

**Transitions to young adulthood after domestic
abuse in childhood: A narrative analysis of young
women's stories**

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Abstract

Those who experience domestic abuse in childhood have been recognised as directly impacted by these experiences. However, existing literature tends to focus on coping, resilience and outcomes, producing a picture that does not always capture other aspects of people's stories. There is a lack of qualitative research about developmental transitions to young adulthood and how that is experienced by those who grew up with domestic abuse.

This thesis explores the developmental transitions of young adult women who experienced domestic abuse in childhood. I interviewed women and used a voice-centred dialogical narrative analysis to explore their accounts. The analysis explores three narrative typologies that capture young women's stories. These are: transitions, recoveries, and battles. Instead of linear stories, women's transitions to young adulthood and their navigations of young adulthood consisted of ambiguities, multiplicities and contradictions. Stories of recoveries and transitions to young adulthood were not just shaped by individual biographies, relationships and histories, but they were also socially and culturally located. Women's stories were shaped by neoliberal and gendered discourses surrounding ideologies of normative childhood, family life and recovery from adversities or trauma, which can offer useful stories to tell but can also significantly constrain how young women articulate their stories.

This thesis concludes that it is necessary to attend to the nuances and pluralities of people's experiences. Drawing on a dialogical philosophy, I conclude that attending to multiple stories and sometimes those that do not align to the dominant 'script', can shine light on experiences that are often marginalised. I suggest that feminist listening practices can support the listener to tune into these ambiguities and the 'messiness' of storied lives. Further, feminist listening practices can help the listener to reflexively lean into how their presence, knowledge and experiences may also shape what is speakable and how.

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1. Introduction

The beginning

This study explores young adult women's accounts of their transitions to young adulthood following domestic abuse in childhood. In this introductory chapter I outline the focus of this thesis and I locate myself in this research with a personal narrative of what drew me to study young women's developmental transitions after domestic abuse in childhood. I use a qualitative approach, drawing on a narrative methodology, assuming that lives are storied, and it is through these stories that we construct a sense of self, make meaning out of our experiences, and communicate something about who we are and how we came to be (Frank, 2010). Framed in this way, this thesis is grounded in the assumption that stories *do* something (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2013). In this thesis my intention is to address the lack of literature on developmental transitions more broadly following domestic abuse in childhood. I build on existing literature that considers the relational and social contexts of people's lives where there has been domestic abuse. I intend to shift the focus away from coping, resilience and outcomes, and attend specifically to what the experience of transitioning to young adulthood after domestic abuse is like for women. The claims that I make are not intended to be generalisable; rather, the aim is to contribute to, and build on existing literature.

Initially I did not set out to focus on the experiences of transitions to young adulthood. When I set out to do this research, I was only aware of research in the UK that had explored the accounts of young adults or children who experienced domestic abuse and had received support from services. For this reason, it was my initial aim to explore the accounts of young adults who did not receive service support. I was successful in recruiting participants who did not receive service support¹, but it became clear during analysis that the issue of service access did not feature in their stories. The direction of the thesis shifted to explore the developmental transitions of young adult women more broadly. However, I do still believe issues around the accessibility of services matters, but that became no longer the focus of this thesis. Further, whilst I did not initially set

¹ I expand more on what service support means in the context of this research, in the 'participant recruitment' section in Chapter 4.

out to explore only women's accounts, only women volunteered to participate, thus, this study became about young women.

Locating myself

From the point of view that it is impossible to separate who I am from the research that I conduct (Finlay & Gough, 2003; Mauthner & Doucet, 2003; Riessman, 2015), it is important to explore my own positioning. Haraway's (1988) argument for a feminist politics of situated knowledges forms the ontological and epistemological position I take. She argued against the assumption that knowledge can be produced objectively, proposing that knowledge is situated and produced contextually, relationally and subjectively. I explore this in more depth in the methodology chapter, but it is important to highlight here in order to provide a rationale as to why I have chosen to locate myself at the beginning of this thesis. It is important to acknowledge that neutrality and objectivity do not exist, nor do I assume that I can separate aspects of myself in order to take up a neutral position.

As considered by Bondi and Fewell (2017), 'research is a way of bearing witness and contributing to conversations about the world within which we are embedded. Reflexivity requires careful consideration of what the researcher brings to the research, autobiographically, socially and culturally and above all subjectively... it insists that research is always personal and that this needs to be acknowledged' (p. 115). Typically, in qualitative research, reflexivity is a way of evidencing rigour in the production of knowledge throughout the research process (Finlay & Gough, 2003). In narrative work, and for this study, reflexivity was crucial, offering a way of positioning and reflecting on the 'self' in and amongst the voices and stories of others, guided by the assumption that the researcher does not 'bias' the research, but rather, shapes the unique way in which the stories of others are told and interpreted (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003; Van Staple, 2014).

As well as my academic role, I am also trained in counselling and psychotherapy. I came to realise that my practitioner role and knowledge informed how I undertook this study and what motivated me to research this area. My therapeutic background provided theoretical resources and experiential knowledge that should be acknowledged. Some, although not many, have also considered the relationship between psychotherapy and qualitative research (Bondi, 2013; Bondi & Fewell, 2017;

Hydén, 2014). Both share a common goal in that they are both ‘projects of meaning-making’ (Hydén, 2014, p. 809). Firstly, at points in this thesis I consider what a psychotherapeutic background might offer qualitative research in terms of opportunities and challenges. Secondly, and importantly, from the point of view that knowledge and meaning is co-constructed (Haraway, 1988; Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 2015) it did not feel right to assume that my practitioner knowledge and training did not travel with me into this study and into the interviews I conducted.

The training I undertook in counselling and psychotherapy deepened my understanding of what it is like to sit with another human being and come close to their story. This process was also identified by Bondi and Fewell (2017). Here, I will briefly explain the theoretical resources and underlying philosophies that inform my therapeutic practice in order to more fully locate myself in this thesis. I trained in integrative humanistic counselling and psychotherapy, and I describe my practice as integrative humanistic with a core relational centre. I integrate humanistic theories using the relationship as the centre of what I believe facilitates therapeutic process and change. Primarily, I work from two assumptions: firstly that the relationship can function as a vehicle for change (Clarkson, 2003; Mearns & Cooper, 2005; Rogers, 1967). Secondly, the notion that all humans have the capacity to grow and that growth and change can be supported by human connection (Rogers, 1967; Van Deurzen, 2009).

Humanistic therapies work with the Person-to-Person relationship, drawing on Buber’s notion of the I-Thou relationship (Buber, 1996/1923). Existential and humanistic psychology draws on the notion that distress can arise in the human search for meaning, and specifically that shared ‘humanness’ between therapist and client can be healing over time. It is the understanding that the ‘humanness’ of the therapist can be experienced as therapeutic, if used meaningfully in relation to the client. The person-to-person relationship is important to my practice and to how I approach this research, because it is an understanding that the ‘person’ of the therapist cannot be excluded from the therapeutic relationship. A dialogical philosophy is the assumption that the boundaries of the self are diffused with those of the ‘other’ – we are always at meeting points in relation with others, always impacted and affected, therefore the ‘other’ is not an object, they are a subject, coming into existence through dialogue and relationship. In this research, it means that I approached participants and the analysis of their stories with the assumption that my own ‘humanness’ and personhood cannot be excluded

from this work, and that neutrality is impossible coming from a dialogical ontology (Buber, 1923/1996).

