrounds included traditional ideals of a woman's place as embedded in her role of wife/partner and/or mother. Such traditional emphasis includes an expectation of the male partner having authority in the home. The majority of participants had not experienced being alone or making their own decisions. Leaving home, commencing a new life after being in another relationship, or making the transition to adulthood, seemed appropriately facilitated by commitment to a romantic partner.



### ***Knowing an Authoritarian World***

<b>Context</b>	<b><i>Sub-category</i></b>	<b><i>Codes</i></b>
<b>Wanting Another for Transition</b>	<b><i>Knowing an Authoritarian World</i></b>	<i>Knowing a world where tradition had authority</i>  <i>Knowing a world where obedience was expected</i>  <i>Knowing a world with physical punishments</i>  <i>Knowing an abusive world</i>  <i>Knowing a father-oriented world</i>

Table 5. Codes of the sub-category ***Knowing an Authoritarian World***.

*A women should not answer back, or speak when men are around.*

*Women have children and stay in the kitchen (Maria:7b.1.1)*

Many participants describe their childhood home as traditional and/or Christian. Others describe childhood homes as violent and/or abusive. Some participants describe both types of childhood home.

Traditional homes were particularly, but not exclusively, evident in the stories of the seven participants born prior to 1960. Four of those participants volunteered a childhood history that included strongly Christian values, as exemplified by Lily: *“I was a good little girl, and I was a Christian.”* (6a.1.40.) Two younger participants also offered a Christian upbringing. Traditional cultural values, inclusive of regular churchgoing, are evident in the story of Maria, a Samoan participant.

The childhood worlds described by participants included homes where stereotyped roles were the norm, and obedience was expected. Several women spoke of physical punishment for childhood transgressions. For a variety of reasons, father was an important authority in the childhood lives of participants. Four described homes where father smashed things, or was violent toward them or their mother, and controlled or dominated household priorities. Three spoke carefully of other, unspecified abuse in their childhood.

*Knowing a world where tradition had authority* included expectations of women and their roles. *“I have the stereotype, and (...) you have this example of unequal relationships.”* (Lily: 6.5.45.)

*Knowing a world where obedience was expected* included understanding their place and the rules of that place. Isabel explains: *“I wasn’t allowed to speak at the table because little girls should be seen and not heard.”* (2.2.6.)

*Knowing a world with physical punishments* meant physical discipline for “naughty” children, usually executed by mother.

*Abusive practices which again weren’t seen as abusive practices. (...)* *She used to pull our pants down when my brother and I were little and whip our bottoms and that was what you did for naughty kids.* (Lily: 6.5.5)

More than half of the participants spoke of *Knowing an abusive world*. Jamie describes her father: *“He was violent and stuff to my mum and all that, but (...) he hasn’t hit me since I was about 12.”* (4.9.20.) In addition to

violence, participants encountered other forms of abuse, as alluded to by Lily:  
*“There were more abusive practices that I did experience. It wasn’t from women.”* (6.6.9.)

Some homes were without mothers, or the relationship with her was conflicted and the relationship with father was easier. Those participants were *Knowing a father-oriented world*. Monitoring father’s moods was evident in Mary’s house: *“I was living with that kind of explosion. And mum would say to us, you know, ‘Don’t upset your father’.”* (3.20.14.)

***Knowing an Authoritarian World*** included both traditional and abusive childhood experiences. Obedience to authority held by others was expected, and father was head of the house.

### ***Being in Transition***

<b>Context</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Wanting Another for Transition</b>	<b><i>Being in Transition</i></b>	<i>Leaving home</i> <i>Rebelling against authority</i> <i>Having limited experience of life</i> <i>Having experienced a lot</i> <i>Becoming religious</i> <i>Getting sober</i> <i>Ending a previous relationship</i>

Table 6. Codes of the sub-category ***Being in Transition***.

Most participants had very little experience of life, the majority had not left home at commencement of the relationship, and the known world was primarily the world of the family of origin. For some, making a commitment to the relationship and living with their partner was a transition of *Leaving home* and the known world of the family of origin. Two participants were single women with more complex histories prior to committing to the relationship that became abusive. Their transitions are partly into their first committed relationship, but also named separately as *Becoming religious* and *Getting sober*. A number of participants had disappointing past relationships, and some were in a very recent transition from another relationship.

For Butterfly, *Leaving home* meant finding a partner. “Dad said to me, ‘you know you’re never going to find anyone unless you get out of the house’.” (5.7.2.)

Mary separated from the family by *Rebelling against authority*. “And my father said ‘no’, so I said ‘yes’. My father said ‘don’t get involved’, so I got involved. So, I think at that particular time in my life, you know... a teenager... rebellious.” (3.20.33)

A majority of participants shared *Having limited experience of life* outside the home. Lily’s explanation speaks for many participants: “I was quite a naive young woman, brought up in fairly strong Christian traditions.” (6a.1.11.)

Two participants described *Having experienced a lot* as uncommitted single women. Georgina was in a transition of *Becoming religious*, and Alex was *Getting sober*.

*I had become religious and I didn't want a sexual relationship outside of marriage. (...) I had been a single girl for all my life and had many partners during that time (...) I did choose dysfunctional men there's no doubt in that. (...) I never committed to them either because I knew how it would be. (Georgina: 11.3.34.)*

*I'd been in the drug haze for eight years. I hadn't really grown up, you know, emotionally. I was a bit stunted there and I really needed to, yeah, just be by myself. I mean it's all the advice really, you know. When you get sober don't get in a relationship for two years. (Alex:8.4.11)*

Several participants had prior serious relationships. Others had previously hoped for a serious relationship that had not eventuated. *Ending a previous relationship* included leaving, as described by Maria: *"I walked out of my marriage and I really needed a shoulder to cry on."* (7.5.11.) Being left was Lily's experience: *"I'd had this other guy, we weren't officially engaged in one sense, but we were talking about where the house was going to be. (...) and he just took off."* (6a.2.3.)

Participants were in transition, often from the security of their childhood homes. Others had recently experienced the ending of a relationship or were moving into a different type of life experience. The majority had never been alone.

### ***Needing Another***

<b>Context</b>	<b><i>Sub-category</i></b>	<b><i>Codes</i></b>
<b>Wanting Another for Transition</b>	<b><i>Needing Another</i></b>	<i>Feeling alone</i> <i>Feeling unworthy</i> <i>Wanting someone to value me</i> <i>Looking after others</i> <i>Dreaming an ideal future</i> <i>Not knowing myself</i> <i>Perceiving myself as strong</i>

Table 7. Codes of the sub-category ***Needing Another***.

*When there's been patches of not being in a relationship, I just had this type of emptiness and loneliness. (Alex:8.2.47.)*

***Needing Another*** encapsulates many participant experiences.

Several participants spoke of not wanting to be alone, both before the relationship and after its ending. Others spoke of having low self-esteem, feeling unworthy, or wanting to be cared for and valued by somebody. *Looking after others* was a way of feeling valued. Participants spoke of idealised dreams for home, family and relationship. Some participants perceived themselves as vulnerable and lacking self-awareness while others remember themselves as strong.

*Feeling alone* was difficult to sustain, particularly in a time of transition. Maria left her husband after ten years and explains what led her to the next relationship. “*When you kind of walk out of a relationship, and you've got to*

*the stage, you're vulnerable, you want companionship and obviously you want a man."* (7.5.37)

Alex was *Wanting* someone to *value me* as an antidote to *Feeling alone* and *Feeling unworthy*. "*Just really not feeling valuable, or yeah, that I needed somebody else to make me feel important, yeah. It was a really unhealthy lonely.*" (8.2.48.)

Butterfly does voluntary work with children and identifies with their *Looking after others* to feel valued.

*I see them trying to please, and trying to feel good about themselves by looking after others. I see that they're the vulnerable ones that need the help, and I can see why they are acting that way because I have been that way.* (5.2.12.)

Some, like Lily, spoke of hopes for a home and family in *Dreaming an ideal future*.

*Having a stable home that could be a 'home' – you know the old traditional idea of parents and grandparents and large house, lots of kids at the centre, very much a family focus, a homestead, a genuine homestead.* (6a.1.23.)

Alex described her lack of confidence in the context of *Not knowing myself*. "*I never had a chance to gain confidence and self esteem just by myself, just being me. So, yeah, I didn't have that strength. I didn't know myself at all.*" (8.3.39.)

In contrast, Catherine was *Perceiving myself as strong* prior to the relationship. “*Before the relationship I felt quite strong and quite together, and like I was quite functional.*” (10.15.5.)

**Wanting Another for Transition** concerns the complexities of moving into an unknown new life from a world in which the unexamined authority on who one is and how one should behave has been held by others. A few participants described their pre-relationship selves as ‘strong’, and their journey of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY** demonstrates this. However, none had experienced being alone for any extended time, and commitment to a partnership or marriage was perceived as the socially sanctioned means of GETTING A LIFE. Participants were vulnerable to experiencing **Falling for Love**.

### **Condition: Falling for Love**

**Falling for Love** is participants’ experience of meeting and becoming enamoured with the partner who would become abusive. This was an exciting and promising time for most participants. ***Romancing the Courtship*** concerns the romance and excitement of courtship. ***Committing to Ideals*** has some relevance to choice of partner and the decision to commit to the relationship.



### ***Romancing the Courtship***

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Falling for Love</b>	<b><i>Romancing the Courtship</i></b>	<i>Being open to romance</i> <i>Avoiding alone-ness</i> <i>Finding someone to love me</i> <i>Being courted</i> <i>Exploring the forbidden</i>

Table 8. Codes of the sub-category ***Romancing the Courtship***.

*I was open to romance. (...) I was smiling at him, and he was smiling at me, and it started very beautifully. He had a very soft smile and warm eyes and handsome face and seemed like an angel (...) and he had a quietness about him, a reserve which I mistook for gentleness, and he had tremendous sexual charisma.*  
 (Georgina: 11.3.17)

***Romancing the Courtship*** concerns the period of courtship.

Participants such as Georgina (above) were open to romance and perceived their partner and his attractions in glowing terms. Others were avoiding aloneness and looking for love. *Being courted* was romantic, exciting, and included forbidden possibilities.

*Avoiding alone-ness* was a theme for Alex who explains: ‘*When I was between relationships, I just felt so lonely*’ (8.3.21). She describes her experience of *Being courted* by her partner. “*The first few weeks he really courted me, took me to dinner, brought me gifts, you know, breakfast in bed and picnics at the beach, very romantic and stuff.*” ( 8.3.32)

The excitement of beginning the relationship also held elements of *Exploring the forbidden*. Dawn describes herself at the beginning of the relationship: “*I was from a fundamentalist background and all of a sudden I could start asking all these questions that I couldn’t ask before, and it was exciting, and the world was my oyster.*” (1.2.10) Lily is more explicit: “*Sex was all fantastic and naughty.*” (6a.1.15.)

***Romancing the Courtship*** was exciting and rewarding. It seemed all their dreams might be possible. Participants went on to commit to the relationship.

#### ***Committing to Ideals***

<b>Condition</b>	<b><i>Sub-category</i></b>	<b><i>Codes</i></b>
<b>Falling for Love</b>	<b><i>Committing to Ideals</i></b>	<i>Looking for an authority like father</i> <i>Committing in obedience to an ideal authority</i>

Table 9. Codes of the sub-category ***Committing to Ideals***.

Participants were often ***Committing to Ideals*** in one form or another. Several women were considerably younger than their partners and participants spoke of looking for someone strong, or a father figure. Religious teachings on marriage influenced several participants.

Mary spoke of *Looking for an authority like father* when she chose a man many years her senior. *“I think part of initially getting into that relationship was because I was looking for a father figure.”* (3.20.32)

Lily was among those influenced by religious beliefs when *Committing in obedience to an ideal authority*. *“I remember this sermon about marriage being a Christian thing, you know, and its what young Christian women should do (...) and in my head it was like, oh yeah there’s the tick.”* (6a.1.47)

**Falling for Love** included an exciting romantic courtship period and resulted in commitment to the relationship. However, taking on the role of partner or wife with this particular man was an experience of **Loving in Blindness**.

### **Process: Loving in Blindness**

**Loving in Blindness** arose as participants embarked upon meeting their commitment to the relationship. With family-of-origin models and gendered cultural prescriptions (James & Saville-Smith, 1990) to guide them, most were either unaware of abuse, or believed it was normal. More than half of the participants, with benefit of hindsight, identified warnings which they chose to overlook at the beginning of the relationship. This section concerns the categories: ***Being Naïve to Abuse*** which considers not identifying abuse early in the relationship; ***Being His Partner*** which regards her focus upon him

as the centre of her world; and ***Taking Responsibility for the Relationship*** with her efforts to make it work.

### ***Being Naïve to Abuse***

<b>Process</b>	<b><i>Sub-category</i></b>	<b><i>Codes</i></b>
<b>Loving in Blindness</b>	<b><i>Being Naïve to Abuse</i></b>	<i>Being naïve</i> <i>Ignoring the signs</i> <i>Not recognising abuse</i> <i>Minimising abuse</i> <i>Thinking this is normal</i>

Table 10. Codes of the sub-category ***Being Naïve to Abuse***.

*Love is blind, and I didn't know, and I just fell for it, and I didn't see through him. (...) He was different and that's what sucked me in for a long time because he was more intellectual, more witty, more charming, more everything like that. (Catherine: 10.10.37)*

***Being Naïve to Abuse*** early in the relationship was common. Some participants were naïve because abuse was outside their experience. Others identified potentially problematic indicators in retrospect, but overlooked his behaviour or attributed it to other causes. Participants experiencing abuse several decades ago did not have a readily available 'language' for understanding or expressing their experience. Other participants minimised the abuse or thought it was normal, particularly if abuse was a feature in their childhood home. The saying "Love is Blind" was echoed by several participants when describing this early part of the relationship.

*Being naive* was common for participants like Dawn whose worlds had not included identified abuse. *“Perhaps there’s some naivety to abuse, of assuming that all decent people were the same. And finding this magnificent man, ah.. I thought he was magnificent, why would he not be like that.”*

(1b.12.27)

Warning signs were often subtle, although these became more obvious in hindsight. Participants noted his moodiness, or his expectations of her seemed inconsiderate, or his family was ‘odd’. It was much later in the relationship when Alex and Georgina discovered their partners had previous histories of abusing partners. However, Jamie was *Ignoring the signs* when his history did not deter her from committing to the relationship.

*I knew he had an abusive history through the courts..., of course, he’d, um ... won’t do that, you know. He’s a good boy now. (...) because, really you do get into that “I love you so much”, and love is blind, and you hit me once, but it won’t happen again. (Jamie: 4.2.29)*

*Ignoring the signs* included Georgina’s consideration for his past: *“It was a horror-story childhood that he’d had. And I guess you’ve got to expect the guy to be a bit defensive. So, I made excuses for his behaviour and went on and married him.”* (11.2.49.)

*Not Recognising abuse* in the 1950’s is understandable as there was no language to describe other than physical abuse at that time (Kelly, 1990). Isabel found it difficult to recognise something for which there was no name. *“I*

*knew of several women in my neighbourhood who were physically abused.*

*(...) It never occurred to me that I was one of them.” ( 2.14.4)*

In the early stages of the relationship, *Minimising abuse* was quite common. “*You're still in that stage of thinking, ‘oh well this is a one off’, and ‘oh well’, you know, ‘I’ll tell him and maybe he’ll change’.*” (Catherine: 10.3.16)

Several women were *Thinking this is normal* behaviour for a man: “*If you've grown up in quite an abusive childhood, this is so normal you can't actually get a clear perspective on it. You've got to have something to compare it to.*” (Catherine:10.10.32.)

All participants named ***Being Naïve to Abuse*** in some form. Over time abuse escalated, and some were then able to identify their experience as abusive. Later chapters will consider this process. Meanwhile, participants put their efforts into ***Being His Partner*** and ***Taking Responsibility for the Relationship***.

### ***Being His Partner***

<b>Process</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Loving in Blindness</b>	<b><i>Being His Partner</i></b>	<i>Considering him first</i> <i>Trying to understand him</i> <i>Lacking the skills to manage abuse</i> <i>Feeling confused and bewildered</i> <i>Keeping the secret</i> <i>Losing other perspectives</i>

Table 11. Codes of the sub-category ***Being His Partner***.

***Being His Partner*** meant putting him and his needs first. Participants tried to understand him and make allowances for his behaviour. The women lacked skills for responding to abuse and became increasingly confused by his behaviour. The response of others to their bewilderment was unhelpful and abuse became a secret as they stopped talking about it to others. Participants began *Losing other perspectives* as their partner dominated and controlled more and more of their world.

*Considering him first* may initially have been by choice, as Alex says: ‘*I was always putting him first. I used to always put (partner) before myself.*’ (8.1.31.). But, *Considering him first* could also be a requirement: “*He said to me, ‘Well, if we have a child here you’re going to be busy taking care of that child. What will happen to me?’*” (Georgina:11.6.1.)

As the relationship progressed, participants followed gendered prescriptions of care (Chodorow, 1989; Gilligan, 1982/1993; Miller, 1976) and took on the responsibility for understanding his emotional and psychological wounding (Towns & Adams, 2000). Georgina explains how she applied *Trying to understand him*: “*My compassion played a part in it, too much of a part. I forgave a lot of his behaviours knowing how he had suffered as a child and how it affected him.*” (11.5.29)

In the early stages of the relationship abuse had been subtle and participants spoke of the insidiousness of the apparent change. *Lacking the skills to manage abuse* was named by participants such as Dawn. “*Having no*

*way of being able to say 'don't be like that with me'. But part of that was also the insidiousness of the change."* (1b.12.30.)

Abuse in the relationship was beginning to be problematic, and without identifying abuse, many participants were *Feeling confused and bewildered*.

*I kind of must have known, there was so much denial as well so much confusion. I couldn't think straight literally, I could not work out what was happening in that relationship at the end. (...) The slightest little things could blow up and I wouldn't know what had caused it, how to stop it, where to go with it. (Catherine:10.15.2.)*

Participants, such as Georgina, tried to find support or advice elsewhere, and found the response discouraging. They began *Keeping the secret*.

*"Oh, it takes two". And, "what on earth did you do to cause him to say that?" (...) "They're just teething problems." "Oh, isn't this a bit private, you shouldn't really be talking about it." (...) Those sorts of comments they just made me feel worse. So I learned to keep it quiet. (11.8.9.)*

Participants with violent partners easily identified abuse, but consideration for his feelings still contributed to *Keeping the secret*. Alex was protecting him. *"I didn't tell anyone. I hid my bruises. I just went on like nothing had happened. (...) I was helping him keep the secret by acting that nothing happened."* (8.9.2.)



***Being his Partner*** became an isolating experience. Although isolation was not necessarily overt, loss of contact outside the relationship resulted in *Losing other perspectives*. The partner completely dominated the environment.

*He had the environment his way and his music, I can't stand. I can't stand. So, it was like it's just infiltrated. It's like I felt like I had nowhere to go, no way of getting any peace, no way of having my own thoughts, nowhere I could go. Overpowered. He'd taken over my whole life. (Catherine:10.13.14)*

***Being His Partner*** resulted in participants putting him first and focusing their lives on him. They tried to understand him, and lacking awareness of abuse or the skills to manage it, began to feel confused and bewildered by their experience. Discouragement from telling others increased the sense of isolation and loss of perspective as his domination of their world increased. The majority of participants were working hard ***Taking Responsibility for the Relationship***.

#### ***Taking Responsibility for the Relationship***

<b>Process</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Loving in Blindness</b>	<b><i>Taking Responsibility for the Relationship</i></b>	<i>Following the rules</i> <i>Trying to make it work</i> <i>Keeping silent in hope</i>

Table 12. Codes of the sub-category ***Taking Responsibility for the Relationship***.

*I was brought up with women as sacrificers, sacrificing themselves.  
Women were there for their husbands and children.  
(Dawn:1a.1.16.)*

Participants had expectations of how things 'should' be and their roles of wife or partner. They followed the rules as they understood them and, not wanting to lose the relationship, tried hard to make it work. The rules for a 'good' wife include looking after the well-being of their partner and the relationship by 'loving him enough' (Towns & Adams, 2000). Participants took responsibility for the quality of the relationship and kept silent in hope that the 'good times' would return.

*Following the Rules* included gender prescriptions for wives or religious beliefs such as those described by Georgina: *"The nature of religion can keep a woman where she shouldn't be."* (11.10.34.).

Participants put enormous effort into the relationship, *Trying to make it work*. Catherine explains her experience: *"If you're hearing constant criticism, and you know if you do this it sets him off, you do tend to get sucked into taking too much responsibility."* (10.10.28)

Catherine also spoke of *Keeping silent in hope* that the relationship will return to the way it was before the abuse. *"You desperately want to resume, the earlier stages of the good relationship. It gets to feel like you can't have the good relationship that you had and speak out. So you get caught in that kind of dilemma."* (10.3.10.)

Most participants had limited alternatives to the view of the world learned in their family of origin. They knew no other way for a woman to be, could not reflect upon their situation objectively, and were **Loving in Blindness**. While many participants did not yet have a name for it, they were **Enduring Abuse**.

### **Consequence: Enduring Abuse**

Relationship durations ranged from 2 years to 21 years during which participants experienced abuse in many forms. Without other perspectives to provide an alternative viewpoint, the women blamed themselves for the problems in the relationship. Participants believed who they were, or something they were doing, or not doing, was causing all the problems. The women continued to endure abuse and, over time, experienced becoming nothing.

### ***Experiencing Abuse***

<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Enduring Abuse</b>	<b><i>Experiencing Abuse</i></b>	<i>Experiencing male privilege</i> <i>Experiencing physical violence</i> <i>Experiencing coercion and threats</i> <i>Experiencing intimidation</i> <i>Living in fear</i> <i>Experiencing economic abuse</i> <i>Experiencing his using children</i> <i>Experiencing sexual abuse</i> <i>Experiencing isolation</i> <i>Experiencing emotional abuse</i> <i>Experiencing being blamed</i>

Table 13. Codes of the sub-category ***Experiencing Abuse***.

*He was totally irrational and totally unpredictable. (...) You wouldn't know if you would go home and he'd be screaming or.. you'd never know. And you wouldn't necessarily have to have done anything. So there was this unpredictable behaviour, which you're then cued into, and it was like I was conditioned, totally conditioned to this Pavlov type response. (Lily:6.5.12.)*

Participants experienced the full range of behaviours identified on the Power and Control Wheel, a widely used tool for analysis of forms of abuse within an abusive relationship (refer Appendix A).

Participants were beaten, threatened, intimidated, and isolated. The abusive partners were irresponsible with money, manipulated the children, demanded privileges, treated the women like servants, made all the big decisions, and controlled participants with fear. Many participants experienced sexual abuse, some to a severe degree.

Emotional abuse, including mind-games and humiliation, put-downs, lies, and blaming were particularly damaging.

*He took me apart psychologically, like just knew too much about me. (...) But then he used it to his own advantage (...) I felt like I had exposed too much of myself, I felt like some of my boundaries had collapsed with the intensity of the relationship in the way of, kind of wanting to know everything. And it felt like I was sort of being annihilated. (...) He justified all his behaviour by saying, 'that's because of your past'. Or, 'I know more about you than you know about yourself'. Or, 'you know you're damaged, you're damaged goods' (Catherine:10.14.21.)*

Most participants experienced multiple forms of abuse. In relative isolation, without support or an alternative viewpoint, and with little experience of alternative expectations of them as wives and mothers, participants began ***Blaming Myself.***

### ***Blaming Myself***

<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Enduring Abuse</b>	<b><i>Blaming Myself</i></b>	<i>Defining myself by his perceptions</i>  <i>Thinking I'm the problem</i>

Table 14. Codes of the sub-category ***Blaming Myself***.

The abusive partners consistently blamed the difficulties and problems on participants. Inevitably, many of the women believed this was true and began *Defining myself by his perceptions* or the perceptions of others who believed his viewpoint. Mary had a bad counselling experience.

*In the end I had a nervous breakdown and my doctor sent us to a counsellor (...) and the clear message that came back from the counsellors was "now, go home and be a good wife, this is a good man". (...) and so I went back into it and thought it was all my fault... (3.5.31.)*

Many participants, such as Catherine, were *Thinking I'm the problem*.

*Confusion, because you're being blamed and you think it's yourself. (...) just sort of caught into that sort of brainwashing thing, (...) that it was all me. It was something I was doing, if I'd only done it better or differently I would. (10.3.6.)*

Over time, the women began to lose hope in their ability to make the relationship work. The stress was extreme, their situation was serious, and they believed they were somehow to blame for their own suffering.

### ***Becoming Nothing***

<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Enduring Abuse</b>	<b><i>Becoming Nothing</i></b>	<i>Feeling devalued and degraded</i> <i>Losing hope for love</i> <i>Losing my sanity</i> <i>Despairing</i> <i>Losing my self</i>

Table 15. Codes of the sub-category ***Becoming Nothing***.

*I knew that I was in a dreadful state. I was depressed, I was clinically depressed (...) that's where the despair came in. I just got more, more kind of clingy I suppose, almost more needy, more desperate, and just wanted the relationship to work.*  
*(Catherine:10.11.49.)*

Toward the end of this phase, participants reached states of despair and depression. Others feared for their sanity, or felt degraded by the relationship. Others lost hope for love, and the majority described ***Becoming Nothing***.

*You don't realise that you're getting turned to have no opinion (...) I didn't realise actually how weak I became. (...) you don't realise it at the time, its just like its slowly getting shaved off you know, (...) I was nothing, at the end of it. (Jamie:4.1.33-42)*

Many of the women had reached breaking point. Limited contact outside the relationship left them embedded in the ideals of the world they

knew before the relationship. These ideals allowed their partner to define reality within the relationship, and he provided the main perspective for their perceptions of themselves. Within this world, they were ***Becoming Nothing***.

### ***Summary***

Participants commenced the relationship during a period of transition in which they were defining or re-defining who they were in the world. The majority were in middle to late adolescence. All participants' family-of-origin environments were either traditional and/or Christian, or abusive, and sometimes both. Most still had close contact with their primary families and had minimal exposure to life or other relationships outside that environment at the time the relationship began. Participants committed to a future with minimal exploration.

Others defined the world known by participants, and transition to the world that lay beyond the relative security of the world they knew was difficult to make alone. Courting, romance, and wanting not to be alone resulted in committing to the relationship without recognising their partner was abusive.

Traditional ideals of relationship and marriage provided expectations of them as women. Being his partner meant taking responsibility for the relationship and trying to make it work. The partner's behaviour seemed to change insidiously over time and participants could not understand him, were confused, and did not have the skills to manage abuse. The abuse became a



secret because others responses were unhelpful or blaming. With increasing social isolation, the women began to lose perspective on the relationship and themselves within it.

Many of the women did not recognise the relationship was abusive for some time, and believed him when he blamed them for the problems. Others had identified abuse, mainly because of violence, but were not in a position where leaving seemed possible. The impact of abuse was now seriously affecting participants' well-being. Fear and escalating despair took many women to the extremes of their coping ability and many felt they were becoming nothing. For the women to survive beyond this point, something had to change. That process will be the subject of the next chapter.

Figure 3 illustrates the processes of FALLING FOR LOVE that lead to Becoming Nothing. Figure 4 summarises the Perspective, FALLING FOR LOVE, the first phase of the process of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**.

**INSERT fig 3**

INSERT fig 4

Chodorow, N. J. (1989). *Feminism and psychoanalytic theory*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Gilligan, C. (1982/1993). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

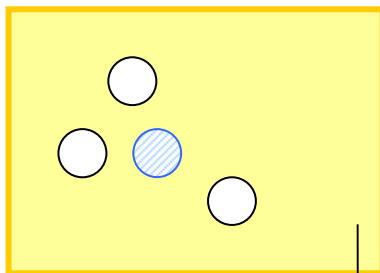
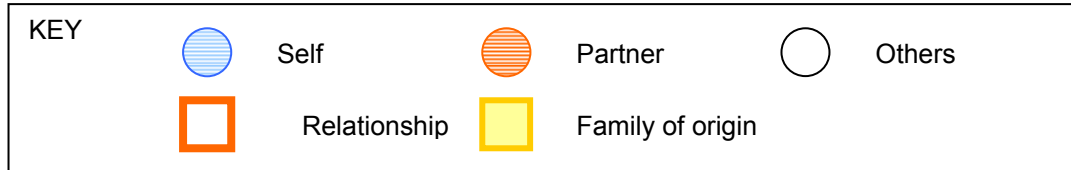
James, B., & Saville-Smith, K. (1990). *Gender, culture, and power: Challenging New Zealand's gendered culture* (Vol. 2). Auckland: Oxford University Press.

Kelly, L. (1990). How women define their experiences of violence. In K. Yllo & M. Bograd (Eds.), *Feminist perspectives on wife abuse* (pp. 114-132). Newbury Park: Sage.

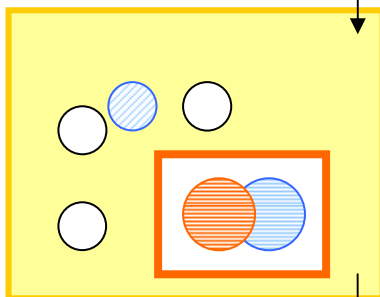
Miller, J. B. (1976). *Toward a new psychology of women*. London: Allen Lane.

Towns, A., & Adams, P. (2000). "If I really loved him enough, he would be okay". *Violence Against Women*, 6(6), 558-585.

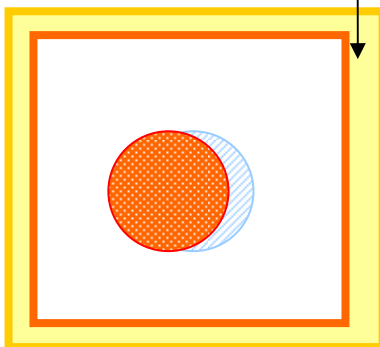
Figure 3.  
**FALLING FOR LOVE**  
 Illustration of processes of the first phase  
 in the basic psycho-social process of  
**GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**



***Knowing an Authoritarian World.***  
 The family of origin is the world known by participants.



***Taking Responsibility for the Relationship*** is part of **Loving in Blindness**. The relationship is embedded in the world as she knows it and she is *Following the rules* and *Trying to make it work*.



***Becoming Nothing.*** The world she knows is small. The relationship takes up most of her energy and she has become isolated. Her partner defines reality and provides the main perspective for her perception of herself.

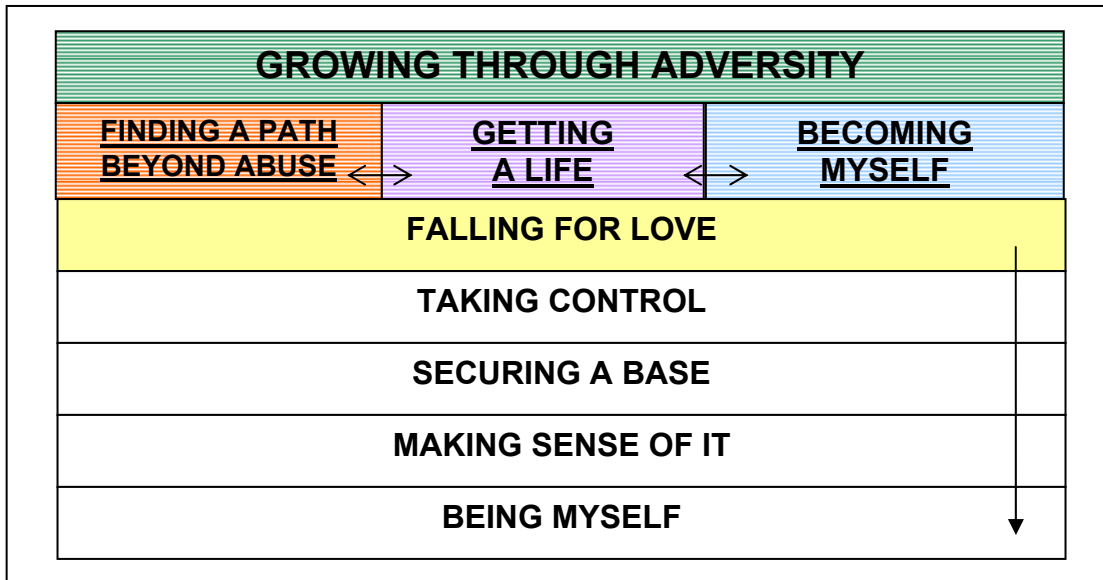


Figure 1. Structure of the basic psycho-social process, **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**. There are three interactive core categories: FINDING A PATH BEYOND ABUSE; GETTING A LIFE; and BECOMING MYSELF. Within these are five temporal phases, in sequence: FALLING FOR LOVE; TAKING CONTROL; SECURING A BASE; MAKING SENSE OF IT; and BEING MYSELF.

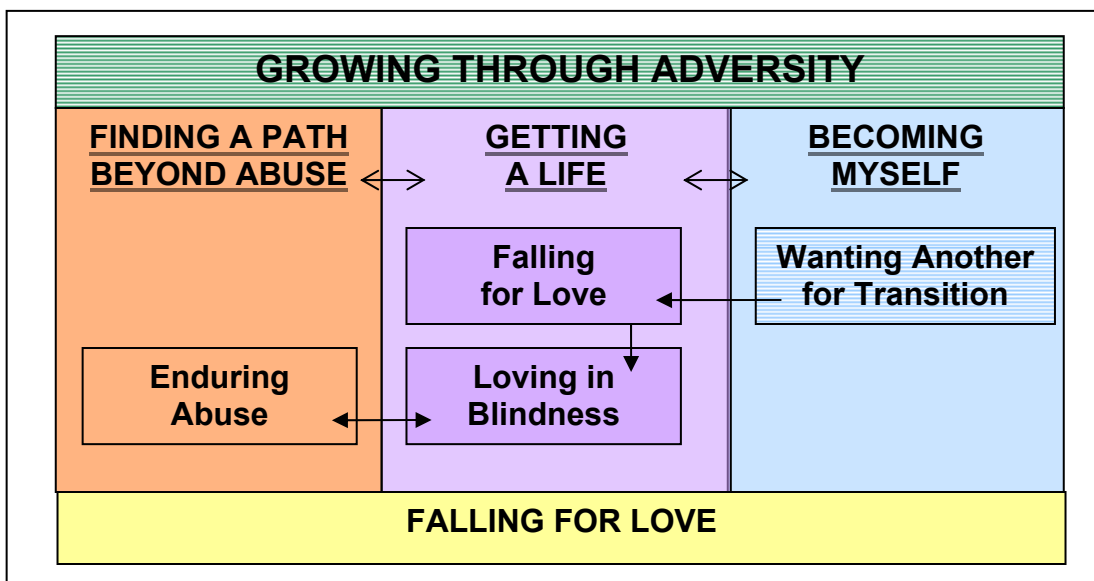


Figure 2. FALLING FOR LOVE the interaction of dimensions within the core categories of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**.

## GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY

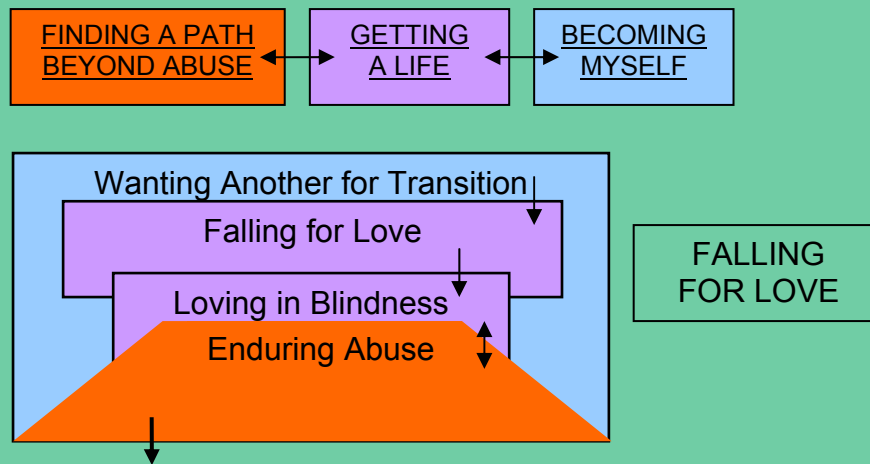


Figure 4. FALLING FOR LOVE. A summary map of the first phase of the basic psycho-social process, **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**.

## CHAPTER SIX

### TAKING CONTROL

#### *Introduction*

TAKING CONTROL is the second phase in the basic psycho-social process named; **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**. Figure 5 locates the phase, TAKING CONTROL within the basic psycho-social process of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**. Figure 6 shows the interactions of dimensions across the core categories FINDING A PATH BEYOND ABUSE, GETTING A LIFE, and BECOMING MYSELF.

INSERT fig 5



INSERT FIG 6

At commencement of the phase TAKING CONTROL, participants are in considerable distress. They have tried hard to make the relationship work without success and are frequently despairing. In TAKING CONTROL they recognise there is a serious problem and try to find ways to improve their situation. Some considered leaving or tried leaving without success. Commonly participants begin trying to take control by resisting what is happening to them. Resisting appears to have two forms. In the first, conflict results in police intervention. In the second, participants begin to pull away from

the abusive partner, trying to find something to sustain themselves. A third form of resisting by controlling the peace, is a precursor to resisting by pulling away, or occurs in conjunction with the other forms of resistance. Resisting in conflict or resisting by pulling away both result in escalating abuse.

When abuse increases, participants seek help for themselves, or the relationship, with variable success. Through the process of seeking help, or through intervening circumstance, participants find another framework that allows a different perspective on their life and the place of the relationship within it.

A different perspective causes participants to realise the relationship must, and can, end. Often this awareness is sudden and those participants may end the relationship immediately. Other participants carefully plan separation and wait for the right time. The timing, circumstances, and management of separation vary according to how much control participants have over the process. TAKING CONTROL and rejecting the relationship does not always mean rejecting the man, and separation can be an ambivalent experience.

TAKING CONTROL includes four main interactive processes. These are: **Waking Up** which is dependent on **Finding Other Perspectives**; **Taking Control of Enduring Abuse**; and, **Breaking Away**. **Waking Up** is the realisation that separation from the abusive partner is probable and necessary. **Taking Control of Enduring Abuse** may commence with resisting prior to **Finding Other Perspectives**, or may be suddenly required if separation is unplanned. **Taking Control of Enduring Abuse**, and taking control more

generally, remains ongoing after separation. **Breaking Away** is the experience of taking action to separate. The patterns of interaction vary across the core categories: FINDING A PATH BEYOND ABUSE; GETTING A LIFE; and, BECOMING MYSELF. Variations in the pattern are dependent upon the sequence of events and processes in this phase.

## PERSPECTIVE: TAKING CONTROL

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Sub-categories</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Taking Control of</b>	<i>Controlling the Peace</i>
	<b>Enduring Abuse</b>	<i>Resisting by Pulling Away</i>
		<i>Resisting in Conflict</i>
<b>Condition</b>	<b>Finding Other</b>	<i>Having Another Context</i>
	<b>Perspectives</b>	<i>Realising He's Abusive</i>
		<i>Experiencing Escalating Abuse</i>
		<i>Seeking Help</i>
		<i>Wanting to Leave</i>
<b>Process</b>	<b>Waking Up</b>	<i>Realising Separation Must Happen</i>
		<i>Realising Separation Can Happen</i>
<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Breaking Away</b>	<i>Planning Separation</i>
		<i>Deciding the Time is Now</i>
		<i>Rejecting the Relationship</i>

Table 16. TAKING CONTROL. Categories and sub-categories of phase two.

## Context: Taking Control of Enduring Abuse

All participants attempted **Taking Control** through resisting what was happening in the relationship. Resistance took two main forms: **Resisting in Conflict**, consisting of attempts to change him or his behaviour; and **Resisting by Pulling Away**, which included having time away from him, leaving and returning, doing something for herself, and withdrawing into silence. Participants recognised there were problems and many applied themselves to **Controlling the Peace** to avoid conflict. Resisting usually changed form over time and both forms of resisting tended to escalate the abuse.

### **Resisting in Conflict**

Context	Sub-category	Codes
Taking Control of Enduring Abuse	<b>Resisting in Conflict</b>	<i>Trying to change him</i>
		<i>Protesting against his behaviour</i>

Table 17. Codes of the sub-category **Resisting in Conflict**.

Many of the women tried **Resisting in Conflict** earlier in the relationship. Some were *Trying to change him*, as explained by Alex: “*The fights were around I wanted change, I wanted him to change. I was fighting for him to change so we could stay together.*” (8.8.21.) Other participants, such as Maria, were *Protesting about his behaviour*. “*I said to him, “look I have left my previous relationship because of the booze I do not tolerate this kind of behaviour.”* (7.5.17.)

***Resisting in Conflict*** is further elaborated in the Condition sub-category ***Experiencing Escalating Abuse*** when considering *Experiencing intervention*.

### ***Controlling the Peace***

<b>Context</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Taking Control of Enduring Abuse</b>	<b><i>Controlling the Peace</i></b>	<i>Recognising there is a problem</i> <i>Choosing my battles</i> <i>Submitting for peace</i> <i>Silencing my voice</i> <i>Choosing not to fight</i> <i>Using a Protection Order</i>

Table 18. Codes of the sub-category ***Controlling the Peace***.

*You get worn down with it and you just want to keep the peace because it's also becoming so ugly. (...) Trying to have your normal equal say, and realising you can't, and realising it's probably better to shut up. (...) And then as I shut up I really lost myself, really lost ground, lost who I was. (Catherine:10.3.8.)*

Fear of further abuse or violence made continued ***Resisting in Conflict*** untenable for most. Participants began ***Controlling the Peace*** by *Submitting for peace* or *Silencing my voice*. Having a Protection Order already in place allowed for some assertion, but generally participants were minimising conflict by *Choosing my battles* or *Choosing not to fight*: “I made a decision to stop fighting, then (...) I would just go out for a walk.” (Dawn:1b.4.29.)

**Controlling the Peace** was one way of managing conflict in the relationship. **Resisting by Pulling Away** was another form of **Taking Control of Enduring Abuse**.

### ***Resisting By Pulling Away***

<b>Context</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Taking Control of Enduring Abuse</b>	<b>Resisting by Pulling Away</b>	<i>To-ing and fro-ing</i>
		<i>Resisting through silence</i>
		<i>Needing something for myself</i>
		<i>Having time away from him</i>

Table 19. Codes of the sub-category ***Resisting by Pulling Away***.

*I started to separate out from him and keep something to myself. (...) Those things were the beginning of me beginning to pull away and set up something for myself. (...) It was actually a step towards saying, "I'm important, I've got to look after me" and putting myself first in some way.(...) There was something more powerful about it being a secret. (...) Something that was mine, taking myself back, taking my life in hand that was separate to him,.(...) something that he wasn't controlling. I needed to get control of my own life again by myself. (Catherine:10.13.32.)*

In ***Resisting by Pulling Away*** some tried *Resisting through silence* within the relationship. However, this also escalated abuse. *Having time away from him* was spent with others or alone. Some participants, *Needing something for myself*, tried to sustain themselves through maintaining or creating connections outside the relationship. Sometimes there was a pattern of separating and reuniting.

Both forms of resisting were causal and correlative with conditions of ***Experiencing Escalating Abuse***. Resisting in conditions of **Finding Other Perspectives** could increase ***Resisting by Pulling Away***.

### Condition: Finding Other Perspectives.

**Finding Other Perspectives** meant ***Having Another Context*** or priority, a reference point from which to see this relationship differently. Sometimes this was as simple as ***Realising He's Abusive***. ***Experiencing Escalating Abuse***, often an outcome of resisting, could result in police intervention. ***Seeking Help*** for themselves or the relationship could provide other points of view. Other participants were ***Wanting to Leave*** but needed information, resources, or a belief in their own ability to survive before they could do so.

### ***Having Another Context***

Condition	Sub-category	Codes
Finding Other Perspectives	<b><i>Having Another Context</i></b>	<i>Changing the reference point</i>
		<i>Thinking about children</i>
		<i>Getting unexpected help</i>
		<i>Having good advice</i>

Table 20. Codes of the sub-category ***Having Another Context***.

For some participants ***Having Another Context*** resulted from intervening circumstances, *Changing the reference point* unexpectedly. *Thinking about children* changed priorities from the relationship to the well-

being of children. *Getting unexpected help* and *Having good advice* contributed to **Having Another Context**.

For Catherine, **Finding Other Perspectives** came with the news that her mother was dying, *Changing the reference point* and providing a different place to stand. *“That really put it in quite a different framework for me. The reference point of my mum's dying and this guy's doing this. It just seemed so outrageous.”* (10.12.33.)

**Finding Other Perspectives** could happen when a powerful experience highlighted the importance of other aspects of life, such as *Thinking about children*. Mary's daughter was hospitalised for surgery and Mary had just been present at the birth of a friend's child.

*I thought I don't want my kids to live like this. I think they're part of what snapped that light on that day. Her going into hospital. This child being born. I'm thinking children. (...) Why should they live this life?* (3.2.9.)

When the police arrived at Maria's house Victim Support came with them and provided Maria with referrals to assist her. **Finding Other Perspectives** came from *Getting unexpected help*. *“I rang the cops and the cops brought Victim Support. (...) I didn't even know about such a thing as the Protection Order and all that.”* (7.1.36.)

Alex' partner stormed out of their counselling session. Alex was *Having good advice* when her counsellor said, *“We would both be beating around the bush if we said there looked like there was any hope for your relationship, and*



*that to be safe and to have a life, you really need to consider getting out.”*

(8.5.10.)

*Having good advice* could come in the form of books or brochures. Georgina found ‘Invisible Wounds’ (Douglas, 1994). *“I just read that book cover to cover.(...) I found a part at the back which was on how can you support a woman going through this process. I sent it to everybody I knew.”* (11.9.22.)

***Having Another Context*** gave participants a different way to see the relationship. For some participants ***Realising He’s Abusive*** provided the new perspective.