When I started training in counselling and psychotherapy, my feminist politics developed as I engaged more with humanistic psychology and philosophy and became more social justice oriented as a practitioner and a person. I learnt that I was not separate to the lives of the clients I worked with. I engaged deeply with issues of power and social justice in the therapy room, dismantling my assumptions that I could somehow remain neutral and separate to my clients. I came to learn that power is central to relationships. I wrestled with the quest for the 'I-Thou' relationship that is power-neutral whilst also knowing that no relationship is ever power-neutral (House & Totton, 2011). I came to learn that it would be a misuse of my power if I ignored my role in the relationship completely by claiming to be equal or neutral in some way. I became keen to work with power dynamics and to involve and include myself in the work I did. My approach to practice is consistent with my personal values and philosophy. Humanistic theories about human development suggest that each person's experience is unique to them. It is a modality of therapy which assumes the therapist has expertise (by training, knowledge and experience), rather than epistemic privilege (power of knowledge irrespective of the client's subjective lived experience). A humanistic and dialogical philosophy is an approach that has guided my work in this thesis too.

When I was first working on domestic abuse research, I interviewed women and children about their experiences of domestic abuse, and I was also on a clinical placement at a women's counselling centre and volunteering at a refuge. I realised one of the things that fed my motivation to continue this work was my response to listening to women's and children's stories. I was mostly struck by how people told their stories. This is not to say that I expected that they could not, but I learnt that some of their stories mirrored much of my own. I had never spoken about my own experiences, and hearing stories of others enabled me to reflect on that. I was interested in how domestic abuse is often positioned as something that should not be spoken about. Yet what I noticed in research and practice was that people were able to tell their stories and that telling our stories could be powerful. I was, and am, critical about the positioning of women and children, as needing protection from their own stories and the way that such

efforts to protect might (re)produce the silencing of domestic abuse (Towns & Adams, 2016). At the time, it was a silencing that I also felt personally.

Growing up with domestic abuse myself gives me a particular viewpoint that is unique to me as a researcher and shapes how I approach this work. Entanglements of my personal and professional lives position me as both an ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ in this study (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Nencel, 2014). These terms refer to whether the researcher is ‘inside’ the group of people being studied, by sharing a characteristic, experience or identity, or ‘outside’, by being different in some way. Arguably, the two should not be considered mutually exclusive as most researchers occupy several roles and positions at once (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2013). An insider-outsider positioning has shaped my relationships and interactions with the narratives of participants in this study.

I have outlined who I am as a therapist, and a little about my personal background in order to situate these parts of myself. Notably, there is very little literature about how to conduct narrative interviews and analyse data. Having little guidance enables a sense of theoretical flexibility which most researchers value, but they also acknowledge that it opens narrative work up to critique. For this study, my own autobiography, my history, and my positioning and training as a therapist shaped my approach. It is only on completion of the research that I have more deeply reflected on how these intersecting ‘selves’ shaped my work. As a therapist with personal, experiential, subjective and theoretical knowledge, the presence and influence of the multiple aspects of myself feels important to acknowledge. As Bondi and Fewell (2017) summarise, the dual therapist-researcher role is not written about extensively in existing literature, and despite the ways that the two intersect in potentially enriching ways, ‘practitioners tend to assume that research requires them to set aside their embodied knowledge of practice and to produce radically different, objective and depersonalised forms of knowledge... Central to their assumptions are ideas about research being capable of generating knowledge that is much more certain, objective, generalisable and important than the kind of knowledge generated through practice. These assumptions equate research with a popular but highly simplistic view of science as a body of incontrovertible, value-free knowledge from which the scientist–researcher is personally detached’ (p. 113). At points in this thesis, I circle back to my sense of how my own positioning and background shaped this work. The knowledge produced in this thesis is shaped by the

theoretical framework that I lay out, and it is also shaped by my own values, my background and my experiences.

Definitions

I use some specialist methodological and theoretical terminology in this thesis, and I provide definitions where appropriate in the literature review and methods chapters. However, before moving on to the literature review it is useful to define what I mean when I refer to domestic abuse in this thesis, the language that I use to talk about victim-survivors, the approach to feminism that I use, and what is meant by stories and narratives.

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse has historically been viewed as a specific kind of pathology isolated to individual men and individual incidents (e.g. wife or woman ‘battering’ (Bograd, 1984; Campbell & Soeken, 1999; Hydén, 1994)). However, our understanding of domestic abuse has developed to include forms of abuse that are non-physical, such as emotional, psychological, and financial (Stark, 2007, 2013; Walby & Towers, 2018). The term domestic abuse is used in this thesis to refer to violence or abuse between individual adults, usually between current or previous intimate partners. It is understood as characterised by on-going and coercively controlling relational dynamics between partners (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Dobash & Dobash, 2015; Hester, 2011). For the purpose of this study, the intimate partners are the parents, stepparents or partners of participants’ parents.

Given that this study is UK-based, my position in developing the study drew on the 2012 Westminster definition of domestic abuse. The Westminster definition at the time of fieldwork recognised domestic abuse as: ‘any incident or pattern of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. Abuse can be, but is not limited to: psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional’ (Home Office, 2012). The Home Office definition offers a useful starting point, because it is not restricted to physical violence, and identifies a range of kinds of abuse. In this thesis, I use the term ‘abuse’ rather than ‘violence’ to reflect a

systemic and relational definition of domestic abuse, incorporating emotional and psychological abuse, including coercive control (Stark, 2007).

Victim-survivor language

Children directly experience domestic abuse and can be considered victims/survivors in their own right. However, in this thesis, I do not emphasise the language of victim or survivor because both terms have been argued to be problematic binary positions (Kelly, Burton, & Regan, 1996; Ovenden, 2012). ‘Victim’ discourses are said to position the person as lacking agency and empowerment, but it does recognise the socio-political structures which contribute to the victimisation of women (Leisenring, 2006; Ovenden, 2012). ‘Survivor’ discourses, whilst often valued as a way of recognising women’s empowerment and agency, also comes with problems. Some have argued that the term survivor is an individual choice because the choice to publicly speak out, or occupy a ‘survivor’ identity is individual to women (Naples, 2003). Others have argued that survivor as an identity position is located within neoliberal and individualising ideologies of self-made success. Abuse can have lasting and on-going effects (Kelly et al., 1996; Leisenring, 2006; Orgad, 2009; Ovenden, 2012; Reich, 2002), and ‘survivor’ as an identity can be particularly problematic, marginalising and restrictive for some women who may not feel that they have survived in this way.

Importantly, participants did not use either term to describe themselves. Some participants explained they did not describe themselves as a victim, and a few had trouble knowing whether their experiences really ‘counted’ as domestic abuse. Some participants actively rejected a victim identity because they found it restrictive or felt it did not fit their experiences. The fact that participants did not use these terms to describe themselves means that I do not use these terms to describe participants. I use terms like ‘young women who experienced domestic abuse’ to describe participants. My intention here is to acknowledge the power of language, and to respect participants’ language choices. Where relevant or appropriate I use the term ‘survivor’ or ‘victim’ to reflect the literature I refer to.

Feminism

Throughout this thesis I make reference to feminist methodologies, feminist listening and feminist approaches to narrative inquiry. When I refer to feminism, I draw on

Ahmed's (2017) definition of feminism. Ahmed explored the idea of making feminism a life question. Her definition and invitations to question and invite feminism into life, have guided my feminist identity and inevitably, my feminist approach to this research. She wrote that '[feminism] is a word that fills me with hope, with energy. It brings to mind loud acts of refusal and rebellion as well as the quiet ways we might have of not holding on to things that diminish us... living a feminist life does not mean adopting a set of ideals or norms of conduct, although it might mean asking ethical questions about how to live better in an unjust and unequal world (in a not-feminist and antifeminist world); how to create relationships with others that are more equal; how to find ways to support those who are not supported or are less supported by social systems; how to keep coming up against histories that have become concrete, histories that have come as solid as walls' (p. 1). Guided by Ahmed's definition, feminism in this thesis refers to these commitments. A commitment to centralising issues of power and social justice, and a commitment to recognising the personal-political intersections (Andrews, 2006).

Feminism in the context of this research means my recognition that women's voices when they talk about trauma and abuse histories are often silenced or marginalised. Feminism, from this view, is my commitment to centralising women's voices and recognising women as offering meaningful knowledge about their own lives (hooks, 2014; Kitzinger & Perkins, 1993). Feminism is also my deep consideration of the socio-cultural, relational and political contexts that we tell our individual stories in (Livholts & Tamboukou, 2015). I consider myself particularly aligned to intersectional feminist approaches, given that I have an interest in exploring the multiplicity of selves and identities. This refers to a recognition that the self is not a single subject, but rather, selves can be considered multiple and intersectional (Thompson, Rickett, & Day, 2018; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Narratives and stories

In this thesis I use a narrative approach. I expand more on what a narrative approach means and why it is appropriate for this study in the methodology chapter. However, for context it is necessary to provide some definitions about what is meant when I refer to stories and narratives. 'Narratives' refers to the resources that people draw on in order to tell their stories, often referred to in this thesis as narrative frameworks or narrative resources (Frank, 2012; 2005). Narratives are a form of social code, informed

by the premise that social and cultural contexts play a powerful role in shaping how people story the self and make sense of their experiences (Hermans, 2001; 2003).

The term ‘stories’ is also used. When I write about stories, I refer to what people say about events or experiences (Tamboukou, 2008, p. 283). It is important not to confuse the use of the term ‘story’ with the idea that accounts are made-up, fictive, or untrue. Rather, “stories” and “storytelling” refers to the practice of talking about a lived experience, or providing accounts or reflections of events, past, current or in the imagined future (Hermans, 2001). Stories can be understood as being told through, and shaped by, existing narrative frameworks and resources.

Pluralising terms

It should also be noted that in this thesis I have pluralised terms such as ‘recoveries’, ‘transitions’ and ‘stories’. The pluralisation of these terms is an intentional choice, and it is to reflect the multiple stories of participants and the diversity of their experiences of domestic abuse and their life stories more broadly. The pluralisation of these terms also functions to reject the homogenisation of experiences and the erasure of stories that do not align with dominant scripts.

Overview of the thesis

Following this introductory chapter, I provide an overview and critical discussion of existing literature. The literature review chapter sets the scene for this thesis by engaging with key areas of domestic abuse literature and feminist scholarship. I then turn to methodology and methods where I outline the theoretical framework for this study and the steps I took to conduct the research. There are then three analysis chapters which explore the stories of participants using three narrative typologies that were constructed through the analysis of interviews with young women. Finally, I end with a conclusion chapter which draws together the key findings and considers the theoretical, methodological and practice-based implications of this research.

2. Literature Review

Introduction

This study explores young adult women's accounts of their transitions to young adulthood following domestic abuse in childhood. In this literature review I discuss literature relevant to children's direct experiences and adult retrospective accounts of childhood. Other literature is drawn on as appropriate, to situate this study in the broader context of domestic abuse and feminist scholarship. Because I explore the experiences of women, I draw on literature which considers the gendered socio-cultural contexts that young women live in.

I conducted a critical review (Grant & Booth, 2009), meaning that the literature review involved an extensive searching and reading of the literature, and a critical evaluation of it. It was not systematically conducted, because my existing understanding of the literature shaped the development of this study, and the approach to this critical review required drawing on existing knowledge as well as exploring new areas that were relevant. I drew on existing knowledge, searching for authors that I already knew of, and I searched relevant academic databases using search terms relevant to the topics I explore in this work. In this chapter, I explore existing literature about the prevalence of and nature of domestic abuse. I then discuss how existing literature positions those who experience domestic abuse in childhood, drawing on the sociology of childhood and critical developmental psychology. I then explore feminist debates about memory and truth.

Domestic abuse in children's lives: What does the literature say?

Domestic abuse is a pervasive problem across the UK. However, data on the prevalence of domestic abuse in England remains unclear and has been criticised for its misrepresentation of gender inequality (Walby & Towers, 2017; Walby, Towers, & Francis, 2016). Additionally, although it has been recognised that children are significantly impacted by their experiences of living with domestic abuse, children are notably obscured from criminal law in this respect as the Westminster Government

definition (Home Office, 2012) does not explicitly name children. The Crime Survey for England and Wales is the only source of official statistics on violent crime in England. However, data represented in these surveys are not necessarily accurate and should be critically analysed (Walby & Towers, 2017). The number of violent crimes published by the Office for National Statistics is capped at five crimes per victim, even if many more offences were recorded by the survey. Domestic abuse, characterised by on-going relational dynamics and a pattern of behaviour rather than one off incidents, is difficult to capture and articulate due to the lack of reliable data available and the problems associated with measuring it. The Office for National Statistics risks underestimating the extent of violent crime, particularly the extent and occurrence of domestic violence perpetrated by men against women (Walby & Towers, 2017; Walby et al., 2016). When the survey's cap is removed, and the raw data examined, the number of violent crimes increases by 60%. Specifically, the amount of violent crimes against women, and the amount of violent crimes by domestic perpetrators, both increase by 70%.

The extent and prevalence of domestic abuse is misrepresented in official national statistics (Walby & Towers, 2018), producing an inaccurate picture of the impact of fear or threat of violence on children or other family members (Stark, 2007). From this view, official statistics play a part in invisibilising gender inequality and patriarchal structures that characterise domestic abuse (Myhill, 2017; Walby & Towers, 2017). Non-physical forms of abuse such as coercive control are not easily captured by counting 'incidents' that are reported to police, as they are rarely reported (MacQueen & Norris, 2016). Further, they do not necessarily translate to an 'incident' because it is a pattern of behaviour (Stark & Hester, 2019).