#### ***Realising He’s Abusive***

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Finding Other</b>	<b><i>Realising He’s Abusive</i></b>	<i>Seeing him differently</i>
<b>Perspectives</b>		<i>Recognising abuse</i>
		<i>Discovering a comparison</i>

Table 21. Codes of the sub-category ***Realising He’s Abusive***.

*I had to identify myself in that category of being in an abusive relationship for it to be over. (Alex:8a.1.11.)*

*Recognising abuse* or *Discovering a comparison* created a different viewpoint resulting in *Seeing him differently* and ***Realising He’s Abusive***.

Catherine was suicidal when she went to her doctor for help. Medication allowed some emotional detachment from her partner, resulting in *Seeing him differently*. *“Once I started taking the medication I started to feel calmer and I*

*was able to detach more from what was happening (...) I made a shift.”*  
(10.12.32.)

*Recognising abuse* allowed Georgina to find other perspectives. “*They sent me the brochure. (...) I know some women don't like to be called an abused woman but for me it helped me to understand what was happening. (...) it's not me, this is what's happened.*” (11.8.2-37.)

Georgina met another man who behaved very differently from her partner. She had been ***Realising He's Abusive***, but this was highlighted when *Discovering a comparison*. “*I think this man was probably the catalyst that made me get out. (...) Just the purity of heart.*” (11.1.22.)

***Realising He's Abusive*** increased in conditions of ***Experiencing Escalating Abuse***.

#### ***Experiencing Escalating Abuse***

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Finding Other</b>	<b><i>Experiencing</i></b>	<i>Living in fear</i>
<b>Perspectives</b>	<b><i>Escalating Abuse</i></b>	<i>Protecting the children</i> <i>Experiencing intervention</i>

Table 22. Codes of the sub-category ***Experiencing Escalating Abuse***.

Resisting resulted in and correlated with ***Experiencing Escalating Abuse***, creating conditions of *Living in fear* and need for *Protecting the children*. Those who continued ***Resisting in Conflict*** found themselves *Experiencing intervention* when police arrived to prevent further violence.

As abuse increased, Lily was *Living in fear*. “*My fear response to him I can remember I would go ice cold and I would feel like nothing was functioning and my whole body would freeze and this happened each time there was major confrontation.*” (6.8.5.)

*Protecting the children* was necessary during **Experiencing Escalating Abuse**, and participants were concerned for the needs and safety of their children during this time. Alex sent her daughter to her room when she sensed there could be violence.

*I never picked her up for protection. (...) he still would have been going at me, and to her she wouldn't be able to decipher what was directed at me and what was directed, you know, because I would be holding her.* (8.9.48.)

Three participants experienced police intervention because of **Experiencing Escalating Abuse**. *Experiencing intervention* was a shock for participants, especially if they were not prepared for separation or still had hopes for the relationship. Maria called the police herself, but was worried about the consequences.

*When the cops arrived I was quite shocked. There were cops everywhere on my section and my house. (...) Oh what troubles have I put myself into now? I mean all very well that I've called the cops, (...). Now they are going to ask a lot of questions.* (7.2.32.)

If **Resisting in Conflict** persisted, it could result in police intervention to prevent further violence. *Experiencing intervention* because of **Experiencing Escalating Abuse** exposed participants' situations to others and

provided other perspectives, such as those of police and support workers.

**Experiencing Escalating Abuse** included a need to protect the children, and some women feared for their lives.

### **Seeking Help**

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Finding Other</b>	<b>Seeking Help</b>	<i>Seeking help for the relationship</i>
<b>Perspectives</b>		<i>Seeking help for myself</i>
		<i>Ceasing to protect him</i>

Table 23. Codes of the sub-category **Seeking Help**.

As abuse escalated, participants began **Seeking Help** either for themselves, or for the relationship. *Seeking help for myself*, might require *Ceasing to protect him*. A few participants unsuccessfully tried *Seeking help for the relationship*.

*Seeking help for myself* had mixed results, but was sometimes successful at this stage. Georgina tried mental health services and Lily called the police, both without success.

*I phoned the CAT Team. (...) "I think I'm losing my mind can someone come and see me I need help." My husband took the phone and said "she's ok' I'm running the bath for her she's going to be alright". And they didn't (come), they didn't. That was it.*  
(Georgina:11.2.2.)

*I phoned the Police, and by the time the Police arrived I was a gibbering mess, and he was you know, "what's the problem here*

*officers”, sort of stuff. And so they believed him, and so I thought well I've just got to go along with this because I can't quite see how I can get out finally. (Lily:6.1.30.)*

Catherine’s doctor was helpful. *“I realised that this is not ok. Somebody does care, and somebody is concerned. That helped make a bit of a difference. I felt quite like I'd turned a corner when I told the doctor.” (10.11.18.)*

*Seeking help for myself* usually meant *Ceasing to protect him* by telling others. Alex told others so that help could be there if she needed it. *“I stopped protecting him was one of the things that I did so that he couldn't hide from it. People knew, yeah people knew.” (8.9.32.)*

Participants began seeking help for themselves, or to save the relationship. Some participants had already identified separation as a possibility, but lacked confidence to attempt it, or tried unsuccessfully to leave.

### ***Wanting to Leave***

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Finding Other</b>	<b><i>Wanting to Leave</i></b>	<i>Lacking confidence to separate</i>
<b>Perspectives</b>		<i>Trying to leave</i>

Table 24. Codes of the sub-category ***Wanting to Leave***.

Some participants recognised separation as a possibility, but had not yet made that decision. Mary was immobilised by perceptions of limited alternatives and was *Lacking confidence to separate*.

*I was so unsure about the help out there, and what I could do, and um, whether I'd be able to do it. So I had an extreme lack of confidence there, so it took me a very long time to leave. (3.2.5.)*

Lily had moved out, but was maintaining a pretext of possible reconciliation while she planned her escape. Several previous attempts of *Trying to leave* had not been successful.

*It was a very dangerous year. I would never have been able to walk out of the house. That is something that I could not have done safely. (...) I had actually tried to leave two years before that (...) it just was too awful so we went back and tried again (...) (next time) we only had the clothes we stood up in and the boys had to go back to school (...) and at that point I was not able to move on and survive. (6.1.16.)*

**Finding Other Perspectives** included realising their partner was abusive and that abuse was escalating. **Seeking Help** and **Wanting to Leave** were responses to **Experiencing Escalating Abuse** that could also lead to **Finding Other Perspectives**. **Having Another Context** provided a different frame of reference. Participants had new information and were less isolated. The women, previously embedded within the relationship, could now see the relationship from outside the relationship. Figure 7 illustrates this process.

## INSERT

Fig 7

**Finding Other Perspectives** continues throughout the basic psycho-social process of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**. **Finding Other Perspectives** prepared the way for further realisations that become apparent in **Waking Up**.

### **Process: Waking Up**

**Waking Up** is the experience of recognising the need to separate, becoming aware that separation is possible, and knowing that separation will happen. Often this awareness came suddenly.

### ***Realising Separation Must Happen***

<b>Process</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Waking Up</b>	<b><i>Realising Separation</i></b>	<i>Knowing its over</i>
	<b><i>Must happen</i></b>	<i>Knowing I have to do something</i>
		<i>Moving out of hopelessness</i>
		<i>Waking in shock</i>

Table 25. Codes of the sub-category ***Realising Separation Must Happen***.

Many participants reached a point of *Knowing its over*, or *Knowing I have to do something*. They were ***Realising Separation Must Happen*** and could begin *Moving out of hopelessness*. The realisation of the inevitability of separation was sometimes unexpected for participants *Waking in shock*.

Alex experienced *Knowing its over* when she realised her partner was not going to change. “*I really didn’t know how long it was going to be, but I knew that it was definitely over. (...) I finally accepted the fact that he’s not going to change.*” (8.10.17.)

Catherine found herself *Knowing I have to do something* and, having made that decision, found herself *Moving out of hopelessness*. “*I just knew I had to do something really. And it still took me another fortnight but I moved out of hopelessness and despair into actively knowing I had to do something.*” (10.11.17.)

Others called the police when they saw an assault on Jamie. It became suddenly clear her situation was serious and Jamie was *Waking in shock*. “*That was a huge wake up call. ‘Cos to have 4 police cars in your driveway and your*



*girls screaming at you because they'd just seen their mum go flying through the carport from a person that they loved."* (4.10.16.)

Some participants realised the relationship was over and separation must happen. Others, who had wanted to separate but had not felt able, now believed it was possible.

### ***Realising Separation Can Happen***

<b>Process</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Waking Up</b>	<b><i>Realising Separation</i></b>	<i>Believing in unknown possibilities</i>
	<b><i>Can Happen</i></b>	<i>Realising suddenly</i>

Table 26. Codes of the sub-category ***Realising Separation Can Happen***.

Some participants had wanted to separate for some time but did not feel able. The women had to believe it was possible to separate successfully, or that there were possibilities of a reasonable life after separation.

For Mary, who experienced *Realising suddenly*, *Believing in unknown possibilities* of a better future for herself and her children triggered a **Waking Up** experience.

*Something snapped inside (clicks fingers). The light went on. (...)  
There's gotta be something better out there. I didn't know what it was  
at the time. (...) I thought the whole world was like that. (...) And  
something inside said "no, this isn't right, there's got to be a different  
story (...) the whole world doesn't... there's something wrong here".  
(3.28.5.)*

**Waking Up** resulted from **Finding Other Perspectives**. With **Waking Up**, participants now had the means or the will for separation, and recognised that it was inevitable. *Waking in shock* and *Realising suddenly* were often almost simultaneous with **Breaking Away**.

### Consequence: Breaking Away

**Breaking Away** includes the experience of *Planning Separation* and *Deciding the Time is Now*. Planning was dependent on prior **Taking Control** and **Waking Up**. Participants *Realising suddenly* or *Waking in shock* because of police intervention experienced **Waking Up** and **Breaking Away** simultaneously without prior planning.

### Planning Separation

Consequence	Sub-category	Codes
Breaking Away	Planning Separation	Gathering information
		Waiting for the right time

Table 27. Codes of the sub-category *Planning Separation*.

*I was finding out how I could survive without him. (...) I had all this stuff written down and hidden. (...) Like all the figures of WINZ and how many hours I would have to work and I'd written up a budget. (...) About a year before I had opened an account. (Alex: 8.6.49.)*

**Planning Separation** required prior **Waking Up** and **Taking Control**. Participants **Realising Separation Must Happen** had often begun *Gathering information* and *Waiting for the right time*. Planning was sometimes lengthy.

*You just have to think and plan, and think and plan, and keep out of the space where they can kill you. And don't go, until you can go as far as you can as fast as you can. (Lily:6.3.35.)*

**Planning Separation** usually allowed participants to have some control over choosing the time for separation.

#### ***Deciding the Time is Now***

<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Breaking Away</b>	<b><i>Deciding the Time is Now</i></b>	<i>Leaving</i>
		<i>Telling him to leave</i>
		<i>Accepting intervention</i>
		<i>Escaping into hiding</i>

Table 28. Codes of the sub-category ***Deciding the Time is Now***.

**Breaking away** and **Waking Up** can be almost simultaneous. For most participants, **Breaking Away** included choice in ***Deciding the Time is Now*** and they may choose *Leaving*, or *Telling him to leave* depending on the circumstances of their life together. ***Deciding the Time is Now*** could mean *Escaping into Hiding*. For those who did not choose the time, the decision was in *Accepting intervention*.

Dawn had been unhappy in the relationship for some time. In **Deciding the Time is Now** she chose *Leaving*. “One time I had taken my bag with me with my bankbook and things and I had an overwhelming feeling of “I don’t want to go back this time”, and I didn’t go back, that time.” (1.3.16.)

Mary’s experience of *Telling him to leave* was decisive but potentially dangerous.

*I thought I was gonna get a smack in the head for it to start off with. (...) I said “I want you out” (...) I dunno what was making me feel I was invincible at the time, or acceptant of anything that was going to happen to me. (...) I went back to the hospital thinking “what have I done? What have I done?” You know. And I was shaking. (3.8.5.)*

For Lily, *Leaving* meant *Escaping into hiding*.

*And I finally made the decision. (...) We’d sorted everything out, and then took off in the car and left the town and he didn’t know where we went, I left no forwarding address. (...) I changed my name. He didn’t know what town I was going to. (...) I had done enough planning (...) I had been able to organise enough to go away and never see him again, and I did it. (6.2.12.)*

**Waking Up** and **Planning Separation** by *Gathering information* can have happened, but **Deciding the time is now** may not be in her hands. For Alex, **Breaking Away** came with *Accepting intervention*.

*The actual end came really suddenly. (...) the difference this time was that, when I saw the cops I felt it was like seeing a door open. Like there were two doors. One was the road of, you know, parenting alone, and getting away from this abusive relationship and rebuilding*

*my life, or staying in the relationship. And so I decided: I choose the 'rebuilding my life'. (...) I had the information and the resources I needed. (...) I'd already done everything I needed to do. (...) I kind of felt like I had hopped on a rollercoaster ride, and once I decided to get on I was going to stay on. I couldn't get off. (8.10.17.)*

**Breaking Away** was a complex process that often, but not always, resulted from **Waking Up**. If participants were not already **Taking Control**, they must do so now.

### ***Rejecting the Relationship***

<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Breaking Away</b>	<b><i>Rejecting the Relationship</i></b>	<i>Not wanting to do this anymore</i>
		<i>Wanting a life</i>
		<i>Rejecting in ambivalence</i>

Table 29. Codes of the sub-category ***Rejecting the Relationship***.

***Rejecting the Relationship*** means recognising that she is *Not wanting to do this anymore*, or *Wanting a life*. ***Rejecting the Relationship*** did not necessarily mean rejecting the man, and some participants were *Rejecting in ambivalence*.

Mary was *Not wanting to do this anymore* and ***Rejecting the Relationship*** happened suddenly: "Something inside of me snapped and I said, 'I'm not gonna do this anymore'." (3.2.7.)

*Wanting a life* that was not available within the relationship might lead to ***Rejecting the Relationship***.

*I'm not going to get my life happening here. I've tried and tried and tried and I'm not going to get it happening, and I'm going to get my life happening.. yeah, and so I left to have a life and it was a very hopeful, positive thing for me to leave. (Dawn:1.6.13.)*

In ***Rejecting the Relationship***, participants may not want to reject the man, or wish to be alone. They could be *Rejecting in ambivalence*.

*I said to them, "take me home". Because I wanted to rush back and say, "don't go, don't go". And they said, "No, we're not going to take you home. Don't go back mum, just leave him". (...) We didn't go home all day, and by the time I got home that night he'd gone."*  
(Catherine:10.9.9.)

***Rejecting the Relationship*** does not necessarily mean rejecting the man. A participant may still love him, and yearn for the times when the relationship fitted her needs. She may fear being alone and believe, as she has been told, that she "can't cope without him". In addition, she may have good reason to fear his response. The next chapter considers these experiences.

### ***Summary***

There seem to be three strategies available to women who attempt TAKING CONTROL. One path tends to be through ***Resisting in Conflict***, which escalates abuse very quickly, sometimes to dangerous levels. This can result in police intervention. *Experiencing intervention* in a situation of ***Experiencing Escalating Abuse***, and unexpectedly ***Finding Other Perspectives*** results in ***Waking Up***. In such a situation, the woman might be

unprepared for **Breaking Away**. Although *Accepting intervention* and **Breaking Away** can result in getting help, TAKING CONTROL sometimes happens without *Planning Separation*.

*Resisting by Pulling Away* also escalated abuse. However, pulling away facilitated the separation process through **Finding Other Perspectives** that resulted in **Waking Up**. **Waking Up** while still in the relationship allowed time for *Planning separation* by *Gathering information* and having more choice in *Deciding the time is now*.

Several participants initially resisted in conflict, but were exhausted with endless difficulties. They often chose *Controlling the Peace* as a way of minimising conflict and staying in the relationship. These participants eventually began *Resisting by Pulling Away* and had some control over the separation process.

TAKING CONTROL is complex. It requires some form of **Waking Up**; a realisation of irresolvable difficulties in the relationship and that it can, and must, end. This realisation comes from **Finding Other Perspectives**. **Waking Up** interacts with **Taking Control** and **Breaking Away**, although the starting point of this process depends on circumstances and the form of resistance used by participants. Figure 8 summarises the complex interactions of TAKING CONTROL and shows its place as the second phase in the basic psycho-social process of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**.

**Finding Other Perspectives** continued after separation as participants sought to make sense of their experience and maintain their resolve to remain separate. Participants continued actively TAKING CONTROL after separation.

TAKING CONTROL was difficult, and most participants sought or received help during this process. They needed further help after separation and those experiences is more fully discussed in the next chapter. TAKING CONTROL to the extent of **Breaking Away** is a painful and potentially dangerous process. For these women it took courage, determination, and hope, to make this step.

INSERT page fig 8



Douglas, K. (1994). *Invisible wounds: A self-help guide for New Zealand women in destructive relationships*. Auckland: Penguin.

## CHAPTER SIX

### TAKING CONTROL

#### *Introduction*

TAKING CONTROL is the second phase in the basic psycho-social process named; **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**. Figure 5 locates the phase, TAKING CONTROL within the basic psycho-social process of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**. Figure 6 shows the interactions of dimensions across the core categories FINDING A PATH BEYOND ABUSE, GETTING A LIFE, and BECOMING MYSELF.

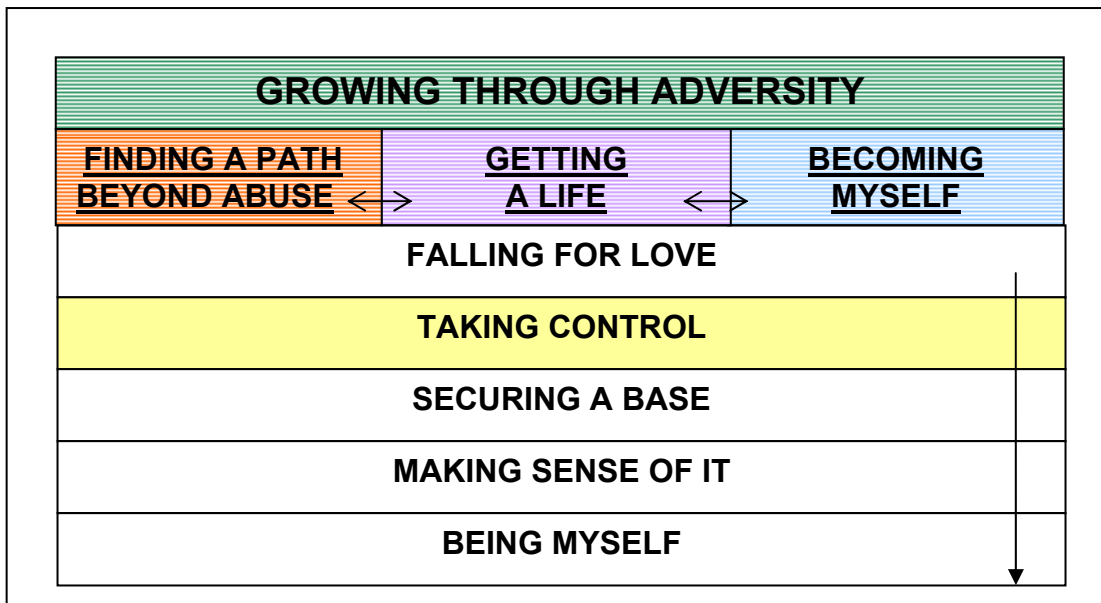


Figure 5. TAKING CONTROL is the second identified phase of the basic psycho-social process of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**.



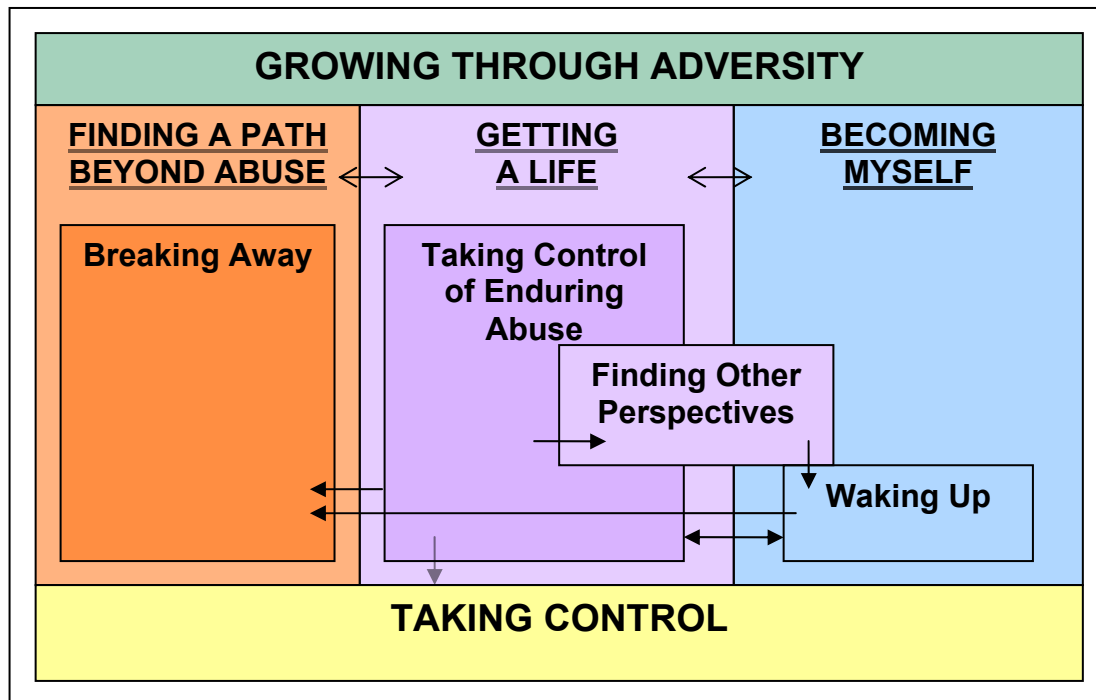
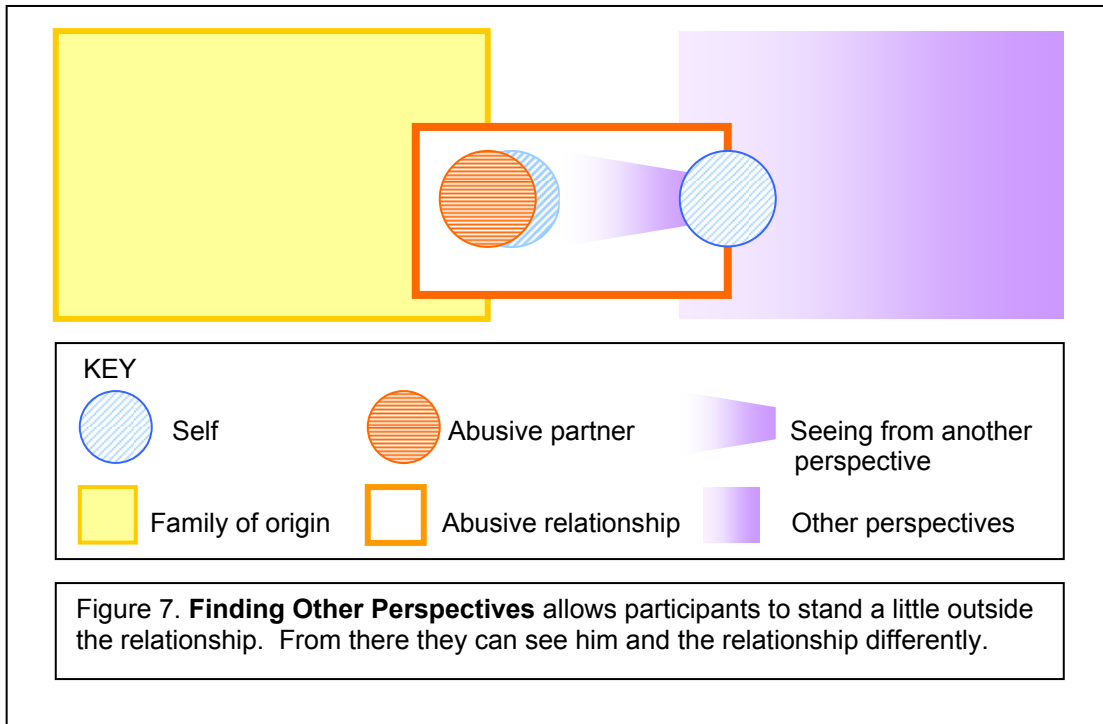


Figure 6. TAKING CONTROL OF ENDURING ABUSE. Interactions of dimensions across core categories, FINDING A PATH BEYOND ABUSE; GETTING A LIFE; and, BECOMING MYSELF in the second phase of the basic psycho-social process; **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**. There are individual variations in the pattern of interaction.

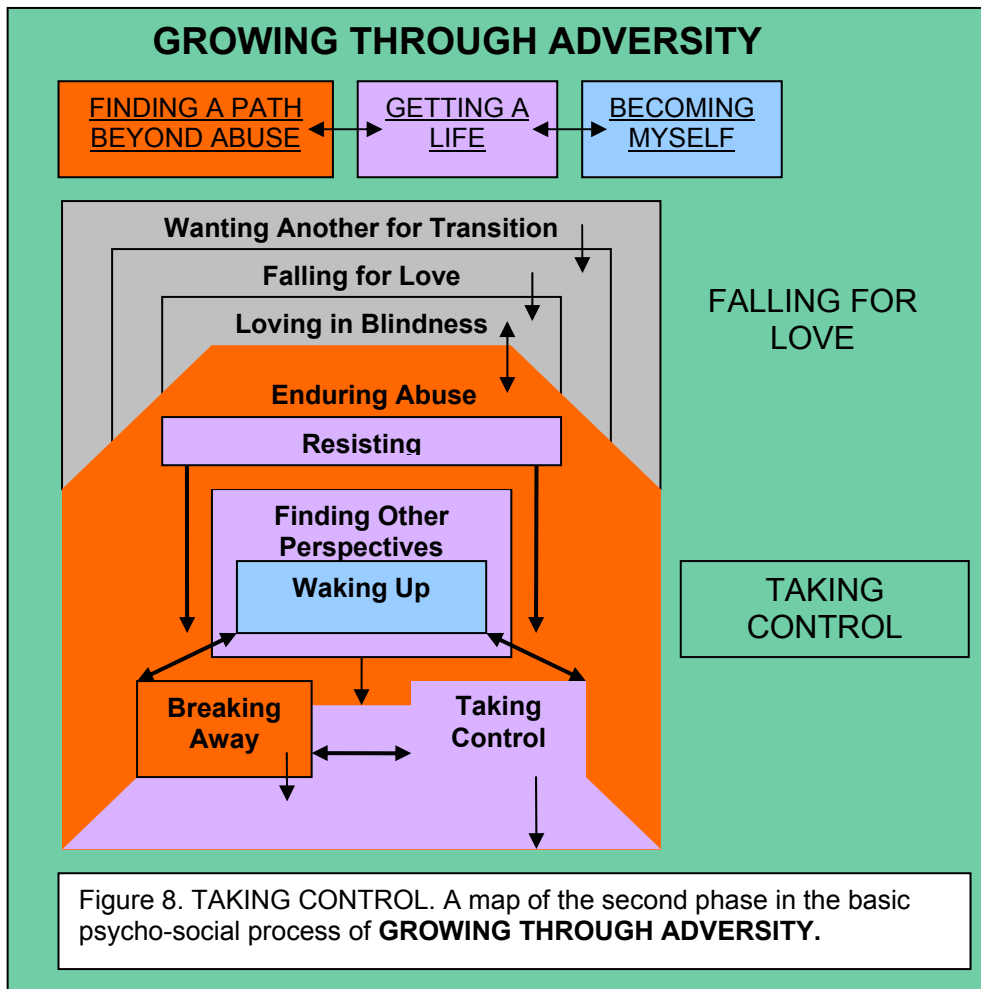
At commencement of the phase TAKING CONTROL, participants are in considerable distress. They have tried hard to make the relationship work without success and are frequently despairing. In TAKING CONTROL they recognise there is a serious problem and try to find ways to improve their situation. Some considered leaving or tried leaving without success. Commonly participants begin trying to take control by resisting what is happening to them. Resisting appears to have two forms. In the first, conflict results in police intervention. In the second, participants begin to pull away from



**Finding Other Perspectives** continues throughout the basic psycho-social process of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**. **Finding Other Perspectives** prepared the way for further realisations that become apparent in **Waking Up**.

### Process: Waking Up

**Waking Up** is the experience of recognising the need to separate, becoming aware that separation is possible, and knowing that separation will happen. Often this awareness came suddenly.



**Finding Other Perspectives** continued after separation as participants sought to make sense of their experience and maintain their resolve to remain separate. Participants continued actively **TAKING CONTROL** after separation.

**TAKING CONTROL** was difficult, and most participants sought or received help during this process. They needed further help after separation and those experiences is more fully discussed in the next chapter. **TAKING CONTROL** to the extent of **Breaking Away** is a painful and potentially dangerous process. For these women it took courage, determination, and hope, to make this step.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SECURING A BASE

#### *Introduction*

The phase SECURING A BASE, immediately follows TAKING CONTROL. This phase may last months or years and concerns the initially urgent process of establishing a secure base while struggling with multiple and complex problems. The responses and needs of children are complex. Participants struggle with circumstances of financial hardship, while trying to manage distressing emotions and an uncooperative and abusive partner. The experiences of this phase can be overwhelming and participants usually sought support, not always successfully. Participants struggled to cope during this very stressful period.

Figure 9 shows the place of this phase in the basic psycho-social process of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**. This phase is interactive across the core categories of: FINDING A PATH BEYOND ABUSE; GETTING A LIFE; and BECOMING MYSELF as shown in Figure 10.

INSERT fig 9

And figure 10



# PERSPECTIVE: SECURING A BASE

Dimension	Category	Sub-categories
Context	Struggling Under	<i>Coping with Environmental</i>
	Stress After Breaking	<i>Stressors</i>
	Away	<i>Experiencing Distressing Emotions</i>
Condition	Getting Safe	<i>Keeping Him Away</i>
		<i>Continuing to Experience Abuse</i>
		<i>Resisting Reconciliation</i>
		<i>Managing Access</i>
Process	Getting Help	<i>Telling Others</i>
		<i>Attempting to Obtain Support</i>
		<i>Trying Family Court Counselling</i>
Consequence	Securing a Base	<i>Having My Own Place</i>
		<i>Stopping intrusion</i>

Table 30. SECURING A BASE. Categories and Sub-categories.

SECURING A BASE is a stressful and sometimes protracted experience. Participants have just broken away from the relationship. They may have been prepared for **Breaking Away**, or it may have happened suddenly. If they had not begun TAKING CONTROL before, they do so now.

### **Context: Struggling Under Stress After Breaking Away**

Participants must cope with many stressors if they are to establish a stable and secure base for themselves and their children. In addition to the burdens they must manage at this time, many participants are experiencing distressing emotional outcomes of trauma and abuse.

#### ***Coping with Environmental Stressors***

<b>Context</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Struggling</b>	<b><i>Coping with</i></b>	<i>Struggling with children's behaviour</i>
<b>Under Stress</b>	<b><i>Environmental</i></b>	<i>Needing help with childcare</i>
<b>After Breaking</b>	<b><i>Stressors</i></b>	<i>Coping with finances, work, and</i>
<b>Away</b>		<i>housing</i>
		<i>Being stressed about legal</i>
		<i>processes</i>

Table 31. Sub-category and codes of ***Coping with Environmental Stressors***.

*It just seemed like an agonising step. It felt like I was towing these hundreds and hundreds of kilos behind me at every step I was making (Mary:3.10.21.)*

Participant's lives were in upheaval with many difficulties to negotiate. For mothers without support, reorganising their lives while looking after children who were also distressed was relentlessly stressful. Children's responses to witnessing abuse, or loyalty to the abusive parent figure, included confusion and often angry and uncooperative behaviour. Mothers were distressed when the

partner used children to deliver messages, and one mother had her child abducted.

In addition, there were often serious financial difficulties. Practical issues such as work, housing, and finances affected all participants. Financial problems were often extreme, particularly for those women whose partners had been irresponsible with money and left them with an additional burden of debt. Fortunately, those who needed it were able to access emergency financial assistance from Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ a.k.a. Social Welfare), although there was considerable ambivalence about that experience. Employed participants struggled to cope with their jobs. Some participants owned their own homes, others had to find somewhere to live. Participants with very young children were unable to work.

In addition to the stress of urgent legal requirements for settling access arrangements or Protection Orders, participants were subject to threats of contested custody unless they compromised on future settlements. Not all participants were eligible for legal aid and legal costs were onerous. Such pressure from legal processes, particularly if the well-being of their children was threatened, added to participants ***Experiencing Difficult Emotions***.

### ***Experiencing Distressing Emotions***

<b>Context</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Struggling</b>	<b><i>Experiencing</i></b>	<i>Struggling with guilt</i>
<b>Under Stress</b>	<b><i>Distressing Emotions</i></b>	<i>Struggling with fear</i>
<b>After Breaking</b>		<i>Being alone</i>
<b>Away</b>		<i>Feeling overwhelmed by stress</i>
		<i>Not knowing who I was</i>
		<i>Not thinking about it</i>
		<i>Breaking down and having depression</i>
		<i>Compounding losses</i>

Table 32. Sub-category and codes of ***Experiencing Distressing Emotions***.

Distressing emotions were common to all participants. Participants were under enormous pressure and many felt overwhelmed by stress in addition to coping with fear and threats. Most had little support and some felt guilty for separating. Many had never lived alone and felt lonely. Unrelated losses, such as bereavements, added to their distress. Several participants suffered from depression, panic attacks, or had a 'breakdown' of some kind after separation. Others tried not to think about the problems or trauma, although this was not always a helpful long-term strategy.

Mary, without support and under pressure, believed "*it is my fault*" (3.4.15.) and "*felt like I was disappointing everybody*" (3.2.38.). She experienced *Struggling with guilt* about the separation from her partner. "*I wasn't handling the*

*guilt, and I wasn't handling it, I wasn't handling (sick child). I just had everything going on. My father wasn't talking to me. My brother wasn't talking to me. No one to talk to."* (3.4.37.)

Participants were also *Struggling with fear*. They knew the partner could be violent or abusive or unpredictable, as Catherine explains:

*I thought he was going to do something to me. (...) I thought he might do something malicious (...) I didn't know what was going to happen if the... He had become so unpredictable that I didn't, actually didn't know what he was going to do next. (10.15.53.)*

Many participants found *"there wasn't anyone to talk about it to"* (Dawn:1.10.34.) and experienced *Being alone*. In addition to the emotional turmoil of separation, participants had complex responsibilities to manage. Understandably, most were *Feeling overwhelmed by stress*. Isabel describes her experience: *"Under great stress, trying to cope with everything, trying to remember all the things I had to do, trying to cope with the children, trying to cope with extraordinary demands on my time and abilities."* (2.16.15.)

Catherine struggled with *Compounding losses* when, immediately post-separation, she nursed her mother until her mother's death soon after and experienced *Not knowing who I was*.

*Just felt quite overwhelming, what I was going through. I still couldn't, you know, process what was happening to my mother. (...) I felt kind of shell-shocked I think. Everything I'd been through, everything I was going through. I felt like I didn't know who I was anymore. (10.14.48.)*

Many participants came close to the limits of their coping ability and experienced serious health problems during this time, including *Breaking down and having depression*. Butterfly explains her situation: “*But, you don’t say ‘I’m depressed’. You just haven’t gone out because you’re too scared to go out.*” (5.2.25.)

Some participants, such as Jamie, tried *Not thinking about it* as a way of coping. “*Was part of that just denial? I just chucked it in the back of my head and I didn’t want to think about it, so I went and did the blah, blah, blah, blah?*” (4.19.19.)

Compounding stress and distress, participants often also had to deal with their ex-partners’ continuing attempts to harass and abuse them.

### **Condition: Getting Safe**

**Getting Safe** is essential for SECURING A BASE. Participants spoke about safety in terms of stopping him from intruding or hurting them, or their children. Some had mixed feelings toward the partner and, to begin a new life, they needed to both keep him away, and keep themselves away from him. Some participants maintained contact because of mandated access arrangements, and for some this continues. **Getting Safe** concerns the women’s experience of *Continuing to Experience Abuse, Keeping Him Away, Resisting Reconciliation*, and *Managing Access*.

### ***Continuing to Experience Abuse***

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Getting Safe</b>	<b><i>Continuing to Experience Abuse</i></b>	<i>Being spied on and abused</i> <i>Feeling distressed by contact with him</i> <i>Being intruded on</i>

Table 33. Sub-category and codes of ***Continuing to Experience Abuse***.

*When I was with him, or saw him, I was like being tensed up, being alert, on guard (Dawn:1b.9.9.)*

Most participants did not have court orders for protection. These women were particularly vulnerable to ***Continuing to Experience Abuse***. Several participants reported him spying, breaking into the house, assaulting her or using the phone to be abusive. Participants found contact with the abusive partner difficult and distressing, particularly when his behaviour was intrusive.

Participants experienced *Being intruded on* as Dawn reports: “He was using every opportunity to impose himself on me and I’d be shattered.” (1.4.22.)

Contact with the partner provoked a variety of difficult emotions in participants who must maintain *Feeling distressed by contact with him*.

*Every time I saw him, I would think of some of the things he’d done to me and I would get angry and I had to suppress that anger because (...) I had to be able to think when I saw him because he was an anathema. I didn’t want to have anything more to do with him. (Isabel:2.13.31.)*

Participants did not want further contact with the abusive partner.

***Keeping Him Away*** was necessary for **Getting Safe**.

### ***Keeping Him Away***

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Getting Safe</b>	<b><i>Keeping Him Away</i></b>	<i>Having protection</i>
		<i>Living in hiding</i>
		<i>Setting boundaries</i>

Table 34. Sub-category and codes of ***Keeping Him Away***.

Participants used several strategies to keep him away. Protection Orders proved useful for four participants. However, Non-Molestation Orders only became available in 1982 and Protection Orders only since 1995. One participant spent several years in hiding under an assumed name. Other participants relied on their own skills and courage to set boundaries and keep him away.

Court orders were useful and Jamie welcomed a Protection Order; *“At that time you’re just looking for anything that will give you strength or security.”* (4.12.33.)

Lily was justifiably afraid of her ex-husband. She left the relationship after careful planning, covered her tracks carefully, and began *Living in hiding*. *“I changed my name. He didn’t know what town I was going to. (...) He made guesses, he tried to follow, and again questioned family members. But I had done enough planning.”* (6.2.32.)



Participants experienced intrusion, particularly at times of access to the children. Mary was *Setting boundaries* when she told her husband; “*Right, I don’t want you here, talking, and looking at me, and staring at me.*” (3.19.29.)

***Keeping Him Away*** was important for **Getting Safe**. **Getting Safe** also required keeping away from him and ***Resisting Reconciliation***.

### ***Resisting Reconciliation***

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Getting Safe</b>	<b><i>Resisting</i></b>	<i>Loving and missing him</i>
	<b><i>Reconciliation</i></b>	<i>Worrying about his well-being</i>
		<i>Being clear with him</i>
		<i>Remembering abuse</i>
		<i>Resisting family pressure</i>

Table 35. Sub-category and codes of ***Resisting Reconciliation***.

Pressure to reconcile could come from family members, children and the abusive partner. However, ***Resisting Reconciliation*** also meant participants managing their own experience of missing him and worrying about him.

*Remembering abuse* was a deterrent to reconciliation.

Some participants still loved the abusive partner and might have returned if they could believe he had changed. *Loving and missing him* was experienced by Georgina. “*Wanting to be back with him. Ambivalence. Yearning for the familiar loving of his arms, a physical pain, ache, to have everything OK.*” (11.19.45.)

Alex was relieved when others provided accommodation for her ex partner. She was *Worrying about his well-being* and concerned he might harm himself. “*It was awful having that feeling, is he going (...) to commit suicide or is he, you know, and feeling responsible for his welfare.*” (8.11.43.) Alex kept herself from reconciling by *Remembering abuse* and *Being clear with him* that there was no chance of reconciliation..

*I wanted to remember what he did to me (...) Whenever I felt like I might be feeling sorry for him, or might be thinking well maybe he could change, I just replayed that in my head to renew my strength to stay on course. (...) I made very, very clear we weren't together living apart. We weren't just having a break. We weren't in a relationship anymore. The only relationship we were having was as parents to (daughter). And I physically didn't give him any mixed messages.* (8.11.50.)

Mary was *Resisting family pressure* when her family completely withdrew support. “*My brother said that it was all my fault that the marriage had broken up and that I shouldn't be leaving, I should be sticking it out.*” (3.3.7.)

For some participants ***Resisting Reconciliation*** meant both resisting pressure from others and resisting their own feelings for him.

### **Managing Access**

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Getting Safe</b>	<b>Managing Access</b>	<i>Experiencing stress about access and the children</i> <i>Having access supervised</i> <i>Compromising her safety for the children's needs</i>

Table 36. Sub-category and codes of **Managing Access**.

Arrangements for access to the children created considerable stress for participants. Having access supervised was not always problem-free, and seeing the partner could feel threatening. Children did not always want to go with their father, nor did he always honour the agreement, and sometimes children were difficult or uncooperative after access. *Experiencing stress about access and the children* varied.

*I'd have to shove her in the car kicking and screaming. She didn't wanna go. (Mary:3.9.35.)*

*She was getting so much more like her father especially after spending three weeks with her dad. (Butterfly:5.4.27.)*

*He'd say " (...) I'll come and get them on Sunday" and he wouldn't come. (Son) fronted up to me and said "It's your fault mum, (...)" and I was bitterly hurt 'cos I got a lot of the back-lash. (Isabel:2.12.7.)*

Unsupervised access arrangements could mean *Compromising her safety for children's needs* when the partner was using access as an opportunity to intrude. Mary faced potential danger during these times.

*I always tended to sort of put safety measures – boil the jug first, 'cos I thought I could always throw a hot jug of water on him and get out of there as fast as I could. (...) If I had to lock myself into the house I knew I could use the cell phone. (3.19.29.)*

**Getting Safe** was not easy, particularly for participants who did not have support or protection. During this phase, participants often sought help.

### Process: Getting Help

**Getting Help** concerns the complexities and mixed outcomes of seeking help and support during the immediate post-separation period. For some participants, the experience of obtaining a Protection Order, or attending counselling provided by the Family Court, was problematic.

### *Telling Others*

Process	Sub-category	Codes
Getting Help	Telling Others	Exposing victimisation for formal recording
		Fearing blame
		Fearing exposure

Table 37. Sub-category and codes of ***Telling Others***.

Disclosing their position and details of the abuse was difficult for participants. Many spoke about fears of exposure and blame for their situation. To obtain a Protection Order required disclosing details of abuse to doctors and lawyers. Jamie found *Exposing victimisation for formal recording* embarrassing.

*It was a huge wake-up call, and having to deal with all the humiliating things that happened. Like tell the lawyers everything that happened so they can deal with the orders, (...) And, to actually see it in writing, you know, so you can have that for the courts, is quite embarrassing.*  
(4.10.33.)

When Maria called the police for help she was *Fearing blame* for what went on in her house.

*Who's going to believe me? And, looking at my ethnic side of things, you know, thinking what will they believe me about that? (...) They most probably think "oh she's telling all this lies". (...) It's the fear of gonna be, I'm gonna be blamed, or the fear that I'll be exposed of my temper, and exposed of things that happens in my house. And all the time in my life, I think that's the worst feeling I actually experienced.*  
(7.2.50.)

Maria was also concerned about going to WINZ for financial help. The possibility of being recognised by someone from her own community resulted in *Fearing exposure*.

*I was so embarrassed. (...) You feel so small and they treated you like a piece of dirt. (...) To WINZ you actually have to show your face. (...) it's a degrading thing to do. (...) I'm very reluctant to go there. thinking 'oh I hope there's no other Samoan person there when I go in*

*there'. (...) I even get the fear when I get served by one of them you know, 'oh, I don't want you to know me'. (7.8.18.)*

**Telling Others** was also necessary when **Attempting to Obtain Support**.

### **Attempting to Obtain Support**

<b>Process</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Getting Help</b>	<b>Attempting to Obtain</b>	<i>Seeking help without success</i>
	<b>Support</b>	<i>Having support</i>
		<i>Being rejected by family</i>

Table 38. Sub-category and codes of **Attempting to Obtain Support**.

Participants were again in transition, alone, and needing others. Access to help and support was not always available. Some had support and others sought help without success. Several participants had no family support and *Being rejected by family* was painful.

Jamie “*knew I needed help*” (4.22.13.), but seeking support for her distress was a frustrating experience. “*I just seemed to be pushing for things to happen, even though I’ve heard that its all meant to be there for you.*” (4.3.27.) Jamie persisted and eventually found “*really supporting*” (4.3.41.) help.

Several participants lacked family support, and others did not have friends who understood their situation. Lacking support was particularly difficult when *Being rejected by family* for separating.

*My brother who I was very, very close with, he turned on me. And my eldest sister turned on me (...) They weren’t accepting of the fact of*

*what I'd done. (...). So, I really had nowhere. And, and no, no support.*  
*(Mary:3.3.1.)*

In the early post-separation stage, a minority of participants had support from family or friends who understood. Many sought professional help for themselves, and some were directed to Family Court counselling for mediation.

### ***Trying Family Court Counselling***

<b>Process</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Getting Help</b>	<b><i>Trying Family Court</i></b>	<i>Compromising safety</i>
	<b><i>Counselling</i></b>	<i>Having an untrained counsellor</i>
		<i>Distrusting the counsellor</i>

Table 39. Sub-category and codes of ***Trying Family Court Counselling***.

Some participants tried counselling and mediation through the Family Court. Participants were unhappy with the experience when the partners used counselling sessions to continue to abuse them, or they did not like the counsellor.