An NSPCC prevalence study of child maltreatment in the UK suggested that approximately 25% of young adults experienced maltreatment in childhood, including exposure to parental domestic violence (Radford, Corral, Bradley, & Fisher, 2013). The NSPCC prevalence study, as far as I know, is the most widely cited and most up to date study that provides prevalence statistics about child exposure to domestic abuse in the UK. It did not focus on domestic abuse exclusively, but it did identify that victimisation experiences can accumulate with age for all kinds of maltreatment and abuse, and they identified, in line with others (e.g. Finkelhor, 2018) that it is common for types of maltreatment to overlap and for children to experience multiple forms of adversity and

abuse. However, the survey was relatively small, measuring the prevalence and impact of child maltreatment in a random UK representative sample of 2,160 parents/caregivers, 2,275 children and young people and 1,761 young adults using self-report measures. What is useful is that it is one of the only prevalence studies that directly seeks children's responses, rather than adult-by-proxy, offering a potentially more accurate picture of what children directly report themselves based on their lived experiences, rather than just adult reporting which may not represent children's realities.

Despite evidence suggesting children are directly impacted by domestic abuse, domestic abuse has historically been understood and constructed as an issue that only adults experience (Mullender et al., 2002). Existing evidence has shown the numerous ways in which children are impacted by domestic abuse. For example, impacts on mental health (Hughes et al., 2017), attachment functioning (Fusco, 2017; Gustafsson, Brown, Mills-Koonce, & Cox, 2017; Levendosky, Bogat, & Huth-Bocks, 2011; Sousa et al., 2011), future involvement in violent relationships (Holmes, 2013), and difficulties with emotion regulation and peer relationships (Easterbrooks, Katz, Kotake, Stelmach, & Chaudhuri, 2018; Fainsilber Katz, Stettler, & Gurtovenko, 2016).

Whilst recognising the impact of domestic abuse on children is necessary, research has also been done to challenge the idea that children are passive witnesses to domestic abuse. Children have been argued to be active members of families and they are directly involved in family dynamics where domestic abuse occurs (Callaghan, Alexander, Sixsmith, & Fellin, 2016; Swanston, Bowyer, & Vetere, 2014; Vetere & Cooper, 2005). For example, children can be directly involved by being used as a 'tool' by the abusive partner, by perpetrators undermining the mother-child relationship (Katz, 2016), by children directly intervening in order to protect another family member or stop or re-direct the violence (Callaghan, Alexander, Sixsmith, & Fellin, 2016; Överlien, 2017; Överlien & Hydén, 2009), or by the abusive partner using post-separation contact in order to maintain control (Morrison, 2015; Thiara & Humphreys, 2017). Recognising that domestic abuse is not an 'adult issue' only, and can have significant implications for children, has been an important development in the domestic abuse literature, supporting the development of knowledge that is based on children's views themselves. However, a focus on coping and resilience only is a fairly narrow lens to look through when making efforts to understand the lives of those who experienced domestic abuse

in childhood. Framed in this way, it may not be enough to know that children are active in their experiences and impacted directly. In this thesis, I extend beyond experiences of coping and resilience by focusing on experiences of transitions to young adulthood. In an effort to broaden the understanding of how developmental transitions are experienced following domestic abuse in childhood, I explore the stories of young adults that go beyond that of the ‘impact, the ‘damage’, or the coping strategies and resiliency they may have developed.

Conceptualising childhoods and children’s development as plural and diverse

Childhood development towards adulthood can be viewed as a transition. In this thesis I draw on the notion that transitions are not just age-based developmental ones, but they consist of many multifaceted aspects including those that are individual to a person’s biography and life, and those that are intimately shaped by social and cultural resources (Zittoun, 2007; 2008). Transitions, in the context of this thesis, are understood as the ‘processes that follow ruptures perceived by people’ (Zittoun, 2008, p. 165). Transitions are understood as fluid and flexible periods of change, involving social relocations, the construction and reconstruction of knowledge, and meaning-making (Zittoun, 2007). Framed in this way, children’s development, particularly the transition to young adulthood can be viewed as a transition. However, there are some assumptions largely shaped by developmental psychology that offers some rigid and normative scripts about what developmental transitions should look like, and consequently, how we might make sense of those whose lives have diverged from these normative assumptions (Rose, 1989; Walkerdine, 1993; Zittoun, 2007).

Childhood in the global north has been constructed as a time that should not be burdened with adult responsibility, experience and knowledge about the world (Archard, 2004). It is constructed as a time of ‘becoming’ a rational, independent adult (Walkerdine, 1993). The assumption that children should be protected from things that might be damaging, is in itself is not a problematic assumption – in fact, it is necessary. However, the assumption that children should be protected from things that only adults experience risks reproducing an adult-child dichotomy that underpins how developmental theories, particularly in psychology, frame childhood and developmental

transitions to adulthood (Walkerdine, 1993). Adulthood as typically positioned as an ‘outcome’, and childhood as the journey to that outcome (Burman, 2017; Walkerdine, 1993). I use the term ‘childhoods’ in plural, rather than ‘childhood’ to acknowledge the diversity of childhood experiences, and to challenge the homogenisation and universalisation of childhood, children and ‘child’ (Burman, 2017).

Dominant ideologies and narratives of childhood shape how childhood as a time, and child as a social group, are understood (Archard, 2004; James & Prout, 2015). Living with and experiencing domestic abuse diverges from social and academic discourse about ideal childhoods and family life, as it is considered that domestic abuse is something that children should not experience (Callaghan et al., 2018). It disrupts dominant ideologies about childhood as a time of play and innocence, despite evidence that shows children are aware of domestic abuse even when parents think they are not (Mullender et al., 2002). Childhoods that diverge from these social expectations about what childhood should be like might be described as having ‘lost childhoods’ - a sense of premature or interrupted innocence (Archard, 2004; Walkerdine, 1993). Similarly, Burman (2017) has suggested that adult versions of romanticised childhoods are more reflections of their own un-lived fantasies, rather than the actual every-day lives of children. These ‘different’ childhoods are consequently positioned as diverging from what is appropriate, disrupting an ‘appropriate’ developmental trajectory, and therefore in need of intervention (Rose, 1989). For this thesis, these are problematic assumptions as ideologies of innocence and vulnerability do not necessarily align with a diverse range of children’s realities, or at least, this version only tells one single narrative.

Developmental psychology has some fundamental assumptions about children’s development that underpin some of the dominant domestic abuse literature, but that have some troubling implications (Burman, 2003, 2017; O’Dell et al., 2018; Orellana & Phoenix, 2017). Developmental psychology functions to normalise children’s development as stage-based and age-based; a process that happens in a linear way over time, and therefore a process that is natural (Walkerdine, 1993) and that tends to be framed through a biological lens (Morss, 1990). In a domestic abuse context, these assumptions include that exposure to violence interferes with, and disrupts ‘normal’ brain development (Carpenter & Stacks, 2009; Perry, Pollard, Blakley, Baker, & Vigilante, 1995; Thomason & Marusak, 2017) and that children’s social and emotional development and skills will be negatively affected as a result of living with domestic

abuse (Carpenter & Stacks, 2009; Holt, Buckley, & Whelan, 2008). These types of universalising and homogenising assumptions about children's lives results in some troubling consequences in relation to knowledge construction and social discourse (O'Dell et al., 2018; Zittoun, 2007). Different childhoods – in other words, childhoods that diverge from dominant normative understandings of children's development and normative family life, tend to be pathologised and positioned as 'other' (Burman, 2003; 2017; Walkerdine, 1993).