Mary had unsuccessfully tried couple counselling for a “*breakdown*” while in the marriage. By exposing her to further abuse, this new counselling experience was also *Compromising safety* for Mary.

*We had to do those to prove that it was irreconcilable, and that was a nightmare. I hated those counselling sessions, (...) I'd be sitting there thinking 'oh, shit. Is it my fault? It is my fault. Maybe I shouldn't be doing this?' (...) He was doing it in such a subtle way, it made him look so much better, (...)" Yes, I hit her, but it was never meant.. she*

*provoked me.. blah blah blah blah.” The court counsellor saw what was going on which was really good. But, (...) I just couldn’t keep going there. (3.4.7.)*

Georgina also experienced Family Court counselling as a ‘nightmare’ and felt she was *Having an untrained counsellor*. “*And that man was a religious man too. He was strong in his Christianity, but he had definitely a patriarchal view on marriage.*” (11.12.39.)

Jamie was *Distrusting the counsellor*, mainly because he was a man; “*giving a woman who’s been beaten up a male counsellor! (...) ‘Cos you’re always thinking, ‘well, men will side with each other’.*” (4.17.44.)

None of the three participants who tried Family Court counselling completed the six sessions provided.

### **Consequence: Securing a Base**

For some participants **Securing a Base** required finding somewhere to live. Whether participants moved house or not, the home base needed to be secure and safe from the abusive partner.

#### ***Having My Own Place***

<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Sub-categories</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Securing a Base</b>	<b><i>Having My Own Place</i></b>	<i>Having somewhere to live</i>
		<i>Finding a house</i>

Table 40. Sub-category and codes of ***Having My Own Place***.



Three participants owned their own homes and four stayed in the homes previously shared or rented with their partners. Other participants moved out and *Finding a house* was a priority, especially when there were children, and schooling needed to be organised. It was also necessary to secure the home by ***Stopping Intrusion***.

### ***Stopping Intrusion***

<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Securing a Base</b>	<b><i>Stopping Intrusion</i></b>	<i>Defending my home</i> <i>Locking him out</i>

Table 41. Sub-category and codes of ***Stopping Intrusion***.

***Stopping intrusion*** was also urgent and, if he had keys to a shared house, participants quickly changed the locks. Lily lived in hiding behind closed doors. *“For about the first three years I used to make sure all the doors and windows were locked thoroughly, and then curtains were drawn so nobody could see in, just in case.”* (6.4.35.)

Dawn’s partner would *“impose himself”* (1b.6.9.) and *Defending my home* was necessary.

*That turned it round, that said to him, and to me – he must do, sometimes, what I say. And he knew that. And I knew that. He was in my home. He wasn’t invited. He wasn’t welcome. And I kept on saying that over and over (ticking off on her fingers). (1b.6.10.)*

Participants had begun to establish a secure base for themselves and their children. They were now ready to begin getting some balance back into their lives.

### ***Summary***

SECURING A BASE was urgent and difficult. Any security that participants had obtained from the relationship was no longer available, and, particularly if they were unsupported or unprotected, they needed a safe place to live. Re-locating compounded stress, especially for mothers. Financial hardship, family rejection, and threats from the partner created great difficulties for participants in this early post-separation stage. Throughout, they remained in control of their situation.

Participants continue to create stability in their lives as they move into MAKING SENSE OF IT, which is the next phase of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**. Figure 11 shows the movement from the relationship toward SECURING A BASE. Figure 12 illustrates the phase, SECURING A BASE, within the process of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**.

INSERT fig 11

INSERT fig 12

One page

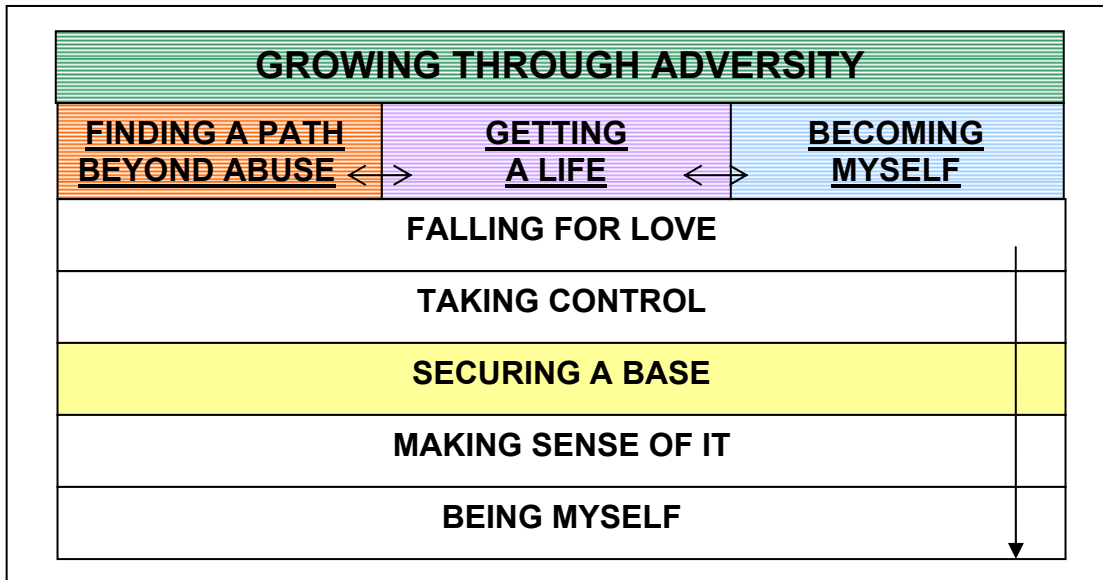


Figure 9. SECURING A BASE is the third identified phase of the basic psycho-social process of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**.

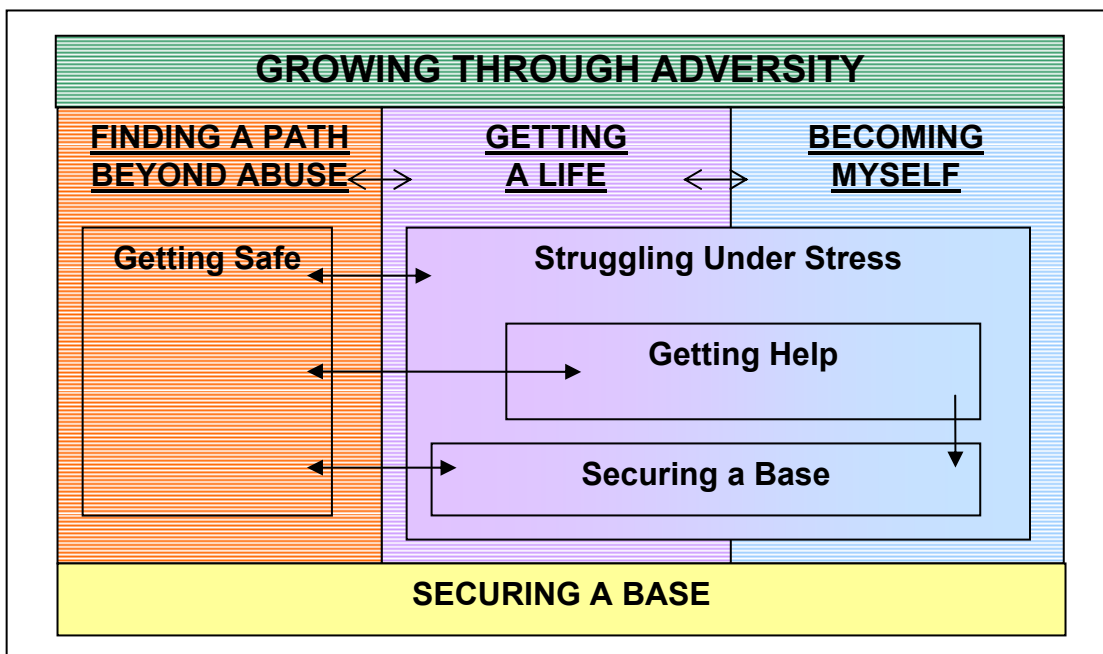
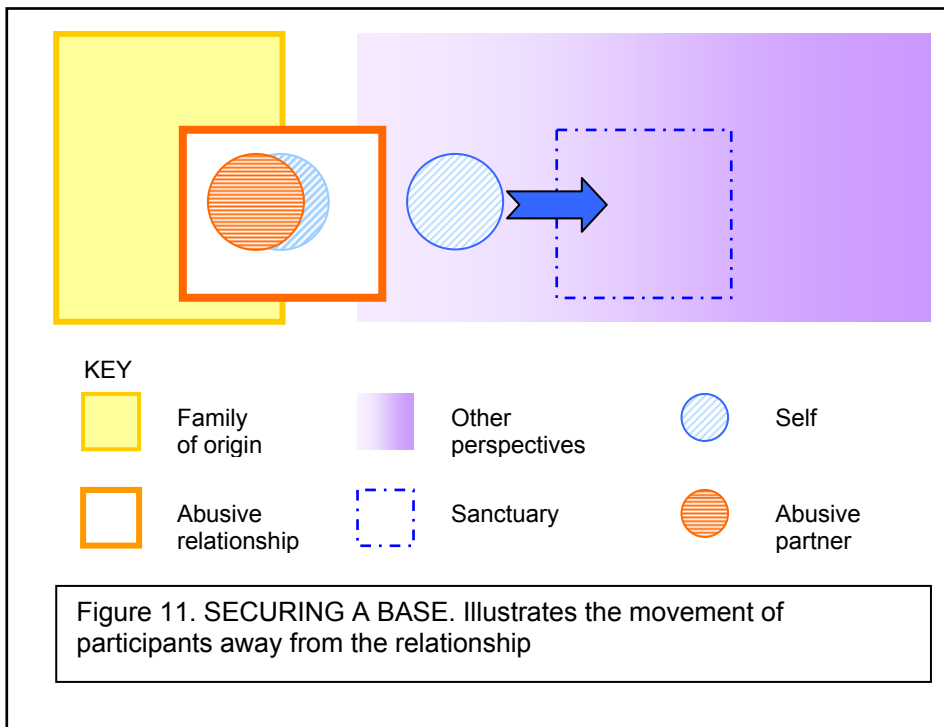


Figure 10. SECURING A BASE is the third phase of the basic psycho-social process; **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**. Dimensions interact across the core categories: FINDING A PATH BEYOND ABUSE; GETTING A LIFE; and, BECOMING MYSELF.



## GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY

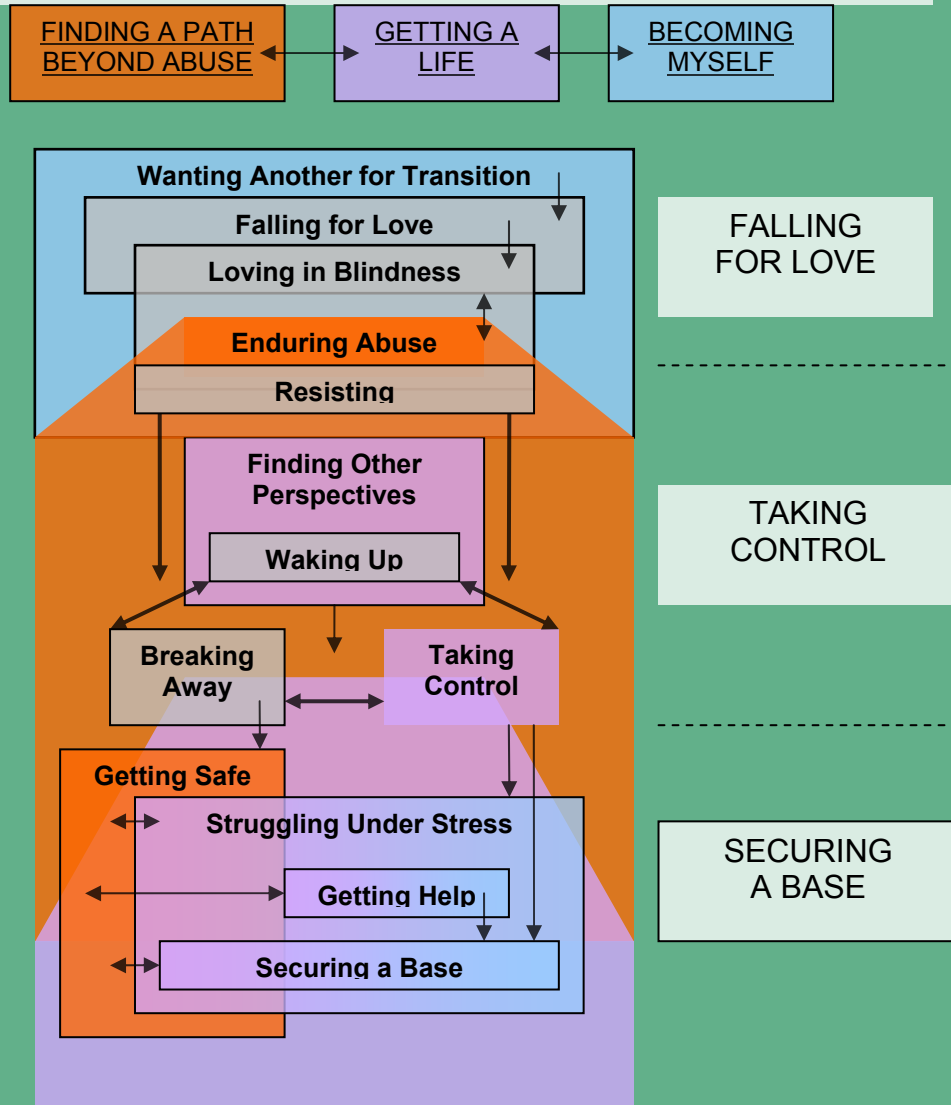


Figure 12. SECURING A BASE . Map of phase three of the basic psycho-social process of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### MAKING SENSE OF IT

#### *Introduction*

Participants apply themselves to MAKING SENSE OF IT after the crisis of separating. Prior to this phase participants have been preoccupied with taking control over immediate and multiple stressors while establishing a secure base.

The phase MAKING SENSE OF IT includes the continuing creation and maintenance of stability and balance. The women refocus their lives on security and the needs of their children while simultaneously trying to understand what has happened. Participants are again in transition, and connecting with others provides perspectives to help them see themselves and their situation clearly. Others also provide information and experiences that make sense of the abusive relationship. Participants are careful in the relationships they form and some choose professional help to support them through this process.

During MAKING SENSE OF IT participants learn new skills, including the skills they need to be a separate person. They begin an exploration to redefine themselves and experiment with 'who', and 'how', they might be in the world. Participants gain confidence in their own abilities and find time to engage with activities that interest and nurture them. The abusive partner is still problematic for some, as are difficulties with children. Trauma and depression continue to impact on some participants.



Figure 13 shows the place of this phase, MAKING SENSE OF IT, in the basic psycho-social process of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**.

Dimensional interactions across the core categories are shown in Figure 14.

**insert Fig 13 & 14**

PERSPECTIVE: MAKING SENSE OF IT

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Sub-categories</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Balancing the Base</b>	<i>Cocooning</i> <i>Connecting</i> <i>Focusing on Mothering</i>
<b>Condition</b>	<b>Staying Safe</b>	<i>Managing Contact</i> <i>Maintaining Separation</i> <i>Continuing Problems with Him</i> <i>Struggling with Symptoms</i> <i>Not Trusting Men</i>
<b>Process</b>	<b>Making Sense of It</b>	<i>Identifying Abuse</i> <i>Learning New Skills</i> <i>Working Through It</i> <i>Considering Relationship</i> <i>Reconciling Unfairness</i> <i>Trying to make the world safe</i>
<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Becoming a Separate Person</b>	<i>Making it Without Him</i> <i>Gaining Confidence</i> <i>Doing Something for Myself</i> <i>Knowing I am Someone</i>

Table 42. MAKING SENSE OF IT. Categories and sub-categories of phase four.

In MAKING SENSE OF IT participants begin to stabilise by **Balancing the Base** of different aspects of their lives. **Staying Safe** remains an issue as they begin **Making Sense of It** and **Becoming a Separate Person**.

### Context: Balancing the Base

During this phase, participants are **Balancing the Base** by building security both at home and within their social exploration. For some participants, connecting with others could not happen until they felt more secure, and **Cocooning** safely at home was important for stability. For other participants, **Connecting** was part of the routine that created such stability. Participants with children were **Focusing on Mothering**.

### Cocooning

Context	Sub-category	Codes
Balancing the Base	Cocooning	<i>Sheltering in routine</i> <i>Grounding in practicalities</i> <i>Having limited finances</i> <i>Being resourceful</i> <i>Living with others</i> <i>Caring for myself</i>

Table 43. Sub-category and codes of **Cocooning**.

*From the time I (left) until four years later, I call that my awakening period. I was like a cocoon, like a cocoon. And at the end of four*

*years, out popped the butterfly and it was away and ready to go.*  
(Mary:2.17.21.)

Getting life stable took considerable effort. Participants were resourceful in overcoming financial constraints. Living with others resolved multiple problems for some participants. Practical problem solving, maintaining routine and taking care of themselves created stability.

*Sheltering in routine* made it possible to manage living with the complexities of having children and needing to work. Dawn could work while her son was with his father at weekends. *"I'd worked out a pattern that was quite good. I had this 24 hour block where I slept in the day time and looked after myself and worked at nights."* (1.7.40.)

Catherine found herself *Grounding in practicalities* by working on her home.

*I started doing some repairs to the house (...) in that first few months (...) kind of taking control of my environment again, because things had got out of hand and that was the final reflection of my life. So that was something I just felt quite grounding and important for me.*  
(10.16.13.)

Mary almost lost her home and *Having limited finances* required careful budgeting. *"They were going to take the house away from me. And I had to go down to the tribunals, and I had to make arrangements to pay the debt off."*  
(2.23.44.)

Dawn found *Living with others* helpful for sharing household responsibilities and childcare, and not being alone. She was also *Being*

*resourceful* in managing a limited budget. “(A) *group living situation so I wasn’t alone, (...) not having the total responsibility of running a home on your own. (...) I didn’t have much money. But life was OK - buying clothes from op-shops.*”  
(1.4.28.)

For Catherine, *Caring for myself* meant choosing to be alone. “*I didn’t want any outside influences. (...) I just wanted to be left alone to work through it and come to terms with it, and make meaning out of it.*” (10.17.47.)

Mothers found children needed a lot of attention and they focused on mothering during this time.

### ***Focusing on Mothering***

<b>Context</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Balancing the Base</b>	<b><i>Focusing on Mothering</i></b>	<i>Managing childcare</i> <i>Making a family with the children</i> <i>Committing to children</i> <i>Having problems with children</i> <i>Not coping with children</i> <i>Keeping thoughts from the children</i> <i>Worrying about children</i> <i>Being safe with children</i>

Table 44. Sub-category and codes of ***Focusing on Mothering***.

Participants with children had additional complexities. Mothers worried about their children, particularly when their behaviour was problematic. They needed to manage childcare and some were not coping when children’s

behaviour did not meet expectations. This required managing strong feelings and not punishing the children. Mothers made commitments to parenting and their children and tried to make a family for them. They also protected their children from their negative feelings about the children's fathers.

*Managing childcare* alone was stressful for mothers such as Mary, who did not have support. However, she was *Committing to children* and their current and future well-being.

*There was no one there to pick up the pieces and sort of say, "look I'll have the kids for the weekend". (...) I opened up to, like I had my kids, I wanted my kids. (...) So, I'm gonna keep my kids no matter what anyway. And if somebody doesn't accept me for me and my children, they can just go away. (2.26.13.)*

Mothers went to considerable effort *Making a family with the children*. Isabel changed her hours of work to have Sunday afternoons with the children. *"Taking them out somewhere, taking them for a swim, or to visit, or, we just used to do so many things together, the three of us." (2.12.19.)*

*Having problems with children* was common. Some problems concerned the father's influence in turning children against their mother. Other problems were an outcome of witnessing violence and abuse in the home.

*I had so much trouble. I didn't know (...) the impact that was going to, what you call, fall on my child at the time. (...) I've had a lot of troubles with her (...) I was in and out of the school, in and out of the cop's office. (Maria:7.6.9.)*

Several mothers had serious struggles with children. For two participants *Not coping with children* required the child to live with other family members or, in Butterfly's case, the father.

*I didn't like her controlling (...) in the end I really had to say you can't live here if you are going to be like this. (...) I really wanted to just bawl my eyes out. I couldn't believe that she would come out with the things that she was saying. (5.4.29.)*

When children's behaviour was problematic, mothers were *Worrying about the children*. Maria wondered if it would help to reconcile with her husband.

*I thought I was doing something right, but then you stopped and looked back; hey I don't do that for my kids, I did it for me. (...) I got to the stage where (...) maybe I should get back to the father. (7.6.32.)*

Mothers were civil to their ex partners despite strong feelings. Mothers, like Mary, were *Keeping my thoughts from the children*. "I'm not comfortable with straight out saying to my children; 'Your father was an arsehole. He beat me up. Blah, blah.' I won't do that. I won't do that to them." (3.9.9.)

Maria struggled with cultural expectations about controlling children's behaviour and planned for *Being safe with children*.

*I have to make sure of some changes and to make sure that I'm safe with the kids. (...) I've got this belief in me my children do not talk back to me, I control them. And it makes it really, really hard to level out. (7.6.44.)*

Concern for the impact of the relationship on their children continues well into the future for half the mothers in this study.

### ***Connecting***

<b>Context</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Balancing the Base</b>	<b><i>Connecting</i></b>	<i>Making connections</i> <i>Building other relationships</i> <i>Befriending other women</i> <i>Going to counselling</i>

Table 45. Sub-category and codes of ***Connecting***.

***Cocooning*** balanced with ***Connecting***, although sometimes the latter took priority. ***Connecting*** included joining social or special interest groups and developing new relationships or friendships, particularly with other women. Several participants found counselling helpful at this time.

In the early 1980s a number of social change movements were active, and Dawn began *Making connections*. “*I was involved in the peace movement (...) and I did non-violent action training. (...) In a way we had personal growth that was more than personal growth. (...) And it was terribly exciting, and enormously hopeful.*” (1.11.66.)

Several participants, including Mary, decided on *Going to counselling*. “*I’ve gotta deal with this. I have really got to take hold and I’ve got to deal with everything that’s happened in my life. And that’s when I started therapy.*” (3.9.37)



Most participants were avoiding men at this time. Consequently, *Befriending other women* was a safe form of **Connecting**. Alex felt women friends were her wisest option. *“I didn’t contact any of my guy friends, didn’t make friends with guys. Surrounded myself with women. I didn’t want to get into any position where a relationship might develop basically.”* (8.13.14.)

In **Balancing the Base**, participants were stabilising their lives while trying to meet their own, and children’s, needs. However, most still had concerns about **Staying Safe**.

### Condition: Staying Safe

**Staying Safe** was still a priority during MAKING SENSE OF IT. The women must maintain separation while having contact when necessary. The abusive partner continued to create problems for some, especially if they allowed more contact than was essential. Some participants continued to struggle with symptoms of trauma and distress. Most participants wanted a close relationship, but were wary about trusting men.

### *Maintaining Separation*

Condition	Sub-category	Codes
Staying Safe	<b>Maintaining Separation</b>	<i>Resisting rescuing him</i> <i>Knowing he might keep abusing</i>

Table 46. Sub-category and codes of **Maintaining Separation**.

The abusive partner continues to occupy participants' thoughts in many ways. Alex had struggled with taking responsibility for her partner. When he again needed help, she was *Resisting rescuing him*.

*This was the first experience of not rescuing (him) because we had always helped him out, my family and I, when he got into situations. So this was the first test not to give him money, not to put him up anywhere. (8.13.37.)*

Jamie knew her ex-partner's pattern of abuse, so kept her distance. *Knowing he might keep abusing*, she hoped he wasn't abusing others.

*I'm hoping um this guy's changed for his girlfriend now. (...) Instead of woman, after woman, after woman, just putting up with it until he decides to leave. (...). And if he isn't changed, and if he is hitting her or, that she'll be strong enough to leave and stuff. (4.9.29.)*

***Maintaining Separation*** became easier over time, although many participants must still manage ongoing contact with him because of child access arrangements.

### ***Managing Contact***

Condition	Sub-category	Codes
Staying Safe	<b><i>Managing Contact</i></b>	Trying to be civil Staying in control

Table 47. Sub-category and codes of ***Managing Contact***.

Participants tried to be polite and reasonable with their ex-partners. Jamie is still having contact at access which is now unsupervised. Her response exemplifies the experience of several participants. She is *Staying in control* of her own safety and the well-being of her child by controlling access conditions, and is *Staying in control* of herself by *Trying to be civil* in spite of the distress she still feels.

*Making sure I don't totally let my guard down with him. And, that I stay in control. (...) So he can keep his son unsupervised, I made him sign a contract with all these rules and regulations. (...) I've got control. (...) When I see him every fortnight for him to have our son, I go back to just, "there you go, there's your dad". I just want to get him and scream at him how much he's hurt me. (4.5.34.)*

**Managing Contact** could be complex when there were continuing problems with his behaviour.

#### ***Continuing Problems with Him***

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Staying Safe</b>	<b><i>Continuing Problems with Him</i></b>	<i>Misjudging safe contact</i> <i>Not getting maintenance</i>

Table 48. Sub-category and codes of ***Continuing Problems with Him***.

Some participants had continuing problems, particularly when *Misjudging safe contact*. *Not getting maintenance* was a frustrating issue.

Alex compromised and allowed her homeless ex-partner to stay overnight in transit. Unfortunately, she was *Misjudging safe contact*. “He jumped up, flipped out, and started ranting, and raving, and screaming. (...) After that he’s never stayed.” (8.13.40.)

In the 1950s and 60s, there was no workable mechanism for collecting court mandated maintenance payments from defaulting fathers. Isabel found herself *Not getting maintenance*. “He was supposed to pay (...) fifteen shillings a week each. That was all. And he paid me on three occasions one hundred pounds (...) in the total of their life.” (2.12.26.)

For participants such as Isabel, he remained “a thorn in my side” (2.3.22.) for many years. Others continued to struggle with symptoms and difficult feelings in the aftermath of the relationship.

### ***Struggling with Symptoms***

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Staying Safe</b>	<b><i>Struggling with Symptoms</i></b>	<i>Living with fear</i> <i>Feeling damaged</i> <i>Having depression</i> <i>Feeling I’m being punished</i>

Table 49. Sub-category and codes of ***Struggling with Symptoms***.

Many participants reported long-lasting distress. Symptoms of trauma or depression affected several women. Fear remained part of many participants’ lives. Lily describes *Living with fear*.

*The fear would come out of nowhere in response to something that was happening, and I wouldn't even know where the fear had come from. It would be a totally irrational, if you like, fear and some of them it took me a while to actually connect that it was connecting back to something that was similar. (4.4.27.)*

A diagnosis of 'depression' could also include experiences of fear. Jamie had 'panic attacks' two years after separation. *"Last year, I had a huge panic attack (....). Probably another scariest moment in my life. (....) That was just before I crashed with the depression (...) and that's how I ended up in hospital under the mental health."* (4.4.45.)

Catherine describes her experience: *"I came out of the relationship feeling very damaged, you know, for a long time."* (10.7.40.) Mary continued feeling guilty whenever anything went wrong in her life. *"This is what I've got for leaving. (...) I'm going to be punished for ever."* (2.15.39.)

Some women continued to experience symptoms of distress and trauma for many years. Many participants reported **Not Trusting Men**, and fears about men added to participant distress.

### **Not Trusting Men**

Condition	Sub-category	Codes
Staying Safe	<b>Not Trusting Men</b>	<i>Wanting love</i> <i>Not trusting</i> <i>Believing all men are the same</i> <i>Not liking men</i>

Table 50. Sub-category and codes of **Not Trusting Men**.

Difficulties with trust were common for participants, particularly with regard to men. Dawn was *Not trusting* and was wary of being abused again. *“I was bewildered (...) and I wanted to know about all the ways that people are not with me, so that I can be on guard for what he did to me. I didn’t trust people.”* (1.5.30.)

Another man was courting Mary, but she doubted him. *“I thought, ‘Well, hey, if I piss you off enough, you’ll hit me too’.”* (2.26.21.) Jamie concluded she was *Not liking men*: *“Really scary dreams (...). Every one in my dreams is men. So, I really don’t like men”.* (4.6.7.)

For some participants, ***Not Trusting Men*** continued for years. However, **Making Sense of It** helped participants gain more clarity about safety in relationship.

### **Process: Making Sense of It**

Participants urgently wanted to make sense of their experience. They wanted to understand so it could never happen again. Some didn’t want to be alone, or another man was of interest, so thinking about the future meant ***Considering Relationship***. **Making Sense of It** includes ***Identifying Abuse***, ***Working Through it***, and ***Learning New Skills***. ***Reconciling Unfairness*** was a distinct and necessary part of making meaning of their experience. For some, ***Trying to Make the World Safe*** for other women was important.

### ***Identifying Abuse***

<b>Process</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Making Sense of It</b>	<b><i>Identifying Abuse</i></b>	<i>Discovering shared experience</i> <i>Learning about abuse</i>

Table 51. Sub-category and codes of ***Identifying Abuse***.

Women learned from many sources; talking to others, reading, and women's support groups. Finding others who shared their experience reduced their sense of isolation. They began to recognise the dynamics of abusive relationships and that their responses to abuse were normal.

Catherine sought information everywhere she could find it. *Discovering shared experience* through talking with other women helped her *Learning about abuse*.

*Hearing the patterns you know, hearing the similarities, the massive similarities between their experience and mine and his behaviour. And the effect, hearing the effects on these women, that seemed so sane and normal to talk to, and yet had been driven to that same point of being suicidal or desperate or murderous or whatever it was, and realising that my behaviour and my responses weren't that far out.*  
(10.15.29.)

Having insights about abuse was useful when considering the possibility of another relationship.

### **Considering Relationship**

<b>Process</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Making Sense of It</b>	<b>Considering Relationship</b>	<i>Not wanting a relationship</i> <i>Having a brief affair</i> <i>Checking out a new man</i> <i>Wanting love</i> <i>Exploring relationship possibilities</i>

Table 52. Sub-category and codes of **Considering Relationship**.

Some participants were *Not wanting a relationship* when interviewed. This may not be a matter of timing: the need for relationship depends on individual needs for intimacy and enjoyment of being alone (Dowrick, 1991). Others during this phase were *Wanting love* and willing to risk connection. One participant experimented with *Having a brief affair*. Other participants had met someone else and were *Checking out a new man*. One participant found a solution that worked for her and was *Exploring relationship possibilities*.

Alex has clear preferences, but for now, she is *Not wanting a relationship*.  
*"I'd like to experience a relationship where there's an equality or support. (...) But, that's way down the line. (...) I like how it is at the moment. I don't have room for another person in my life."* (8.2.43.)

Butterfly tried *Having a brief affair*. *"I'd wished I'd left it a longer time but I was pleased. (...) Then when I realised it was more me giving, and it seemed more like getting back into the marriage type of thing (...) I decided no."* (5.2.15.)



Participants cautiously investigated potential partners in *Checking out a new man*. Georgina got permission from the potential partner to call his ex wife.

*That's how wise and tough I'd got. (...) I would advise every woman to ring the ex-partner. I was number three, and I found that out afterwards. (...) They'd had breakdowns and the same sorts of things, different stories but similar patterns. (11.2.16.)*

Dawn was afraid, but *Wanting love*. She spent several years *Exploring relationship possibilities* with a man who could make no claims on her.

*I didn't want to go there in any way. No way, no way. But I did want the love. (...) I had the same values. I was learning how to have a relationship that let me live by them. That it worked for me to be in that with a married man, and I didn't have to worry about him getting too close because he was always needing to go back to his wife. (1b.7.4.)*

Many participants felt the need for another relationship quite soon after separation. Others waited many years as they continued ***Working Through It***.

### ***Working Through It***

Process	Sub-category	Codes
Making Sense of It	<b><i>Working Through It</i></b>	<i>Having counselling</i> <i>Managing trauma symptoms</i> <i>Getting realistic about what's possible</i>

Table 53. Sub-category and codes of ***Working Through It***.

*Having counselling* or therapy helped some participants with *Managing trauma symptoms* and *Getting realistic about what's possible*. Jamie found

*Having counselling* essential for some time. She is now *Managing trauma symptoms*.

*There was a stage where I really, really relied on the counsellor. (...) I would just wait for the appointment, 'cos that was what kept me going. (...) Because I'm hearing it all the time, and I'm picturing him at my doorway so many times, and its never been true. I know its imaginary.*  
(4.5.46.)

Butterfly was also *Having counselling* and was *Getting realistic about what's possible*. *"I learned that, don't take too many steps, just (...) appreciate the little steps. Don't put yourself out too much, because it puts you in danger."*  
(5.13.21.)

More than half of the participants undertook some therapy or counselling for themselves after the separation. Counselling was used less by participants whose separation happened more than ten years ago. This reflects the availability and 'normality' of doing personal therapy in recent years.

### ***Learning New Skills***

<b>Process</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Making Sense of It</b>	<b><i>Learning New Skills</i></b>	<i>Discovering assertion</i> <i>Learning about parenting</i> <i>Strengthening my boundaries</i>

Table 54. Sub-category and codes of ***Learning New Skills***.

Four participants went to women's support groups and learned skills for relating and parenting. They valued *Discovering assertion*, *Strengthening my boundaries*, and *Learning about parenting*.

Butterfly went to a women's support group twice. The second time she worked on *Strengthening my boundaries*. "*I focused on healthy, what is really healthy, and what is the benefit for me, and how to hold my boundaries still, and know that my boundaries are going to give me what I want in the end.*" (5.2.38.)

For Maria *Discovering assertion* was a life-changing revelation. She wanted to change her parenting style too, and was *Learning about parenting*.

*I just felt like I was very professional when I left the group. (...) I felt so good. And even my children I even learn how to talk to them. (...) That is also part of my culture thing from the past. Where I come from parents controlled your children. But, now I've also learned (...) being assertive means everybody's got to be ok.* (7.12.11.)

Those women who participated in support groups were very positive about their learning experience and the skills they acquired.

### ***Reconciling Unfairness***

<b>Process</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Making Sense of It</b>	<b><i>Reconciling Unfairness</i></b>	<i>Struggling with injustice</i> <i>Wanting to hurt him</i> <i>Finding a positive outcome</i> <i>Making negative comparisons</i> <i>Trying to make people understand</i>

Table 55. Sub-category and codes of ***Reconciling Unfairness***.

***Reconciling Unfairness*** is an important meaning-making part of **Making Sense of It**. Disrupted beliefs about justice and fairness were often slow and difficult to reconcile. Participants were *Struggling with injustice* from the outcome of their experience, and *Wanting to hurt him* was noted by several. *Finding a positive outcome* was one way of reconciling the dilemma, as was *Making negative comparisons*. *Trying to make people understand* about abuse also helped in ***Reconciling Unfairness***.

*Struggling with injustice* had multiple themes; participants' pain and his disregard of it; the apparent minimal response of the justice system compared to the extent of his abuse; that he now has a good income with few responsibilities, while she struggles with poverty and children; or that he is living with a new girlfriend despite his history of abusing. Jamie's description exemplifies this struggle with her sense of unfairness.

*He broke his bail conditions, broke the Protection Order, and you still only get 4 days PD. So, obviously they don't really think that much of it. (...) He's gonna buy M a bike for his house, and all this stuff that I can't do 'cos I've got 3 kids and they've got the money and I don't. (...) I don't understand how people can go through hurting people (...) and he can walk away after doing all this and can still end up better off than other people. Its like it just doesn't make sense. (...) He probably doesn't even think about it anymore. Whereas, I'm picturing guns and knives, so where's the fairness in that. (4.17.15.).*

Jamie, in trying to reconcile her sense of injustice, was *Wanting to hurt him*. She describes several fantasies about scarring him in some way to alert others that he is an abuser. However, for her son's sake, she does not want this to be too severe. She is also *Making negative comparisons* to her own situation.

*He said, 'You 'll like never be anything without me, you cant cope'. (...) I find myself trying to go that extra mile, just to prove that I can. (...) He hasn't got a car or a licence and I have. So, I've got that extra freedom. (...) I've got to keep reminding me of that stuff that I have that he doesn't have, and I'm not a materialistic person ... But, it does make you feel a lot better. (4.6.34.)*

For Alex, *Finding a positive outcome* helped her reconcile the experience with her ex partner. *"It was kind of like a bit of a marathon or triathlon where I had to go through this horrendously demanding hard time with him to find myself."* (8.14.32.)

Georgina wants others to stop blaming women for staying in abusive relationships. She is *Trying to make people understand*, as in this talk back radio example. *"People were ringing, bashing the victims (...) saying she must be*

*stupid why is she staying, and the whole focus is on her being ridiculous. (...) So I phoned up.” (11.16.38.)*

***Reconciling Unfairness*** reflected participants’ strong sense of injustice and having their distress invalidated. Part of resolving this is also illustrated in ***Trying to Make the World Safe***.

#### ***Trying to Make the World Safe***

<b>Process</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Making Sense of It</b>	<b><i>Trying to Make the World Safe</i></b>	<i>Righting some wrongs</i> <i>Wanting to protect others</i> <i>Clarifying responsibility</i>

Table 56. Sub-category and codes of ***Trying to Make the World Safe***.

Participants tried to make their world feel safer. *Clarifying responsibility*, and accepting any part they might have played in creating or maintaining the abusive relationship, could create a sense of having some control over past and future experiences. Participants were *Wanting to protect others* from abuse, and *Righting some wrongs* was another way to feel that there could be some justice in the outcome of their experience.

Mary’s counsellor helped her in *Clarifying responsibility*.

*‘You have responsibility in this relationship, in this marriage that you’ve ended. (...) He’s abused, you stayed, but still, all the way along, there’s been the two of you, (...) so you’ve both got some responsibility in the life of this marriage.’ (...) and I’m thinking, ‘you’re right, you’re right.’ (2.12.24.)*

Several participants spoke of *Wanting to protect others*, or help them through the process of recovery. Participating in this study also served that purpose for some. Georgina has been out of the relationship for four years and finds her heightened awareness of abuse prompting protectiveness.

*Now I look at every woman and think, 'how are things at home?' And every man I meet I think, 'gosh you're charming, I wonder how you are when the doors are shut and the windows are closed'. So I have this (...) distrust and an alertness. It's a protectiveness toward the women and the children and it's very strong. (...) It does affect me. It's one of the indications that I don't think I'm there yet. (11.15.47.)*

Georgina went to some lengths *Righting some wrongs*. She wrote to her religious body, is trying to help her mother in her marriage to Georgina's "controlling" father, and returned to the Family Court counsellor to address her unsatisfactory counselling experience. *"I went straight to the counsellor when I felt strong enough. (...) He said, 'how can I ever regain your trust?' (...) I said, 'well in this area you can't. I'll never, ever trust you with abuse issues'." (11.13.7.)*

Throughout this phase, in contact with others, learning about abuse, and finding some meaning in the experience, participants began to get a more positive sense of themselves, their strengths, their values, and their abilities. They were **Becoming a Separate Person**.

## Consequence: Becoming a Separate Person

Participants are beginning to construct a self-directed life, making their own decisions and being their own authority. They are ***Making It Without Him*** and ***Gaining Confidence*** in themselves, their abilities, and their worth. They are frequently ***Doing Something for Myself*** in the form of exploration of values and possible futures. Participants are ***Knowing I am Someone***, a core self (Marcia, 1993) is beginning to form and they are thriving on **Becoming a Separate Person**.

### ***Making It Without Him***

Consequence	Sub-category	Codes
Becoming a Separate Person	<b><i>Making It Without Him</i></b>	<i>Making my own decisions</i> <i>Being alone but not lonely</i> <i>Feeling liberated</i>

Table 57. Sub-category and codes of ***Making It Without Him***.

With increasing stability and without the burden of living with an abusive partner, some participants reported *Feeling liberated*. They engaged with *Making my own decisions*. Others grappled with feeling alone for some time, although *Being alone but not lonely* is also indicative of this phase. Alex summarises all these processes: “*I love my home. I make all the decisions, big and small. It’s a liberating feeling. I don’t feel like anything’s missing.*” (8b.1.38.)



### **Gaining Confidence**

<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Becoming a Separate Person</b>	<b>Gaining Confidence</b>	<i>Learning about myself</i> <i>Discovering my strength</i> <i>Gaining self-esteem</i>

Table 58. Sub-category and codes of **Gaining Confidence**.

Participants were learning about themselves and their strengths. They began **Gaining Confidence** and self-esteem. Mary was “*starting to gain a sense of who I was, and where I was going, and what I was doing.*” (2.13.27.) She had embarked on *Learning about myself*.

Many participants spoke about this as a time of *Discovering my strength*. Isabel had many difficult years working to repay debt while also managing household and children. She explains that time in her life; “*(It) gave me an inner strength that I didn’t know I’d possessed. It gave me the chance to function more fully.*” (2.16.31.)

There were many opportunities for participants to feel good about themselves. Feedback was helpful, as was creating something that pleased them. Jamie painted her kitchen, others liked it and she was *Gaining self-esteem* and a sense of her strength in her delight with the result. “*I must have been really strong to pick such a strong colour. (...) I’m really into believing, you know that saying, actions speak louder than words (...). To have the confidence to paint your kitchen that colour.*” (4.21.4.)

Participants were feeling more confident and in charge of their lives. They were also exploring other interests and ***Doing Something for Myself***.

### ***Doing Something for Myself***

Consequence	Sub-category	Codes
Becoming a Separate Person	<b><i>Doing Something for Myself</i></b>	<i>Considering possible futures</i> <i>Thinking about a career</i> <i>Getting political</i> <i>Exploring religion and spirituality</i>

Table 59. Sub-category and codes of ***Doing Something for Myself***.

Participants were now able to pursue their own needs and interests. Although many had children to consider, their lives no longer revolved around an abusive partner. This was a time of exploration and reflection, a time of ***Doing Something for Myself***. Participants began exploring their values and thinking about the future. Fields of interest included religious and spiritual beliefs, political movements and career goals.

Alex was beginning to think about what she would do when her daughter went to school. She was *Considering possible futures*. She also thought a lot about her faith and was *Exploring religion and spirituality*.

*Discussion on Christianity (...) Some intellectual conversation with like minded people. (...) The (X) course. I'm doing that because it's really good for helping you work out what you want to do and how to do it. And obviously the extra study will help me get to where I want to.*  
(8.1.38.)

Dawn was discovering ‘*the personal is political*’ (1.11.66.) and, in *Getting political*, was involved in social change movements as well as exploring spirituality. “*Doing stuff that was really good for me, particularly round the peace movement and the environment movement and (...) I started getting into um feminine spirituality.*” (1.8.42.)

Exploring religion, politics, and possible occupations coincided with exploring relationship roles in **Making Sense of It**. These four domains of identity exploration were identified by Marcia (Marcia, 1966, 1993). Participants begin to develop a clear sense of who they are and who they want to be.

### ***Knowing I am Someone***

<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Becoming a Separate Person</b>	<b><i>Knowing I am someone</i></b>	<i>Being a single person</i> <i>Being part of a team</i> <i>Being someone</i> <i>Being clear about my values</i> <i>Being more than a mum</i> <i>Finding myself</i>

Table 60. Sub-category and codes of ***Knowing I am Someone***.

*For so many years (...) thinking that I was nothing and trying to portray that I was something and to now know that I am someone.*  
*(Butterfly:5.1.49.)*

Connecting with others in self-chosen ways, such as *Being part of a team*, allows the experience of *Being a single person* in the company of others.

Developing other interests, and roles which utilise particular personal attributes, creates a feeling of *Being someone*. This is also reflected in *Being more than a mum*. *Being clear about my values* differentiated participants from others.

Learning how to stand up for themselves in healthy ways created an experience of *Finding myself*.

After separating from her partner, Alex made a point of presenting herself to others as *Being a single person*. She enjoyed sport, changed clubs, and found *Being part of a team* useful during this transition period.

*I was being recognised as being single. I wasn't part of a relationship. (...) I wasn't 'X and Alex had split up'. (...) Once you're on the court (...) no-one is what they are identified in any other area in their life, whether it's their religion, they're married, or children. (...) Your position is who you are in the team, and your skills, your abilities, your personality - not all the titles that go from where you are from. (...) I really needed that I could just be this important part of the team.*  
(8.12.27.)

Several mothers spoke of their wish to express themselves in other roles. They applied themselves to *Being more than a mum*. Jamie explains; "*I was doing something for myself, because I wasn't just a mother or someone sitting at home on a benefit. (...) I think its important for people to have something for themselves.*" (4.3.1.)

Alex, in contrasting her viewpoint with the perceived values of others, was *Being clear about my values*.

*I've decided to stay away from men. A relationship with a man is not a goal. Other people have a problem with that. Friends need to see me in a relationship to make them feel better for being a family. Finances are only a problem when others think I should have money. It's a major issue for some people and about their values. Richness is about experience not money. (8b.1.13.)*

Alex made positive meaning of the abusive relationship as being a path to *Finding myself. "That experience of finally standing up to a person like him, and a situation like that, I think that was finally the thing that gave me the opportunity to find myself and be OK with me, just with me."* (8.14.34.)

Participants now have a better understanding of themselves as women with skills, abilities, and values that are important to them. They can stand alone, and define themselves by their own values rather than by the values of those who may have authority over them.

### **Summary**

MAKING SENSE OF IT allowed participants to begin to move forward. A secure base for themselves, and their children, made standing alone a possibility. They were increasingly confident of making a life without their ex partner. Participants did not want further abuse, so those considering another man chose carefully. They had taken control of their lives and safety.

This was a period of exploration. Participants learned about abuse, relationships, and their own personal issues. They developed a core sense of themselves through exploring beliefs and values, and perceiving themselves as

women with potential futures. This phase commonly lasted two or three years, although duration varied according to individual circumstances. Figure 15 shows the outcome of this phase. Figure 16 illustrates the place of the phase MAKING SENSE OF IT within the basic psycho-social process of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**.

INSERT fig 15

INSERT page

Fig 16

Dowrick, S. (1991). *Intimacy and solitude* (1997 ed.). Sydney: Random House.

Marcia, J. E. (1966). Development and validation of ego identity status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 3(5), 551-558.

Marcia, J. E. (1993). The ego identity status approach to ego identity. In J. E. Marcia, A. S. Waterman, D. R. Matteson, S. L. Archer & J. L. Orlofsky (Eds.), *Ego identity: A handbook for psychosocial research* (pp. 3-21). New York: Springer-Verlag.



Figure 13 shows the place of this phase, MAKING SENSE OF IT, in the basic psycho-social process of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**.

Dimensional interactions across the core categories are shown in Figure 14.

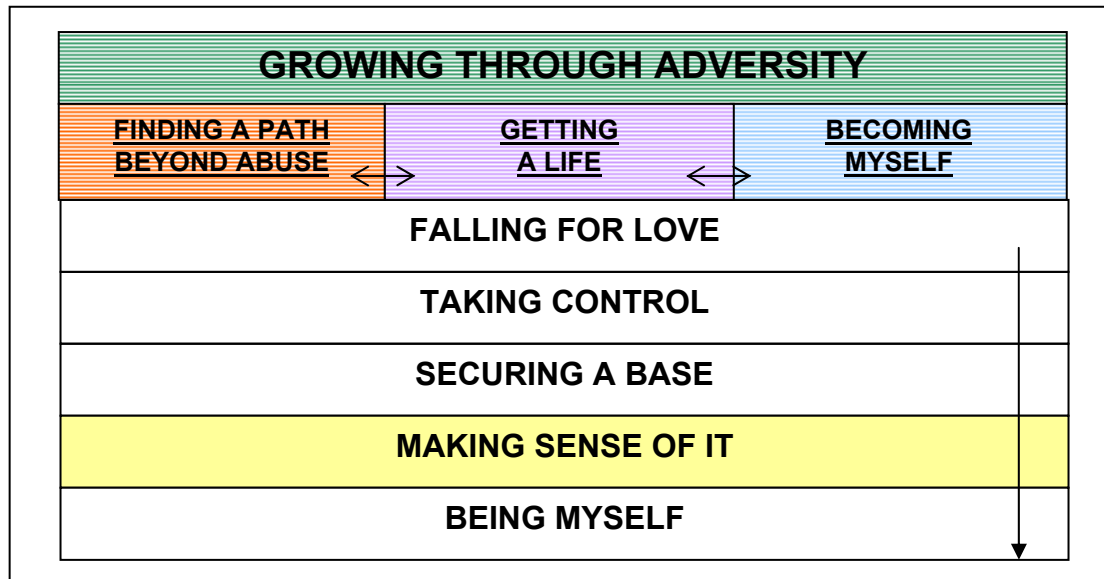


Figure 13. MAKING SENSE OF IT is the fourth phase of the basic psycho-social process of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**.

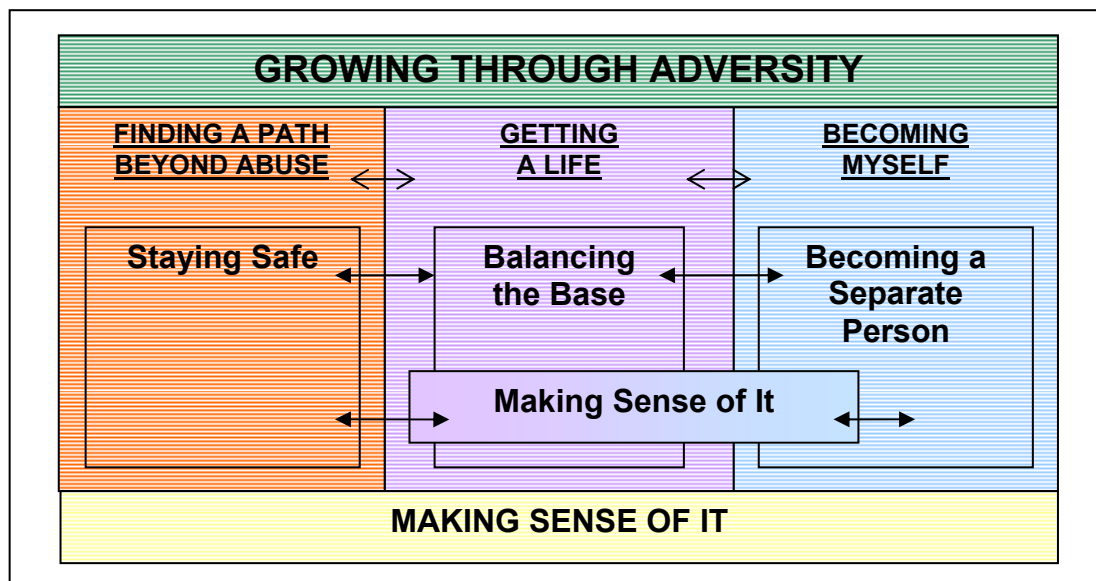
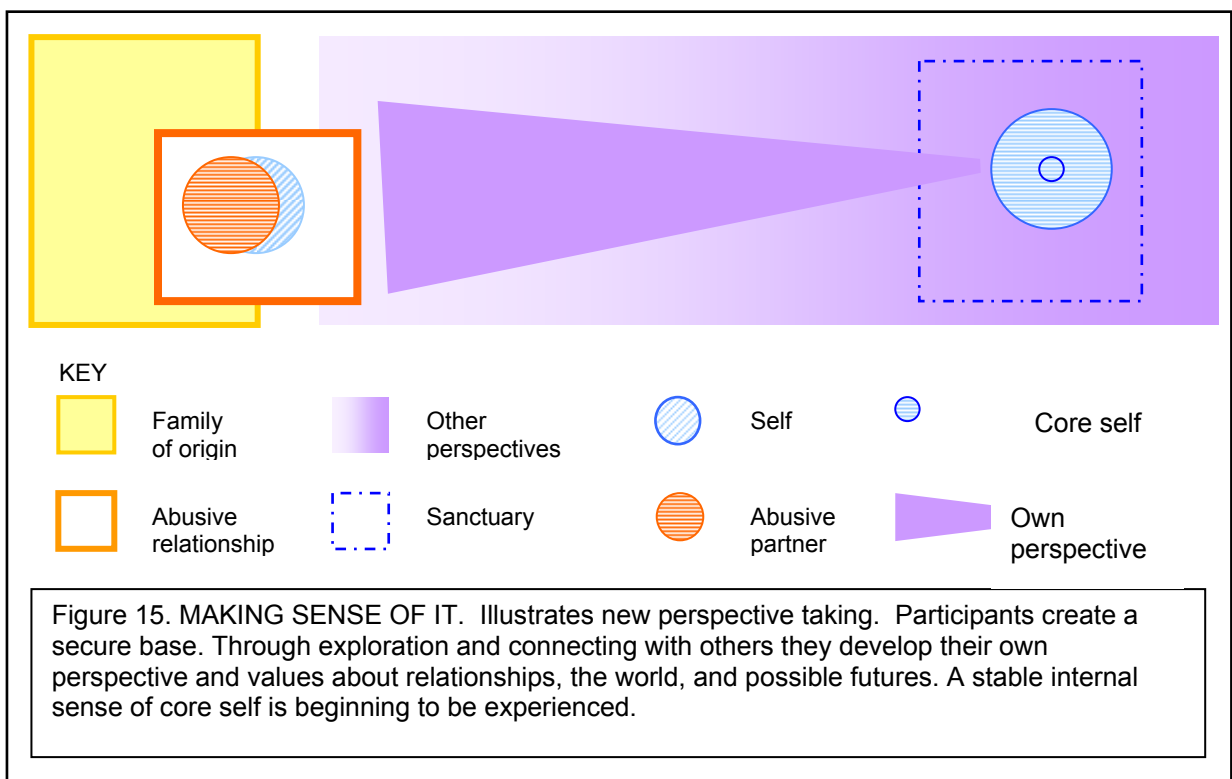
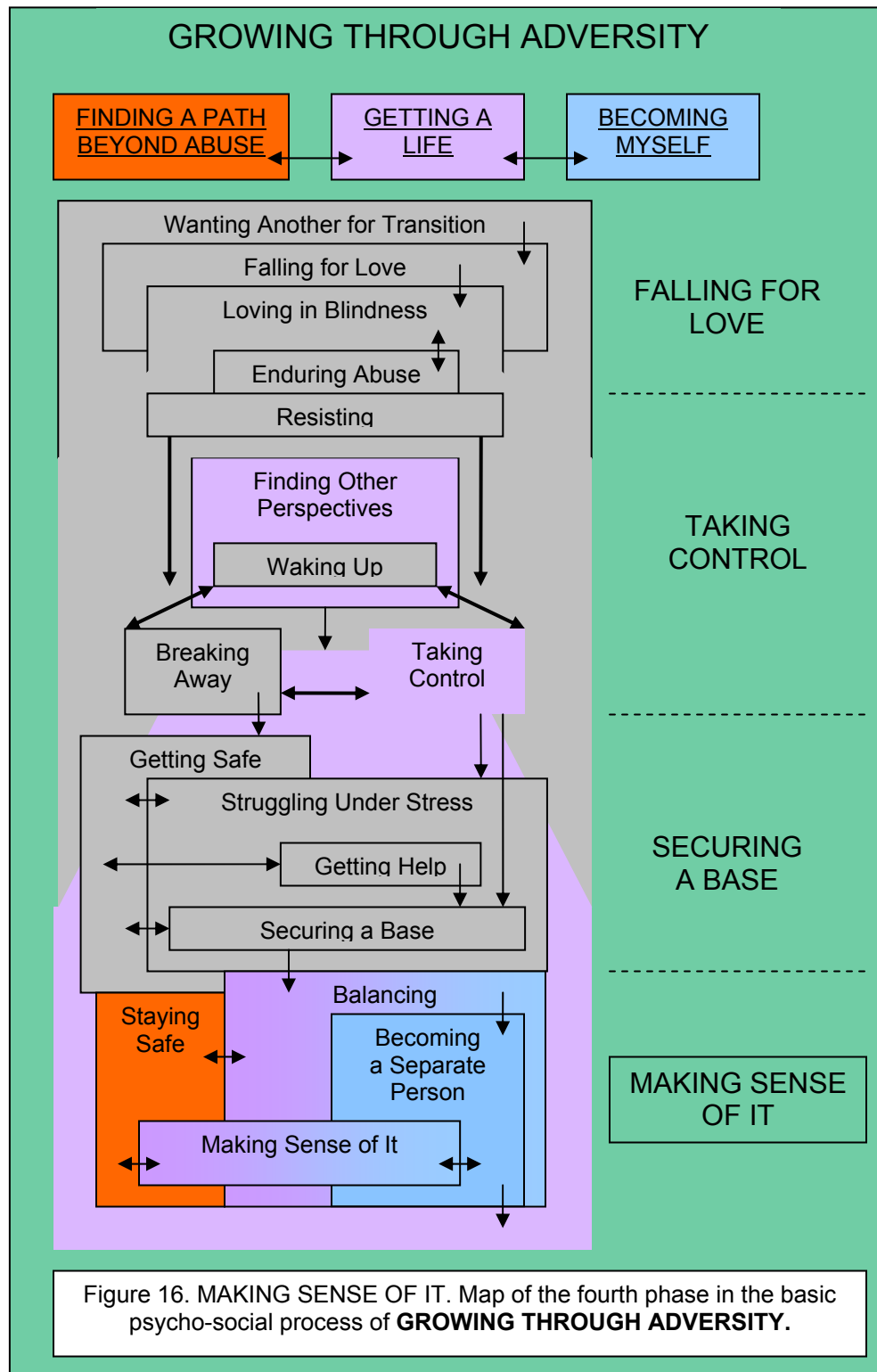


Figure 14. MAKING SENSE OF IT is the fourth phase of the basic psycho-social process; **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**. Dimensions interact across the core categories: FINDING A PATH BEYOND ABUSE; GETTING A LIFE; and, BECOMING MYSELF.

women with potential futures. This phase commonly lasted two or three years, although duration varied according to individual circumstances. Figure 15 shows the outcome of this phase. Figure 16 illustrates the place of the phase MAKING SENSE OF IT within the basic psycho-social process of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**.





## CHAPTER NINE

### BEING MYSELF

#### *Introduction*

Participants have now created a relatively secure environment for themselves and their children. They have learned new skills, developed an understanding of abuse, and constructed some meaning of their experience. They have discovered their own values and begun to satisfy their own needs. Participants have explored possible futures, and some have made decisions regarding their next step.

During the phase, BEING MYSELF, participants look toward the long-term future and make commitments that will carry them forward. Determined they will never be abused again, they are resolute in controlling their safety. There are still problems for some, particularly with children and continuing symptoms of trauma. However, participants are secure in their sense of themselves and are happier with their lives.

Figure 17 shows the place of the phase, BEING MYSELF, in the basic psycho-social process of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**. Figure 18 shows interactions across the core categories FINDING A PATH BEYOND ABUSE, GETTING A LIFE, and BECOMING MYSELF.

**INSERT fig 17 and 18**

## PERSPECTIVE: BEING MYSELF

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Sub-categories</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Constructing My Own</b>	<i>Finding Purpose and Direction</i>
	<b>Future</b>	<i>Committing to a Future</i>
		<i>Committing to Relationship</i>
<b>Condition</b>	<b>Monitoring Safety</b>	<i>Committing to 'Never Again'</i>
		<i>Feeling Safer</i>
<b>Process</b>	<b>Being Myself</b>	<i>Living By My Values</i>
		<i>Being me</i>
<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Moving On</b>	<i>Breaking His Hold on Me</i>
		<i>Connecting From a New Place</i>
		<i>Dealing with the Aftermath and Children</i>
		<i>Dealing with the Aftermath of Trauma</i>
		<i>Seeing a Bigger Picture</i>
		<i>Having a Life</i>

Table 61. Categories and sub-categories of the phase: BEING MYSELF.

BEING MYSELF requires **Monitoring Safety** while **Being Myself**. This enables **Constructing My Own Future** and **Moving On**.

### **Context: Constructing My Own Future**

Participants had undertaken a period of exploration. They had considered possible careers and the possibility of another relationship. Many had learned personal and relational skills in therapy, counselling, or support groups. Some had specifically explored spiritual and ideological beliefs and values. Participants were now ready to begin realistic planning, and committing to a future based on their own values and choices.

#### ***Finding Purpose and Direction***

<b>Context</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Constructing My Own Future</b>	<b><i>Finding Purpose and Direction</i></b>	<i>Reconnecting with hopes and dreams</i>  <i>Having a direction</i>

Table 62. Sub-category and codes of ***Finding Purpose and Direction***.

For many, ***Finding Purpose and Direction*** was an outcome of the exploration process in MAKING SENSE OF IT. A sense of direction sometimes arose from discovering new interests, or from reconnecting to goals they had considered prior to the abusive relationship.

Catherine was now free to pursue previous goals and was *Reconnecting with hopes and dreams*: “It was like reconnecting to my own hopes and dreams for the future and what I wanted to do, (...) going back on track really with my life.” (10.18.8.)

*Having a direction for her future took Mary some time to find. She “sort of pottered around a lot, 6 or 7 years without having any direction and now I’m doing (...) and I’m really enjoying it.” (3.1.8.)*

Having found a self-chosen sense of direction, participants began ***Committing to a Future.***

<b><i>Committing to a Future</i></b>		
<b>Context</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Constructing My Own Future</b>	<b><i>Committing to a Future</i></b>	<i>Being realistic</i>
		<i>Thinking long-term</i>
		<i>Making plans</i>
		<i>Committing with support</i>
		<i>Making a life</i>

Table 63. Sub-category and codes of ***Committing to a Future.***

*“I really want to do some study because I left school at 14.”  
(Alex:8.1.49.)*

Participants were ready for ***Committing to a Future.*** They were making realistic long-term plans for their lives. Having support made a commitment to lengthy training realistic and possible.

Isabel was considering remarriage. She was *Being realistic.* “*I had that time to look around and decide, well, do I want to tie myself down again, what sort of life am I letting myself in for? Um, how are my children going to be cared for?*” (2.11.21.)



Lily realised that *Making a life* meant coming out of hiding and she committed herself to that.

*I really should get out and make a life. (...) You can't sit behind locked doors and locked windows for ever. You've got to face the fear if you like. (...) I started thinking about regrets and not wanting any more regrets, and that's when I thought, 'yeah I'll give things a go, even if I'm afraid of what might happen'. (Lily:6.4.11.)*

Mary was pleased to be *Committing with support* from her new husband.

*If I've committed myself to doing something, he's been there. He's supported. I could never have done (...) with my ex-husband. I'd never have felt secure enough. I'd never have ever, ever felt as secure as I do now doing it. (Mary:3.27.20.)*

Jamie was *Thinking long-term* as she planned well ahead into her future. *"I'll have my 40th birthday the same year my oldest daughter has her 21st birthday. And then I'm thinking, well then I'll have a life, and done my studies."* (4.14.38.)

Some participants became involved with new partners which required ***Committing to Relationship***.

#### ***Committing to Relationship***

<b>Context</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Constructing</b>	<b><i>Committing to</i></b>	<i>Wanting a safe man</i>
<b>My Own Future</b>	<b><i>Relationship</i></b>	<i>Being a partner in relationship</i>

Table 64. Sub-category and codes of ***Committing to a Relationship***.

Most participants eventually began another relationship. This time it had to be different. Dawn was *Wanting a safe man. "I wanted to be with a safe man, who was kind and respectful, and it had to be like that."* (1b.8.2.) Mary now experiences *Being a partner in relationship. "I see myself as a partner in this relationship."* (3.10.35.)

Participants have decided on their goals and engaged with **Constructing My Own Future**, but remain aware of potential abuse and continue **Monitoring Safety**.

### **Condition: Monitoring Safety**

Participants had an awareness of abuse and are now **Committing to 'Never Again'**. Despite remaining alert to potential abuse they begin **Feeling Safer**.

### **Committing to 'Never Again'**

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Monitoring Safety</b>	<b>Committing to 'Never Again'</b>	<i>Having a bottom line</i>
		<i>Keeping boundaries</i>
		<i>Nipping it in the bud</i>
		<i>Watching for signs</i>

Table 65. Sub-category and codes of **Committing to 'Never Again'**.

*I had the bottom line that I will not allow myself to be abused again (...) and I'm not going to underestimate that. If things start to crop up in the early stages of the relationship, then I'm going to cut my losses and run. (...) The longer you stay in, the harder it is to leave. And, for me, that would be a pattern. I've got to think this is probably just the beginning of things and they're going to get worse if they can't get resolved. So I've promised myself I'd do that even if it was difficult, and not to think this is going to get better. (Catherine:10.18.54.)*

With a heightened awareness of abuse, participants are determined they will never be abused again. They are alert and firm about *Keeping boundaries* and *Nipping it in the bud* if they sense abuse returning to their lives.

Participants prepared for the possibility of other relationships by making a commitment to *Having a bottom line* and *Nipping it in the bud* if they noticed behaviours that “aren't respectful and good” (Catherine:10.18.53.).

Dawn is happy in the long-term relationship she is in now, but remains *Watching for signs* and will be *Nipping it in the bud* if her concerns aren't respected.

*So, what happens now is... that I am always checking and watching. Even with X at the moment. Am I OK? That's with me all the way. (...) If I'm not OK, and if its not listened to ..... I say “right now, I must nip this in the bud”. (1b:12.27.)*

Alex has chosen not to have another partnership at this point. She has a shared parenting relationship with her ex-partner and is firm about *Keeping boundaries*. “I don't want a repeat performance, which is an incentive to keep

*boundaries. I don't let him back in. Now he has no power over me. I had given him that emotional power.” (8b.1.1.)*

Participants plan an abuse-free life, and, continuing to monitor for abuse, they begin to feel safer as time goes by.

### ***Feeling Safer***

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Monitoring</b>	<b><i>Feeling Safer</i></b>	<i>Feeling safe because he's not here</i>
<b>Safety</b>		<i>Feeling safe because he's dead</i>
		<i>Feeling safe because I have support</i>
		<i>Deepening sense of trust</i>

Table 66. Sub-category and codes of ***Feeling Safer***.

Having no contact with their ex-partner helped participants to begin ***Feeling Safer***, as did family support. However, learning to trust again often took time.

Mary's ex-husband went to live overseas and returned infrequently. She was *Feeling safe because he's not here*. “*It actually was like a weight off my shoulders. (...) I also had a sense of safety. (...) I'm not afraid of you 'cos you aren't here.*” (3.9.21.)

Lily's ex-husband died five years after she left and she began *Feeling safe because he's dead*.

*On one level that fear was there, but on another level you sort of knew it was ok now. So I knew that I could have people around to the house and not worry that he might come around and do stuff. So you could actually have, you could live a normal life. (6.4.26.)*

Mary had reconciled with her family and was *Feeling safe because I have support.*

*Even if you're here, you can't hurt me any more. You can't touch me. Because I know I've got that sense of... I can ring the police... or I could call my brother. He wouldn't let him lay a finger on me now. (...) I had that reliability again. I had that sense like I wasn't alone any more. I didn't have to deal with this by myself any more. (3.18.22.)*

Catherine recognises the slowness of **Feeling Safer** when a *Deepening sense of trust* makes her aware that she had not been feeling safe.

*Even though it's been a long time (...) I'm still getting over it. I'm still realising the impact it has on me when something else shifts or something else changes for me even now. Or my sense of safety deepens and I realise that, oh I haven't really felt fully safe. (...) Lots of things I was carrying I didn't really know I was still carrying. (10.19.49.)*

**Monitoring Safety** remained a condition of participants' lives as they continued with **Being Myself**.

### **Process: Being Myself**

**Being Myself** means participants are living self-determined lives and including their own needs in their relationships. ***Living by My Values*** and ***Being me*** are priorities.

### ***Living by My Values***

<b>Process</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Being Myself</b>	<b><i>Living By My Values</i></b>	<i>Prioritising myself</i> <i>Growing up</i>

Table 67. Sub-category and codes of ***Living By My Values***.

Participants describe themselves as “*more independent*” and “*strengthened*”. They are clear about what they value, including the value of being themselves in their relationships. Dawn describes her experience as *Growing up*, yet retaining her earlier values. She approaches relationship on her own terms, including the importance of *Prioritising myself*.

*My side, of this good relationship means being myself 100%. (...) Being myself is more important than the relationship. (...) These were the values that I was brought up with, and these are the values that I’m taking with me now. (...) I’ve become tempered perhaps. Strengthened. I’ve grown up. (1b.13.9.)*

While Dawn’s values may not have changed, she has explored and considered them. Her values are now fully her own.

### ***Being Me***

<b>Process</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Being Myself</b>	<b><i>Being Me</i></b>	<i>Claiming who I am</i> <i>Being more than a role</i>

Table 68. Sub-categories and codes of ***Being me***.

Participants now have a clear sense of who they are or who they are not. Isabel, now widowed from her second husband, is *Claiming who I am* and fully experiencing her life. *"I'm a grown up woman, and I love people, and I love life."* (2.2.18.)

Mary has a life that engages and excites her. She is *Being more than a role*. *"I'm a person, to start off with. I'm not, not just this mum, and this wife that was in this... that... that's what my life was .., the helper."* (3.10.33.)

Participants have a stable sense of themselves and the meaning of their lives. Participants are **Moving On**, and the abusive relationship is becoming part of the past.

### **Consequence: Moving On**

While aspects of the experience of abuse may continue to have some effect on their lives, participants are **Moving On** toward their chosen futures. For those who have not already done so, any emotional hold the ex-partner still has on them can now be severed. There are still ongoing issues for many women,

especially with their children or longer-lasting symptoms of trauma. However, participants can see a bigger picture and are living the new life they have created for themselves.

### ***Breaking His Hold on Me***

<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Moving On</b>	<b><i>Breaking His Hold on Me</i></b>	<i>Getting closure</i>
		<i>Divorcing the entitlement</i>
		<i>Severing the connection</i>
		<i>Exorcising his energy</i>
		<i>Stopping his power over me</i>

Table 69. Sub-category and codes of ***Breaking His Hold on Me***.

Participants are moving forward in their lives but, while some had little contact with the ex partner, he still had power over them. Participants claimed their independence from him by **Breaking His Hold on Me**, which took many different, often symbolic, forms. This was a necessary step for many participants in **Moving On**.

Mary wrote to her ex-husband acknowledging her part in the relationship difficulties and forgiving him his part. His attempts to induce guilt no longer threatened her. She was *Getting closure*.

*“The matter’s over, because I’ve resolved it inside of myself (...) and resigned to the fact that it wasn’t going to work, and we weren’t meant*



*to be together and I forgive you and I'm getting on with my life." And from that day on, I think I had closure. (...) So all the stuff he's been able to throw at me, or thinks he's been able to throw at me since then, it almost like I can put up a shield and throw him off. I deal with it. Its not like I don't deal with it. (3.12.40.)*

Lily took the risk of exposing her whereabouts when *Divorcing his entitlement*. This eased the way to moving on with her life, a process that became easier after he died. *"Someone said to me something about, if anything happened to me, because we were still legally married that he would still have, you know, entitlements and rights."* (6.4.10.)

Dawn found a unique resolution in *Severing the connection* through ritual meditation. She did not know the *"powerful and unexpected experience"* she would find when seeking answers to feeling drained.

*Its (...) 5 or 6 years later, and (...) my world is still blocked. There's still a whole pile of me that is entwined with X though, we are not having contact to speak of (...). I was looking at why I was drained, and I looked at my energy around me and I found a little bit,..... draining (...) it was a straw, quite literally, (...) and X was at the other end, sucking..... (...) I cut it, I sealed it. (...) I could cut all the physical stuff and I was still being drained. (...) It actually worked because I had severed that link on the metaphysical realm. (1.9.52.)*

Catherine took the more direct route of *Stopping his power over me* by confronting her ex partner.

*I'd looked him in the eyes and told him what I thought about the situation, and he hadn't been able to do anything to me. And it was a bit like he can't do anything to hurt me now. You know, I was shaken up by it. It did strengthen me because I thought, 'well yeah, he's got no power over me'. (...) It was sort of very much unfinished business anyway. (...) I felt like I hadn't had my say. I'd never been heard. (10.16.23.)*

Georgina divorced her abusive partner, threw the wedding ring in a street planter and went through her home, *Exorcising his energy*. *"I burned his letters and his faxes. I beat the bed with a towel to beat his energy out of it. I went from room to room saying, 'get your energy out of my kitchen etc.'"* (11.20.16.)

These efforts to claim a life that did not include his influence were meaningful and effective for participants and they reported a sense of increased freedom from him after that time.

### ***Connecting From a New Place***

<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Moving On</b>	<b>Connecting From a New Place</b>	<i>Reconciling with him</i>
		<i>Reconciling with family</i>
		<i>Claiming what would work for me</i>

Table 70. Sub-category and codes of ***Connecting From a New Place***.

Participants had changed. They approached relationship with new skills and strengths, and greater self-awareness. They had broader perspectives and

a new place to stand in the world. They were connecting with others from this new place.

Maria was the only participant who undertook *Reconciling with him*. She made this step after a period of independence and acquiring skills. Her husband had also attended programmes to change his behaviour and his relationship with alcohol.

*We'd been separate for nearly three years and (...) we've been together now for nearly two years. (...) I am in more control of the situation now and our every day routine now. (...) We sit down and talk about it, and it's working. (7.10.50)*

Mary could now resolve her long estrangement from her family.

*Reconciling with family* was an essential step in her **Moving On**.

*I had to close some of these doors and I had to make it known to some of these people. (...) I said to my dad, "Look, I know you're not happy about what has happened. But, the ultimate end dad is that its my choice. And I think I'm doing the right thing". Then dad was talking to me again. (...) My heart was breaking every time I saw (brother). (...) I said, "I'm just asking you to let me be happy and don't punish me for it. (...) And he said "yes". (3.13.29.)*

Dawn had a lengthy affair and now knew what she wanted from relationship. She was looking for intimacy and went into her next relationship *Claiming what would work for me*. "I came back at a different place. (...) I was ready for being me in a relationship (...) I had changed. I had grown. It was *claiming what would work for me*." (1b.8.13.)

The women had changed and grown. They engaged with others in relationship as women who had realistically explored their options and knew what they wanted from life.

***Dealing With the Aftermath and Children***

<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Moving On</b>	<b><i>Dealing with the Aftermath and Children</i></b>	<i>Continuing problems with children</i>
		<i>Creating a father myth</i>
		<i>Sorrowing for a child</i>

Table 71. Sub-category and codes of ***Dealing With the Aftermath and Children***.

For many mothers there are continuing problems and concerns with children. Some children retained loyalty to their fathers or the distorted messages he had given them, or behaved in ways that caused concern to participants. Mothers made efforts not to turn the children against their fathers, and experienced sadness for the effects of the relationship and abuse on their children.

Mary has *Continuing problems with children*. Her youngest daughter was her father's favourite and Mary's relationship with her daughter is complex and sometimes difficult.

*She said to me um "Dad's right. You never did love me." (...) I know I'm always gonna have to deal with the aftermath when it comes to the kids. For me its over, but for them its not, and I'm always gonna have to deal with that. (3.8.37.)*

Lily tries to give her sons a stronger sense of themselves by *Creating a father myth*.

*I've tried really hard to help them see a better side to their father, almost to the point where I think I've gone too far and I get a bit pissed off at times. I've tried to be so rational and reasonable because I am conscious they carry his genes and so I don't want them to be thinking, 'oh my god where do I come?' (6.8.21)*

Isabel's adult son still causes her concern, and she is *Sorrowing for her child*.

*I must say that (son) is still feeling the effects of that break up. (...) He has no self-esteem and my heart aches for him, because he had, he had potential when he was younger. But the things, the things that happened in this marriage when it was breaking up, just, just overwhelmed the poor, young lad. (2.3.26.)*

Two mothers could not manage a child's problematic behaviour. Those children are still living with other family members several years later. Other participants are ***Dealing with the Aftermath of Trauma***.

#### ***Dealing with the Aftermath of Trauma***

<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Moving On</b>	<b><i>Dealing with the</i></b>	<i>Continuing fear</i>
	<b><i>Aftermath of Trauma</i></b>	<i>Putting it in the back of my mind</i>
		<i>Using denial</i>

Table 72. Sub-category and codes of ***Dealing with the Aftermath of Trauma***.

Some participants continue to experience trauma symptoms. They manage distressing memories by avoiding thinking about it or minimising the experience with denial.

In the 1980's a local Woman's Refuge had declined Lily's offer of help. She felt her experience was invalidated and began *Using denial*.

*"That led to the denial, which has in some strange way allowed me to get on with my life. Unfortunately, I think it has also caused me to be a little hard on other women in similar situations." (6c.3.7.)*

Lily's life appears normal on the surface, but she sometimes experiences *Continuing fear*. *"Just thinking about having the interview, and all of a sudden a fear comes up connected with this. You think it's pushed away, and your life is apparently normal." (6.5.25.)*

Isabel continues to manage by *Putting it in the back of my mind*. *"If I allow myself to go back and look at all of the things that happened .... I still aren't totally over them, but I can put them in the back of my mind." (2.14.20.)*

Despite remaining difficulties, participants have a perspective on their experience and are ***Seeing a Bigger Picture***.

### ***Seeing a Bigger Picture***

<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Moving On</b>	<b><i>Seeing a Bigger Picture</i></b>	<i>Wanting to help community</i>  <i>Continuing concerns for the women</i>

Table 73. Sub-category and codes of ***Seeing a Bigger Picture***.

Many participants spoke of concerns for other women and continuing abuse in relationships generally. Participants are very pro-social and most have chosen occupations that will help others.

Dawn notes that, although she came from a traditional home, she had the influence of feminism in the 1970s. She sees society as not changing much, and has *Continuing concerns for women*. “*I want to make a link between my traditional upbringing and now. For a lot of women it hasn’t changed that much. (....) I don’t want to give the impression that that was then.*” (1b.2.7.)

Maria is very concerned for other Samoan women. *She is Wanting to help her community* and is frustrated by collusion with abuse.

*You will never hear them ring the cops. Or you’ll never hear them tell anybody. I mean, you can see them with a big black eye and you know exactly where it came from. And then you say, ‘oh what happened?’ And they say, ‘oh, you know’. And they expect you to understand. And you say, ‘no that’s wrong’. ‘Oh no. He’ll kill me if I do something about it.’ So that’s another big, big issue to me. (7.17.12.)*

Maria was among the many participants whose intention for participation in this study was to help women who experience abuse.

### ***Having a Life***

<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Moving On</b>	<b><i>Having a life</i></b>	<i>Getting on with it</i>
		<i>Having good things in my life</i>
		<i>Looking back on the experience</i>

Table 74. Sub-category and codes of ***Having a Life***.

Participants are generally happy with their current lives. They know and like themselves, and value their relationships, life-styles, and futures. From the position of a more secure present, they are able to reflect on their experience.

Isabel remains irrepressible, and is *Getting on with it*.

*I've just had to stand on my own two feet most of the time. I've (...) muddled my way through heaps of situations, and haven't always done right. (...) But that's me. I've just got to get on with things.*  
(2.18.7.)

Mary remarried and has another child. She is enjoying the satisfaction of *Having good things in my life*: "Now I've found something that is good in my life. My husband, my son, you know, my life, my (vocation)." (3.6.40.)

The interview process gave participants an opportunity for *Looking back on the experience*. Their observations are varied:



*I've lost my innocence in life. I'm alert now. (...) I don't think I can be carefree again. I think I can be happy. I can have contentment, I think. I know I'm in a good relationship and feel good about that.*  
(Georgina:11.15.2.)

*You don't stay in a relationship in order to fulfil yourself, in order to keep yourself happy, you know. The relationship is something separate from that.* (Lily:6.9.45.)

*My own personal journey is bigger, bigger than being (ex)'s wife.*  
(Dawn:1.12.72.)

Participants have not forgotten their experience. It is part of their life, but now it is history.

### **Summary**

Participants have created meaningful lives for themselves, and committed to futures that fit their values. Some have retained the values of their childhood, but by choice, after considering alternatives. Most are again in a committed relationship, but this time on their own terms. Several participants are still managing symptoms of trauma, and others have ongoing concerns about the impact of the relationship on their children. However, they are well resourced and supported to manage their lives. They have successfully broken any emotional hold the abusive partner had over them. They now stand apart from that relationship, having a relationship with the relationship, and can see it clearly rather than being embedded within it.

Participants are no longer isolated and continue to develop new perspectives. They have full lives with varied interests. These women now know themselves well and have a deeper understanding of the world and their place in it. They are determined that they will never be abused again and remain alert to its potential. They have firmly taken control of their lives and, while many bear emotional scars, have become women who live without abuse. Figure 19 illustrates this phase of BEING MYSELF.

INSERT fig 19

Figure 20 shows the phase, BEING MYSELF, as the outcome of previous phases of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**. During FALLING FOR LOVE in the first phase, the partner became abusive. Participants began TAKING CONTROL by resisting abuse and eventually separated from their partners. Participants' practical needs for themselves and their children were resolved in SECURING A BASE. With stability achieved, participants sought information, skills, and meaning in MAKING SENSE OF IT. Over time, participants had created lives for themselves enabling them to move on in BEING MYSELF.

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FIG 20

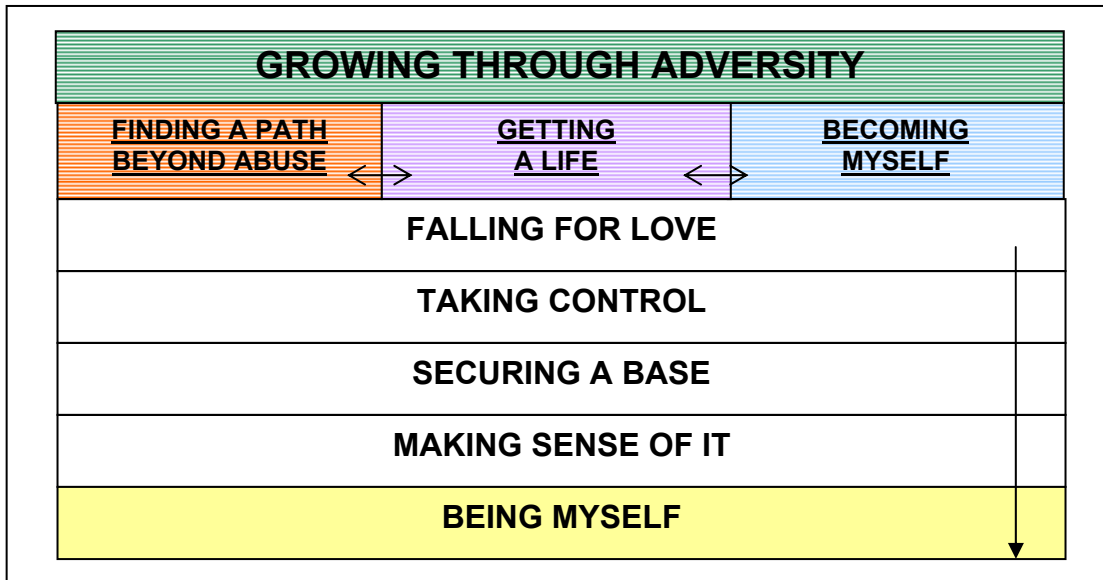


Figure 17. BEING MYSELF is the fifth phase of the basic psycho-social process of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**.

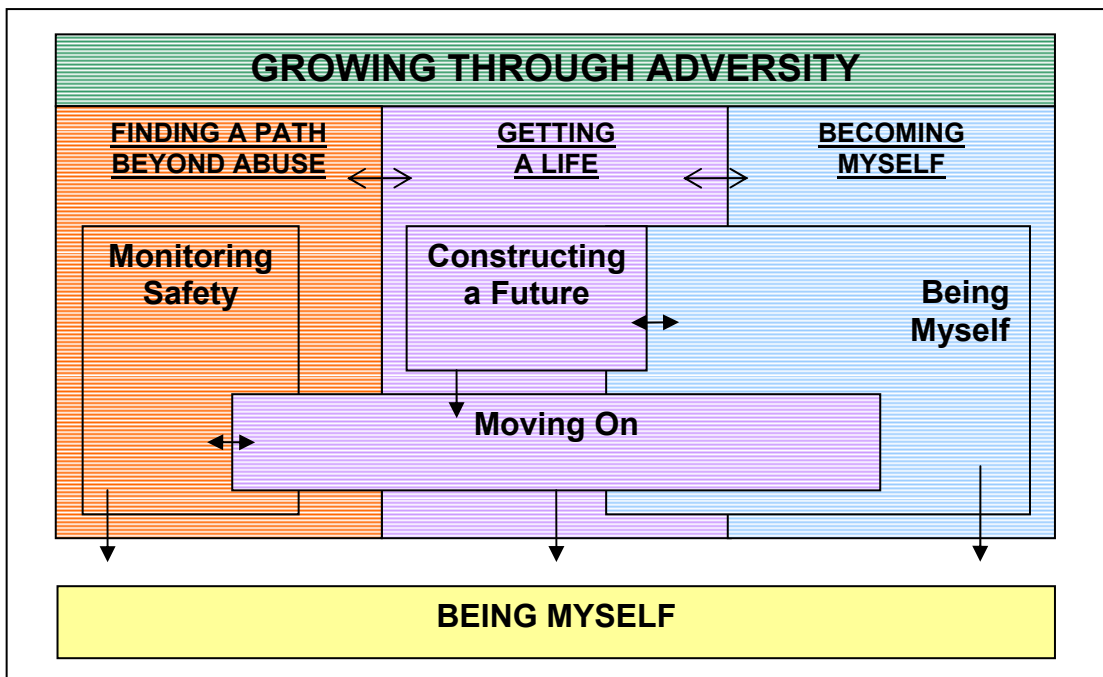
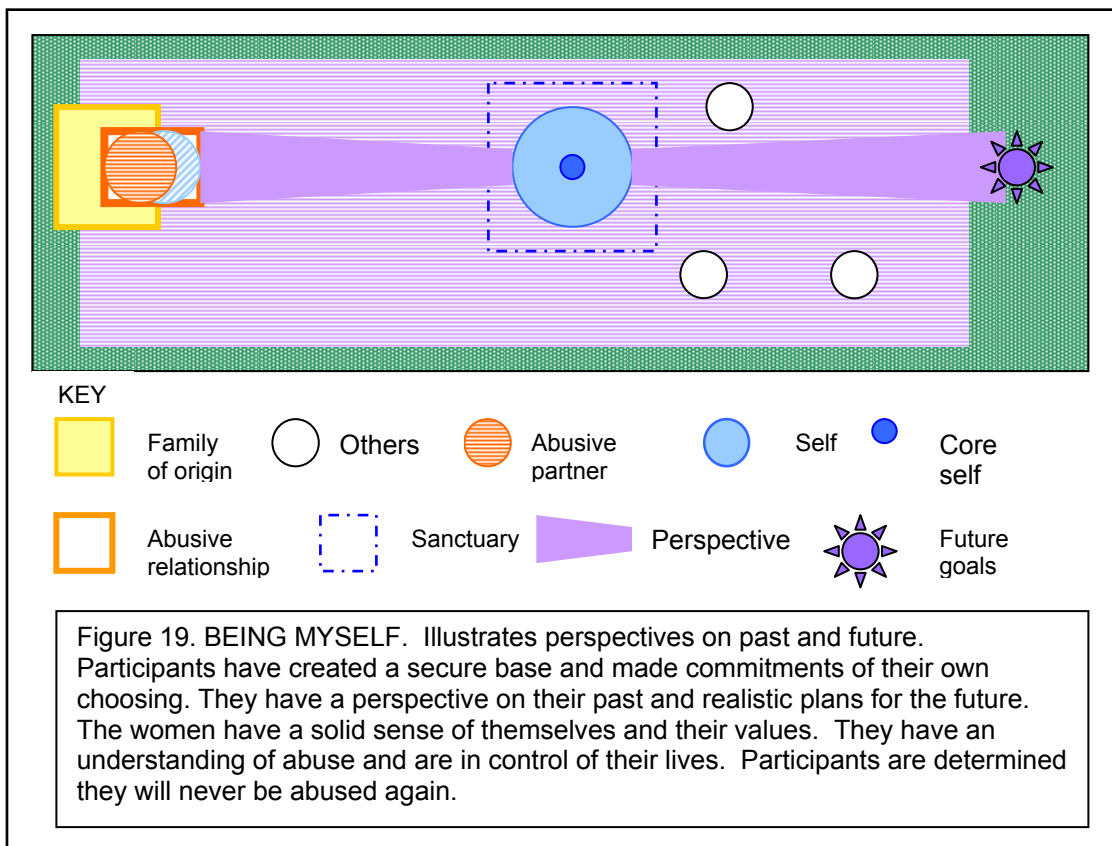
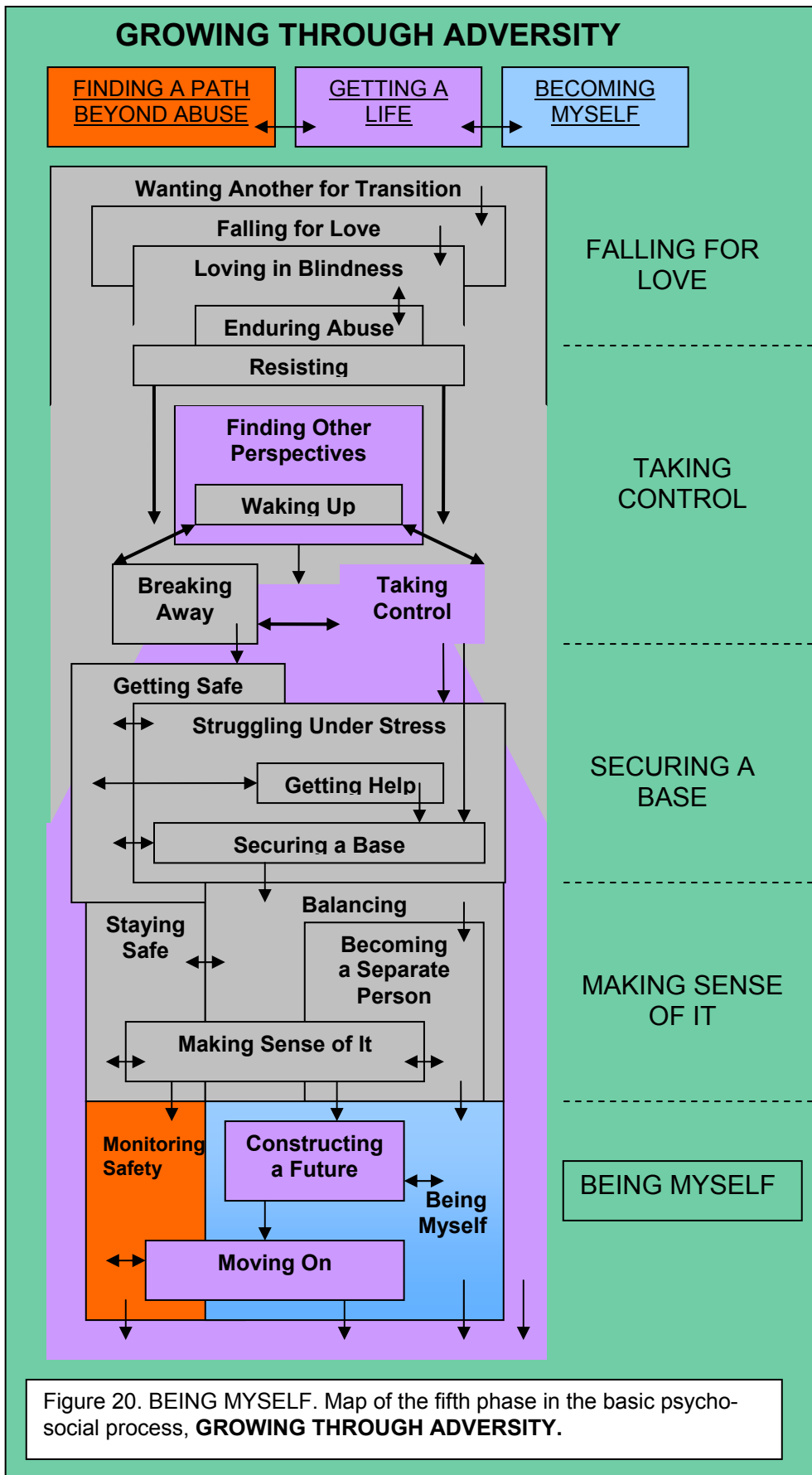


Figure 18. BEING MYSELF. Dimensions interact across the core categories: FINDING A PATH BEYOND ABUSE; GETTING A LIFE; and, BECOMING MYSELF.