Since Peled (1998) and Mullender et al.'s (2002) research with children who had experienced domestic violence children's voices in research have become much more centralised. The push for the centralisation of children's voices parallels a broader focus on children's own accounts of their experiences that has come from an increased political and research focus on children's rights (UNCRC, 1989). Consequently, the assumption that children are passive witnesses to violence and abuse has been challenged (Åkerlund & Sandberg, 2017; Callaghan, Alexander, & Fellin, 2018; Överlien & Hydén, 2009). Challenging assumptions of passivity offers alternative positions for children as being active, resilient, and both vulnerable *and* having the capacity to resist violence. This study does not seek to centralise the voices of children themselves, but the evidence cited above is central to the development of this work because it offers contextualised and relational accounts of domestic abuse in childhood, building evidence that challenges the idea that children are both passive to domestic abuse and inevitably damaged by their exposure (Överlien & Holt, 2018).

Whilst adulthood and childhood are socially and culturally constructed to be separate phases in the lifespan (Archard, 2004; Burman, 2017; James & Prout, 2015), it can also be argued that the transition from childhood to adulthood is not easily defined by age markers (Valentine, 2003; Zittoun, 2007). Efforts to distinguish the two are either arbitrary (Archard, 2004) or require a more nuanced, culturally located and individually oriented approach (Furlong, 2009; Zittoun, 2007). Framing childhood as a stage in human development, has been critiqued amongst critical developmental psychologists and widely amongst sociologists (Archard, 2004; Burman, 2017), because rigid developmental assumptions tell a story of linearity about childhood which is not globally applicable, and assumes children are fundamentally in a period of 'becoming' and subject to psychological and social development as they 'become' adults. For example, entering into new phases of life, such as work, employment, further education,

leaving childhood ‘homes’, are socially and culturally understood markers of ‘becoming’ adult. However, these markers are not generalisable transition points – they routinely exclude those whose lives do not follow these biographical paths and they reproduce age-based norms when arguably, the borders between all life phases are ‘less age-dependant’ (Furlong, 2009, p. 11) and require a more located and nuanced view. Age-based ways of distinguishing ‘child’ and ‘adult’ (re)produce the idea that childhood is separate from adulthood and disrupts the kind of fluidity and continuity that developmental transitions can exist of (Burman, 2017; James & Prout, 2015; Walkerdine, 1993).

The category of child is both helpful and unhelpful; it offers a way of making sense of experiences. It recognises the social, material and subjective reality of childhood, what it means to be a child and to reflect on childhood, and the social and cultural narratives that shape these meanings (Burman, 2018). However, it also sets up a binary logic about childhood and adulthood, in which distinguishing features are rarely universally defined. In this thesis, the difference between childhood and adulthood is viewed as both real (based on social and lived realities of age and rights; policies and legislation are built on age-determined rights) and illusory (the boundary between childhood and adulthood is ‘blurred and fluid’) (O’Dell et al., p. 153). ‘Childhood’ as a time, and ‘child’ as a social position offers particular narrative resources through which adults can make sense of their childhood experiences, shaping the narrative resources and possibilities for the stories young women tell, about their lives and their transitions to young adulthood. This is a developmental transition that, rather than linear and age-based, has been argued to be flexible and consisting of multiple aspects and transitions, involving social relocations, knowledge construction and reconstruction and meaning-making (Zittoun, 2007; 2008). In the section that follows, I explore the specific issue of child to young adult transitions in the context of domestic abuse literature.

Child to adult transitions following domestic abuse

In existing literature, there are some dominant assumptions about the ‘growing up’ processes and outcomes of those who experience domestic abuse and/or other adverse childhood experiences. As previously highlighted, the outcomes of children who live with domestic abuse are widely recognised, but they are largely framed in a binary way. For example, positioning people who experienced domestic abuse in childhood in

binary categories as either ‘resilient’ or ‘not resilient’ (see for example, Bowen (2015) and Howell (2011)). The question of what makes children and adults resilient following exposure to domestic abuse threads through much of the literature (see Anderson & Bang, 2012; Howell & Miller-Graff, 2014; Narayan, Rivera, Bernstein, Harris, & Lieberman, 2018). Consequently, characteristics such as age and gender, and factors such as severity of violence, sibling order and attachment functioning are treated as categories through which to assess impact, resilience, and outcomes (see Holt, Buckley, & Whelan, 2008; Sousa et al., 2011). Such research highlights how domestic abuse raises risk of poorer outcomes for children, but it is important to note that domestic abuse is not the only adversity that children might experience, and it is likely that other kinds of abuse or adversities co-exist such as poverty, substance or alcohol misuse, or other issues such as mental health issues that are significantly impactful (Hughes et al., 2017; Lamers-Winkelmann, Willems, & Visser, 2012). Such knowledge is useful in building evidence, but it does little to account for complexity or context and it has a particular kind of power in the way that it privileges measurement through narrow decontextualized categories and individualising discourses. Categorising outcomes can be seen as a mechanism of categorising children’s needs, smoothening over complexity, and reproducing individualising discourses around resilience and ‘damage’.

Domestic abuse has often been positioned as an individual family problem as it is assumed to be something that happens privately, behind closed doors (Gray, 2016; Stanley, Miller, & Richardson Foster, 2012). The criminalisation of domestic abuse has shifted it more into the public sphere, meaning it has gained more public attention (Hester, 2013), but it is still an intimately private and individually experienced issue (Burman & Brooks-Hay, 2018). In the current austerity climate, such public attention, alongside a predominant focus on outcomes, particularly those that are considered ‘pathological’, has a particular function. It uses an individualising lens, positioning families or individuals as responsible for their own struggles, and removing the responsibility of the state to change the social and economic inequalities that often underpin ‘private’ difficulties of families such as poverty, domestic abuse, substance use problems and mental health issues (Burman, 2017; Edwards, 2002).

Viewing domestic abuse through an outcomes-focused and individualised lens presents some troubling narrative frameworks within which children and adults have available to them, to make sense of their selves and their life experiences. There exists a narrative

framework of outcomes that paints a picture of a non-negotiable linear trajectory where the end point or outcome does not look hopeful. The homogenisation of outcomes is problematic and works against a multidimensional and relational way of understanding how domestic abuse in childhood is experienced, specifically in relation to the transition to young adulthood. Here, it is important to note a small number of retrospective studies have been conducted with adults who experienced domestic violence in childhood with a focus on resilience (Alaggia & Donohue, 2018; Anderson & Danis, 2006; Gonzales, Chronister, Linville, & Knoble, 2012; Jenney, Alaggia, & Niepage, 2016; O'Brien, Cohen, Pooley, & Taylor, 2013) some of which have led to a socio-ecological model of resilience in relation to children who experience domestic abuse (Jenney et al., 2016). However, their model is still justified by the assertion that some children evidence resilience, and others do not, reproducing the idea that adult outcomes based on childhood experiences can *only* be understood through a binary either-or lens. Additionally, a focus on resilience or coping limits the space for people to express, and for listeners to understand, how transitions to adulthood are experienced beyond factors contributing to resilience or coping. Further, cited studies were conducted in Canada, Australia and the US, indicating that there has been a lack of focus on the experience of developmental transitions in UK literature.