Participants are no longer isolated and continue to develop new perspectives. They have full lives with varied interests. These women now know themselves well and have a deeper understanding of the world and their place in it. They are determined that they will never be abused again and remain alert to its potential. They have firmly taken control of their lives and, while many bear emotional scars, have become women who live without abuse. Figure 19 illustrates this phase of BEING MYSELF.









## CHAPTER TEN

### DISCUSSION

#### *Introduction*

The women in this study provided information about the entire experience of an abusive relationship; beginning the relationship, the dynamics within the relationship, processes of separation from the relationship, the difficulties in establishing themselves when separated from the relationship, and the journey to becoming who they are today.

Participants committed to the relationship with traditional gendered ideals of women's roles. As the relationship became abusive they used a variety of coping strategies to manage and make sense of their experience. As these strategies became less effective, and their situation increasingly desperate, they sought help outside the relationship. Through seeking help or intervening circumstances, participants experienced other contexts that changed their perspective and made sense of their experience in a different way. New perspectives resulted in participants making the choice to separate from their partner.

Separation, and the period immediately following, was extremely stressful but participants learned new ways of coping and practical skills. During this difficult time of learning to make it 'without him', participants discovered their own strengths and grew in self-esteem and confidence. They sought to understand

how 'it' happened so it would never happen again, and made personal meaning of the experience that helped them to move forward.

Throughout this process participants changed and grew, exploring their values and finding purpose and direction in their lives. They now have a solid sense of who they are and have committed to future goals of their own choosing. Many have formed other relationships, but on their own terms such as refusing to accept abuse and equality in the partnership.

This chapter begins with an overview of findings from the study. Phase processes identified in this study are then compared with existing domestic violence and partner abuse literature. Discussion moves onto processes within each phase, followed by an examination of coping strategies and the beliefs that influence them. Processes of development and growth are discussed, followed by an integration of growth processes and theories of the development of self and identity relevant to this study. Historical influences and ethnicity factors are briefly considered. Limitations of the study are discussed. Suggestions for policy, practice and further research are followed by a conclusion.

Processes within the general body text are formatted as follows to retain consistency with 'findings' chapters: **BASIC PSYCHO-SOCIAL PROCESS**; CORE CATEGORY; PHASE; **Category**; **Sub-category**. Diagrams, maps and figures are colour coded to identify core categories; shades of orange for FINDING A PATH BEYOND ABUSE, shades of purple for GETTING A LIFE, and shades of blue for BECOMING MYSELF.

## **An Overview of Study Findings**

### ***Basic Psycho-Social Process and Core Categories***

The basic psycho-social process identified in this study is **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**. It is comprised of three interactive core categories: FINDING A PATH BEYOND ABUSE, which includes participant experiences of the partner, his abuse, and participant needs for safety; GETTING A LIFE includes participant interactions with the social world, goals and commitments; and BECOMING MYSELF concerns the experience of finding and developing self and identity throughout the process.

Core category processes are complex and interactive. Consequently, as with the findings chapters, the five phases of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY** identified in this study are used to structure discussion in this chapter. Figure 21 illustrates the basic structure of core categories and phases within **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**.

### ***Five Phases***

**GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY** has five phases, beginning prior to commitment to relationship and extending beyond the achievement of an abuse-free life. **FALLING FOR LOVE** considers participant experience prior to the relationship and its early stages. **TAKING CONTROL** concerns participant strategies for survival within the relationship, the decision to separate, and leaving the relationship. **SECURING A BASE** includes the multiple factors involved in

INSERT FIG 21

participants' struggle to find security and safety immediately post-separation. MAKING SENSE OF IT involves participants' focus on understanding what has happened in the relationship, discovery or re-discovery of strengths or skills, exploration of personal values and orientation to the future. BEING MYSELF includes participants' current awareness of themselves, sense of purpose and direction, and orientation to future goals.

Figure 22 shows dimensional analysis of phases of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY** in more detail.

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### ***Processes of Self-Development***

Developmental processes are fully discussed later in this chapter. Participants embarked upon the relationship during periods of transition. Such transitions were normal life stage experiences and/or periods of change or crisis. Developmental processes considered later in this chapter include processes relevant to entering the relationship; differentiating self from others; and exploration and commitment relevant to identity formation.

Age and/or developmental stages of participants suggested from the findings don't imply pathology or cause abuse. Identified stages are well within norms for age and gender. Understanding how developmental processes interact within the context of experiencing partner abuse illuminates the vulnerability of participants when the relationship begins. It also clarifies the difficulty of disengaging from the relationship, and helps explain the deep distress resulting from experiencing abuse within relationship.

Figure 23 provides an overview of processes of separation from primary family, differentiation of self from others, and construction of a core self.

FIG 23 ONE PAGE INSERT

### **Comparison to Literature on Partner Abuse,**

Several noteworthy studies have explored phases of women's experiences within, leaving, and recovering from abusive relationships. I found these studies during the course of this research and, as my focus broadened, set them aside to avoid influencing independent theory development. Studies that include phase processes, shown in Table 75, are by Karen Landenburger (Landenburger, 1989, 1998a, 1998b), Judith Wuest and Marilyn Merritt-Gray (Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999, 2001a, 2002), Trudy Mills (Mills, 1985) and a grounded formal theory comprised of a synthesis of 13 qualitative studies by Margaret Kearney (Kearney, 2001).

There is a high degree of consistency between the findings of this study and other studies. Categories have different names but describe similar processes. Emphasis on the prominence of categories may depend on research focus, and perhaps on variation in participant population. The phase structure varies a little and other researchers agree that phases are not always clearly separate or linear for individual participants. Most researchers do not cover both very early and much later phases of the relationship experience. Grounded Theory, and my choice of a dimensionalising method, has structured the format of findings in this study. Other studies use a variety of methods.



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Table 75 shows a comparison with other studies that have identified a phase structure. Details of specific correlations with other studies, although limited by information provided, are tabled in Appendix K. The following section compares the five phases of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY** to other partner abuse literature.

### ***Phase One in Comparison to Other Partner Abuse Literature***

This study names the initial phase, FALLING FOR LOVE. The majority of participants met the partner who would become abusive when they were between ages 16 and 23, and this was their first serious relationship commitment. The other main grouping of participants had previously been in another relationship, usually recently ended, that had begun when they were aged between 16 and 23. Participants appear to be in a process of transition at commencement of the relationship, most commonly in the process of leaving the parental home, or of separating from another relationship. The majority, but not all, had very limited life experience beyond the tradition and culture of their family of origin environment. Other studies, detailed in Appendix K, Table K1., show similar patterns of youthfulness, naivety, and lack of life experience or recent change and/or crisis resulting in a need for intimacy (eg: Landenburger, 1998a; Mills, 1985; Wood, 2001).

Participants' families of origin were traditionally Christian, and/or included elements of family violence and abuse. Traditional gendered roles represented both ideal and aspiration for participants. Several studies note the influence of

traditional religious beliefs about marriage, commitment to the relationship based on traditional ideals, childhood dreams, romanticised cultural ideals of love and marriage, and socially normative beliefs of women's subordinate role in relationship (eg: Ferraro, 1983; Hoff, 1990; Kearney, 2001; Lempert, 1997; Towns & Adams, 2000; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2001a).

Several studies note possibly relevant participant experiences of abuse or violence as children, either personal or within the family (eg: Cascardi, O'Leary, Lawrence, & Schlee, 1995; Sleutel, 1998). This study did not inquire about this issue, although some participants did provide incidental corroboration.

Participants' initial delight with their new partners and their tendency to minimise or not recognise abuse is consistent with other studies (eg: Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Douglas, 1994; Glover, 1995; Mills, 1985). Participants took responsibility for the well-being of their partner and the relationship (eg: Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Towns & Adams, 2000; Wood, 2001), were confused when they could not reconcile his behaviour with their image of him as a loving partner (eg: Kearney, 2001; Lempert, 1996; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995), and lacked skills to manage the abuse (eg: Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2001a).

Increasing social isolation and loss of other perspectives resulted in the abusive partner defining participants' perceptions of themselves and their choices (eg: Ferraro, 1983; Glover, 1995; Lempert, 1996; Wood, 2001). Participants reported increasing distress, despair, serious depression, and feeling 'crazy' (eg: Douglas, 1994; Landenburger, 1989). Blaming themselves for the abuse is highly

consistent as are feelings of becoming 'nothing' (eg: Kearney, 2001; Lempert, 1996; Mills, 1985).

### ***Phase Two in Comparison to Other Partner Abuse Literature***

The second phase identified in this study is TAKING CONTROL. Appendix K, Table K2. provides detail of other studies with similar findings.

Participants wanted the relationship to work, so they tried to find a way to survive within it. Recognising there were problems within the relationship, they controlled themselves to keep the peace. They were silent and compliant to avoid conflict. Some resisted through conflict, as they may have done earlier in the relationship. This could lead to shame for their own behaviour. Participants often picked their fights, carefully focusing on specific behaviours they saw as problematic to the relationship, in the hope that he would change. This form of resistance usually escalated abuse to violent levels. (eg: Campbell, Rose, Kub, & Nedd, 1998; Curnow, 1997; Eisikovits, 1999; Glover, 1995; Landenburger, 1998a; Ulrich, 1991; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999).

Other participants controlled the peace to sustain their survival in the relationship by spending time away or withdrawing emotionally (eg: Campbell et al., 1998; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995). Leaving the relationship and returning may be part of this process, but lack of social support and resources outside the relationship is a deterrent (Campbell et al., 1998).

Participants also needed to resist a total loss of self-esteem and identity within the relationship, and most pulled away to focus attention on other aspects of their lives such as their mothering role, or their work (eg: Eisikovits, 1999). Pulling

away through participating in activities outside the relationship created possibilities of finding other perspectives on their situation (eg: Campbell et al., 1998; Eisikovits, 1999; Eisikovits, Buchbinder, & Mor, 1998; Mills, 1985).

Some participants were receiving positive feedback for their skills and abilities outside the relationship. Other activities built self-esteem and, with increasing confidence, other lives and identities seemed possible (eg: Kearney, 2001; Ulrich, 1998). Resisting by pulling away also escalated conflict as the abusive partner responded to this loss of control over her (Campbell et al., 1998; Eisikovits, 1999; Landenburger, 1989).

Participants sought help which required telling others.(eg: Campbell et al., 1998; Kearney, 2001; Lempert, 1996). Some sought help for their partner and his 'moods' and others sought help for the relationship. Some sought help to resolve their bewilderment, although the purpose was often to find a means of sustaining the relationship. Frequently others did not understand, sometimes defining his behaviour as normal, or participants felt blamed for their experience. However, participants persisted and most eventually found the information and support they needed (eg: Glover, 1995; Lammers, 1996). Ulrich (1991) proposes that personal growth occurs via problem-solving, identifying their partner as abusive, and positive feedback from others.

New information, particularly if obtained in interaction with others, resulted in insights that re-contextualised participants' lives. For one participant the imminent death of her mother provided another context, and such external events can trigger insights (Campbell et al., 1998; Eisikovits et al., 1998). Making

children's well-being a more central context in their lives was also an influence (Ulrich, 1991). Whether awareness came suddenly or slowly, participants reported long periods of distress in the relationship and bewildered attempts to make sense of what was happening (eg: Eisikovits et al., 1998; Landenburger, 1989; Mills, 1985).

For some participants, the awareness that the relationship was not sustainable came slowly. For others, seeing alternative possibilities, having another meaning for their experience or recognising that he was not going to change happened suddenly. This sudden awareness, including a snap decision to end the relationship immediately, seems to be quite common (Campbell et al., 1998; Eisikovits et al., 1998; Glover, 1995; Mills, 1985; Ulrich, 1991). At this point most knew their partner was abusive and some identified themselves as abused women, at least in the short term (Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995; Mills, 1985).

Awareness sometimes came with police intervention in a violent situation. This could be shocking for those suddenly faced with a very public exposure of their situation. The formal requirement of telling their story to others meant they could no longer deny their experience (Eisikovits et al., 1998). With police intervention, the relationship usually ended immediately, although one participant stayed in the relationship with a Protection Order until a later police intervention.

Participants became aware the relationship would end and broke away, either through planning or because of intervention. Those who had an opportunity to pre-plan by identifying supports and resources prior to separating (eg: Campbell

et al., 1998; Eisikovits et al., 1998; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995) were better prepared to manage the immediate stress of breaking away.

Wuest and Merritt-Gray (1999, 2002) name this process 'Breaking Free'. Only a minority of participants in this study were breaking away for freedom, freedom itself was not necessarily the goal, although participants wanted freedom from abuse. Many participants did not want to be alone or were ambivalent about the separation, still loving their partner and remembering the good times (Campbell et al., 1998; Landenburger, 1998a).

Phase two, TAKING CONTROL, lasted many years for some participants and planning to leave in safety was a protracted process.

### ***Phase Three in Comparison to Other Partner Abuse Literature***

In phase three participants enter a period of difficulty in which they must re-establish themselves and prevent post-separation abuse while SECURING A BASE. The women experienced extremes of stress and distress during this period and frequently sought help, with mixed results. Again, issues relevant to this phase are well supported in other studies (refer Appendix K, Table K3.).

Participants struggle with many stressors, including managing the impact of the relationship and separation on their children. Negative effects on children are well documented in overseas studies (eg: Barnett, Miller-Perrin, & Perrin, 1997, p.141). New Zealand women report similar difficulties (Glover, 1995; Hand et al., 2002), and harm done to children who witness violence and abuse is recognised in the Domestic Violence Act of 1995.



Separation does not protect participants from abuse, and violence or harassment may continue for lengthy periods after separation (eg: Campbell et al., 1998; Glover, 1995; Hand et al., 2002; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999). Fear for their own safety or the well-being of their children (eg: Hand et al., 2002; Landenburger, 1998a) adds to participants' extreme stress (eg: Kearney, 2001; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999).

Participants in this study experienced financial pressures and, in some cases, needed a safe and relatively stable place to live. This agrees with other studies (eg: Hand et al., 2002; Kearney, 2001), as does the unpredictability of receiving appropriate support from both informal and formal sources (eg: Glover, 1995; Hand et al., 2002; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999).

Participants frequently reported exhaustion as they struggled with multiple demands and emotional turmoil. Some considered returning to the abuser as a possible solution to the overwhelming problems encountered. Participants resist reconciliation despite considerable external pressure and lack of support (eg: Campbell et al., 1998; Hand et al., 2002; Landenburger, 1989).

Participants were often required to maintain some contact with the abuser for the sake of their children. The women found ways to protect themselves and their children and stopped intrusion upon their homes and private lives by setting limits and maintaining boundaries. Other studies found limit-setting important for sustaining a safe separation and women sometimes used court orders for protection (eg: Hand et al., 2002; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999).

#### ***Phase Four in Comparison to Other Partner Abuse Literature***

Findings in this phase, MAKING SENSE OF IT, also correspond well with other studies as shown in Appendix K, Table K4.

Several months or more have usually elapsed since separation, and with relative security established, participants balance and maintain security through establishing routines (eg: Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999) while risking new connections (eg: Mills, 1985). Children's distress or behaviour continues to cause concern (eg: Landenburger, 1998a), although daily life is grounded in the practicalities of managing with limited resources. Participants are 'surviving' (Mills, 1985) and staying in control (eg: Landenburger, 1989).

Safety is still an issue for some. The abusive partner may (or may not) have accepted the boundaries she has set, but the fear of his intrusion remains (eg: Landenburger, 1998a). Participants must maintain separation in spite of continued pressure from him, her family, or her children. She may still feel sorry for him and guilty about leaving. Contact may be necessary for the children's sake, and participants manage this by controlling their feelings and trying to maintain civility (eg: Kearney, 2001).

Participants struggle with difficult emotions, feeling depressed, damaged, guilty, unloved, and may be mourning the loss of hopes represented by the relationship (eg: Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1989; Ulrich, 1991). Some participants continued to struggle with symptoms of trauma, experiencing intrusive symptoms and panic attacks. They are plagued with doubt about future relationships and, while wanting love, fear the possibility of a repeat performance

(eg: Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1998a). Trusting others, particularly men, is difficult and participants seek to understand what happened in the relationship so they will not be hurt again (eg: Landenburger, 1998a). Participants considering another relationship spoke of testing the potential partner, of alertness for warning signs, and promises to themselves of not accepting abuse (eg: Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1998a).

Some participants chose counselling or worked through their experience in therapy, and others attended women's support groups to learn about their experience and develop skills for future relationships. Others increased understanding by talking with friends or other women who had experienced abuse. Social interaction created opportunities for learning about self in relationship. Slowly, and in tandem with growing confidence (Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999) and increasing skills, new perspectives allow participants to put the abusive relationship behind them (eg: Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1998a; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2002).

Participants sought meaning for their experience, particularly if retaining a sense of unfairness at the disparity of outcome between themselves and the abusive partner. Most sought to clarify attributions of blame and responsibility (eg: Landenburger, 1998a, 1998b; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2002). Some found it helpful to take responsibility for any personal contribution to the relationship difficulties (eg: Kearney, 2001; Ulrich, 1998), although they were clear this did not mean accepting blame for the abuse. Participants were consciously taking control of

their own lives and decisions (eg: Landenburger, 1989, 1998a) and became increasingly self-sufficient and secure in themselves (eg: Kearney, 2001).

Participants explored their values, noting their concerns were less materialistic, and considered possible futures (eg: Kearney, 2001). They were making a life without him, and experiencing a sense of their own authority and effectiveness. Participants often formed new social connections with others who had not known them when they were in the abusive relationship (eg: Mills, 1985) as they began to create a place for themselves in larger social contexts (eg: Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 2001). Participants were more self-aware and this was a period of dramatic personal growth (eg: Kearney, 2001). Most participants were considering the possibility of another relationship as part of their future, and some had already met another partner.

### ***Phase Five in Comparison to Other Partner Abuse Literature***

During the final phase, BEING MYSELF, participants oriented to the future (eg: Farrell, 1996) and located the abusive relationship in their past (eg: Kearney, 2001). They made realistic commitments to long-term goals including, in some cases, another relationship. The literature on longer-term post-separation is limited, but this study seems to agree with what is available (refer Appendix K, Table K5.).

Participants now have a clear sense of their values, including prioritising themselves in relationship (eg: Farrell, 1996) and taking pride in their own strength and effectiveness (eg: Kearney, 2001; Mills, 1985). They perceive themselves as more than a wife or mother, and have a sense of purpose and direction based on

clearly defined goals. Most had made career or vocational choices and committed to current or future training, many planning their lives well into the future.

They continue to monitor safety and remain alert to the possibility of abuse years later. Those who enter another relationship do so on their own terms, emphasising partnership and respect. For some, the fear associated with the abuse persists (Landenburger, 1998a) and finding a sense of trust and safety can take many years. However, participants do report feeling safer, usually because there is no contact with their ex-partner.

Reconciliation with her estranged family of origin was now possible for one participant. Family acceptance of her separation and acceptance of her new partner allowed her to move forward with a sense of safety and connectedness.

Most participants report continued regrets and concerns about the impact of the abusive relationship on their children (eg: Glover, 1995), some of whom are now well into adulthood. Potential negative outcomes for adults who were children living in homes where there was abuse is well documented (eg: Barnett et al., 1997).

Many participants engaged in clear processes of placing the abuser and the relationship in their past. Some may have done this in the previous phase, but for several this was part of moving on. The processes used were direct, or symbolic, or ritualised, and created a sense of breaking the bond to him. Participants spoke of a sense of freedom to move forward as the past no longer took up so much of their energy and he no longer had power over them.

One participant reconciled with her partner. However, she did so after he had received treatment for his relationship with alcohol and undertaken training in skills that would foster relationship. She is confident she has the skills to sustain a healthy relationship and, after two years, reconciliation seems to be working for her.

Participants speak of seeing a bigger picture (eg: Farrell, 1996) and feel strong, capable, and secure in themselves (eg: Kearney, 2001; Rowe, 2002). Several participants, even many years after, spoke of their continued concerns for other women who may experience abuse.

### **Coping Strategies**

As with other studies, women in this study demonstrated resourcefulness in their attempts to manage abuse within the relationship and in the rebuilding of their lives post-separation (eg: Campbell et al., 1998; Eisikovits, 1999; Glover, 1995). Focusing on the strengths of women in abusive relationships (Gondolf & Browne, 1998) allows for consideration of the coping strategies they use to survive abuse.

Participants in this study tried various means to cope with their experience within the relationship and after separation. Common coping strategies to manage stressful situations (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978) involve either changing the situation, controlling the meaning of the experience, or controlling the stress itself.

### ***Beliefs Influencing Coping Strategies***

We know ourselves by others' responses to us (Mead, 1934), make sense of our experience through interaction with others (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Rosenberg, 1979), and evaluate ourselves through taking others' perspectives (Cooley, 1964/1902). The norms and values of society and "the generalised other" (Mead, 1934) provide standards to aspire to in situations within which we have a socially-defined role.

Like many New Zealand women, most participants had little opportunity, encouragement, or desire, to explore or develop other roles or identities prior to committing to their role as partner. Consequently the role of wife/partner is a highly salient identity (Stryker & Burke, 2000) for participants, and performance in this role is very invested in meeting internalised aspirations or externalised standards of self and identity (Higgins, 1987; Rokeach, 1973) based on gendered beliefs (Woods, 1999). Self-esteem depends on verification of role performance (Burke & Stets, 1999; Cast & Stets, 1999; Josephs, Markus, & Tafarodi, 1992; McCall & Simmons, 1966; Rosenberg, 1979; Swann, De La Ronde, & Hixon, 1994). If performance is not validated, the perceived solution is to try harder.

Participants start the relationship with expectations of successfully achieving romantic cultural ideals and dreams of 'love' and 'happily ever after'. They apply themselves to creating an identity of 'good' wife or partner through focusing on caring for their partner, meeting his needs, and creating a home.

Most participants' experience of personal authority is limited, and traditional marital roles give the male authority over his partner, yet give the female

responsibility for the healthy functioning of both household and relationship. With their partner also in the position of 'significant other' (Berger & Luckman, 1967), participants are vulnerable to his perspectives and opinions on who they are and how they 'should' behave (Woods, 1999).

Those who believe the world is a fair and just place are more likely to take their partner's perspective and accommodate to his behaviour in the relationship (Lipkus & Bissonnette, 1998). Accommodation is likely to be greater when external pressures such as cultural or religious beliefs require commitment to the relationship, and is higher in those who are 'other-centred' (Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991) as women are more likely to be (eg: Surrey, 1991).

### ***Coping Strategies in Phase One***

In FALLING FOR LOVE participants' inability to recognise or accept early warning signs that her partner may become abusive probably derive from traditional beliefs about relationship. There are several possible explanations fitting participant profiles. Firstly, as suggested by Landenburger (Landenburger, 1989), behaviour expressing normative beliefs that degrade women are so common in our society they are not identified as abusive. Secondly, naive participants from more sheltered backgrounds have a world-view (Park & Folkman, 1997) that provides no context for understanding his behaviour, and they attempt to maintain positive illusions (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996). Gendered prescriptions of care (Gilligan, 1982/1993) and responsibility for his redemption



(James & Saville-Smith, 1990; Towns & Adams, 2000) may have influenced others.

Participants, like women in other studies, tried hard to make the relationship work (Woods, 1999) and to build a life to match their dreams. But, the price of a relatively happy environment and a 'good' relationship was compliance and 'silence'. The phenomenon of 'silencing' limits awareness to the present, disconnects women from others, and creates an environment of unquestioning subordination to external authority (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). Keeping the abuse secret from others and silencing her own voice means that abuse is not named, even to herself (Kelly, 1990), and may remain unidentified.

When a relationship partner must silence their voice, the remaining possibilities for responding constructively to destructive behaviour become limited (Rusbult et al., 1991). When talking to others about the relationship was unhelpful, participants' social world diminished, and they lost access to other perspectives. The partner now provided the main perspective on her reality, defining who she was, and that she was to blame if things went wrong. Violence, threats, withdrawal of affection, and/or additional abuses enforced his demands.

Participants tried hard to change the situation from within the relationship. Leaving was not yet an option, so they struggled to manage stress and they attempted to control the meaning of the abuse by taking responsibility for the problems (Murray et al., 1996). Taking responsibility meant trying to be a better wife or partner by prioritising his needs and demands and trying harder. The abusive behaviour continues, or increases, and this coping strategy fails.

Victimised people commonly seek causal explanations (Lerner, 1980) and victims often blame themselves for their suffering as a way of coping by creating some sense of control over future outcomes (eg: Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Some researchers (eg: Janoff-Bulman, 1992) propose two forms of self-blame: behavioural self-blame, meaning some action undertaken by the harmed person causes the harm, hence trying harder; and characterological self-blame, in which a defect of character is the cause of harm to self. While research is equivocal regarding which form of self-blame is most likely to occur within abusive relationships (O'Neill & Kerig, 2000; Tashiro & Frazier, 2003), both forms were apparent in study findings. Self-blame can lead to serious emotional distress including negative impact on self-esteem, a sense of loss of potential lovability, confusion, fear of punishment, shame, guilt, depression and anxiety (Cross, Bacon, & Michael, 2000; Gecas, 1982; Gecas & Mortimer, 1987; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983; Higgins, 1987; Josephs et al., 1992; Kielcolt, 1994; Rosenberg, 1979).

Controlling the stress of living with an abusive partner became increasingly ineffective, although positive aspects of the relationship provided relief at times. Faced with the subjective improbability that either everything they believed about the world and their place in it is wrong, or that something is wrong with them or their performance in their role (Sommer & Baumeister, 1998), and in a context of secrecy and isolation, the outcome of ongoing abuse and blame from their partner was serious. Many participants at this stage were clinically depressed or seriously anxious, and some were suicidal. Several participants sought medical help during

this phase. Participants could not make sense of their situation in any way that sustained them, nor could they give up their commitment to the relationship without letting go of their primary system of meaning-construction. Something had to change if they were to survive.

### ***Coping Strategies in Phase Two***

In TAKING CONTROL participants continued trying to cope by attempting to control or resist the abusive behaviour. Resisting by ***Controlling the Peace*** was used at some time by all participants. ***Controlling the Peace*** included its own dilemmas, not least of which is the escalating cost of compliance in order to avoid conflict. In order to meet traditional social expectations and retain an identity as a 'good' wife, she must accept subordination. If conflict escalates, the rules of the meaning-system she knows mean she is to blame for not controlling the situation to prevent abuse. Either way, subordination or self-blame, she is diminished. Figure 24 illustrates this paradox.

Processes in phase two include internal conflict between meanings, beliefs, and values held by participants and a desperate need for physical and psychological survival. Participants not only had to see separation as a reasonable moral solution, they also needed to believe they could survive after leaving.

## INSERT FIGURE 24

Coping strategies were not resolving the relationship problems and distress was increasing. Trying to stop abuse by controlling the peace, resisting by pulling away, or trying to change his behaviour only escalated abuse. Distress, increased by meaning-making strategies of self-blame and self-derogation (Dalbert, 1998; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Lerner, 1980, 1998), had escalated to levels beyond most participants' ability to cope. The existing meaning-making system was collapsing (Eisikovits et al., 1998) and the only way to cope was to re-construct the meaning

participants made of the relationship and the abuse (Emmons, Colby, & Kaiser, 1998). Several participants experienced sudden changes in awareness.

In stressful situations, people may seek to change themselves to generate positive feedback and so preserve their sense of self-efficacy, self-esteem and a sense of authenticity (Kielcolt, 1994). Participants tried to develop new social identities and sought more affirming connections to sustain themselves. Making connections outside the relationship resulted in increasing abuse but participants persisted and, through others, found new perspectives. Each situation is unique, but common themes are re-defining their situation and re-evaluating individual priorities. New perspectives allowed participants to choose other purposes that could provide valued identities (Cast & Stets, 1999; Gecas & Mortimer, 1987; Josephs et al., 1992), and develop self-concepts representing authentic self-expression (Rokeach, 1973; Rosenberg, 1979).

The purpose of seeking help changes from sustaining the relationship and sustaining self in the relationship, to planning separation and survival post-separation. Figure 25 illustrates the shifting focus of this process.

The decision to separate involves a cognitive re-structuring that may be more than situational. Developmental processes that may be operating in this context are discussed later in this chapter.

INSERT FIG 25

### ***Coping Strategies in Phase Three***

In SECURING A BASE participants needed support to cope. Obtaining both informal and formal help requires exposing victimisation to justify her need and the decision to separate. Most women in this study used the word “embarrassment” to describe how they felt when seeking help. However, the experience they describe of not wanting to be visible, and the accompanying intensity of emotion points to a ‘shame’ experience (Baumeister, 1991; Rokeach, 1973).

INSERT FIG 26

Participants have internalised self-blame, and anticipate blame from others. Justifying the decision to leave and the need for help requires exposing abuse and publicly identifying herself as a victim. Shame, and the accompanying fear of exposure, is a strong deterrent to seeking help that must be overcome for survival. When fears of blame appear to be realised, distress and the sense of victimisation increase. Figure 26 illustrates this paradox.

'Blaming the victim' is a commonly used method of denying that bad things can happen to those who do not deserve it. This process denies potential threats to a sense of personal security by maintaining belief in the world as a fair and safe place. Being unsupportive is justified by denial; minimising the degree of harmful outcome; blaming the victim for her behaviour; or derogating her as a person (Lerner, 1980). Holding women solely responsible for the well-being of their relationships provides justification for stigmatising and blaming abused women for their circumstances.

In addition, many women are expected by family, friends, or church to "stick it out" regardless of how she is treated by her partner. A separated or divorced woman is a challenge to the social meaning attached to the role of female partner in a relationship (Stets & Burke, 2000). She may expect disapproval for not staying in the relationship, regardless of the abuse or, paradoxically, she may expect disapproval for having stayed so long in the relationship.

Participants also spoke of their inner conflict in resisting reconciliation or not helping their partner after separation. The "ethic of care" (Gilligan, 1982/1993) holds women responsible for their partner's well-being. In trying to separate, some participants must confront a moral dilemma in which the 'terminal value' (Rokeach, 1973) of freedom from abuse conflicts with an 'instrumental value' of caring for him.

Separating from the relationship results in a loss of the identity formed by that relationship (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Identities form reference points for who one is (Burke, 1991). Consequently, participants try to retain existing role-



identities, other than that of wife or partner, or make use of other available identities for self-definition. Some participants took the social identity of 'abused woman' in the short term while this label was necessary for getting help. Others, through necessity, focused on work identities or mother identities.

Coping strategies in this phase focused on problem-solving to manage the practical issues of survival and safety for themselves and their children.

### ***Coping Strategies in Phase Four***

Coping during MAKING SENSE OF IT is mainly concerned with creating new meaning to control ongoing stress, and as guidance for other relationships. Significant personal growth occurs in this phase. Merritt-Gray & Wuest (1995) name 'Reclaiming Self' as an important process of recovery, and define this as reinstatement in a larger social context. Findings are in agreement with that definition which is consistent with Judith Herman's description of the recovery process for those who have experienced trauma (Herman, 1992). However, this process seems more about 'claiming', than 'reclaiming' as will be discussed in the section on developmental processes.

Making sense of the experience has several components including clarifying abuse dynamics and attribution of blame. Participants are alert to potential abuse and wanting to know how it happened to prevent future abuse.

'Making meaning' is also an important process in this phase. 'Global meaning' includes beliefs and basic assumptions about the world, and is distinguished from the situational, cause and effect, 'making sense' of the relationship and events within it (Park & Folkman, 1997). The perceptual control

of meaning assists in coping with stressful life events (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Park & Folkman, 1997). Ontological security depends on a sense of order based on beliefs about the world, the self, and the self's place in the world. Making meaning concerns the process of reducing discrepancies between the apparent meaning of the experienced situation and the meanings, formed in childhood, of beliefs about the world. Participants spoke of bewilderment at the unfairness or injustice they experienced. They perceive that the abusive partner has no remorse and few negative outcomes for his behaviour.

Most people tend to perceive the world as benevolent (Park & Folkman, 1997). This includes beliefs in justice and fairness that have implications for perceptions of predictability. The struggle with attributing blame was often lengthy, involving cognitive processes attempting to reconcile beliefs incompatible with their experiences. Figure 27 illustrates the processes used by participants in this study to reconcile their sense of injustice in ways that allowed them to retain or increase self-esteem and/or a sense of security.

Belief in one's self-efficacy, or agency (Bandura, 1989, 1999) affects the speed of recovery from difficulties (Sommer & Baumeister, 1998). Self-esteem can be derived from the opinions and acceptance of others, or from a sense of one's own competence. A sense of agency increases inner self-esteem (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983).

INSERT FIGURE 27

When self-esteem has become relatively positive through the experience of self-efficacy, participants are able to address part of the paradox inherent in their experience: whether justified in their assessment or not, many participants took responsibility for their participation in some aspect of the relationship. They were clear this was not accepting blame for the abuse. They took responsibility for getting into the relationship; for not having the skills to manage their partner's behaviour; or for staying so long in the relationship. Taking responsibility in hindsight may be adaptive in providing participants with perceptions of control of their past circumstance to build confidence in future self-efficacy.

Another construal of meaning is "meaning as significance" (Davis, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Larson, 1998), a shift in emphasis from 'how' it happened, to 'why' it happened. Significant meanings refer to the value or worth of the experience to one's life and sense of purpose. Participants also used this form of making meaning by finding a positive outcome in accordance with belief in a 'higher power' or divine purpose (Sommer & Baumeister, 1998). This appraisal of the event as an opportunity for growth also led to feelings of well-being and increased self-esteem.

Several participants mentioned a re-orientation of values in relation to material resources. The devaluation of money or material goods is an effective coping response to the stress of economic deprivation (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). However, participants actively explored values across a range of domains during this phase to find direction, and goals for the future.

Confidence and self-esteem improved with the realisation that they could cope without their ex-partner and had achieved a sense of control over their futures. Participants took pride in their new skills and abilities, and their well-being gradually improved. With relative stability established they turned their attention to making sense of their experience, usually in connection with others. This was a period of intense exploration as participants considered future possibilities. During this phase participants constructed meaning for their experience and created new contexts of meaning for their lives.

For participants in this study, this phase did not seem to be complete for two years or longer.

### ***Coping Strategies in Phase Five***

In the final phase, BEING MYSELF, participants have placed the abusive relationship in the past. They remain in control of their life, alert to potential abuse and determined not to be abused again. They focus on future goals and healthy relationships that allow them to live by their newfound meaning and values. They have a clear sense of purpose and direction and make commitments based on their own values and authority.

Participants have moved from a life constructed by others to a life informed by exploration and personal choice. They have a solid sense of self and identity, derived from self-examination and healthy relationships. Participants experience themselves in a larger social context and see themselves as more than survivors of an abusive relationship. By the final phase of **GROWING THROUGH**

**ADVERSITY**, participants have been through a process of significant personal growth.

*I've gone through so much, and I'm still here. So, that speaks heaps. And I was thinking the other day how strong people come about because they've gone through so much. They've had to be strong to get through it. Yeah. I have gone through so much stuff, and I'm still here. (Jamie:4.21.47.)*

Is self-reported growth an accurate perception or a product of re-interpretation as a tool for coping? People may engage in cognitive distortions that allow them to view themselves and their experiences in a positive light (McFarland, 2000) by constructing images of the past, and their prior selves, that facilitate self-enhancement in the present. The cultural script of 'what doesn't kill you makes you stronger' supporting the common phenomenon of perceiving benefit in negative events has only begun to be studied and verification of actual benefit is inconsistent (McMillen & Fisher, 1998). However, this study suggests that the personal growth experienced is valid.

### ***Summary of Phases and Coping Strategies***

Participants entered the relationship during a time of transition. They believed in the traditional ideals of women's roles, so when their partner became abusive they accepted his perspective that they were to blame. Participants were in a paradoxical situation; either they must subordinate themselves to be 'good' wives and partners or blame themselves for the problems in the relationship.

Participants tried hard to make the relationship work but, with increasing isolation and continued abuse, they experienced themselves as 'becoming nothing'.

The women resisted the abuse and loss of self-sense, mainly coping by controlling the peace and, eventually, by pulling away from him to seek help or to find some source of self-verification to rebuild their self-esteem. The relationship no longer 'made sense' and traditional beliefs in women's roles and relationship ideals did not fit their experience. They sought help to survive within the relationship. In re-connecting with others, or sometimes due to intervening circumstances, new perspectives enabled participants to see their situation more clearly.

New perspectives enabled new possibilities, and participants made the decision to separate. This was a fraught time, and participants were almost overwhelmed with the difficulties they faced. They sought help for their survival, but were often disappointed with the response. Ashamed of the abuse and for 'failing' in their relationship, they anticipated blame for their situation. Their situation was again paradoxical; they must identify themselves as victims in order to get formal support, but their exposure as victims of abuse often resulted in further blame.

After a period of struggle, stress and ambivalence, during which they learnt new skills and set limits with their ex-partners, participants were able to create a relatively stable environment. They balanced their lives between the safety of routine and connecting with others to try to create new identities. They needed to make sense of what had happened to them. Information and support introduced

them to larger contexts from which they made sense of their experience.

Participants rebuilt their confidence as they discovered they could make a life without their ex-partner.

Participants also sought an explanation for the unfairness and injustice of their experience. Over time, connecting with others and exploring their own values, they found ways of making meaning that supported emerging future goals and increased their self-esteem. This process of exploration resulted in commitments to an attainable future.

The majority of women in this study have rebuilt their lives. They have severed their connection to the abusive partner as much as they are able, although some retain a civil relationship for the children's sake. Most are now in relationships and have a sense of purpose and direction in their lives. Symptoms of trauma, residual distress, and heightened alertness to abuse remain with participants to some degree. However, these women have a solid sense of self, live by their own values, and are certain they will never allow abuse in their lives again.

Participants in this study used coping strategies differently in each phase of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**. Table 76 provides a summary of strategies used.



INSERT TABLE 76

ONE PAGE

## **Processes of Development and Growth**

Participants in this study describe themselves differently before and after their experience of relationship with an abusive partner. They describe their younger selves as naïve and lacking skills. Now they speak of knowing who they are, of having a sense of purpose, of being partners in a relationship, of being a 'person', and of being themselves. Participants appear to have achieved personal growth as an outcome of surviving an abusive relationship and this is confirmed in other studies (eg: Farrell, 1996; Rowe, 2002; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2002). The concept of growing through the adversity of surviving an abusive partnership raises interesting questions: does personal growth cause participants to end abusive relationships (ie: growth 'in spite of' the relationship)?; or does the experience of being in and separating from abusive relationships create personal growth (ie: growth 'because of' the relationship)?

The concept of stress-related growth is briefly discussed, followed by an exploration of relevant developmental processes.

### ***Stress-Related Growth***

An emerging body of literature addresses the study of growth arising from crisis, trauma or other negative life experiences. Studies have considered personality factors, coping styles, cognitive processing, temporal factors, social support, level of psychological distress, degree of severity of the stressor, and application to different populations and age groups (eg: Armeli, Gunthert, &

Cohen, 2001; Frazier, Tashiro, Berman, Steger, & Long, 2004; Janoff-Bulman, 1992).

The process of stress-related growth appears to be multidimensional. There are qualitatively many different categories of growth, and it has been found that trauma needs to be significant before stress-related growth occurs (Armeli et al., 2001). A recent review (Linley & Joseph, 2004) considers findings inconsistent across studies. However, positive re-interpretation and acceptance coping by optimistic people who are intrinsically more religious and experience more positive affect is most likely to result in adversarial growth. Time does not seem to be a factor, and alleviating distress does not necessarily promote growth (Linley & Joseph, 2004).

Within the relationship, the abusive partner does not confirm the participants' 'ideal' or ought' self (Rokeach, 1973; Rosenberg, 1979), which is mainly based on participant role-ideals (Josephs et al., 1992), and this creates psychological distress (Schafer, Wickrama, & Keith, 1996). When male partners do not see participants as they would like to see themselves, participants experienced a discrepancy (Higgins, 1987). As the abusive partner's behaviour became increasingly unpredictable, any hope of verifying the self in a positive way was lost, along with increasing loss of trust and commitment to the relationship (Burke & Stets, 1999; Swann et al., 1994; Swann, Stein-Seroussi, & Giesler, 1992).

Stress promotes self-change in the attempt to find self-enhancement to relieve distress (Kielcolt, 1994). Participants tried to verify themselves elsewhere

by attempting to develop other roles and affiliations that could provide positive validation. This provided the other perspectives that allowed them a different view of themselves and the relationship.

Participants spoke frequently about the responses of others. The quality, availability, and subjectively-experienced appropriateness of social support received influences satisfaction with social support and personal growth outcomes (Linley & Joseph, 2004). The response of others was as pivotal to recovery and growth as was participants' own increasing skill-development.

### ***Developmental Processes***

Developmental processes include hierarchies of development. Implicit in this is the assumption that it is desirable to attain 'higher' levels of development. However, this may not always be the case, and different developmental stages could be stylistically adaptive depending on culture, gender and historical era. Social circumstance may limit opportunities for development, and social structure may define what is appropriate. Too often in the past, the definition of 'normal' was based on an exploration of developmental processes limited to particular populations, usually male and often students (eg: Archer, 1992; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988). Many 'normal' people, perhaps a majority, do not achieve the developmental stages presented in this section (Archer & Waterman, 1990; Kegan, 1994) and others do not achieve stages 'on time'.

This section applies developmental theories relevant to this study. Table 77 illustrates the possible application of theories to phases identified in this study. The main theories considered here are:

Stage five of Erikson's stage model of development; Identity vs Identity Confusion (Erikson, 1950), including James Marcia's concept of identity statuses (eg: Marcia, 1966).

Robert Kegan's Constructive Developmental concept of Orders of Consciousness (Kegan, 1994) and more relational subject/object stage model (Kegan, 1982).

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule (Belenky et al., 1986) and women's ways of 'knowing'.

## **INSERT TABLE 76**

Erikson (1950) proposes that society allows a period of moratorium for the development of identity during late adolescence but considers that identity formation continues across the lifespan. 'Late adolescence', currently studied and defined as between age 18 and 24 (Marcia, 1987), is later than defined by Erikson and reflects the changing nature of our society. According to Marcia, a late adolescent can be categorised by one of four identity statuses depending on the level of exploration and commitment made in several domains. Domains for exploration include: occupational choice; ideological beliefs (religious and political attitudes); and, sexual-interpersonal beliefs (attitudes toward sex-roles and sexuality). Marcia's four identity statuses are: Identity Diffusion (low exploration, low commitment); Identity Foreclosure (low exploration, high commitment); Identity Moratorium (high exploration, low commitment); and Identity Achievement (high exploration, high commitment) which follows Moratorium.

Findings from this study suggest that, at commencement of the relationship, participants were most likely in Identity Foreclosure, at least in the domain of sexual-interpersonal beliefs, although Identity Diffusion or Moratorium is possible for a small minority. Other studies on women in abusive relationships do not appear to consider this possibility, but careful analysis of available participant data shows similar factors among participant characteristics, histories, and perceptions that support this analysis (refer Appendix K, Table K1.).

Participants appear to come from homes where obedience to authority was expected, and for some this was enforced with physical punishment by either parent. Other participants lived relatively sheltered childhoods where there was

little exposure to alternative world-views. Many participants spoke of gender expectations, and although a few described their fathers as 'wonderful' most experienced sexism, even if in benevolent forms (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Most participants had little opportunity for genuinely purposeful exploration of alternatives before making a commitment to the relationship. This outcome may be defined as 'situational foreclosure' (Henry & Renaud, 1972. Cited in Archer & Waterman, 1990).

Identity Foreclosure includes a view of the world where submission to external authority and conventionality is valued. Self-esteem is vulnerable to negative feedback and high goals are unrealistically maintained in response to failure under stress (Marcia, 1966). A person with a Foreclosed identity bears many resemblances to the 'Received Knower' of Belenky et al (Belenky et al., 1986) who depends upon external authorities to define what is right or wrong, believes there is only one 'right' way, and does not tolerate ambiguity. Received Knowers are often very nurturing and caring of others, particularly those in authority over them.

Kegan (1994) suggests those in the third order of consciousness of Mutuality/Interpersonalism seek an infallible guide external to themselves to whom they grant authority and, uncritically identified with external sources of 'truth', are unable to question the assumptive beliefs, ideas and values of these identifications. Like Belenky et al's Received Knowers, they are *subject to* the limitations of the psychological surround they are embedded in. Kegan defines 'object' as related to previous stages of development and as something we *have*

and can reflect upon, while 'subject' is what we *are*. Embedded in the third order, one *is* one's relationships. Consistent with Kegan's third order, participants early in the relationship are subjectively embedded in ideals and values emphasising role consciousness and mutual reciprocity (Kegan, 1994). They were to be painfully disillusioned.

The majority of participants in this study reached a point within the relationship where ongoing conflict was unbearable and they could no longer control the peace. They began to create distance between themselves and their partner. Usually they turned to others or sought information to help them understand what was happening. In turning to others, or through intervention or circumstances, participants found other perspectives. As participants began to differentiate from their embeddedness in the relationship, the relationship itself became an object. Participants could now 'stand outside' the relationship and reflect upon it (Kegan, 1982). As they now began to experience a larger context or 'system of meaning', participants found they could realistically consider the possibility of survival after separation.

Many of Belenky et al's participants reached a 'turning point' (often vividly recalled) that led them to Subjective Knowing "after some crisis of trust in male authority in their daily lives" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 58). Subjective Knowers focus intrapersonally and make decisions based on their own subjective thoughts and feelings. They begin to value themselves, develop inner strength, are adventurous, and focus on the future. They start to claim their own personal authority and become autonomous. Many of the women in that study, as with this one, were



uncertain about men and spoke of loss of trust and past naivety. Subjective Knowing, correlated here with the process of Moratorium, is too uncomfortable to sustain long-term.

Probably beginning pre-separation, participants embark on a more than usually complex and distressing crisis of Moratorium. Often they have few supports or resources, have responsibility for children in distress, and may also have to manage trauma symptoms. Participants must overcome their fear of being alone, and their need for security and social approval. “Freedom can be terrifying” (Josselson, 1988b, p.71) for women on the path to Identity Achievement. Their partner does not usually co-operate in this process.

Moratorium is a period of exploration in domains of political and religious ideology, sex roles, and occupation. The content of identity, such as interests and values, may not change (Kroger, 2000) but is re-structured to reflect individual priorities. Participants actively explored Marcia’s domains, and over time made commitments to value-based goals that provided a sense of direction, purpose and meaning to life (Waterman, 1992).

Subjective Knowing gives way to Procedural Knowing (Belenky et al. 1986). The Procedural Knower is practical, pragmatic and trying to take control of her life. The focus is on the acquisition and application of procedures, and includes respect for laws and rational authority figures. Procedural Knowing has two forms that may be stylistic. The first is Separated Knowing, and this may be relevant to learning to navigate court and legal processes. The second is Connected Knowing, which relies on shared experience and gathering information and

opinions from the social world. The majority of participants now seem to be Connected Knowers who actively seek new social relationships.

Over time, in differentiating self from the abusive relationship and integrating into a wider context of meaning, participants begin to reflect upon the relationship as an object and relate to it as such, placing it in the past (Kegan, 1982). Most participants have reached, or exceeded, Kegan's Institutional order of consciousness.

The Institutional order seems to correlate with Belenky et al's concept of Procedural Knowing and is equated with Identity construction (Kegan, 1982). The Institutional self, embedded in a context of relationship-regulating forms and multiple-role consciousness, is autonomous and able to manipulate abstract systems (Kegan, 1994). However, autonomy is a structure rather than an orientation and does not necessarily mean separateness, but the ability to self-regulate. "Deciding *for* myself" does not have to equal 'deciding *by* myself" (Kegan, 1994, p.222). Kegan also proposes varied orientations toward separateness or connectedness at this stage.

While some participants are still in earlier stages of this process, most of them appear to have achieved a self-constructed identity. Identity Achieved participants are open to experience, anchored in a solid sense of self and less dependent on external sources of self-esteem. They control their own lives, take responsibility for their decisions, and can tolerate guilt (Josselson, 1988b).

"Individuality without connection is not autonomy, but isolation" (Adams & Shea, 1979, p.54) and participants aspired to a healthy partnership. "A more

clearly delineated sense of self makes new forms of relationship possible” (Josselson, 1988a, p.98). Most participants in phase five found their way to this goal and Erikson’s stage six, Intimacy. Erikson’s concept of Intimacy equates with Kegan’s relational model, stage five Inter-Individual (Kegan, 1982), but not necessarily with the Inter-Institutional order of consciousness (Kegan, 1994). Connected Knowers (Belenky et al., 1986) also seem to fit this profile.

Is growth as experienced by participants in this study innate, or did growth only occur because of the abusive relationship? Kegan suggests the former: “If one’s important connections are unwilling to support our moves toward personal authority, then being faithful to the forward motion of our own lives may indeed involve the extraordinary cost of having to take our leave from these connections” (Kegan, 1994, p.220). Marcia suggests the latter when he proposes that disequilibrating experiences will force a person with Foreclosed identity to re-evaluate their position (Marcia, 1987).

Women may have two paths to identity development. One pattern involves constructing an identity based on ideological and occupational concerns before committing to relationship. The second pattern is to become ‘home-makers’ first and then form a self-constructed identity in their late 20’s or 30’s when family life is less demanding (Schiedel & Marcia, 1985).

Differentiation as a process encompasses increasing levels of complexity, and for women it ideally happens within relationships, as relationship and identity grow in synchrony (Kaplan, Gleason, & Klein, 1991; Surrey, 1991). Optimal circumstances for women committing to relationship prior to reaching Identity

Achievement are when the relationship allows growth within it. This cannot happen if the partner is abusive.

A study of New Zealand women's identity formation (Kroger & Green, 1996) found the transition to Moratorium in relationship domains was prompted by "dissatisfaction with a partner or a changed level of awareness of one's own needs or one's own part in an intimate relationship" (p.486).

Women may re-evaluate earlier identity choices when there are transitions from relationship with significant others, particularly if responsibility to others is reduced, and many women make multiple changes in their self-definition when a marriage ends (Josselson, 1988b).

It seems clear that many women in New Zealand have committed to relationship from a Foreclosed position. A women's Foreclosed commitment does not *create* abuse in relationships.

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Achievement are when the relationship allows growth within it. This cannot happen if the partner is abusive.

A study of New Zealand women's identity formation (Kroger & Green, 1996) found the transition to Moratorium in relationship domains was prompted by "dissatisfaction with a partner or a changed level of awareness of one's own needs or one's own part in an intimate relationship" (p.486).

Women may re-evaluate earlier identity choices when there are transitions from relationship with significant others, particularly if responsibility to others is reduced, and many women make multiple changes in their self-definition when a marriage ends (Josselson, 1988).

It seems clear that many women in New Zealand have committed to relationship from a Foreclosed position. A women's Foreclosed commitment does not *create* abuse in relationships.

### **Identity, History, and Partner Abuse**

Identity is achieved after a period of exploration in which adolescents clarify their personal values and build a core sense of self that is constructed from their own beliefs and aspirations. Traditional expectations of women constrain this process by limiting opportunities for exploration, and by defining 'acceptable' female aspirations.

Identity formation is an outcome of the possibilities permitted with cultures and feedback from significant others (Kroger, 2000). Societies that discourage identity exploration in women are likely to prescribe identity, and gendered

expectations are usually limited to the roles of wife and mother. Social expectations of conformity and compliance may explain the low self-esteem of Moratorium women, and support the proposal that a Foreclosed Identity is adaptive for women (Prager, 1982).

Socio-historical conditions have also limited women's options for exploration. World Wars and the Depression of the 1930s produced higher rates of Identity Foreclosure in women (Waterman, 1982). In New Zealand after the Depression of the 1930s and World War II in the 1940s, the social imperative of reconstruction required women to return to traditional roles (May, 1992).

Women's patterns of identity formation, either prior to relationship commitment or after family routines have become established (Schiedel & Marcia, 1985), require opportunities for exploration. The New Zealand 'norm' of early marriage between the late 1940s to the late 1970s, combined with limited educational or career opportunities and rigid beliefs and expectations regarding women's roles and behaviour, limited women's options severely. The majority of women who committed to marriage during those years were probably *normatively* Identity Foreclosed.

For New Zealand women born in the 1930s to 1950s, today's mothers and grandmothers, there was little socially-sanctioned opportunity for identity exploration prior to marriage. Identity development within marriage, where women had total responsibility for housework and childcare, was also constrained for most women. Wives had few options if the husband did not permit or support their growth. If he was violent or abusive, choices were further limited.

To divorce meant extreme social disapproval and was difficult to obtain, frequently resulting in loss of home and financial support for herself and her children.

The women's movement was active in New Zealand during the 1970's and 1980's. Kroger & Green's (1996) study of New Zealand women associated transitions to Moratorium with the women's movement and dissatisfaction with traditional sex role values. The influence of the women's movement on women's identity is specifically linked to cohort groups and life stage (Stewart, 1994; Stewart & Healy, 1989). The women's movement influenced identity formation in late adolescent women and identity revision in later adulthood for women whose family responsibilities were less constraining. Women in early adulthood with family commitments made fewer identity changes but were advantaged by increasing opportunities. The age of their children is relevant to women's development when influenced by social change (Roberts & Nelson, 1997).

The women's movement and its ideology of feminism produced legislative and policy changes that improved women's lives. The high visibility of 'women's issues' raised awareness of choice and possibilities for young women in the process of identity formation during the 1970s. However, as lamented by one participant in this study, young women at the start of the new millennium do not have access to the same consciousness-raising influences. Unfortunately, the so-called 'third wave' of feminism, 'girl-power', appears to utilise the ideology of freedom to promote women's objectification, and commodifies identity under the

rubric of choice of products for objectification. Many implications of 'girl-power' are disturbing (Greer, 2000).

Fluctuations in economic prosperity within society influences women's identity development (and perhaps men's too). During a period of economic uncertainty in New Zealand during the latter part of the 1980s, Identity Achievement in young women significantly reduced with a corresponding increase in Foreclosure (Kroger, 1993).

Many mothers and grandmothers of today, lacking opportunities or motivation for exploration, may remain Identity Foreclosed. Daughters continue to be raised within family contexts based on traditional gendered values, and adolescent women remain constrained in their exploration by the beliefs and modelling of parents. It may be more than a generation before young women 'normally' know themselves prior to relationship commitment. The risk of 'finding themselves' via the difficult and distressing disequilibrating experience of abusive relationships continues. Culture changes slowly.

The structure of society has changed. Increasing secularisation, urbanisation and the phenomenon of the suburban nuclear family and increased mobility have all reduced inter-generational contact. These changes have not all been helpful for women. However, there have been improvements for women in abusive relationships. Improvements include: increased availability of reliable contraception; access to education and employment; the provision of state-funded support for solo parents; improved fairness in the division of assets after



divorce; and better state support for women who separate from an abusive partner.

INSERT FIG 28

The “salience and meaning of gender were products of ones time and place” (Chodorow, 1989, p.217). Figure 28 illustrates the interaction of history, culture, gender beliefs, with the mutual influences of social-structural change and women’s identity formation and relationship choices.

## Ethnicity, Culture, and Partner Abuse

Studies on ethnic and cultural minority groups in America support the relevance of ethnicity to identity construction and show that ethnic identity is significantly important for minority groups (eg: Archer & Waterman, 1994). In New Zealand, the main ethnic minority groups are Maori and Pacific Island peoples. Both groups are communal cultures, in which collective values prevail over individual values. In collective cultures, responsibilities to family and group have more value than independence from the group (Cross, Bacon, & Michael, 2000). While cultural groups are active in schools and elsewhere, participation in regular church activities is perhaps the most common expression of community, particularly for Pacific peoples.

I can only speak as a pakeha woman in assessing cultural components of partner abuse. Maria, a Samoan participant, may speak for many women in her culture when she tells of the difficulty disclosing abuse in her community:

*The pressure from outside, from churches, from the extended family. They're the worst people, extended family. Or just from the community and (...) well if you have a big black eye like that you don't go to church, you stay home, because in case the church knows and then they start talking about it. And if they hear that you split, 'oh what you done it for?' and then they all point the finger at the woman and they also create a lot of things like 'oh, I bet she slept with him'. (7.17.21.)*

For women with collective social identities, the social exclusion resulting from exposure of their victimisation is especially painful. Women from minority groups may also fear negative stereotyping if they seek help outside their own

community. As Maria says: “*Who’s going to believe me and looking at my ethnic side of things you know. Thinking what will they believe me about that?*” (5.3.1.)

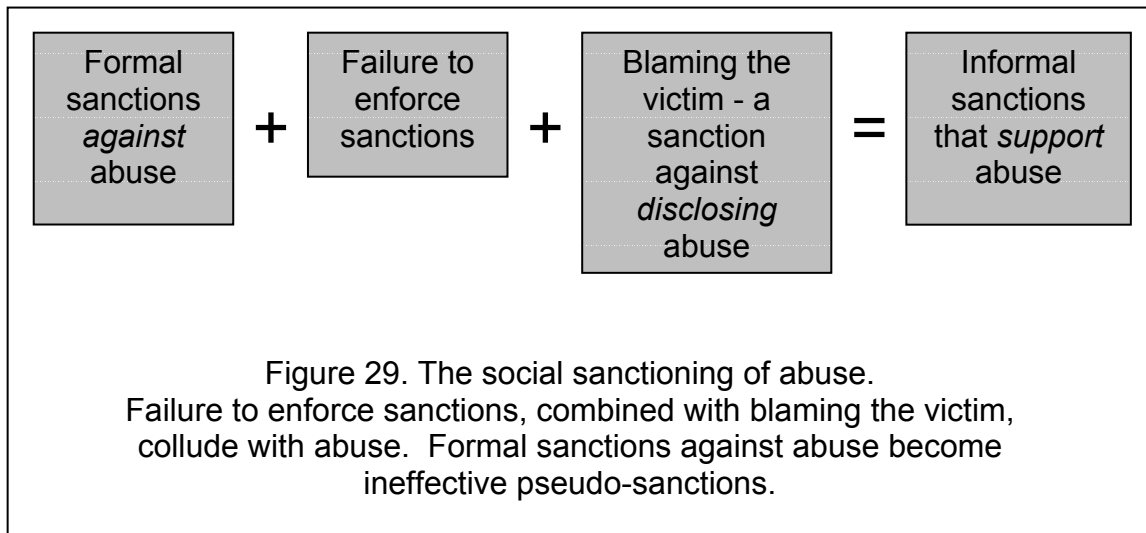
For women like Maria, it takes extraordinary courage to disclose abuse.

Maria speaks of finding “*my real self*” (7.9.41.) when she learned the skills of assertion that enabled her to reconcile with her partner and live a life that does not sanction abuse. Maria is concerned for her community and its collusion with partner abuse. She wants education in ‘non-violence’ openly encouraged.

The many factors contributing to abuse in the homes of Maori and Pacific Island women are beyond the scope of this study. However, it appears that cultural beliefs in male privilege and social sanctions against disclosing partner abuse combine to blame New Zealand women for their own victimisation, regardless of ethnicity and culture. As shown in this study, and confirmed in consultation with Maori, abuse continues when it cannot be disclosed because of shame and victim-blaming.

### **Social Sanctions Supporting Abuse**

The absence or prevalence of abuse toward wives in any society depends upon formal and informal sanctions of abuse (Counts, Brown, & Campbell, 1992). What appear to be formal community, legal, and religious sanctions *against* abuse are ineffective. Formal sanctions create expectations of justice for victims. However, when formal sanctions are not enforced and when actual victim experience is of sanctions against *disclosing* abuse (via victim blaming), the result is informal sanctions *supporting* abuse. Figure 29 illustrates this paradox.



### Limitations of This Study

All participants are English-speaking New Zealand citizens and the abuse occurred within the context of New Zealand culture and history. Participant numbers are small. Participant experience spans several decades, which has the advantage of providing viewpoints from different historical periods, although representation in depth for each era is limited.

Participants may not be representative, although the Grounded Theory method of constant comparison covers for variables. Four women were homeowners, several had some employment after separation, and none had accessed Women's Refuge services. Women misusing drugs and alcohol were excluded from the study on the assumption they had not recovered. Participants who separated more recently had attended a women's support group and/or counselling or therapy at some time within the relationship or after separation,

and these interventions may have influenced their understanding of their experience. The four women sourced from a tertiary environment may not be typical. One Maori participant and one Samoan participant may not be representative of those cultures and communities.

Women in this study assessed themselves as abused and defined themselves as having made progress toward recovery, and women who have not 'survived' this transition are therefore excluded. Participants also self-assessed their current abuse-free status. This does not guarantee that participants will never experience abuse again.

The original intention of this study was to learn more about the post-separation recovery process. Participating women were not questioned about their family of origin or experiences of abuse within the relationship. However, the majority of participants offered unsolicited information as explanatory context for the meaning they made of the abusive experience. Consequently, some aspects of participant history may be more prevalent than specified, eg: more participants may have experienced physical punishment in their childhood than offered this information, and conversely, some participants might have described their childhoods as 'happy' if questioned.

Much of the information provided by participants is retrospective. The very long time-span of some participants' stories may also influence accurate recall of events. Participants' stories may include some hindsight re-interpretation to protect the coherence of the self-concept and hindsight bias might reflect participant's need to believe in a safer future.

Duration since separation does not define the phase reached by individual women. The majority of participants completed all phases, but a slightly reduced number of participants' stories are available for analysis of the final phase. One participant has reconciled with her partner and now lives without abuse. Her outcome may not be typical, and forming a new relationship that is abuse-free cannot be assumed as an outcome for all women who separate from an abusive relationship. The experience of women in this study shows the potential for recovery, but does not mean all women will recover.

### **Implications for Policy**

Partner abuse is a common social problem and the aftermath may continue for generations. Prevention efforts so far remain largely ineffective, so the 'problem' persists. Defining the problem as caused by the behaviour of individual men toward individual women and their children misses the point. The problem is actually social; a direct outcome of traditional stereotyped attitudes toward women, social tendencies toward denying the existence of the problem and blaming the victims, and entrenched cultures of abuse and violence within our society.

Punitive responses toward abusers imply that the use of power to punish is justified and effective for getting people to do what you want. This appears to be the rationale already in use by abusers and does nothing to change the attitudes that create the problem. However, victims do need to perceive that society takes their abuse seriously. Justice and criminal system responses to

partner abuse must be backed up by social sanctions that do not blame the victims for the abuse.

### ***Public Awareness***

Partner abuse is a public health issue of significant proportions in New Zealand. Conservative estimates suggest that in 14% of family homes (Snively, 1994), women and children experience abuse from a man they are socialised to love and trust. Partner abuse is a normal, everyday occurrence for many women, yet it is socially perceived as outside normal experience. Our society needs to look beyond the individual to acknowledge social sanctions that support abuse through denial of its existence, ineffective sanctions, and blaming the victim. Continued social denial of the problem, and sanctions against victims for disclosing, colludes with partner abuse by keeping it hidden.

A broader picture would include promoting options other than gender stereotypes for both men and women, and discarding cultural endorsements of violence as a solution to problems. Education that particularly promotes antidotes to the stigmatising and blaming of victims would be helpful.

Te Rito New Zealand Family Violence Prevention Strategy (Ministry of Social Development, 2002) is preparing a public information and awareness campaign scheduled to be in place by June 2006. Attitudes toward partner abuse in New Zealand appear to be entrenched, and the proposed campaign will need to be sustained over a long-term.

### ***Provision of Financial Support and Resources***

Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) emergency funding for women separating from an abusive partner must remain available. The initiative of helping women with education funding has been well-utilised by participants in this study. Limited finances are a continued problem for women on the Domestic Purposes Benefit.

Providing privacy for disclosure of abuse to WINZ staff is recommended. Another recommendation is that WINZ provide training for staff as a condition of employment. Training should explain the dynamics of abuse, the nature of women's victimisation, and appropriate responses to women who have experienced partner abuse. This training should be regularly available and provided by educators who know this field and understand issues relevant to women victims.

### ***Justice System***

Formal sanctions against abuse create false expectations of justice for victims. Without enforcement, legal sanctions are actually pseudo-sanctions that collude with abuse. Inadequate sentencing for Protection Order breaches creates a perception that women's experiences of abuse are not serious. Public awareness campaigns must be supported by appropriate enforcement.

It is also necessary to be aware that some women seeking Protection Orders may not want to end the relationship, but hope their partner's behaviour will change and the relationship can continue. It is essential to maintain the practice of referring women to counselling or support groups when they come to



the attention of the justice system so that phase-appropriate intervention can be provided.

Police personnel need training to be aware that women experiencing intervention are not only in shock from the violence and abuse of their partners, but also experiencing acute shame at the public exposure of their situation and fear being blamed for the abuse. It is also necessary for police personnel to recognise that victims who call for police help may not be seeking help to end the relationship. Some victims may be trying to find a means of managing the abuse, and safety, so that the relationship can continue.

The reducing availability of legal aid for employed women fails to take into account the financial stress she may be under in trying to re-establish a life for herself and her children alone. The justice system must recognise that abusive men will often use the law to harass and intimidate their partners, placing severe financial strain on those women who are not eligible for legal aid.

Legal counsel for affected children need to be aware that the intention of many abusive men who contest custody and access may not be any real wish to have long term care of their children, but to punish, coerce, or compromise the women who have disobeyed them.

Family Court Counselling was a frequently noted problem area. Family Court referral guidelines may need review to include awareness that a woman who has become frightened of men may prefer a woman counsellor, and a reminder that couple counselling may be very emotionally unsafe for an abused woman. Assessing counsellors for suitability ought to include an assessment of

gendered attitudes toward women, rather than just knowledge of power and control dynamics.

### ***Education***

Schools could provide age-appropriate life-skills learning. It is particularly appropriate that adolescent girls who are compliant or obedient are given permission to reject abuse and men who are abusive. Both sexes could learn relationship skills, anger-management skills, skills to negotiate interpersonal conflict, and training to recognise abuse and the use of power and control.

Adolescent girls could be encouraged, via a life-skills curriculum, to participate in courses that facilitate the exploration of values and possible identities. Adolescents may need encouragement and support to explore broader sex-role definitions and possible relationship options rather than accept traditional commitment to marriage or partnership as women's only life path.

Education programmes for service providers should include a focus on appropriate responses to women in the different phases of seeking help. The negative health and social implications of blaming victims must be highlighted.

### ***Health***

The main health concern arising from this study relates to the older women in our community. Many women who have experienced abuse or violence in the past have had no interventions. Discrete screening of older women may provide an opportunity for disclosure, and more effective treatment. This may be particularly relevant in cases of depression.

Abuse has many negative health outcomes beyond those that are obvious, such as bruises and broken bones. It is recommended that doctors screen for abuse routinely as part of annual health checks, and whenever abuse is suspected. This would apply to all women patients, not simply based on negative stereotyping. Training programmes to identify and respond to abuse in general practice are available.

Nurses, hospital staff, and other health professionals could be trained to recognise and respond appropriately to abuse. Appropriate responses are non-blaming and include awareness that any reason for accepting help will change over the course of the relationship.

### **Implications for Counselling Practice and Support Worker Intervention.**

It is important to recognise that seeking help is motivated by differing needs throughout the process of being in an abusive relationship. Do not expect a women to leave an abusive relationship when her focus is on seeking help to sustain it. This may be a moral choice, and is likely to be based on realistic fears of the outcome of separation, and must be respected. While her intention is to remain in the relationship, self-esteem building and teaching skills that allow her to minimise abuse without placing herself at risk may be the most appropriate responses. Social interactions create meaning for victim's experience, so non-blaming responses are essential.

The primary task of support workers and counsellors working with women who are restructuring their lives after leaving an abusive relationship, is to

provide coping resources and information that will assist clients to bridge the meaning gap between old and new meaning-making systems and structures. Coping resources include skills-building, developing self-esteem, and promoting healthy self-care. Figure 30 illustrates this process.

Interventions that support the creation of other social identities, and the construction of personal identities are likely to be effective for longer-term recovery. Such interventions would encourage exploration of possible futures and assist women to clarify their personal values, thus enabling them to find new purpose and healthy direction in their lives.

Insert FIG 30

One page

## **Implications for Future Research**

### ***General Recommendations***

The prevalence of partner abuse remains difficult to assess accurately. Negative health outcomes can be long-lasting and the social cost of abuse is high. Assessing prevalence on the basis of recent incidents is misleading. For example, incident reports for any year do not take into account that many women may still be in recovery from incidents prior to that year. Prevalence assessments need to cover the life-span and include psychological and sexual abuse. Some women may need assistance to identify these forms of abuse. Accurate prevalence figures must be obtained to calculate the true current social and economic cost to community and state.

Screening for partner abuse histories among older women in the community could create opportunities for intervention and appropriate treatment of illnesses such as depression.

### ***Recommendations Arising from this Study***

Clarify whether processes of identity formation are relevant to other forms of stress-related growth. This could potentially enable appropriate interventions over a range of situations.

Confirm theory by constructing a process to assess abused women's identity status before and after intervention. Such a prospective study would need to be long-term.

It would be useful to discover the current identity status of New Zealand adolescents, and the relevant age range. Finding the most effective means for encouraging identity formation in adolescent girls, and identifying constraints to identity formation, would be useful for identifying when and where to target preventative interventions.

Related studies could assess the vulnerability of today's young women to the acceptance of romanticised ideals of partnership and marriage. Young women could be assessed for the ability to recognise abuse, particularly psychological abuse which can be subtle and is highly damaging.

An additional related study could assess whether current patterns of multiple partnership have affected beliefs about women's roles and women's willingness to stay in relationships that may be abusive.

Clarifying the part religion plays in perpetuating sanctions that support abuse in New Zealand may be useful to church and community leaders who want to change patterns of abuse in their communities.

It would be useful to assess the prevalence and degree of victim-blaming in New Zealand within and across cultures. Such understanding would enable public education to be targeted more effectively.

## **Conclusion**

Participants in this study have experienced **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY**. The women in this study committed to a relationship with the partner who became abusive during a time of transition and usually with limited

prior life experience. They appear to have been in Marcia's Identity Foreclosed status, Kegan's Interpersonal order of consciousness, and to be Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule's 'Received Knowers'.

Participants tried hard to make the relationship work based on unexplored social and familial expectations of women's roles. Because authority is externalised in this stage of development, and participants had accepted traditional gendered ideals, the women were susceptible to internalising self-blame when their partner became abusive and the relationship deteriorated.

With increasing social isolation, participants' had no way to make meaning of the paradox of their experience and began losing any sense of who they might be or how to solve the problems.

Participants used various forms of resistance to cope with the abuse. Attempting to sustain the relationship required subjugation and compliance to avoid shame and self-blame for failing to make the relationship work. Participants frequently sought help outside the relationship, and initially help-seeking focused on maintaining the relationship through seeking help for the partner, or support for themselves to sustain the relationship. Seeking help was often a distressing experience requiring participants to overcome shame, and their fear of being blamed for having been abused was realistic. However, it was mainly through seeking help that participants discovered other contexts or perspectives that enabled them to see their situation differently and this prompted the decision to separate. Participants then sought help to separate safely.



Separation and the immediate post-separation period were highly stressful. Participants established clear boundaries between themselves and the abusive ex-partner by setting limits on contact and stopping intrusion. The public exposure of their victimisation in order to get help provoked intense feelings of shame. However, participants coped and, as they discovered they could make a life without their partner, gradually rebuilt their confidence and self-esteem.

Throughout this process, participants struggled to make sense and meaning of their experience in the relationship. Participants explored their values and priorities, usually in connection with others, and constructed a sense of their own authority. Making sense of the experience required clarifying issues of blame and responsibility. Resolving a sense of injustice was necessary for making meaning of the experience so they could move on.

Participants developed new skills, found purpose, meaning, and direction for their lives, and committed to future goals with a solid sense of self and identity. However, being autonomous does not mean being alone and most have established new partnerships after careful exploration, although it took some time to regain trust. Participants remain alert to issues of abuse and do not intend to be abused again. For some there are ongoing difficulties with residual trauma symptoms and problems with children.

Participants achieved enormous personal growth under very stressful circumstances. It is difficult to assess whether this growth happened because of their experience, or in spite of their experience. Partnered women often delay identity exploration until household routines are established. If the partner had

not been abusive this may have been the outcome for participants in this study. It appears that women who successfully separate from abusive relationships may be simultaneously engaged in two separate processes. For self-preservation, they leave a relationship that does not allow growth, and growth occurs because of the process of separation itself. Being separate allows the possibility of further growth, although being separate does not mean being alone.

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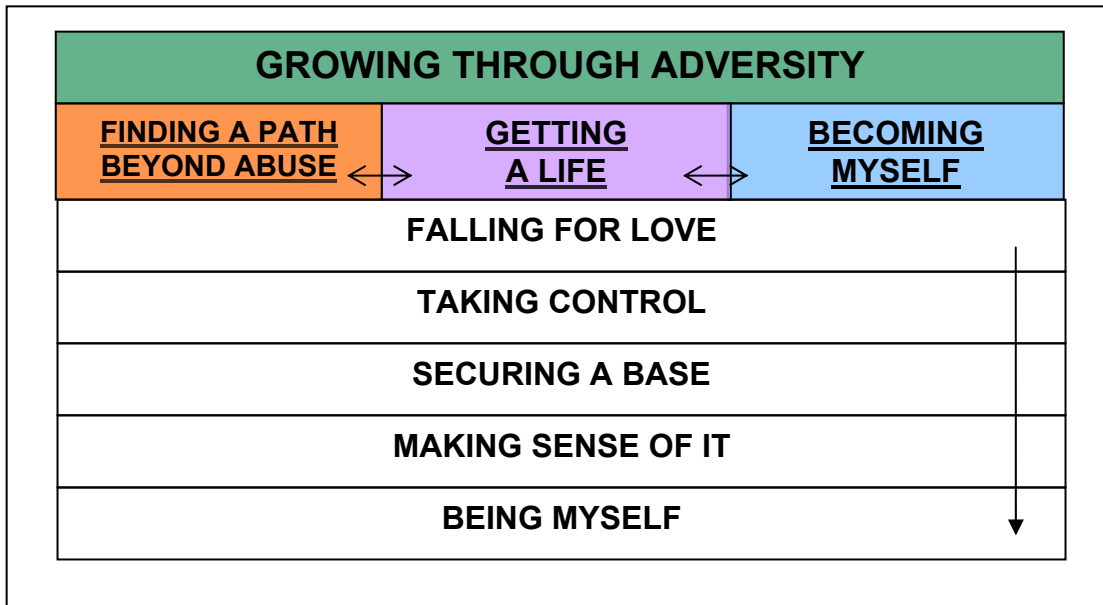
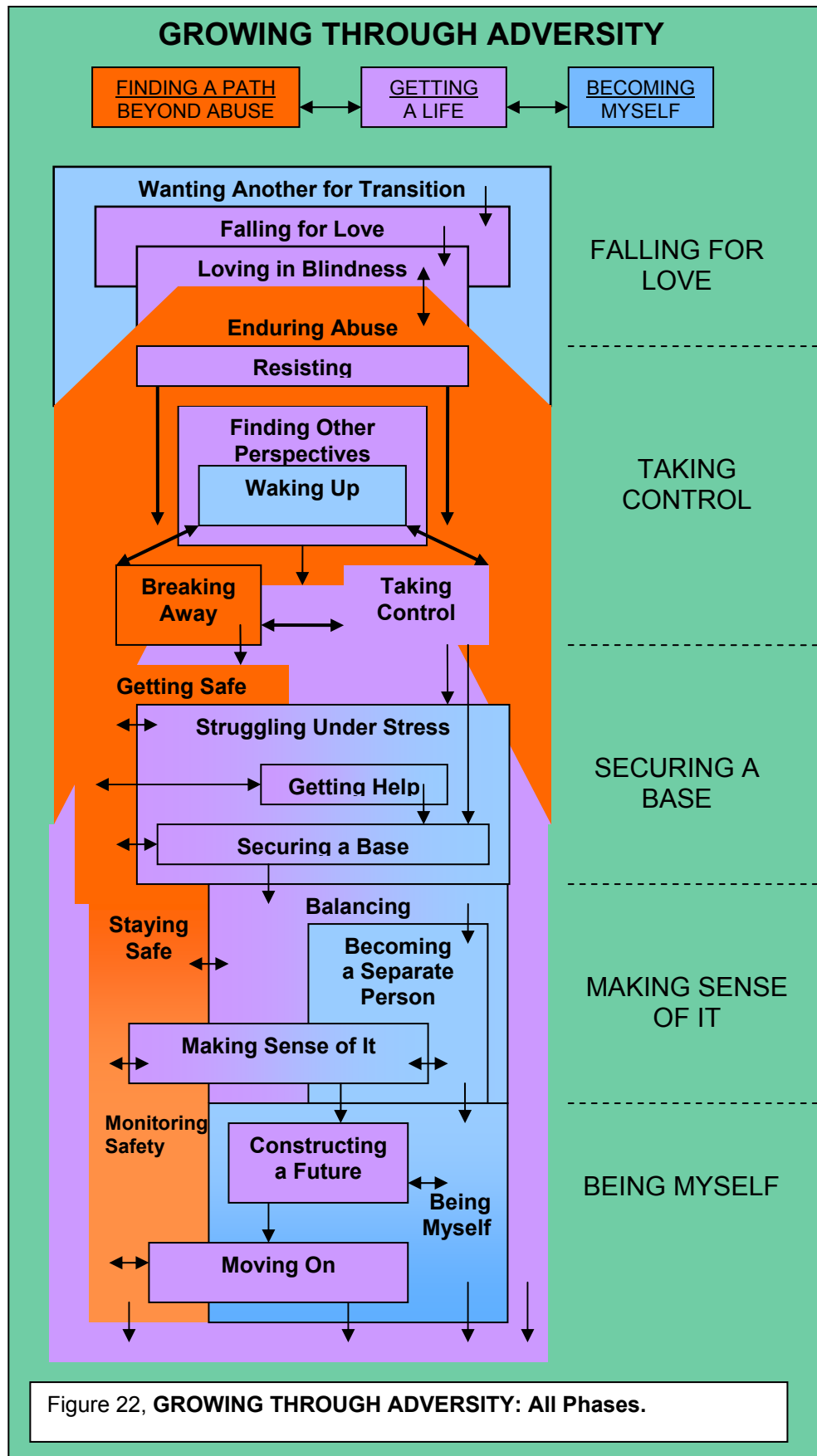


Figure 21. The basic psycho-social process, **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY** has three interactive core categories: FINDING A PATH BEYOND ABUSE; GETTING A LIFE; and BECOMING MYSELF. Within these are five temporal phases, in sequence: FALLING FOR LOVE; TAKING CONTROL; SECURING A BASE; MAKING SENSE OF IT; and BEING MYSELF.

participants' struggle to find security and safety immediately post-separation. MAKING SENSE OF IT includes the participants' focus on understanding what has happened in the relationship, discovery or re-discovery of strengths or skills, exploration of personal values and orientation to the future. BEING MYSELF includes participant's current awareness of themselves, sense of purpose and direction, and orientation to future goals.

Figure 22 shows dimensional analysis of phases of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY** in more detail.



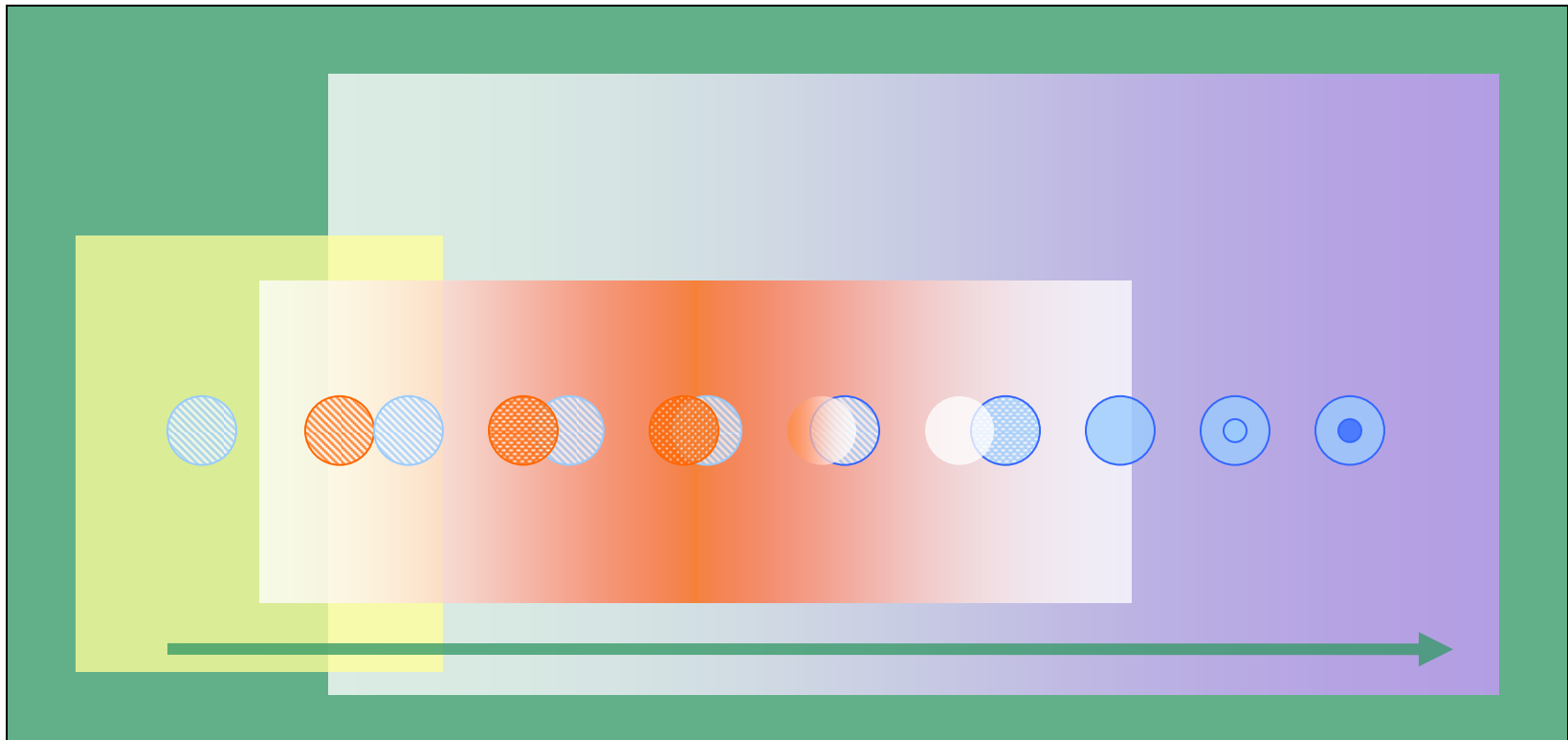


Figure 23. BECOMING MYSELF: A Differentiation of Self from Relationship and Integration into a More Complex Meaning-Making System

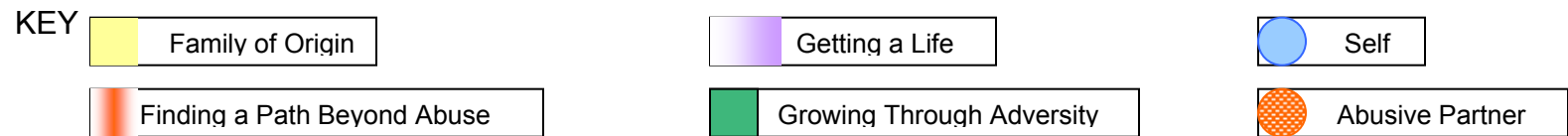
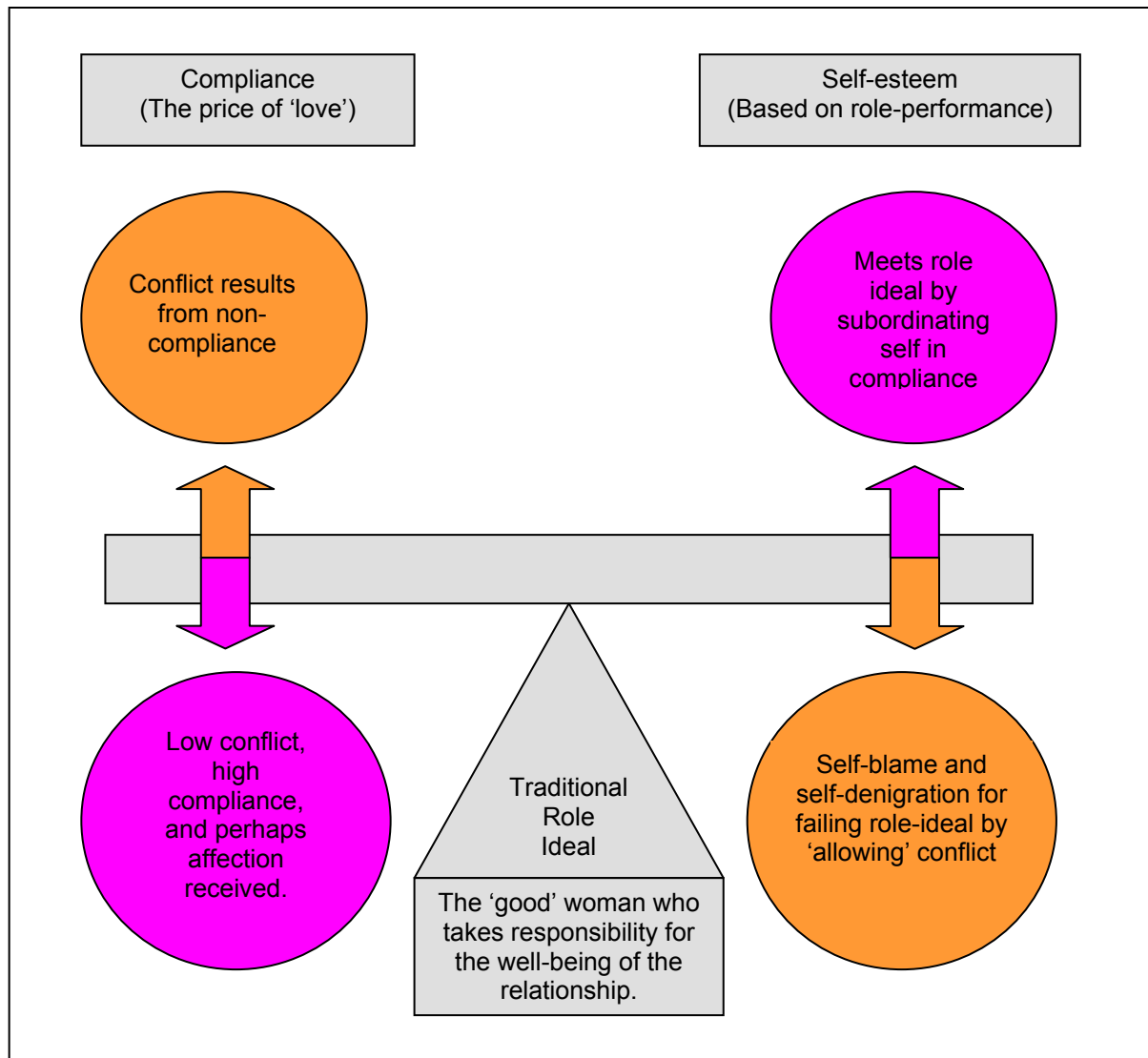


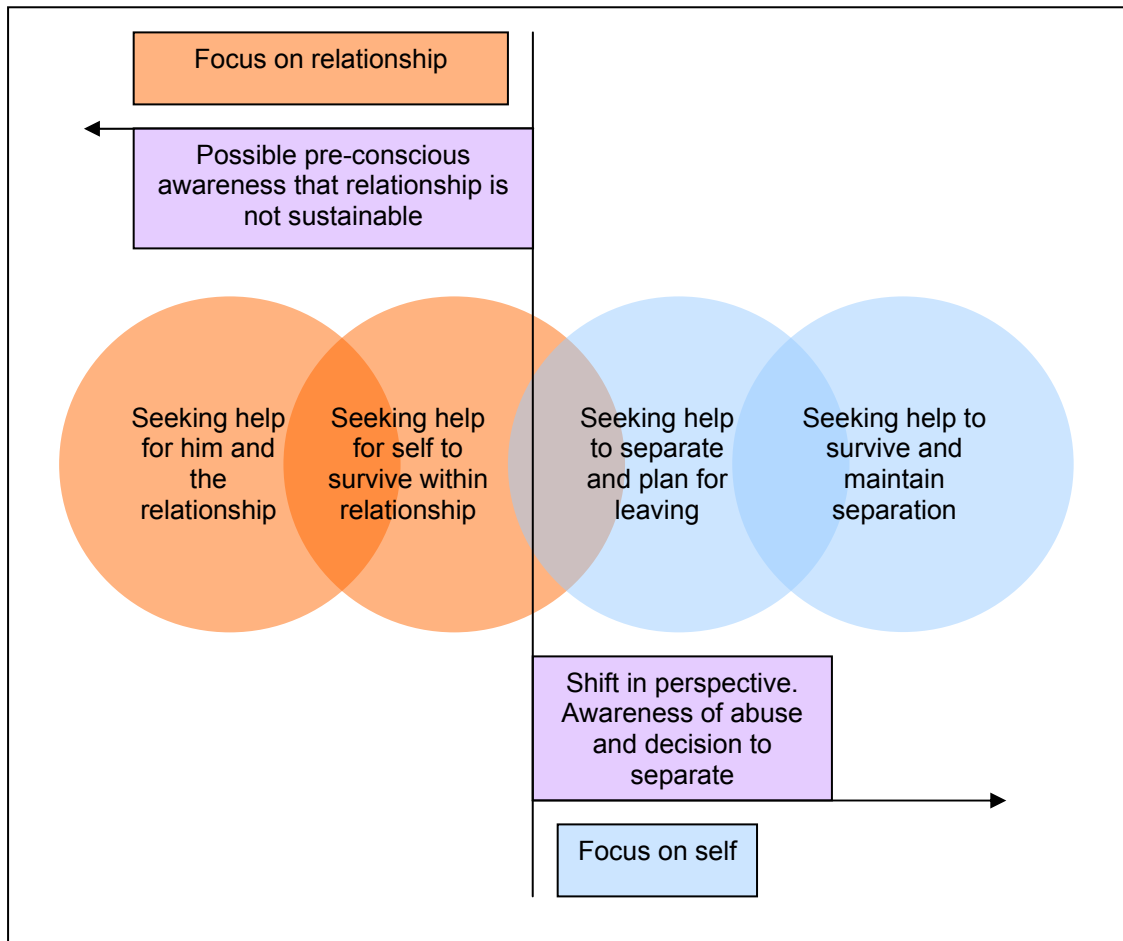
Figure 24. The paradox of **Controlling the Peace**. Being a 'good' woman in an abusive relationship results in reduced self-esteem.