There is one recent study that has explored the experiences and perspectives of young adults with a broader focus on meanings assigned to childhood experiences of domestic abuse, rather than specifically on resilience or coping, offering a significant addition to the literature. Dumont & Lessard (2019) explored Canadian young adults' meaning making in relation to childhood experiences of domestic abuse. Their work diverges from existing qualitative literature with young adults as it does not centre around coping or resilience, offering some unique insights to the domestic abuse literature. Specifically, they suggest that development consists of multiple factors for young adults over the life course. Their findings offer a useful springboard for the work in this thesis, indicating that developmental transitions in the context of those who experience domestic abuse in childhood are potentially more nuanced, complex, individual and relational than most existing literature suggests.

Qualitative research significantly supports the production of knowledge that is more nuanced, but there is still a dominance of quantitatively driven evidence that identifies the long-lasting outcomes that exposure to domestic abuse can result in. Such research

has centred on: children *lacking* emotional regulation skills; *lacking* capacity to build peer relationships; and *lacking* in capacity to achieve ‘well’ in school or in later life (Holt et al., 2008; Meltzer, Doos, Vostanis, Ford, & Goodman, 2009). These deficit models of development exist despite the many researchers who have included the voices of children themselves and which suggest alternative positions for children (Överlien & Holt, 2018). My review of the literature here does not suggest that experiencing domestic abuse is not impactful and traumatic in many ways. Rather, I argue that it is necessary to recognise the harm caused by adverse experiences, but the sole use of outcomes evidence as the only lens through which to view and predict outcomes, is concerning. It can be a narrow and individualised view of problems that are not *only* private and personal, but they are political and public too. For example, health inequalities, which are evident in the health outcomes of some children who experience domestic abuse, are directly related to social and economic inequalities such as poverty, disability, age, race and ethnicity (Ben-Shlomo & Kuh, 2002). These inequalities become erased when the private and public lives of families are assessed within a system which may not be equipped to provide support that meaningfully addresses social inequalities as well as ‘individual’ problems (Finkelhor, 2018).

To return to the idea of childhoods, the assumption that childhood is a stage associated with lack of capacity, competency and maturity, also speaks to a deficit model of childhood – the idea that development is about an outcome of rationality and independence (Walkerdine, 1993). In other words, what such outcomes evidence also does, is reproduce the idea that the developmental trajectory of childhood to adulthood is linear. It aligns to the idea that childhood is a time of ‘becoming’, reducing children to passive recipients of development, rather than active agents in their lives (Horton & Kraftl, 2006; Qvortrup, 2009). Framed in this way, resilience and damage as binary outcomes present a fixed and rigid set of societal and cultural narratives through which adults might make sense of their experiences of ‘growing up’ (Zittoun, 2008). This thesis explores how young adult women talk about their childhoods, inviting them to tell their own stories of transitioning to young adulthood.

Women's stories: Memory, truth and the status of women's accounts

I did not initially set out to explore women's stories but given that it was only women who volunteered to participate, this research became about women. For this reason, I will now explore the historical context that shapes how women's accounts of abuse have historically been framed and the implications of that for how women are heard today when they talk about abuse that they have experienced. A range of literature suggests that experiences of trauma can have an effect on how we make meaning of our experiences and construct a sense of self by producing a disconnect and rupture in narrative coherency and integration (Alcoff, 2018; Brison, 2002; Campbell, 2003; Herman, 2015). From a narrative view, rupture, a sense of disconnectedness or a struggle to integrate the 'before' and 'after' can mean it is difficult to narrate a coherent and integrated sense of self (Brison, 2002; Herman, 2015). In this thesis I want to be cautious about the risk of pathologising stories that lack coherency due to the way that historically women's stories have been devalued. Despite the fact that this study is not concerned with memory and 'truth', it is necessary to look at how women's narratives have historically been devalued (Fricker, 2007; Tamboukou, 2003; Woodiwiss, 2007). Such epistemic privileging has significant implications for violence research; particularly when accounting for women's experiences of violence and abuse. It can mean that knowledge based on the lived experiences and stories told by women, are not considered to count – or, they do not tend to be counted in a meaningful way (Fricker, 2007; Woodiwiss, Smith, & Lockwood, 2017). Women's accounts of trauma or traumatic experiences risk holding less epistemological power in a culture that values single-subjectivities that do not shift over time, and in a culture that values objective sources of knowledge (Alcoff, 2012; Woodiwiss, 2007, 2014).

Here I consider what has historically been termed 'false memory syndrome'. That is, the belief that it is possible to recover memories that are not true, and the belief that it is possible that therapists can implant memories in the minds of women through talking in therapy, causing them to recover memories of abuse that are not true (Clancy, Schacter, McNally, & Pitman, 2000; Williams & Banyard, 1999). 'False memory syndrome' stems back to the 1970's and 80's when adult survivors of sexual abuse in childhood spoke out in public about their experiences of sexual abuse in childhood, resulting in a

backlash (Brown & Burman, 1997). Adults ('falsely accused' parents) who had been accused of perpetrating or enabling the abuse, argued the claims of their adult daughters were not true. They claimed that these recovered memories must be false because one does not simply forget knowledge and then know it again. Discourses surrounding false memory syndrome positioned therapists – mostly feminist therapists and survivor activists, as destroying the lives of happy families as a result of 'recovered' memories of abuse and it produced a discourse of 'dis-believability' of women's knowledge (Brown & Burman, 1997; Schuman & Galvez, 1996). An anti-feminist rhetoric weaves through these debates with some even claiming that these feminist and activist therapists were in fact anti-feminist because by recovering previously forgotten memories, they were turning otherwise happy and healthy women into patients in a system that was set up to pathologise them. The fact that disclosures led to women being institutionalised in psychiatric systems that were set up to pathologise, has also been argued from within feminist psychology too (Kitzinger & Perkins, 1993). This points towards the difficulty of women's stories of abuse being taken seriously in a context where they then risk their difficulties becoming diagnosed, medicalised and pathologized through therapeutic and psychiatric discourses and systems of power where professionals occupy status and power over their clients.

This thesis is not about child sexual abuse, and it does not ask questions about the accuracy of memory. However, these discourses about the dis-believability and untrustworthiness of women's memories of abuse in childhood are important to consider as they provide powerful narrative frameworks for how and why women tell their stories. The notion of false memory syndrome still threads through *why* women's accounts of abuse in childhood are so vulnerable to being discredited (Schuman & Galvez, 1996). For example, currently, if clients receiving therapy are about to give evidence in court about witnessing or experiencing abuse, they must enter into what is called pre-trial therapy, whereby therapists cannot discuss traumatic events directly with their clients in the period running up to the trial, for fear of interfering or implanting memories that are not true (Fouché & Fouché, 2017; Pace, 2001). The notion of recovering memories that are not true, is located in patriarchal power structures whereby the 'myth of objectivity' (Brown & Burman, 1997, p. 10) is pervasive in society, in the psychiatric system and in therapeutic and legal contexts. Women's stories of abuse are fundamentally treated with caution, from the starting

point that they may not be believable, and that an objective version of reality should be counted as ‘truth’.