Coping strategies were not resolving the relationship problems and distress was increasing. Trying to stop abuse by controlling the peace, resisting by pulling away, or trying to change his behaviour only escalated abuse. Distress, increased by meaning-making strategies of self-blame and self-derogation (Dalbert, 1998; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Lerner, 1980, 1998), had escalated to levels beyond most participants' ability to cope. The existing



Figure 25. The changing purpose of help-seeking as focus shifts from sustaining the relationship to survival of self.

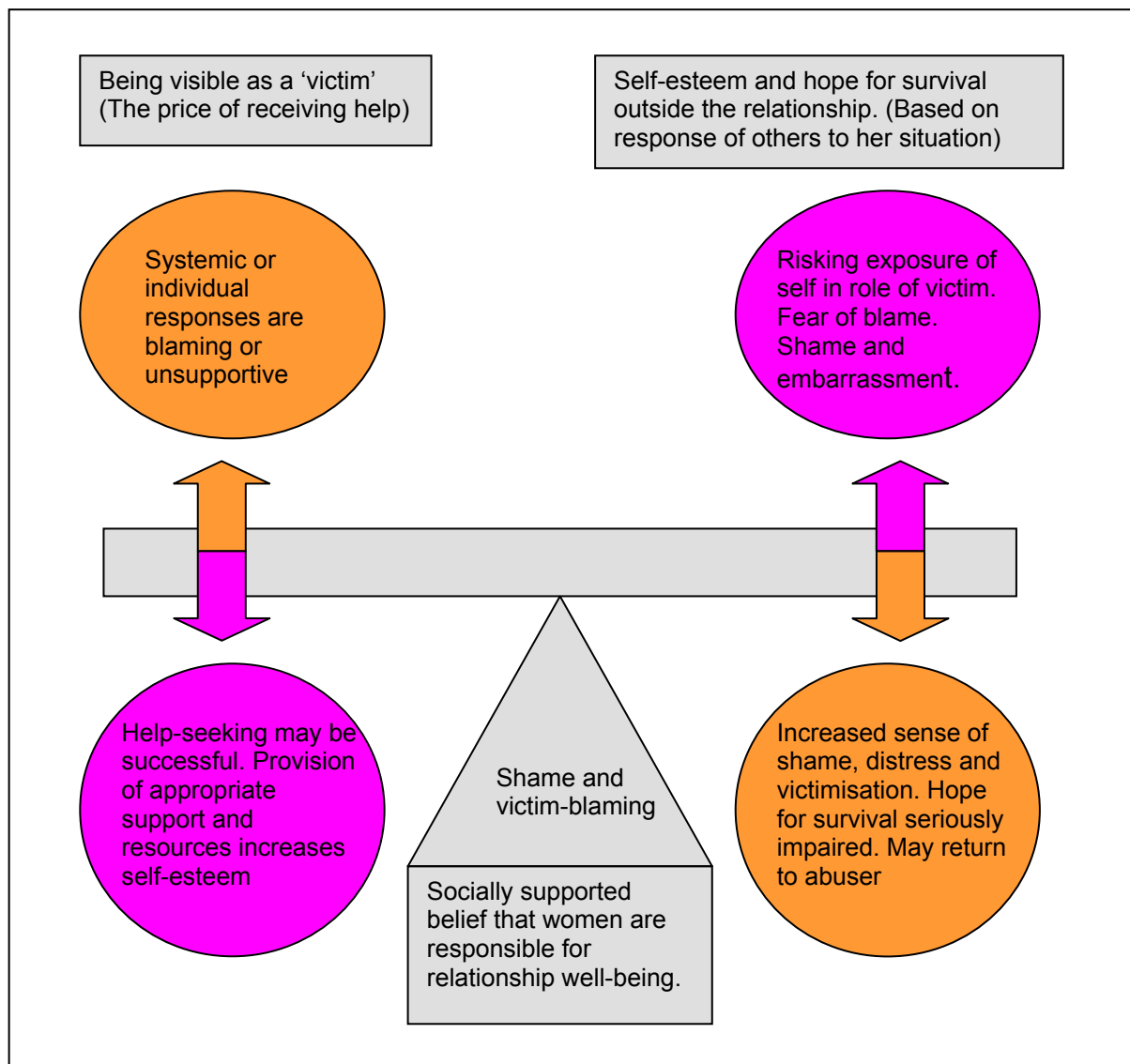


### ***Coping Strategies in Phase Three***

In SECURING A BASE participants needed support to cope. Obtaining both informal and formal help requires exposing victimisation to justify her need and the decision to separate. Most women in this study used the word “embarrassment” to describe how they felt when seeking help. However, the experience they describe of not wanting to be visible, and the accompanying intensity of emotion, points to a ‘shame’ experience (Baumeister, 1991; Rokeach, 1973).

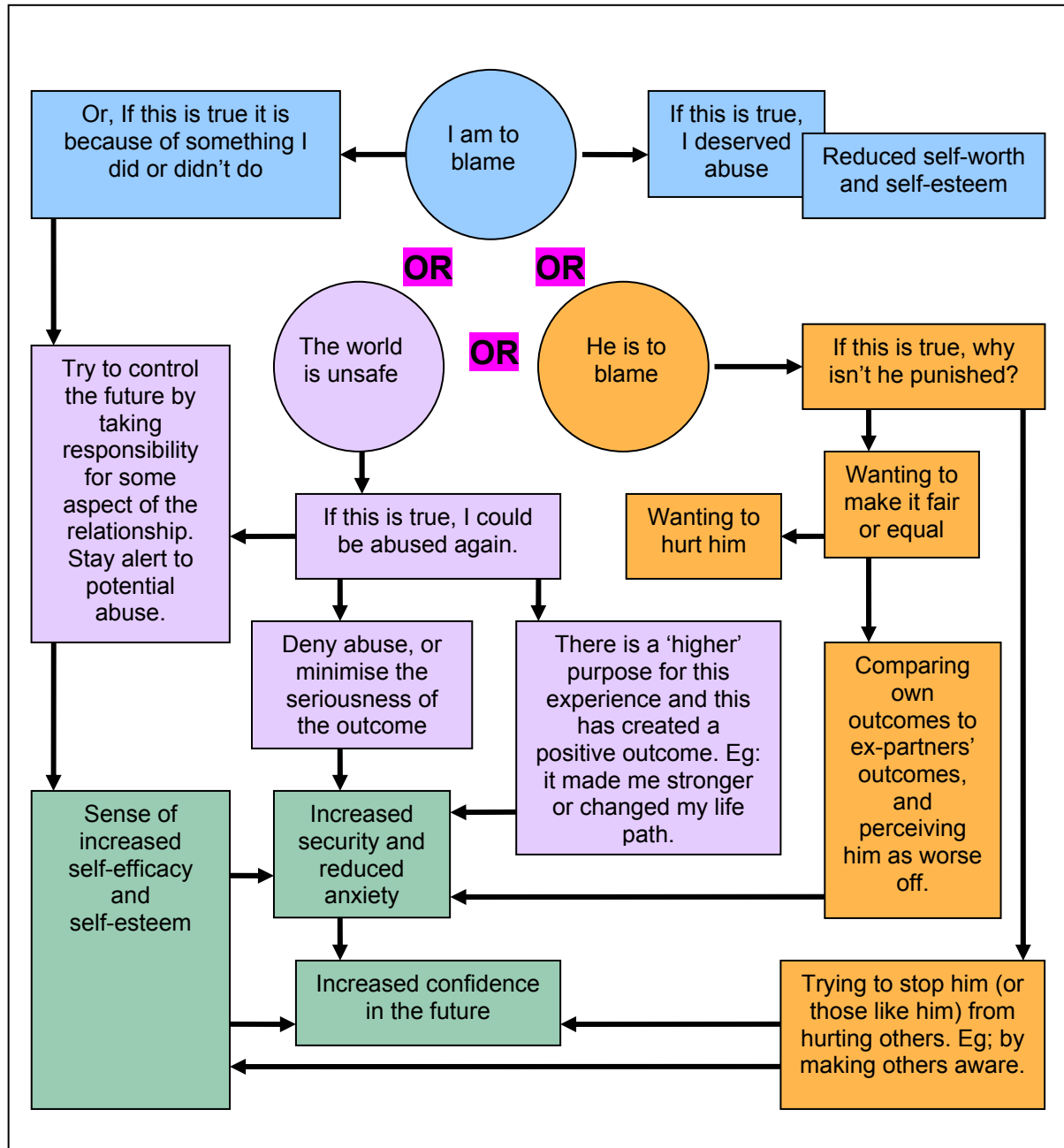


Figure 26. The paradox of getting help. Social support systems, both formal and informal, may replicate abuse dynamics. To get help she must expose herself as having failed to create a healthy relationship and risk blame for the abuse.



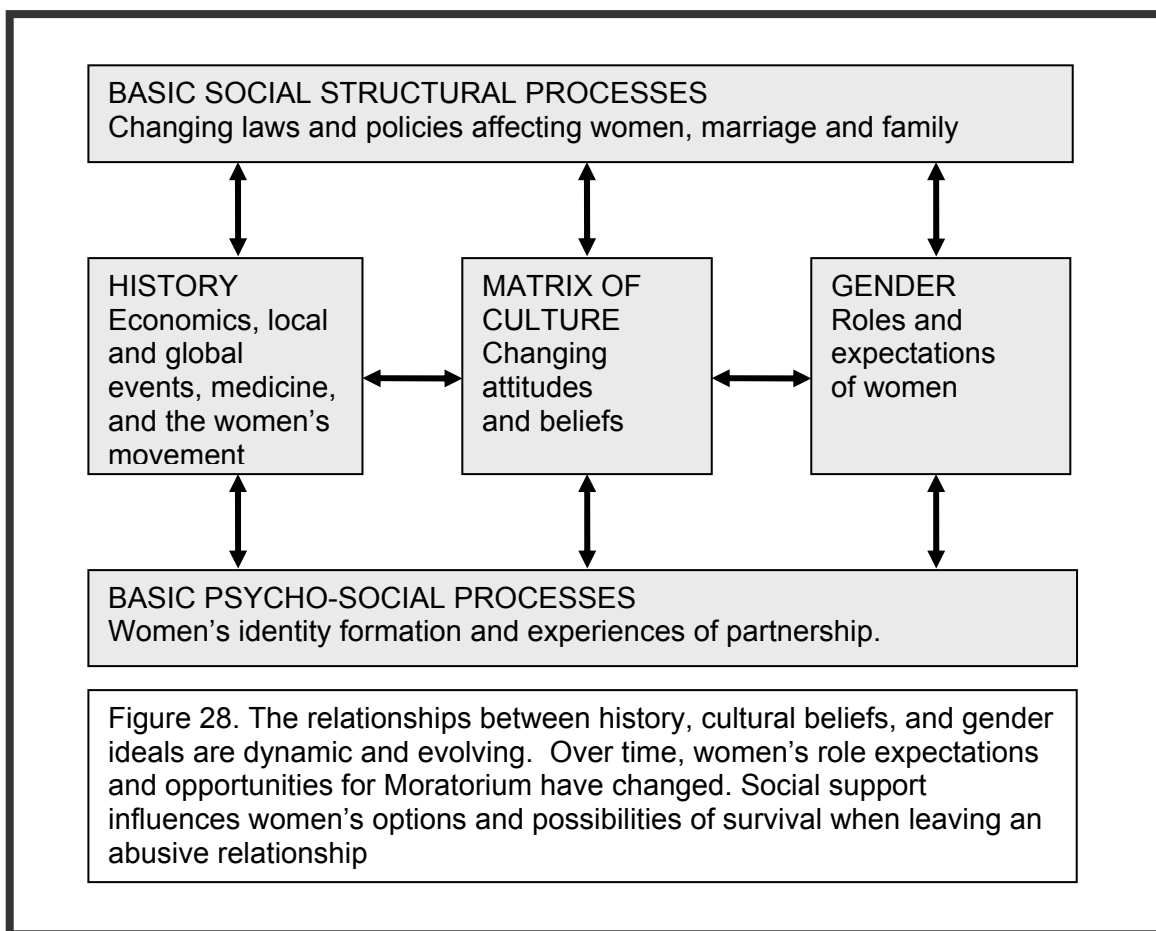
Participants have internalised self-blame, and anticipate blame from others. Justifying the decision to leave and the need for help requires exposing abuse and publicly identifying herself as a victim. Shame, and the accompanying fear of exposure, is a strong deterrent to seeking help that must be overcome for survival. When fears of blame appear to be realised, distress and the sense of victimisation increase. Figure 26 illustrates this paradox.

Figure 27. Making meaning of the experience of abuse by a partner. Reconciling the attribution of blame and responsibility with perceived injustice to preserve self-worth, self-efficacy, self-esteem and/or sense of future security.



divorce; and better state support for women who separate from an abusive partner.

The “salience and meaning of gender were products of ones’ time and place” (Chodorow, 1989, p.217). Figure 28 illustrates the interaction of history, culture, gender beliefs, with the mutual influences of social-structural change and women’s identity formation and relationship choices.



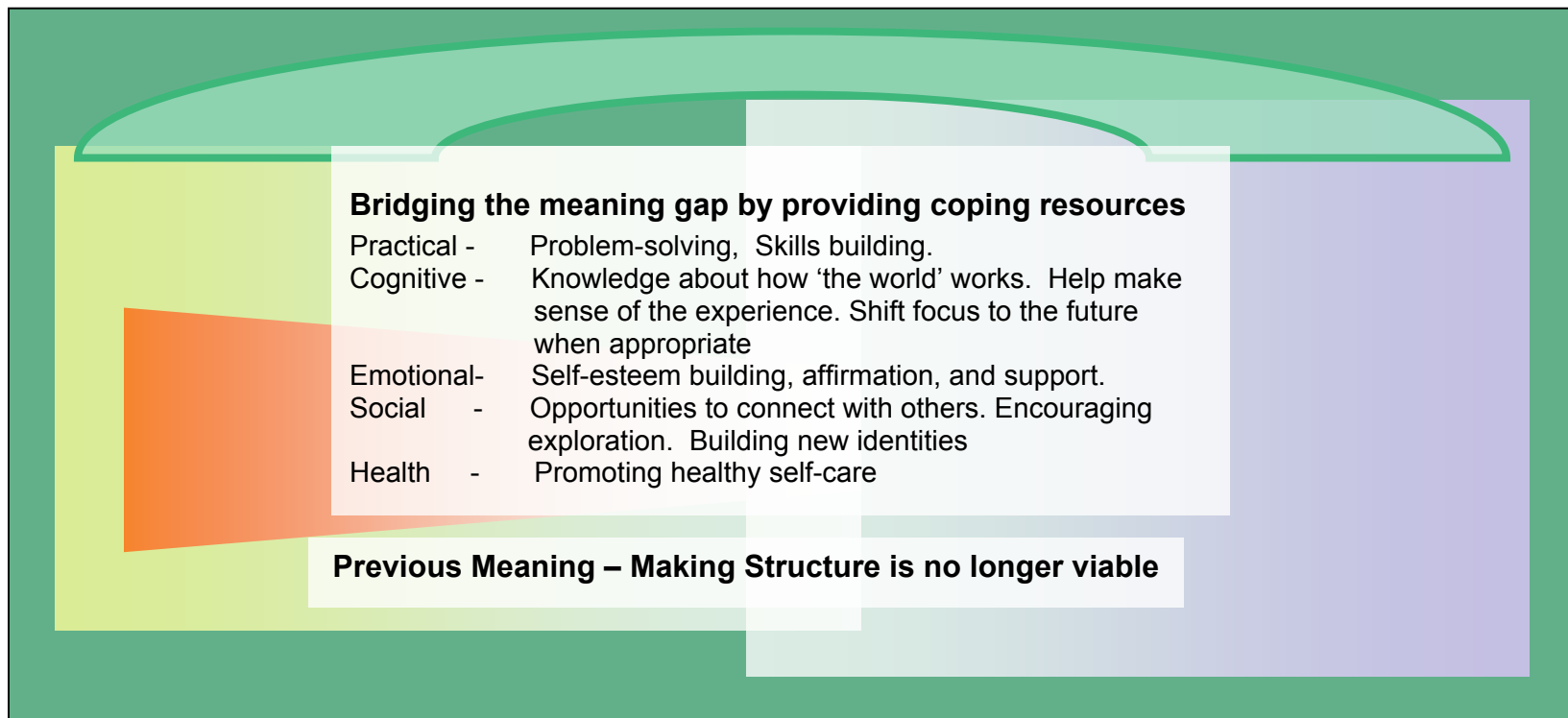


Figure 30. Bridging the meaning gap.  
A task for support workers and service providers who can provide coping resources.

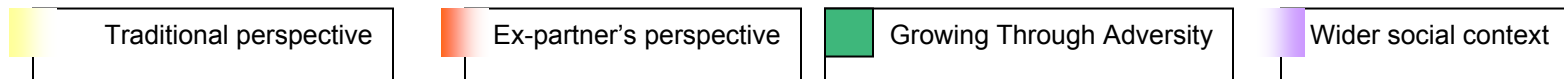


Table 75. Comparison of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY** phases with other studies

Phases as identified in this study	Phase Equivalents (Landenburger, 1989, 1998a, 1998b)	Phase Equivalents (Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999, 2001, 2002)	Phase Equivalents (Mills, 1985)	Phase Equivalents (Kearney, 2001) A synthesis of 13 qualitative studies
<p><b>FALLING FOR LOVE</b> (Wanting Another in Transition, Falling for love, Loving in Blindness, Enduring Abuse)</p> <p><b>TAKING CONTROL</b> (Taking Control of Enduring Abuse, Finding Other Perspectives, Waking Up, Breaking Away)</p> <p><b>SECURING A BASE</b> (Struggling Under Stress After Breaking Away, Getting Safe, Getting Help, Securing a Base)</p>	<p><b>BINDING</b> (Desire for a Loving Relationship, Warning Signals, Working on the Relationship, Questioning)</p> <p><b>ENDURING</b> (Placating, Feeling Responsible, Covering, Shrinking of Self)</p> <p><b>DISENGAGING</b> (Labelling, Seeking Help, Breaking Point, Emerging Self)</p>	<p><b>COUNTERACTING ABUSE</b> (Relinquishing Parts of Self, Minimizing Abuse, Fortifying Defences)</p> <p><b>BREAKING FREE</b> (Active disengaging from relationship over time)</p> <p><b>NOT GOING BACK</b> (Claiming and Maintaining Territory, Getting Situated, Relentless Justifying, Harnessing the System)</p>	<p><b>ENTERING A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP</b> (Describes participant vulnerability due to crisis or change process)</p> <p><b>MANAGING THE VIOLENCE</b> (Protecting Oneself From Harm, Developing Justifications for Maintaining the Relationship)</p> <p><b>EXPERIENCING A LOSS OF SELF</b> (Loss of Identities, Loss of Observing Self)</p> <p><b>RE-EVALUATING THE VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP</b> (Insights or external perspectives redefine situation, specific triggering events, 'spur of the moment' decisions to leave)</p>	<p><i>"This is what I wanted"</i> (Realisation of a goal of lasting relationship)</p> <p><i>"The more I do the worse I am"</i> (Partners love and violence seen as unpredictable, incongruent, inconsistent, Help unavailable or inaccessible, Salvaging relationship as women's role)</p> <p><i>"I had enough"</i> (Violence unacceptable, Relationship not salvageable, Self, children more important)</p>

Table 75. Comparison of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY** phases with other studies

- Kearney, M. (2001). Enduring love: A grounded formal theory of women's experience of domestic violence. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 24, 270-282.
- Landenburger, K. M. (1989). A process of entrapment in and recovery from an abusive relationship. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 10, 209-227.
- Landenburger, K. M. (1998a). The dynamics of leaving and recovering from an abusive relationship. *Journal of Obstetric Gynecologic and Neonatal Nursing*, 27(6), 700-706.
- Landenburger, K. M. (1998b). Exploration of women's identity: Clinical approaches with abused women. In J. C. Campbell (Ed.), *Empowering survivors of abuse: Health care for battered women and their children*. (pp. 61-69). London: Sage.
- Merritt-Gray, M., & Wuest, J. (1995). Counteracting abuse and breaking free: The process of leaving revealed through women's voices. *Health Care for Women International*, 16(5), 399-412.
- Mills, T. (1985). The assault on the self: Stages in coping with battering husbands. *Qualitative Sociology*, 8(2), 103-123.
- Wuest, J., & Merritt-Gray, M. (1999). Not going back: Sustaining the separation in the process of leaving abusive relationships. *Violence Against Women*, 5(2), 110-135.
- Wuest, J., & Merritt-Gray, M. (2001). Beyond survival: Reclaiming self after leaving an abusive male partner. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research*, 32(4), 79-94.
- Wuest, J., & Merritt-Gray, M. (2002). While leaving abusive male partners, women engage in a four stage process of reclaiming self. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, 5(2), 60.



Table 75. Comparison of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY** phases with other studies

Phases as identified in this study	Phase Equivalents (Landenburger, 1989, 1998a, 1998b)	Phase Equivalents (Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999, 2001, 2002)	Phase Equivalents (Mills, 1985)	Phase Equivalents (Kearney, 2001) A synthesis of 13 qualitative studies
<p><b>MAKING SENSE OF IT</b> (Balancing the Base, Staying Safe, Making Sense of It, Becoming a Separate Person)</p> <p><b>BEING MYSELF</b> (Constructing My Own Future, Monitoring Safety, Being Myself, Moving On)</p>	<p><b>RECOVERING</b> (Struggling for Survival, Grieving, Searching for Meaning)</p>	<p><b>MOVING ON</b> (Figuring it Out, Putting it in its Rightful Place, Launching New Relationships, Taking on a New Image)</p>	<p><b>RESTRUCTURING THE SELF</b> (Describes survivor or victim identities, other identities and roles, social support networks)</p>	<p><i>"I was finding me"</i> (Depleted resources, Uncertainty, Vulnerability)</p>
<p>Basic psycho-social process <b>GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY</b></p>		<p>Basic psycho-social process <b>RECLAIMING SELF</b></p>		<p>Basic Psycho-Social Process <b>ENDURING LOVE</b></p>

Table 75. Comparison of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY** phases with other studies

- Kearney, M. (2001). Enduring love: A grounded formal theory of women's experience of domestic violence. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 24, 270-282.
- Landenburger, K. M. (1989). A process of entrapment in and recovery from an abusive relationship. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 10, 209-227.
- Landenburger, K. M. (1998a). The dynamics of leaving and recovering from an abusive relationship. *Journal of Obstetric Gynecologic and Neonatal Nursing*, 27(6), 700-706.
- Landenburger, K. M. (1998b). Exploration of women's identity: Clinical approaches with abused women. In J. C. Campbell (Ed.), *Empowering survivors of abuse: Health care for battered women and their children*. (pp. 61-69). London: Sage.
- Merritt-Gray, M., & Wuest, J. (1995). Counteracting abuse and breaking free: The process of leaving revealed through women's voices. *Health Care for Women International*, 16(5), 399-412.
- Mills, T. (1985). The assault on the self: Stages in coping with battering husbands. *Qualitative Sociology*, 8(2), 103-123.
- Wuest, J., & Merritt-Gray, M. (1999). Not going back: Sustaining the separation in the process of leaving abusive relationships. *Violence Against Women*, 5(2), 110-135.
- Wuest, J., & Merritt-Gray, M. (2001). Beyond survival: Reclaiming self after leaving an abusive male partner. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research*, 32(4), 79-94.
- Wuest, J., & Merritt-Gray, M. (2002). While leaving abusive male partners, women engage in a four stage process of reclaiming self. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, 5(2), 60.

Table 76. Examples of coping strategies used by participants in this study.

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Change the situation</b>	<b>Control meaning of experience to prevent stress</b>	<b>Control the stress</b>
<b>FALLING FOR LOVE</b>	Taking responsibility by trying harder to be a better wife/partner. Helping the partner. Asking others for help or advice.	Relationship ideals do not allow recognition of abuse. Making excuses for him. Minimising abuse. Conflict between the meaning of his behaviour, and ideals of relationship.	Seek affection from partner.  Not telling others because of shame and self-blame. Later seeking medical help for distress symptoms .
<b>TAKING CONTROL</b>	Trying to change him by resisting in conflict. Controlling the peace to avoid conflict. Trying to get help for him or the relationship. Pulling away from him. Seeking help to separate.	Recognising abuse through finding new perspectives. Acceptance of separation as a solution.	Trying to sustain self within the relationship.  Seeking support and validation for self from others. Spending time away from him.
<b>SECURING A BASE</b>	Seeking resources. Learning skills. Setting boundaries. Staying in control. Focus on survival.	Knowing he's abusive, but not understanding how it happened. Justifying separation.	Seeking emotional support. Trying to maintain/build self-esteem.
<b>MAKING SENSE OF IT</b>	Establishing routines. Maintaining boundaries and staying in control.	Constructing new meaning system. Trying to clarify attribution of blame. Understanding abuse dynamics. Making positive meaning of experience. Exploring values. Finding purpose and direction	Building confidence and self-esteem in connection with others.
<b>BEING MYSELF</b>	Staying in control and alert for abuse.	Putting him in the past. Focus on future goals	Forming healthy relationships.



- Stage five of Erikson's stage model of development; Identity vs Identity Confusion (Erikson, 1950), including James Marcia's concept of identity statuses (eg: Marcia, 1966).
- Robert Kegan's Constructive Developmental concept of Orders of Consciousness (Kegan, 1994) and more relational subject/object stage model (Kegan, 1982).
- Belenky et al (Belenky et al., 1986) and 'women's ways of knowing'.

Table 77. Phases of **GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY** and hypothesised integration of developmental theories.

<b>Phases</b>	<b>Erikson and Marcia: Identity Formation</b>	<b>Kegan: Orders of Consciousness and subject/object stage model</b>	<b>Belenky et al: Women's Ways of Knowing</b>
Phase One FALLING FOR LOVE	Probable Foreclosed Identity	Probable Mutuality/Interpersonalism (Third Order)	Probable Received Knowing
Phase Two TAKING CONTROL	Moratorium	Interpersonal (Stage 3)	Subjective Knowing
Phase Three SECURING A BASE			
Phase Four MAKING SENSE OF IT			
Phase Five BEING MYSELF	Probable Identity Achieved (Stage 5) ↓ Intimacy (Stage 6)	Institutional (Fourth Order and Stage 4) ↓ Inter-individual (Stage 5)	Procedural Knowing. (Either Separated Knowing or Connected Knowing)

## Chapter Two:

(Abdul, 1982; P. J. Adams, Towns, & Gavey, 1995; American Psychiatric Association, 1994; Balzer, Haimona, Henare, & Matchitt, 1997; Barnett, Miller-Perrin, & Perrin, 1997; Belich, 1996, 2001; A. Browne, 1993; Bunkle & Hughes, 1980; L. K. Burke & Follingstad, 1999; Busch & Robertson, 1995; Cascardi, O'Leary, Lawrence, & Schlee, 1995; Connell, 2000; Davey, 1998; Dickstein, Symonds, Braude, & Cohen, 1987; Eisikovits, Buchbinder, & Mor, 1998; Elvidge, 1997; Fanslow, 2002; Figley, 1985; Follingstad, Brennan, Hause, & Polek, 1991; Follingstad & DeHart, 2001; Garimella, Plichta, Houseman, & Garzon, 2000; Gelles & Loseke, 1993; Gelles & Straus, 1988; Gilmore, 1990; Gold & Webster, 1990; Hagar, 2001, 2002; Haj-Yahia, 1999; Hand et al., 2002; Hatty, 1987; Head, 1991; Herman, 1992; P. Hoffman, 1985; Horsman, 2000; Jackson, Philp, Nuttall, & Diller, 2002; Jacobson, Gottman, Waltz, & Rushe, 1995; B. James & Saville-Smith, 1990; Kazantzis, Flett, Long, MacDonald, & Millar, 2000; Kelly, 1990; Kemp, Green, Hovanitz, & Rawlings, 1995; Kemp, Rawlings, & Green, 1991; Kimmel, 2002; Langley, Martin, & Nada-Raja, 1997; Lapsley, 1993; Leibrich, Paulin, & Ransom, 1995; Letellier, 1994; Logan, Walker, Cole, & Leukefeld, 2002; L. L. Marshall, 1997, 1999; R. D. Marshall, Olfson, Hellman, & Blanco, 2001; Matthews & Matthews, 1998; McHugh, 1993; T Mills, 1984; T. Mills, 1985; Ministry of Health, 1998, 2001, 2003; Ministry of Justice, 1995, 1999a, 1999b; Ministry of Social Development, 2002; Monahan & O'Leary, 1999; Morris, 1997; Morris, Reilly, Berry, & Ransom, 2003; Morton, 1997; New Zealand Government, 1996; O'Leary, 1999; Pence, 1985; Perry, 2000; Pianta & Egeland, 1994; Pilott, 1996a, 1996b; Pool, Jackson, & Dickson, 1998; Renzetti, 1993; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1993; Robinson, 2003; Roper, 1987; Rosewater, 1990; Rothschild, 2000; Saunders, 1990; Semple, 2001; Sinclair & Dalziel, 2000; Statistics New Zealand, 2001, 2003; The Law Commission, 2002; Tifft, 1993; Veale, 2002; Victoria Link Ltd, 1996; Wainohu, 1991; Wolkenstein & Sterman, 1998; Women's Refuge, 2001)

## Chapter Three:

(Aboulafia, 1986; G. R. Adams & Shea, 1979; Allport, 1958; Archer, 1992; Archer & Waterman, 1990; Bakan, 1966; Baldwin, 1992; Baltes & Nesselrode, 1972; Bandura, 1999; Baumeister, 1991; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Baumeister & Muraven, 1996; Baumrind, 1967; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Berger & Luckman, 1967; Beutel & Marini, 1995; Block & Robins, 1993; P. J. Burke, 1991; P. J. Burke & Stets, 1999; Cast & Stets, 1999; Charon, 1998; Chodorow, 1989; Cooley, 1964/1902; Cross, Bacon, & Michael, 2000; Cross & Madson, 1997; de Beauvoir, 1949; Emmons, Colby, & Kaiser, 1998; Erikson, 1950, 1968; Foddy & Kashima, 2002; Frankl, 1959; Fritz & Helgeson, 1998; Gaines, Buriel, Liu, & Rios, 1997; Garbarino, Gaa, Swank, McPherson, & Gratch, 1995; Gecas, 1982, 2000; Gecas & Mortimer, 1987; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983; Gilligan, 1982/1993; Goffman, 1959; Grotevant, 1992; Grotevant & Cooper, 1998; Helgeson, 1994; Higgins, 1987; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Humphreys & Kashima, 2002; Jack, 2001; Jack & Dill, 1992; B. James & Saville-Smith, 1990; W. James, 1890/1952; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Jordan, 1991a, 1991b; Jordan,

Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991; Josephs, Markus, & Tafarodi, 1992; Josselson, 1996; Kanagawa, Cross, & Markus, 2001; Kaplan, Gleason, & Klein, 1991; Kaschak, 1992; Kashima, Foddy, & Platow, 2002; Kegan, 1982, 1994; Kroger, 1989, 1993; Kroger & Green, 1996; Lerner, 1980; Maes, 1998; Marcia, 1987, 1993a, 1993b; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; McCall & Simmons, 1966; Mead, 1934; Miller, 1976, 1991; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996; Park & Folkman, 1997; Patterson, Sochting, & Marcia, 1992; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978; Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992; Prager, 1982; Rokeach, 1973; M. Rosenberg, 1979; S. Rosenberg, 1997; Schenkel & Marcia, 1972; Schwartz & Montgomery, 2002; Skoe, 1998; Sommer & Baumeister, 1998; Stets, 1995; Stets & Burke, 2000; Stiver, 1991; Stryker, 1980/2002; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Surrey, 1991a; Swann, De La Ronde, & Hixon, 1994; Swann, Stein-Seroussi, & Giesler, 1992; Tallman, Burke, & Gecas, 1998; Towns & Adams, 2000; Turner, 1978, 1990; Wark & Krebs, 1996; Waterman, 1982; West & Zimmerman, 1987; Williams & Bybee, 1994; Winefield & Harvey, 1996)

#### Chapter Four:

(Berger & Luckman, 1967; Blumer, 1969; Bograd, 1990; Bowers & Caron, 2000; J. Browne & Sullivan, 1999; Chatzifotiou, 2000; Chenitz & Swanson, 1996; Crotty, 1998; Denzin, 2002; Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Harding, 1986, 1993; I. Hoffman, 1991; W. James, 1890/1952; Kools, McCarthy, Durham, & Robrecht, 1996; Krefting, 1990; Mead, 1934; Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1997; Oakley, 2000; Reinhartz, 1992; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1970, 1993, 1997; Saunders, 1990; Schatzman, 1991; Steier, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998; Thomas, 2000; Tolich & Davidson, 1999; Wuest, 1995; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2001b; Yllo, 1990)

#### Chapter Five:

(Chodorow, 1989; Gilligan, 1982/1993; B. James & Saville-Smith, 1990; Kelly, 1990; Miller, 1976; Towns & Adams, 2000)

#### Chapter Six:

(Douglas, 1994)

#### Chapter Eight:

(Dowrick, 1991; Marcia, 1966, 1993a)

#### Chapter Ten:

(G. R. Adams & Shea, 1979; Archer, 1992; Archer & Waterman, 1990, 1994; Armeli, Gunthert, & Cohen, 2001; Bandura, 1989, 1999; Barnett et al., 1997; Baumeister, 1991; Belenky et al., 1986; Berger & Luckman, 1967; P. J. Burke, 1991; P. J. Burke & Stets, 1999; Campbell, Rose, Kub, & Nedd, 1998; Cascardi et al., 1995; Cast & Stets, 1999; Chodorow, 1989; Cooley, 1964/1902; Counts, Brown, & Campbell, 1992; Cross et al., 2000; Curnow, 1997; Dalbert, 1998; Davis, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Larson, 1998; Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Douglas, 1994; Eisikovits, 1999; Eisikovits et al., 1998; Emmons et al., 1998; Erikson,

1950; Farrell, 1996; Ferraro, 1983; Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Frazier, Tashiro, Berman, Steger, & Long, 2004; Gecas, 1982; Gecas & Mortimer, 1987; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983; Gilligan, 1982/1993; Glick & Fiske, 2001; Glover, 1995; Gondolf & Browne, 1998; Greer, 2000; Hand et al., 2002; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988; Herman, 1992; Higgins, 1987; Hoff, 1990; B. James & Saville-Smith, 1990; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Josephs et al., 1992; Josselson, 1988a, 1988b; Kaplan et al., 1991; Kearney, 2001; Kegan, 1982, 1994; Kelly, 1990; Kielcolt, 1994; Kroger, 1993, 2000; Kroger & Green, 1996; Lammers, 1996; Landenburger, 1989, 1998a, 1998b; Lempert, 1996, 1997; Lerner, 1980, 1998; Linley & Joseph, 2004; Lipkus & Bissonnette, 1998; Marcia, 1966, 1987; May, 1992; McCall & Simmons, 1966; McFarland, 2000; McMillen & Fisher, 1998; Mead, 1934; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995, 2001; T. Mills, 1985; Murray et al., 1996; O'Neill & Kerig, 2000; Park & Folkman, 1997; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978; Prager, 1982; Roberts & Nelson, 1997; Rokeach, 1973; M. Rosenberg, 1979; Rowe, 2002; Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991; Schafer, Wickrama, & Keith, 1996; Schiedel & Marcia, 1985; Sleutel, 1998; Sommer & Baumeister, 1998; Stets & Burke, 2000; Stewart, 1994; Stewart & Healy, 1989; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Surrey, 1991b; Swann et al., 1994; Swann et al., 1992; Tashiro & Frazier, 2003; Towns & Adams, 2000; Ulrich, 1991, 1998; Waterman, 1982, 1992; Wood, 2001; Woods, 1999; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999, 2001a, 2002)



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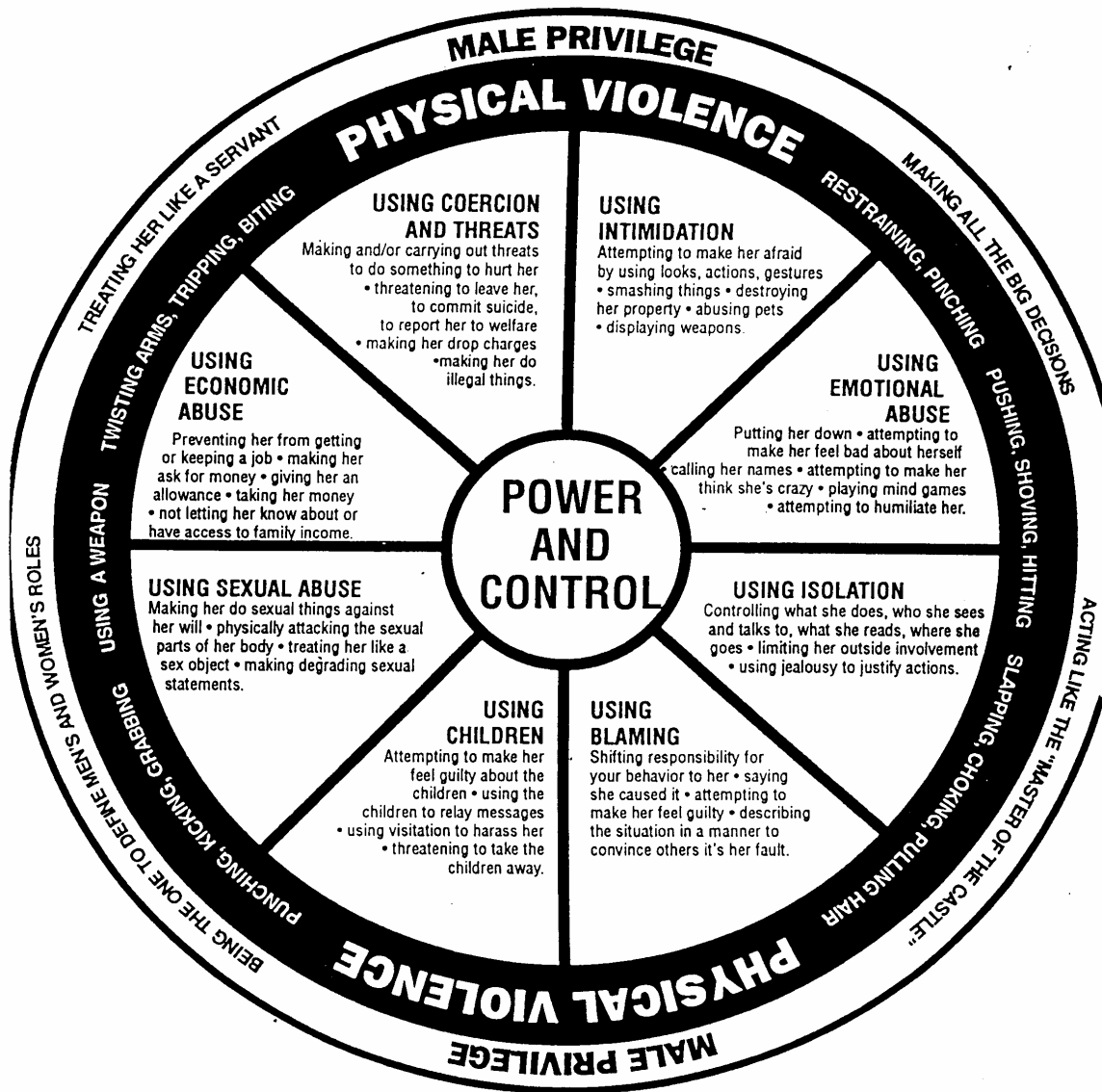
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Appendix A

The Power and Control Wheel



Developed by:  
DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT  
206 West Fourth Street  
Duluth, Minnesota 55806  
218-722-4134

Modified by:  
PAULA BASIL, M.A., L.M.H.C.

STOPPING VIOLENCE PROGRAMME

RESOURCE

Source: The National Network of Stopping Violence Services (NZ) Inc. (NNSVS). Te Kupenga Whakaoti Mahi Patunga. Resource material handbook: Stopping Violence programme for men.



## Appendix B

# Participant Information Sheet

February 2003



### **Becoming Women who Live Without Partner Abuse**

Attached please find a letter inviting you to be part of a research project.

#### **Who can be in the study?**

- (a) English speaking women.
- (b) Who have been separated from a long term abusive personal relationship for more than one year, ideally longer.
- (c) Who feel that they have had some success in rebuilding their lives.
- (d) Who are at least 25 years old.

#### **What will exclude someone from the study?**

- (a) If the abusive relationship you were in lasted for less than a year.
- (b) If you are currently misusing alcohol or drugs.

#### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The study hopes to find how women heal after having experienced living in an abusive relationship.

The study will be part of a Master of Health Science qualification with Auckland University of Technology. It will be written up as a thesis. Reports for journals will also be written and the outcome of the study will also be presented at conferences. Policy makers and funding bodies will be advised of the findings. I will also seek publication of a book which can be used to help women and their families.

#### **How was a person chosen to be asked to be part of the study?**

Either: You will have completed a women's support group with North Harbour Living Without Violence Collective Inc. At the end of the group you signed a form agreeing to be contacted to see if you wanted to be part of any research; Or your counsellor believes you may have an interest in participating, and after hearing about it through them, you may be interested in being involved. Or you have responded to a noticeboard invitation to participate.

#### **What happens in the study?**

We will meet somewhere neutral for about two hours and I will tape a one hour interview of your experience of finding your way to where you are now. You may bring a support person with you if you wish. At a later stage of the study, if you are willing, we may meet again so that I can have your opinion on any emerging ideas about how women rebuild their lives. Between six and twelve women will be involved altogether.

**What are the discomforts and risks and how will they be attended to?**

Although I am a trained counsellor and very sensitive about women's issues and women's feelings, it is possible that you might feel a bit stirred up after the interview. Because of this, I will call you a day or so afterward to see how you are. A free follow-up counselling session with another counsellor will be offered. Maori participants will be able to access a Maori counsellor. Participants may make contact at a later date if they feel they need to access further support and further low cost counselling can be arranged if required. You will be asked to sign a consent form which is very clear that you can withdraw from the study at any time.

**What are the benefits?**

For you, it is my hope that the experience of telling your story of healing and having that valued will be a positive experience. I hope the study will help other women in the future to find their way to a happier life after they have separated from an abusive relationship. The study will also benefit people who work with partner abuse to have a better understanding and be more effective in their work with women and children who may need help after leaving an abusive family environment.

**What compensation is available for injury or negligence?**

I sincerely do not expect this to be an issue. Every consideration will be given to the safety of all women involved. However, if you have any concerns regarding the nature of this project please notify in the first instance:

Project Supervisor, Helen Curreen, AUT Faculty (09) 9179999 ext 7198.

Any concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to:

The Executive Secretary, AUTC, Madeline Banda, [madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz) ,

Phone: (09) 917 9999 ext 8044.

If you have queries or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this study, you may wish to contact a Health and Disability Advocate, telephone 0800 555 050 Northland to Franklin.

**How is my privacy protected?**

All participants will be protected by confidentiality. You may choose a pseudonym to call yourself and you will only be named by that in any written material. I will be very careful not to use information in the study that might cause you to be identified. Any information with your real name or contact information on it will be kept in locked storage.

**Costs of Participating**

If there are likely to be any costs involved in your participation, please let me know on the response form before the interview is arranged. For example, if transport is a significant barrier, it may be necessary to arrange for reimbursement of bus or taxi fares.

**Opportunity to consider invitation**

If you would like to be part of this study, contact details and consent and response forms are enclosed with my letter. Please call me on (09) 6262356 if you have any questions that might help you to make this decision.

**This study has received ethical approval from the Auckland Ethics Committee**

## Appendix C

# Consent to Participation in Research

This form is to be completed in conjunction with the attached Participant Information Sheet.

Title of Project: **Becoming women who live without partner abuse**

Project Supervisor: **Helen Curreen**

Researcher: **Janice Giles**

- I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet, dated February 2003, for volunteers taking part in this study designed to find out how women heal after having lived in an abusive relationship.
- I have had an opportunity to use whanau support or a friend to help me ask questions and understand the study, and I have had my questions answered.
- I understand that the interview will be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that taking part in this study is my choice and that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, and that this will in no way affect any current or future relationship with the agency or counsellor referring you. If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed
- I understand that my participation in this study is confidential and that no material which could identify me will be used in any reports on this study.
- I agree to take part in this research based on the Participant Information Sheet of which I have a copy.
- I have had time to consider whether to take part.
- I know who to contact if I have any concerns or questions about the study.
- I consent to my interview being audio-taped. YES/NO
- I wish to receive a summary of the outcomes. YES/NO
- I would like to have a support person with me for the interview. YES/NO

Participant signature: .....

Participant name:

Date:

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Helen Curreen, Senior Lecturer, Health Faculty. Room AR 125. Auckland University of Technology. Akoranga Campus. Phone 917 9999 ext. 7198

**This study has received ethical approval from the Auckland Ethics Committee.**

## Appendix D Participant Contact Letter

Janice Giles  
Counsellor

P.O. Box 80-219., Green Bay, Auckland 1007.  
Ph. (09) 6262356 Email: [geewiz@ihug.co.nz](mailto:geewiz@ihug.co.nz)

Date.....

Dear .....

### **Research Study: Becoming Women who Live Without Partner Abuse.**

You will have heard about this study in one of three ways:

Either:

In ..... (month)..... of ..... (year) you completed at women's support group with North Harbour Living Without Violence Inc. At that time you indicated that you were willing to consider invitations to participate in future research studies.

Or:

Your counselor/therapist heard about this study and thought you might be willing to participate.

Or:

You are responding to a notice-board invitation and are seeking more information.

I am planning a study as part of a Master of Health Science degree which you may be interested in. Details of the study are enclosed. Please contact me if you need to know more. I hope to find information that will help women who have experienced an abusive relationship and are trying to build a safe future for themselves. So, I am looking for English speaking women who:

- (a) Have been separated from a long term abusive personal relationship for more than one year, ideally longer.
- (b) Who feel that they have had some success in rebuilding their lives.
- (c) Who are at least 25 years old.

Cover letter and response form to potential participants.  
Becoming Women who Live without Partner Abuse.

You may be involved in another relationship, may be single, and may or may not have children. I hope to include a variety of experiences.  
Being part of the study means that I make an audio- taped interview with you at a neutral place. If you are willing, we will have a second brief meeting to clarify themes emerging from the study.

Below please find information about me and a Response Form. A Consent Form, Participant Information Sheet and reply envelope are also enclosed.

Please let me know if you are interested by ..... (date).

Yours sincerely,

Janice Giles

**About me:** I am a pakeha woman, aged 52. I am a qualified counsellor with a Diploma in Counselling from the Auckland Institute of Psychosynthesis and have ten years experience in counselling. My experience includes one to one counselling with a wide variety of clients and many different issues including ACC sensitive claims work. In addition, I began training in family violence work in 1995 and since 1997 have co-facilitated support groups for women and respondent groups for men. I have trained in many different ways of working with people and have recently completed a Post Graduate Diploma in Expressive Therapies at Auckland University of Technology and am now planning on completing a thesis as part of a Master of Health Science qualification. As I strongly value the safety of women and children I am undertaking this research study as a contribution to family and community.  
(Janice Giles)

## RESPONSE FORM

My name .....

I am interested in participating in the research study: **Becoming Women Who Live Without Partner Abuse**

I was in an abusive relationship for ..... (years and months)

I have been out of an abusive personal relationship for ..... (years) and feel that I have had some success in rebuilding my life.

I am more than 25 years old      Yes/No      Age at last birthday ..... (years)

I am not currently misusing alcohol or drugs.

I can be contacted (where/when/how)

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

If you need follow-up counselling, would you prefer a Maori counsellor?    Yes/No

Anything else that might be important for me to know about you or your possible participation in the study? Or any questions?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....(Please use over page if needed)

With your consent, could I contact you at a later date to arrange a second brief meeting to talk about the development of the study. (You may change your mind about this when the time comes.)?      Yes/No

I have enclosed the signed Consent Form. (Please don't sign if you still have questions about the study.)      Yes / No

I have some questions about the Consent Form.      Yes/No

Appendix E  
**INVITATION**  
**TO PARTICIPATE IN A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STUDY**

**Becoming Women who Live Without Partner Abuse**

I am planning a study as part of a Master of Health Science degree. I hope to find information that will help women who have experienced an abusive relationship and are trying to build a safe future for themselves.

I am looking for English speaking women who:

- (a) Have been separated from a long term abusive personal relationship for more than one year, ideally longer.
- (b) Who feel that they have had some success in rebuilding their lives.
- (c) Who are at least 25 years old.

You may be involved in another relationship, may be single, and may or may not have children. I hope to include a variety of experiences.

Being part of the study means that we meet in a neutral place and I make an audio-taped interview with you. A follow up counselling session will be available if you need it. I am hoping that you might also want to check out what the research comes up with at a later stage of the study. However, you can withdraw at any time.

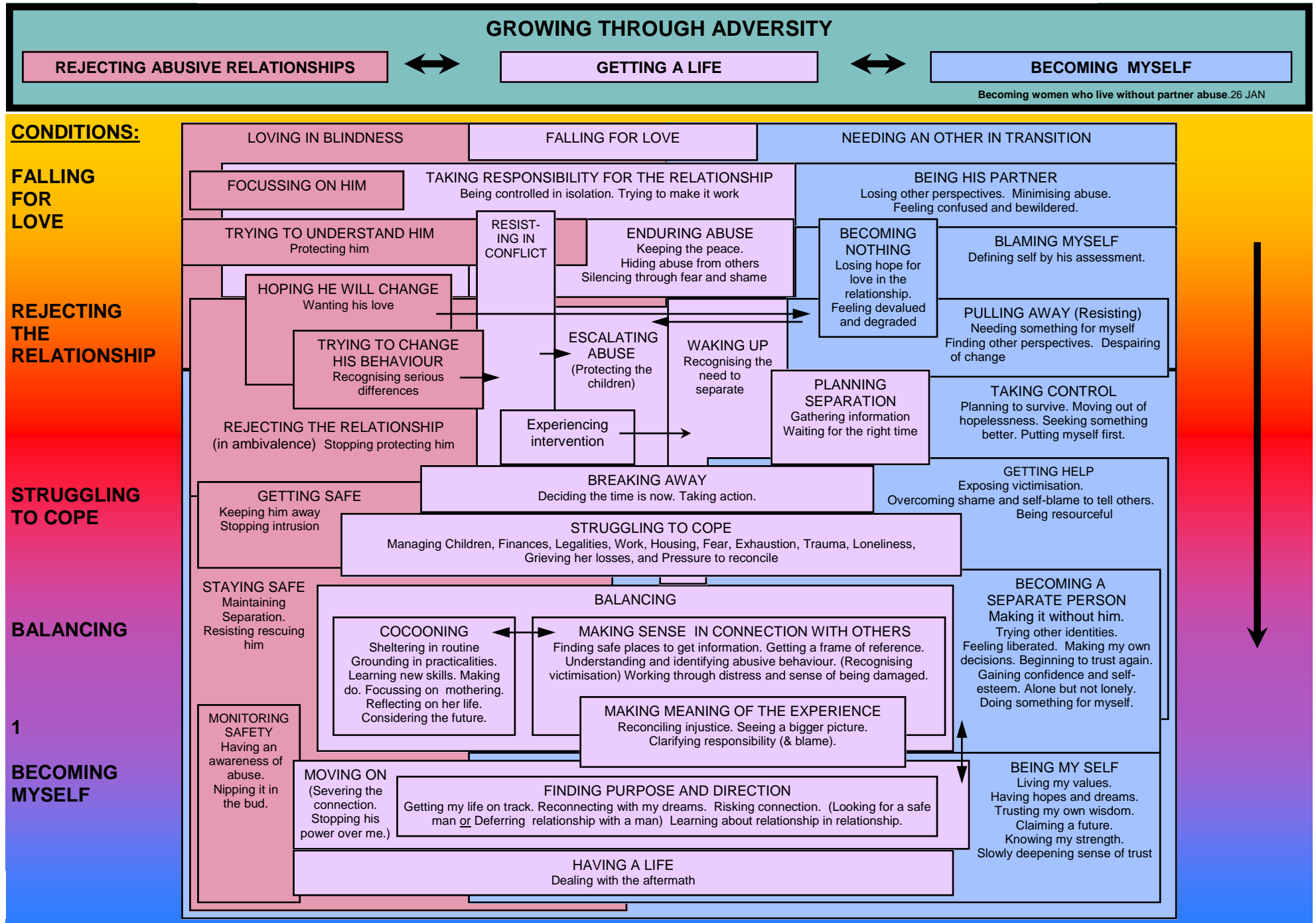
**This study has received ethical approval from the Auckland Ethics Committee**

For more information about the study and what is involved, or about me, please contact:

Janice Giles  
P.O. Box 80-219, Green Bay, Auckland 1007.  
Telephone (09) 6262356  
email: [geewiz@ihug.co.nz](mailto:geewiz@ihug.co.nz)

**ASKING FOR MORE INFORMATION WILL NOT OBLIGATE YOU IN ANY WAY.**

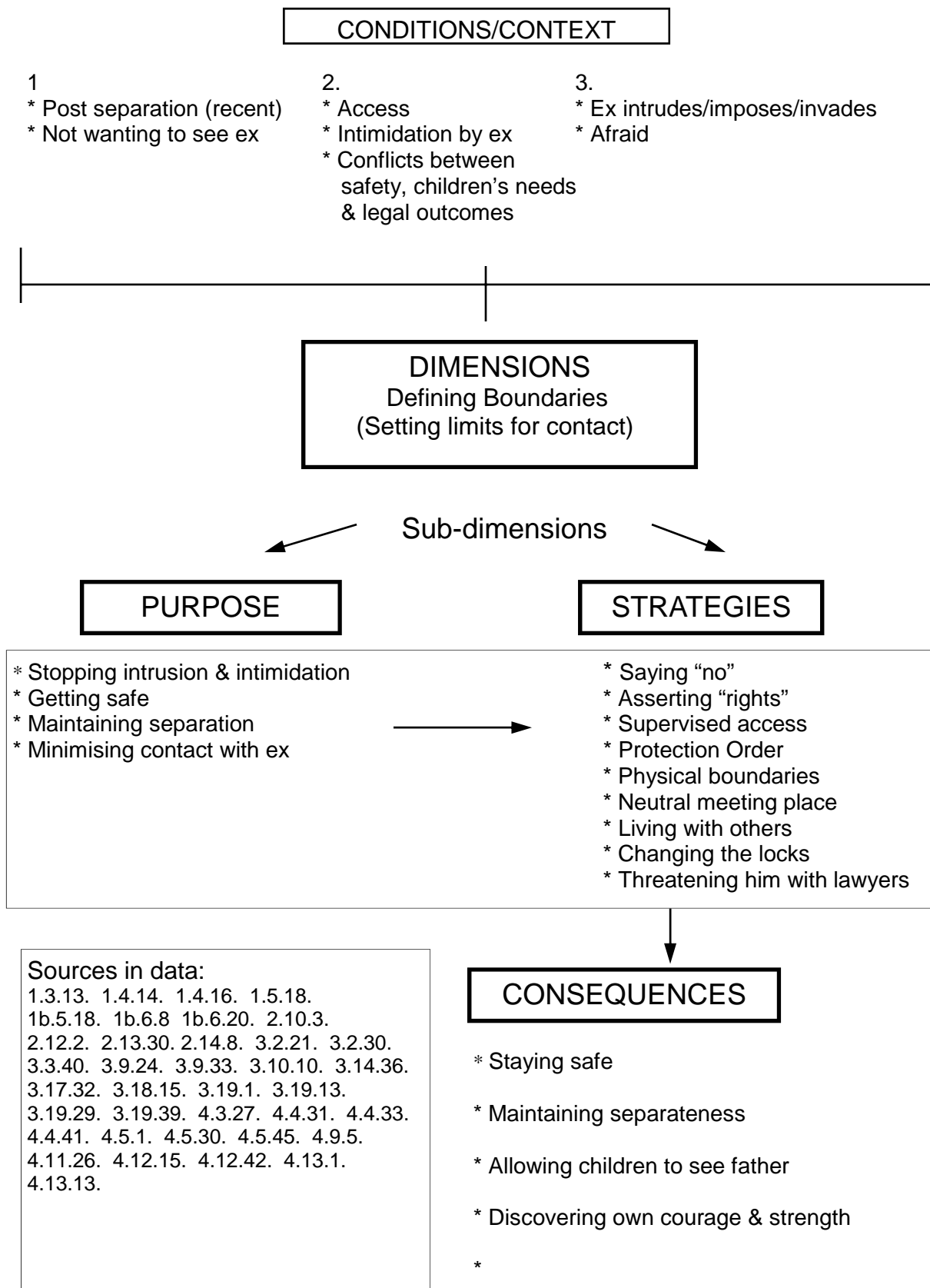
## Appendix F. Sample of Early Mapping of Process





**Appendix G**  
**Sample of Initial Dimensionalising Format (Later Discarded)**

PERSPECTIVE



## Appendix H Theoretical Questions

INTERVIEW      Identifier

Date

For the record: Informed Consent  
OK to take some notes?

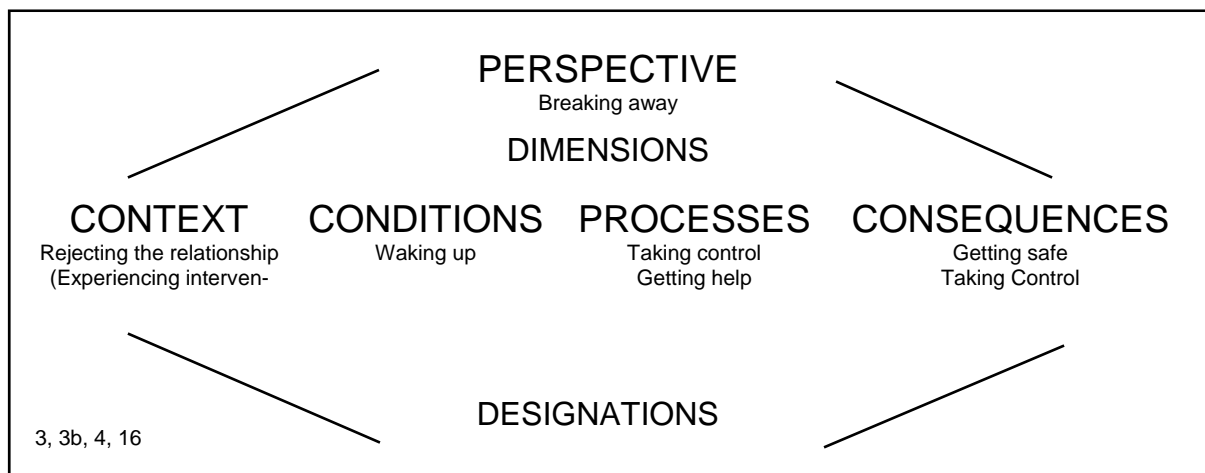
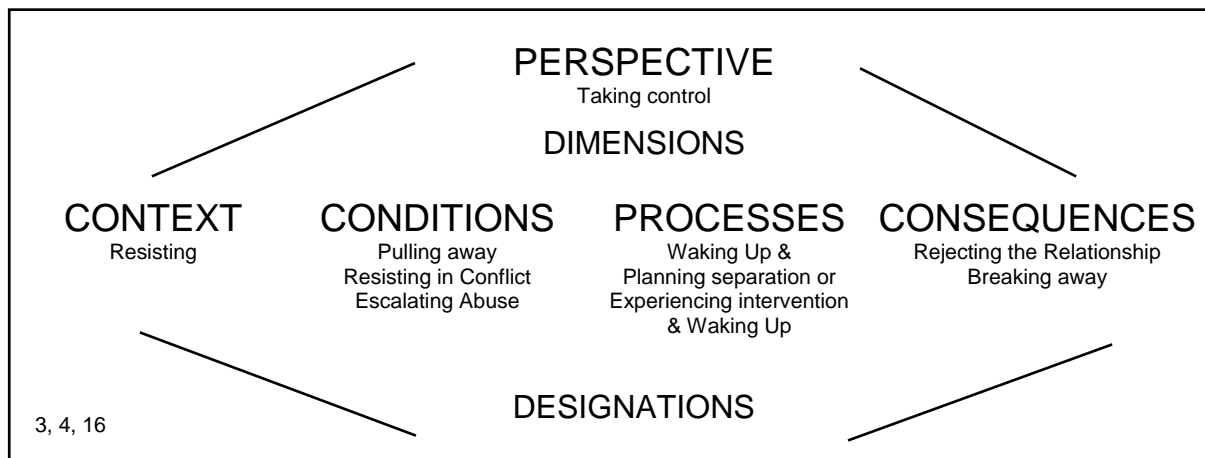
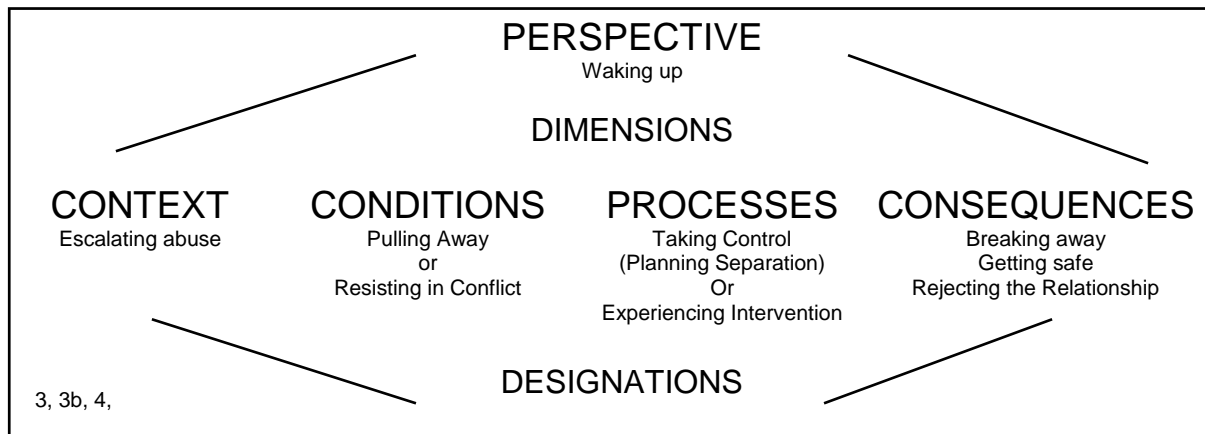
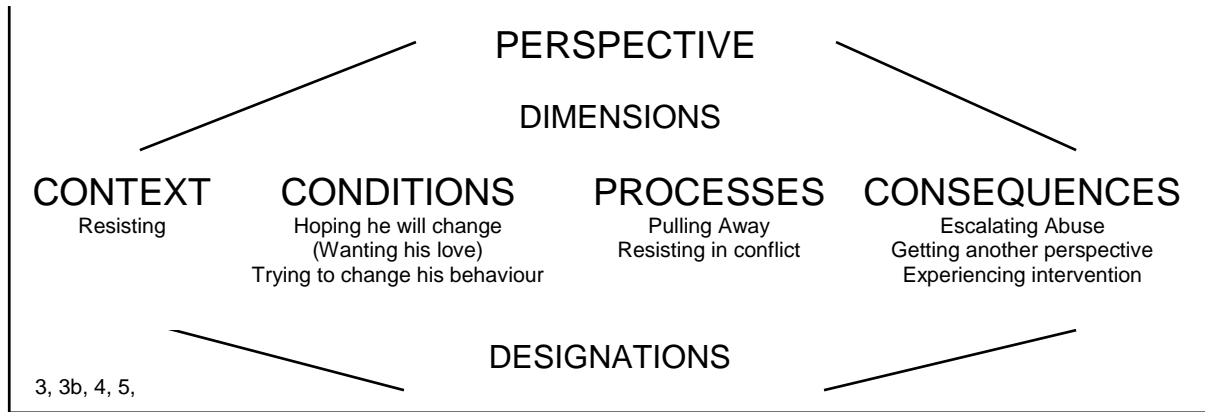
Tell me about your life now	Tell me something that happened at the beginning of that relationship that might help me to understand how things were for you then.
What was deciding not to be with him about for you?	What did you have to do after you separated to get your life sorted out?
What sort of help were you able to get?	Tell me something that helped you know you were feeling better.
How do you make sense of all that has happened?	Are there any issues to do with him and that relationship that still take up your energy?
How would a friend who knows you well describe you now?	Tell me how you see yourself in the future.
What might be useful for other women to know?	

For tape: Invite to meet to go over transcript.  
Ask if willing to be contacted later for review of emergent theory.  
Advise I will phone to check how they are in next two days.

Off tape, but to be recorded: Choose pseudonym.

## Appendix I

### Samples of Early Dimensionalising used to Refine Categories



## Appendix J

### Sample memos

7/9/03

182. Are some things that seem more important to some women due to time lapse since separation (ie: less intense, not IN it, forgotten)? Or due to interaction in different social eras? Need to clarify: Is the experience different?

183. Must go through all my big drawings and diagrams to see if anything useful has slipped through that I haven't followed through with a memo on.

184. Must go back through self interview – but not yet.

185. Remembering an article in NZAC journal from a few years ago – something about the importance of women friends post-sep. – reminder to dig it out later (not now). Thinking about P1 and how important companionship was and group involvements – the personal is political, hope and excitement in being involved in social change – but also the enduring friendships and support. P2 said she had friends who supported. P3 talked about importance of getting back her “social life”. Wait.

186. Trying to find a coding family that might work for different focus. Playing with lots of alternatives. Clear as mud.

187. Thinking about Friere? And “empowerment” (adopted by feminism with a vengeance). Therapeutic use – to not assist with something someone can do for themselves – affirms their capabilities and builds sense of competence and control. Part of the language I'm reluctant to use because its conceptually loaded already – like all those questions I have about survivor and victim, (and client and patient). So, those who use this construction can read it in – but I don't want to use those terms if I can help it. ????

## Appendix K

### Comparisons with Existing Literature

Table K1. FALLING FOR LOVE phase: Correlations with factors noted in other studies.

<b>Dimensions and Sub-Categories</b>	<b>Categories and themes correlated with other studies</b>
<b>Wanting Another in Transition</b> <i>(Knowing an Authoritarian World, Being in Transition, Needing Another)</i>	Traditional Christian influence (Glover, 1995; Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1989; Sleutel, 1998; Wood, 2001; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2001) Close to family, some parental stereotyping, obedient mothers (Glover, 1995) Some with no abuse family background (Glover, 1995; Sleutel, 1998; Wood, 2001; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2001) Family or domestic violence or abuse background (Glover, 1995; Sleutel, 1998) Some participants experienced childhood victimisation (Cascardi, O'Leary, Lawrence, & Schlee, 1995; Landenburger, 1989; Mills, 1985; Sleutel, 1998) Father dominated homes (Sleutel, 1998) Limited life experience and/or never been self-supporting (Landenburger, 1998a) Feeling alone and needing a man (Mills, 1985; Wood, 2001), Feeling strong (Hoff, 1990; Mills, 1985) Feeling vulnerable or in change or crisis (Mills, 1985), Normative beliefs of women's subordinate role (Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Hoff, 1990; Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1989; Lempert, 1997; Towns & Adams, 2000; Wood, 2001; Woods, 1999) Stubborn, tough, highly responsible, caring of others (Rowe, 2002)
<b>Falling For Love</b> <i>(Romancing the Courtship, Committing to Ideals)</i>	Finding someone to love me, courting (Wood, 2001) Childhood dreams, romantic ideals of love and commitment, idealising him (Eisikovits, Buchbinder, & Mor, 1998; Ferraro, 1983; Hoff, 1990; Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1989; Lempert, 1997; Sleutel, 1998; Towns & Adams, 2000; Wood, 2001) Strong idealistic desire for life-partner and children (Glover, 1995)
<b>Loving in Blindness</b> <i>(Being Naïve to Abuse, Being His Partner, Taking Responsibility for the Relationship)</i>	Youthfulness (many young participants, especially first committed relationship), leaving home (Glover, 1995; Hoff, 1990; Landenburger, 1989; Mills, 1985) Naivety, ignoring warning signs or not recognising or minimising abuse (Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Douglas, 1994; Eisikovits, 1999; Ferraro, 1983; Glover, 1995; Hoff, 1990; Landenburger, 1989; Mills, 1985; Sleutel, 1998; Wood, 2001) Thinking abuse is normal/typical (Glover, 1995; Landenburger, 1989; Wood, 2001) Trying to help and understand him (Ferraro, 1983; Landenburger, 1989; Mills, 1985; Wood, 2001; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2001) denial by self, family, friends (Rowe, 2002) Others normalising abuse (Glover, 1995) Lacking skills (Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2001) Feeling bewildered or confused and trying to reconcile inconsistencies

	<p>(Glover, 1995; Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1989; Lempert, 1996, 1997; Merritt-Gray &amp; Wuest, 1995; Mills, 1985; Wood, 2001) Couldn't understand him (Glover, 1995) Keeping abuse secret, hiding abuse, protecting him (Eisikovits, 1999; Glover, 1995; Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1989, 1998a; Lempert, 1996, 1997; Merritt-Gray &amp; Wuest, 1995; Mills, 1985; Rowe, 2002) Secret for shame of being a bad wife (Glover, 1995) Isolating self, (Rowe, 2002) Isolation and losing other perspectives (Dobash &amp; Dobash, 1980; Glover, 1995; Landenburger, 1998a; Lempert, 1996, 1997; Mills, 1985; Sleutel, 1998; Wood, 2001) Being isolated by him, (Glover, 1995) Accepting ideals about marriage, being married more important than quality of marriage (Glover, 1995) Taking responsibility for the relationship and trying to make it 'work' (Ferraro, 1983; Hoff, 1990; Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1989; Lempert, 1996, 1997; Mills, 1985; Wood, 2001; Woods, 1999) Focusing on him, modifying behaviour, Trying to please, not telling, submitting, obeys, excuses him, feels sorry for him, gives him everything, tries harder (Glover, 1995) Trying to please, committed to values of family and community, subordinating own needs for partner or family, believing things would improve and they could achieve the dream of happy family life, reluctant to quit, wanting to do what a wife was supposed to do (Rowe, 2002) Willing to accept the authority of partner and accept his truth as more right than own perceptions. Maintaining role of supportive, subordinate wife (Rowe, 2002)</p>
<p><b>Enduring Abuse</b>  <b>(Experiencing Abuse, Blaming Myself, Becoming Nothing)</b></p>	<p>Blaming myself (Andrews &amp; Brewin, 1990; Ferraro, 1983; Glover, 1995; Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1989, 1998a; Lempert, 1997; Merritt-Gray &amp; Wuest, 1995; O'Neill &amp; Kerig, 2000; Wood, 2001; Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 2001) Defining self and situation by his perceptions, (Ferraro, 1983; Landenburger, 1989, 1998a; Lempert, 1996, 1997) Becoming susceptible to his reality, being blamed (Glover, 1995) Feeling devalued and degraded (Landenburger, 1989; Sleutel, 1998) Losing sanity, despair, depression or 'breakdown' (Campbell, Rose, Kub, &amp; Nedd, 1998; Douglas, 1994; Glover, 1995; Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1989; Lempert, 1996; Sleutel, 1998) Losing self, losing identity, loss of authentic self (Campbell et al., 1998; Eisikovits et al., 1998; Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1989, 1998a; Lempert, 1996; Mills, 1985; Sleutel, 1998) Dependent and needy, worn out, scared to be alone, scared to go outside, low self-esteem, using drugs and alcohol (Glover, 1995) Seeking explanations for his behaviour in their own behaviour, striving to meet his demands (Rowe, 2002) Traditional values form foundation for self-blame (Hoff, 1990)</p>

Table K2. TAKING CONTROL phase: Correlations with factors noted in other studies.

<b>Dimensions and Sub-Categories</b>	<b>Categories and themes correlated with other studies</b>
<b>Taking Control of Enduring Abuse</b> <i>(Controlling the Peace, Resisting by Pulling Away, Resisting in Conflict)</i>	<p>Trying to change him, hoping he will change (Campbell et al., 1998; Curnow, 1997; Kearney, 2001; Lempert, 1996) Protesting about his behaviour, fighting back (Campbell et al., 1998; Glover, 1995; Kearney, 2001; Merritt-Gray &amp; Wuest, 1995; Mills, 1985; Sleutel, 1998; Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) Controlling self to control his behaviour (Campbell et al., 1998; Eisikovits, 1999) Resisting being abused (Campbell et al., 1998; Eisikovits et al., 1998; Glover, 1995; Lempert, 1996; Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) Powerless but not helpless (Glover, 1995) Choosing when to resist, picking my fights (Campbell et al., 1998) Placating, protecting self, coping, passive resistance, trying to make it better (Campbell et al., 1998; Curnow, 1997; Eisikovits, 1999; Eisikovits et al., 1998; Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1989; Lempert, 1996; Mills, 1985; Sleutel, 1998; Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) Rejecting violence (Eisikovits et al., 1998) Staying silent to avoid conflict (Campbell et al., 1998; Woods, 1999) Controlling the risks, managing the violence, strategising (Campbell et al., 1998; Eisikovits, 1999; Eisikovits et al., 1998; Lempert, 1996; Mills, 1985) Leaving and returning (Campbell et al., 1998; Landenburger, 1998a; Peled, Eisikovits, Enosh, &amp; Winstok, 2000; Sleutel, 1998; Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) Needing something for myself, self-preservation in other activities (Eisikovits, 1999; Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) Having time away from him, distancing, creating space, avoiding him, withdrawing emotionally (Campbell et al., 1998; Curnow, 1997; Kearney, 2001; Merritt-Gray &amp; Wuest, 1995; Peled et al., 2000; Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) Emotional regulation, problem solving, making use of external resources, seeking peace and harmony, appeasing, acquiescing, withdrawing (Rowe, 2002)</p>
<b>Finding Other Perspectives</b> <i>(Having Another Context, Realising He's Abusive, Experiencing Escalating Abuse, Seeking Help, Wanting to Leave)</i>	<p>Thinking about children and their future (Campbell et al., 1998; Glover, 1995; Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1998a; Ulrich, 1991) "Collapse in the system of meaning" (Eisikovits et al., 1998) "unexpected audience to violence" (Eisikovits et al., 1998) Awareness triggered by an external event – not causal (Campbell et al., 1998; Eisikovits et al., 1998) Re-evaluation, redefining, new awareness/knowing, defining self as abused, (Campbell et al., 1998; Eisikovits et al., 1998; Merritt-Gray &amp; Wuest, 1995; Mills, 1985; Sleutel, 1998; Ulrich, 1991, 1998) Loss of love, loss of hope, loss of authentic self, loss of security, loss of meaning in coping, feeling alone (Eisikovits et al., 1998) Keeping up interests, making friends, going out to work, being resourceful (Glover, 1995) Putting myself first to survive (Ulrich, 1991) Seeking and getting help/advice/support, another perspective, feedback, new information,</p>

	<p>telling others, getting other perspectives (Campbell et al., 1998; Curnow, 1997; Eisikovits, 1999; Eisikovits et al., 1998; Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1989, 1998b; Lempert, 1996; Merritt-Gray &amp; Wuest, 1995; Mills, 1985; Sleutel, 1998; Ulrich, 1991) Not calling police (Glover, 1995; Mills, 1985; Sleutel, 1998) Calling police (Campbell et al., 1998; Curnow, 1997; Glover, 1995; Merritt-Gray &amp; Wuest, 1995; Mills, 1985) Others not supportive – in-laws, own family, church, doctors, friends say his behaviour normal (Glover, 1995) friendships most helpful (Glover, 1995; Lammers, 1996) Questioning and reflecting, turning to friends for support, reading books, joining groups (Rowe, 2002) Seeing him differently, recognising abuse, realising he will not change, they cannot stop abuse (Curnow, 1997; Eisikovits et al., 1998; Glover, 1995; Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1989; Merritt-Gray &amp; Wuest, 1995; Sleutel, 1998; Ulrich, 1991, 1998) Stops loving him (Glover, 1995) He tightens his control over her (Landenburger, 1989) by ‘losing control’ (Eisikovits, 1999) Escalating abuse (Campbell et al., 1998) Protecting the children from him or herself (Eisikovits et al., 1998; Glover, 1995; Landenburger, 1998a; Merritt-Gray &amp; Wuest, 1995; Sleutel, 1998; Ulrich, 1991) Experiencing intervention (Eisikovits et al., 1998; Kearney, 2001; Sleutel, 1998) Seeking, wanting help for the relationship/him (Campbell et al., 1998; Merritt-Gray &amp; Wuest, 1995) Seeking help for myself, seeking insight (Curnow, 1997; Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1989; Ulrich, 1991) Gaining confidence through other activities, doing something for myself (Kearney, 2001; Merritt-Gray &amp; Wuest, 1995; Mills, 1985; Ulrich, 1991, 1998; Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) Lacking confidence or resources to separate (Campbell et al., 1998; Landenburger, 1989, 1998a; Sleutel, 1998) Trying to leave (Glover, 1995) Thinking about leaving (Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1989) External interventions or seeking support resources, dealing with conflict made his behaviour worse. Searching for another truth (Rowe, 2002)</p>
<p><b>Waking Up (Realising Separation Must Happen, Realising Separation Can Happen)</b></p>	<p>“Waking up” (Curnow, 1997; Ulrich, 1991) Knowing its over (Curnow, 1997; Mills, 1985) Knowing I have to do something, change is inevitable (Campbell et al., 1998; Eisikovits et al., 1998; Ulrich, 1991) Believing in unknown possibilities (Ulrich, 1991) Dawning realisation abuse is not acceptable, no longer financially dependent (Glover, 1995) Wanting to be safe (Glover, 1995) Suddenly having enough (Glover, 1995) Waking suddenly, sudden insights, specific timing of insight, particular event triggers, turning points (Campbell et al., 1998; Curnow, 1997; Eisikovits et al., 1998; Glover, 1995; Kearney, 2001; Mills, 1985; Ulrich, 1991) Wanting a better life (Glover, 1995; Rowe, 2002)</p>
<p><b>Breaking Away (Planning Separation,</b></p>	<p>Planning to leave, finding support and resources (Campbell et al., 1998; Curnow, 1997; Eisikovits et al., 1998; Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1989; Merritt-Gray &amp; Wuest, 1995; Ulrich, 1991; Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) Active help-seeking (Rowe, 2002) Waiting for the</p>



<b><i>Deciding the Time is Now, Rejecting the Relationship</i></b>	right time (Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999) Accepting intervention (Campbell et al., 1998; Curnow, 1997; Eisikovits et al., 1998; Sleutel, 1998) Loss of 'we-ness' (Eisikovits et al., 1998) Escaping into hiding (Ulrich, 1991) Not wanting to do this any more, reaching a limit (Curnow, 1997; Eisikovits et al., 1998; Ulrich, 1991) Wanting safety, living in fear (Ulrich, 1991) Wanting a life, seeking growth (Ulrich, 1991) Rejecting in ambivalence (Campbell et al., 1998; Landenburger, 1998a)
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Table K3. SECURING A BASE phase: Correlations with factors noted in other studies.

<b>Dimensions and Sub-Categories</b>	<b>Categories and themes correlated with other studies</b>
<b><i>Struggling Under Stress after Breaking Away (Being Stressed About Children, Coping with Finances etc..., Being Stressed About legal Processes, Experiencing Distressing Emotions)</i></b>	Difficulties of managing children, learned behaviour problems (Glover, 1995; Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1998a) Complexity of managing children (Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999) Child led to believe she is to blame for their loss of other parent (Hand et al., 2002; Landenburger, 1989) Constraints, managing chaos on a daily basis (Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999) Awareness of effects on children (Hand et al., 2002) Distressed children, due to witnessing abuse (Landenburger, 1998a) Multiple reports of effects on children (Barnett, Miller-Perrin, & Perrin, 1997, p.141) Needing help with child care and transport, needing to settle children (Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999) Punishing her through children, using children to harass her (Landenburger, 1998a; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999) Lack of socio-economic resources and difficulty accessing financial assistance and housing (Hand et al., 2002; Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1989; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999) Using the legal system (Rowe, 2002) Effects on children emotionally or physically abused (Landenburger, 1998a) Shame, depression, poor self-esteem at others knowing (Rowe, 2002) Abuser uses legal system to harass her or improve his image (Glover, 1995; Hand et al., 2002; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999) Struggling for survival, food and shelter (Hand et al., 2002; Landenburger, 1989) Emotional trauma and hurt, exhaustion, fatigue, depletion (Kearney, 2001; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999) Guilt at deserting partner or upsetting her family (Glover, 1995; Landenburger, 1989) Guilt at removing child from father (Hand et al., 2002; Landenburger, 1989) Family pressure to reconcile (Hand et al., 2002) Grieving (Hand et al., 2002; Landenburger, 1989) Losing family (Landenburger, 1998a) Turning to law and courts as another authority (Rowe, 2002) Missing good aspects of the relationship (Landenburger, 1989) Feels a void (Landenburger, 1989) Unsure if she can survive alone (Landenburger, 1998a) Profound emotional vulnerability (Wuest

	<p>&amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) May still feel responsible for relationship interactions, continued self-blame (Hand et al., 2002; Landenburger, 1989) May believe she is worthless without him (Landenburger, 1998a) Self doubt about ability to survive (Landenburger, 1998a)</p>
<p><b>Getting Safe (Keeping Him Away, Continuing to Experience Abuse, Resisting Reconciliation, Managing Access)</b></p>	<p>Reminding self how bad it was, replaying and reviewing (Campbell et al., 1998; Landenburger, 1989; Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) May still feel need to care for him, resisting being sympathetic (Hand et al., 2002; Landenburger, 1989; Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) feeling sorry for him (Glover, 1995) Resisting his pleas, pressure to reconcile (Hand et al., 2002; Landenburger, 1989) Avoiding and hiding, potential danger (Campbell et al., 1998; Hand et al., 2002; Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) Turning others against her (Hand et al., 2002) Continued violence after leaving, retaliation, harassment (Campbell et al., 1998; Hand et al., 2002; Kearney, 2001; Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) Emotional and physical protection needed at access (Hand et al., 2002; Kearney, 2001; Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) Setting limits (Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) Safety concerns, fear, continued harassment (Hand et al., 2002; Landenburger, 1989, 1998a; Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) Court Orders for protection helpful (Hand et al., 2002; Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999)</p>
<p><b>Getting Help (Telling Others, Attempting to Obtain Support, Trying Family Court Counselling)</b></p>	<p>Others not understanding, others questioning her responsibility, or disinterested (Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1989; Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) Getting labelled to get help (Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) Having to tell others (Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) Relentless justifying to self and others (Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) Fear of seeking public solution, ie: court orders, shame when getting help (Hand et al., 2002; Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) Support unpredictable, mixed responses, helpful/unhelpful (Hand et al., 2002; Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) Seeking help from new sources (Landenburger, 1989) Needing to justify her survival to others (Landenburger, 1989) Feeling stigmatised, others lack of awareness, may feel abused by formal helping systems (Hand et al., 2002; Landenburger, 1998a) Harnessing the system, learning how to use resources (Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999)</p>
<p><b>Securing a Base (Starting with a House, Stopping Intrusion)</b></p>	<p>Securing boundaries, protecting personal space (Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) Having somewhere safe and semi-permanent to live, getting situated (Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999)</p>

Table K4. MAKING SENSE OF IT phase: Correlations with factors noted in other studies.

<b>Dimensions and Sub-Categories</b>	<b>Categories and themes correlated with other studies</b>
<b>Balancing the Base (Cocooning, Connecting, Focussing on Mothering)</b>	Resuming normal activities, establishing routines (Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999) Gaining a balance (Landenburger, 1989, 1998b) Settling children into new environment (Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999) Continuing difficulties with and for children (Landenburger, 1998a; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999) Finding social support (Tashiro & Frazier, 2003) New and different social relationships (Mills, 1985) Benefits of interacting with supportive others (Farrell, 1996)
<b>Staying Safe (Managing Contact, Maintaining Separation, Continuing Problems with Him, Struggling with Symptoms, Not Trusting Men)</b>	Breaking cultural norms by failing to be sympathetic to him (Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999) Not taking responsibility for partner's actions or needs (Landenburger, 1998a) Feeling experience of loss, grieving (Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1989, 1998a; Ulrich, 1991) Grieving loss of innocence, dreams, hopes, material possessions and sense of self (Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999) Bonded through children, awkward co-existence (Kearney, 2001) Presence of continued harassment interferes with grieving process (Landenburger, 1998a) Difficulty in regaining perspective and placing him in the past (Landenburger, 1998a; Ulrich, 1991) Reluctance to trust (Kearney, 2001) Ambivalence about launching new relationships (Kearney, 2001; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2002) Relearning to trust others and herself (Landenburger, 1998a) Painful memories may resurface (Kearney, 2001) Ever watchful (Rowe, 2002) Wary of involvement (Glover, 1995)
<b>Making Sense of It (Identifying Abuse, Learning New Skills, Working Through It, Considering Relationship, Reconciling Injustice, Trying to Make the World Safe)</b>	Figuring it out, putting it in its place and in the the past, searching for reasons (Farrell, 1996; Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1998b; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2002) Searching for meaning to balance her life (Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1989, 1998a, 1998b; Ulrich, 1991) Making sense of abuse (Landenburger, 1998a) Placing abuse in perspective (Landenburger, 1998b) Asking why did I stay so long, self-questioning (Kearney, 2001) Working through guilt at deserting partner, upsetting her family (Landenburger, 1989, 1998a) Emotional regulation skills – how to express feelings, anger, dealing with conflict, assertion, more open-minded. Interpersonal communication skills, Problem solving or life skills, more socially involved, more honest and self-disclosing, more tough – boundaries, intellectual and practical life skills, identifying the pattern and triggers of conflict, willingness to get help, independence – taking care of self, not taking on others problems. (Rowe, 2002) Finding some positive consequences (Kearney, 2001) Learning

	<p>about dynamics of the abusive relationship (Landenburger, 1998a) Wondering if she can have a 'normal' relationship (Kearney, 2001) Fear of repeating involvement with an abusive partner (Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1998a, 1998b) Distinguishing between wanting a new relationship and being able to do this (Kearney, 2001) Exhaustively testing new relationships with new criteria (Kearney, 2001) Vigilance in new relationships, on guard, reading signs, surveillance, making self-protective rules (Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1998b) Undertaking therapy Having counselling for self and children (Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1998a) Getting affirmation from others for their courage (Mills, 1985) Learning new ways of reacting to people (Landenburger, 1998a) Assigning blame outside the self (Landenburger, 1998a, 1998b; Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 2002) Being right in the eyes of the social world, winning is important (Rowe, 2002) Taking some responsibility and credit for their actions (Kearney, 2001; Ulrich, 1998) Taking responsibility for not finding solutions to the problems, blaming self for tolerating abuse (Landenburger, 1989) Taking pleasure in his misfortunes (Kearney, 2001) Now safe to acknowledge hatred and hostility (Lempert, 1997) Not seeking professional help (Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 2002) Undertaking therapy (Kearney, 2001) Not considering social/cultural norms and family traditions as part of the picture (Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 2002) Learning to trust self and others (Farrell, 1996) Changed views of the world, less materialistic (Kearney, 2001) More knowledge about others motivations, more caring, forgiving (Rowe, 2002) New perspective on life – shift in what's important, more positive, wiser, less naïve, more adventurous, more aware of options, more spiritually aware, more freedom, realising he has no power over me, more willing to live simply, more mature (Rowe, 2002)</p>
<p><b>Becoming a Separate Person</b>  <i>(Making it Without Him, Gaining Confidence, Doing Something for Myself, Knowing I am Someone)</i></p>	<p>Building confidence and sense of self (Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 1999) Assuming control over her life (Landenburger, 1998b) Controlling decisions that shape her life, can do what she wants (Landenburger, 1989, 1998a) Increased self-awareness, self-acceptance, establishing and maintaining boundaries, experiencing greater depth to life (Farrell, 1996) Learning to depend on herself and believe in herself (Farrell, 1996; Landenburger, 1989, 1998a) Recognising they were different (Wuest &amp; Merritt-Gray, 2002) Reaffirming self, replacing negative beliefs about self, building positive self-image, feeling effective (Landenburger, 1998a) Reclaiming self by re-instatement in larger social context (Merritt-Gray &amp; Wuest, 1995) Finding me, discovering authentic self, dramatic personal growth (Kearney, 2001) Sense of connection between self and others, establishing relationship with self as foundation for relationship with others (Farrell, 1996) Beginning to feel human again, be a person (Landenburger, 1989) New social</p>

	relationships where others do not know about victimisation (Mills, 1985) Strengthened self-concept. – more confidence in self, stronger, better understanding of self needs, more in control, feeling empowered, being happier, more content, feeling more valued, free from psychological pain, forgiving of self. Having other priorities – the development of self (Rowe, 2002)
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Table K5. BEING MYSELF phase: Correlations with factors noted in other studies.

<b>Dimensions and Sub-Categories</b>	<b>Categories and themes correlated with other studies</b>
<b>Constructing My Own Future</b> <i>(Finding Purpose and Direction, Committing to a Future, Committing to a Relationship)</i>	Orientation to future, dreams of future, letting go of the past (Farrell, 1996; Kearney, 2001) Seeing partner as part of her past (Landenburger, 1998b) Relaxing criteria and expectations of relationships over time (Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2002) Seeing self in relation to others (Landenburger, 1998a) Reconnections with previous self-images of strength and success (Mills, 1985) Re-evaluation of what has value in the world (Rowe, 2002) Creating relational independence (Rowe, 2002)
<b>Monitoring Safety</b> <i>(Committing to 'Never Again', Feeling Safer)</i>	Choosing what she wants in a future relationship (Landenburger, 1998a; Tashiro & Frazier, 2003) Not forgetting so she doesn't repeat (Kearney, 2001) Still some relationship struggles – 5 years on (Hoff, 1990) Still trying to rebuild trust, avoiding re-marriage, confident it will not happen again, will not tolerate abuse – 5 years on (Hoff, 1990)
<b>Being Myself</b> <i>(Living By My Values, Being Me)</i>	Taking pride in person they have become (Kearney, 2001; Mills, 1985; Tashiro & Frazier, 2003; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2002) Self sufficiency, stronger, braver, more capable of caring for self, more secure in self (Kearney, 2001) More self-reliant, getting to know self (Hoff, 1990) Proud of self for surviving (Mills, 1985) Self-determination, sense of accomplishment, confident in decision-making (Farrell, 1996) Feeling whole and alive, self-realisation (Farrell, 1996) Increasing self-worth and identity (Rowe, 2002)

<p><b>Moving On (Breaking His Hold On Me, Connecting From a New Place, Dealing with the Aftermath and Children, Dealing with the Aftermath and Trauma, Seeing a Bigger Picture, Having a Life)</b></p>	<p>Fear associated with abuse remains for years (Landenburger, 1998a) A broader view of life (Farrell, 1996) Beating him up and no longer afraid of him (Glover, 1995) OK to place herself first, to value self not just others (Farrell, 1996; Landenburger, 1998a) Seeing self in relation to others (Landenburger, 1998a) Learning to function spontaneously (Landenburger, 1998a) Importance of self diminishes power of partner over her (Landenburger, 1998b) Having established support networks validating new sense of self (Mills, 1985) Reinstatement of self in larger social context (Merritt-Gray &amp; Wuest, 1995) Seeing the world differently, and seeing self differently in relationship to the world. Independent but still relationally oriented (Rowe, 2002) On-going children problems, still emotional affects (Glover, 1995; Hoff, 1990) Violent sons (Glover, 1995) Low tolerance to conflict (Glover, 1995)</p>
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