The contexts in which women talk about experiences of abuse are significantly shaped by gendered social structures and power that privilege objectivity and ‘rational’ storytelling over emotion-led stories or stories that change over time (Brown & Burman, 1997). Woodiwiss et al., (2017) highlighted there is a ‘history to women’s storytelling that has seen women or aspects of women’s lives repeatedly removed or silenced...’ (p. 16). Patriarchal values of objectivity (Brown & Burman, 1997), rationality and consistency (Valentine, 2011) shape the assumption that women’s accounts of trauma are fundamentally unbelievable if they are told in certain ways (Woodiwiss, 2014). In this thesis, I make efforts to deconstruct and re-explore how power structures such as this play a part in shaping how young women talk about their developmental transitions following domestic abuse in childhood.

How does neoliberalism frame the work of recovery?

I have explored the historical context of women’s memory and the ‘truth’ debate in relation to when women provide accounts of abuse. In this section, I situate the work of recovery from domestic abuse in a neoliberal context in an effort to de-individualise recoveries and consider the contexts in which women speak. Due to the fact that this study is about young women’s experiences, I also situate this study within a gendered lens and explore how gendered structures intersect with neoliberal values.

In this thesis, I draw on the term neoliberalism. Neoliberalism refers to an ideology and culture that emphasises individual responsibility and privileges self-autonomisation and self-driven ‘success’ (Ahmed, 2014; Rose, 1992). A critical exploration of neoliberal ideologies helps to recognise the social and political context that emphasises individual responsibility, thus making invisible socio-political structures and removing the responsibility of the state to address those (Edwards, 2002). Secondly, my use of neoliberalism is to acknowledge that through locating domestic abuse as ‘individual’ or ‘family’ incidents, instead of something that happens within broader social structures, there are some unhelpful assumptions that are reproduced. I use neoliberalism to draw attention also to not just individualising frameworks about domestic abuse and distress, but also about recovery. Neoliberal recovery narratives suggest that recovery is an individual endeavour; one which consists of self-improvement, and one which only the

self is responsible for. This has particular intersections with discourses of femininity and gender, which already locate womanhood within individualising discourses of self-work and self-improvement (McRobbie, 2004).

My focus on neoliberal ideologies also recognises the economic basis and implications of individualising human distress and recovery. In the context of health and social care, we are in a post-welfare state that does not value equality, but values competition and consumerism. Individuals become positioned as contributors to the economy, and only valued when they are 'productive' members of society (Moncrieff, Rapley & Dillon, 2011). If individuals need intervention, in other words, if they are not assumed to be contributing to the economy, treatment becomes a form of 'social control' (Moncrieff, 2008, p. 236 in book). This economic agenda promotes the 'return to work' rhetoric that underpins neoliberal policies in relation to mental health treatment agendas (Cohen & Timimi, 2008). Further to this, the welfare state had set up neoliberal ideals; the nuclear family, gender roles and promoting the reduction of poverty (Moncrieff, 2008), building a context that is 'antithetical to equality' (Moncrieff, 2008, p. 242). Further, in a domestic abuse context, pushing individuals and families that experience domestic abuse to become positioned as 'deviant' and non-normative, becoming 'problems' for the state (Burman, 2017). Families and individuals then become consumers, or 'service users' of a state service that has already been set up to problematise them, and frame them through a deficit, problem and risk-based lens.

My interest in the impact of neoliberal policies and agendas is an intention to de-psychologise, and instead, to politicise, discourses of recovery in the context of domestic abuse and trauma (Moncrieff, Rapley & Dillon, 2011). Situated within a discourse self-responsibility and self-autonomous living, children and families who experience adversities, including domestic violence, are still predominantly positioned in problematic ways in social, clinical and academic discourses (Överlien & Holt, 2018). Here, I use the term adverse childhood experiences because living in a household where domestic abuse occurs, is considered an adverse childhood experience (Felitti et al., 1998) and domestic abuse in the lives of children is often framed through an adverse childhood experiences lens in academic and practice contexts. Adverse childhood experiences is not a new concept, but considered in a neoliberal context, it has a particular function. It uses an individualised lens, positioning individuals as responsible for their own struggles, and removing the responsibility of the state to

change the social and economic inequalities that often underpin difficulties of families such as poverty, domestic abuse, substance use problems and mental health issues (Burman, 2017; Edwards, 2002).

What underlies these issues is not necessarily a discourse of damage, but a discourse of risk. More specifically, who is at risk and who is responsible for ‘fixing’ the problem. The adverse childhood experiences studies suggest that risk of pathological outcomes and health concerns can be calculated based on exposure to multiple adversities in early life (Felitti et al., 1998; Lamers-Winkelmann et al., 2012; McGavock & Spratt, 2017). My review of the literature here does not suggest that experiencing domestic abuse is not impactful and traumatic in many ways. Rather, a view of domestic abuse through a risk lens, presents some troubling narrative frameworks within which children and adults have to make sense of their selves and their life experiences.

It is necessary to recognise the harm caused by adverse experiences, but a risk lens as the only lens through which to view and predict outcomes, is concerning. It promotes a culture of ‘precaution, prevention and pre-emption’ (Rose, 2010, p. 80) which is individualised and bolstered by the rise of neurobiological ways of understanding harm and measuring risk. Framed in this way, there exists a narrative framework of outcomes that paints a picture of a ‘growing up’ story where the ‘end point’ does not look hopeful. The outcomes of childhood experiences and exposure to domestic abuse are largely framed in a binary way. For example, positioning people who experienced domestic abuse in childhood as either ‘resilient’ or ‘not resilient’ (see for example, Bowen (2015) and Howell (2011)). The question of what makes children and adults resilient following exposure to domestic abuse, is one which threads through much of the literature (see Anderson & Bang, 2012; Howell & Miller-Graff, 2014; Narayan, Rivera, Bernstein, Harris, & Lieberman, 2018). Consequently, characteristics such as age and gender, and factors such as severity of violence, sibling order and attachment functioning are treated as categories through which to assess impact, resilience, and outcomes. It is useful to generate knowledge about the impact of domestic abuse and outcomes of children, but a sole focus on impact, outcomes and resilience does little to account for complexity or context. A focus on identifying impact and assessing outcomes has a particular kind of power in the way that it privileges measurement through narrow decontextualized categories and individualising discourses. Categorising outcomes in such ways is not in itself problematic and can have many uses

especially in clinical contexts. However, children's needs and outcomes, and smoothening over complexity, risks reproducing individualising discourses around resilience and 'damage'.

Categorisation in such ways usually draws on the resilient brain as a way of conceptualising resilience through a neuroscientific lens (Macvarish et al., 2015; Rose, 2010; Wastell & White, 2012). My intention is not to suggest that neuroscientific evidence is not helpful. As a practitioner myself I find neuroscience helpful, in part, in helping clients to make sense of how trauma experiences may have had a lasting impact (Herman, 2015). However, neuroscience alone is not enough. Critiques of the neurodevelopmental discourse are not new (Burman, 2017; Featherstone, Morris, & White, 2014; Rose, 2010; Wastell & White, 2012). It has even been critiqued from within neuroscience itself as cognitive neuro-psychologists question the extent to which localisation of regions of the brain have been theorised, suggesting that we do not know as much as brain imaging studies would propose (Uttal, 2011). However, the sole use of neuroscience as evidence remains unchallenged in mainstream practice meaning that the power of neuroscience discourses about resilient brains continue to be pervasive and continues to reproduce assumptions that resilience, and wellness in adulthood is an individual trait and not located within social and relational contexts (Gill & Scharff, 2011; Rose, 2010; Wastell & White, 2012).

Risk culture is located within neoliberal values of self-improvement and self-responsibility, paving the way for what kind of recoveries are possible to talk about, and how. Given that this thesis is about women's stories, what is also important to explore here is how gender intersects with neoliberal recovery narratives. Gender – femininity specifically, intersects with values of self-improvement, self-autonomisation and resilience. Feminist scholars have pointed out that contemporary northern narrative frameworks locate femininities or womanhood within individualising discourses of self-work and self-improvement (Burman, 2017; Gill & Scharff, 2011; McRobbie, 2004). In relation to women's recoveries from domestic abuse, a therapeutic discourse not only suggests that 'we all have the right to personal happiness, success and satisfaction, but direct ourselves to construct ourselves as damaged and ultimately responsible if we do not live such lives' (Woodiwiss et al., 2017, p. 16). Framed in this way, neoliberal values surround a particular kind of femininity whereby success is self-made and self-driven (McRobbie, 2004).

I have explored the way that recovery and femininity are socially and culturally located constructs, using a socio-cultural lens to challenge individualising discourses that women's recoveries from domestic abuse are typically framed in. The majority of domestic abuse literature still tells a narrative shaped by a deficit model of development. For example, about children *lacking* emotional regulation skills, *lacking* capacity to build peer relationships, and *lacking* in capacity to achieve 'well' in school or in later life (Holt et al., 2008; Meltzer et al., 2009). These narrative frameworks privilege a single story of either resilience and hope, or inevitable damage caused by adverse childhood experiences. Resilience and damage as binary outcomes are a fixed and rigid set of societal and cultural narratives through which adults might make sense of their experiences, and through which children have a way of imagining and making sense of their possible futures. We lack literature about transitions and recoveries more broadly, and there is a focus in existing literature on resilience and coping. In this research I explore how child to adult transitions are experienced by those who grew up with domestic abuse and now speak from a young adult viewpoint.

Summary

I have explored the developing field of knowledge surrounding the experiences of domestic abuse in childhood. Some in-depth qualitative research that has significantly developed the evidence-base about childhood experiences of domestic abuse. However, the study of domestic abuse in childhood has been dominated by deficit-oriented, and predominantly quantitative accounts; consequently, children and families who experience adversities, including domestic abuse, are often positioned in problematic ways through social, clinical and academic discourses (Överlien & Holt, 2018). Researchers have challenged these existing discourses of risk, outcomes evidence still holds power. The 'myth of objectivity' (Haraway, 1988) and the epistemological power of 'scientific knowledge' (Rose, 1985) can help to explain why such evidence tends to be privileged. A neoliberal lens helps to situate this literature in a broader socio-cultural context by suggesting that such literature plays a part in (re)producing an individualising framework whereby problems such as domestic abuse and the impacts of domestic abuse are located in individuals (Rose, 1992). Principles of self-responsibility and self-autonomy govern what kinds of recoveries are possible, and how to 'do' recovery, for those who grew up with domestic abuse.

There is a lack of literature that is about transitions to young adulthood following domestic abuse, particularly about how that child to young adult transition is experienced. Most of the literature is concerned with resilience, coping or outcomes. Knowledge about resilience, outcomes or coping is helpful, particularly in clinical contexts, but we still lack knowledge about that transition to young adulthood more broadly, from the perspectives and stories of those who have lived it. The only qualitative research from the views of adults that I can locate has been produced in the US, Canada or Australia. However, Dumont & Lessard's (2019) work with young adults in Canada is a useful divergence from existing literature as it focuses more broadly on meaning making using a life course theoretical approach. This thesis aims to build on their work, assuming that developmental transitions are flexible, fluid and multifaceted (Zittoun, 2007; 2008), contributing to and enhancing the small body of qualitative literature about the developmental transitions of young adults. Through the work in this thesis I aim to address the current lack of life course approaches to developmental transitions to young adulthood after domestic abuse by exploring how young women experience that child to adult transition following domestic abuse.

Finally, it is important to note that women's stories of abuse in childhood tend to be treated with the premise that they may not be believable or trustworthy sources of knowledge because patriarchal structures are set up to value objectivity, rationality and unchanging storylines, rather than subjectivities that change over time. In this thesis, unstable storylines and multiple narratives which might be inconsistent, are not erased, smoothed out or made consistent. Rather, it is precisely that kind of instability that is of interest to this work.

Research aims and questions

This thesis explores how young adult women narrate their transitions to young adulthood following childhood experiences of domestic abuse. This work builds on and extends existing domestic abuse research by offering an analysis of women's accounts of their transitions from childhood to young adulthood after domestic abuse.

This research is guided by the following research aims and questions.

Research aims

1. To explore young women's accounts of transitions to young adulthood following domestic abuse in childhood.
2. To explore the role of multiple narrative resources in shaping young women's accounts of their transitions to young adulthood following domestic abuse in childhood.

Research questions

1. How do young women narrate their transitions to young adulthood following domestic abuse in childhood?
2. How do young women construct the self in and through the stories they tell, when they talk about their transitions to young adulthood following domestic abuse in childhood?
3. What are the narrative resources that shape how young women tell their stories?
4. What role does power play, in its multiple and intersecting forms, in young women's accounts of transitions to young adulthood after domestic abuse in childhood?

In the following chapters, I describe the methodology and methods used in this study. There are two chapters which address methodology. First, is a theoretical chapter in which I outline the philosophical assumptions of this study and situate it within a narrative methodological and theoretical framework. Second, is a chapter which outlines the study design and analytical approach.

3. Methodology: A dialogical narrative approach

Introduction

In the previous chapter I reviewed relevant literature and demonstrated that there is a need for qualitative research which explores experiences of the transition to young adulthood following domestic abuse in childhood. In this chapter I will turn attention to the methodological approach that I use in this thesis. First, I locate this study within a narrative framework, and I outline the ontological and epistemological assumptions. I then define what ‘narratives’ and ‘stories’ mean in the context of this thesis. Lastly, I outline the theoretical framework that guides this study.

Locating this study within narrative inquiry

I use a narrative approach to explore young women’s stories of domestic abuse. Narrative inquiry is theoretically diverse, fluid and flexible and there is not a ‘one size fits all’ assumption (Livholts & Tamboukou, 2015). However, a common thread amongst narrative approaches is that narrative methods are suitable for research which centralises ‘voice(s)’ and highlights relationality, context, power and lived, storied experiences (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 2008). The starting point to narrative inquiry is that lives are storied, and it is through stories that we make meaning out of our experiences and construct a sense of self – through telling stories about who we are and how we came to be (Frank, 2010; 2012).

A point of division within narrative research has been historically characterised by a focus on either: (a) experience-led storytelling; or (b) socially/culturally and discursively grounded storytelling (Andrews et al., 2013). Feminist narrative scholars challenged the division of the individual and social, from the premise that the stories we tell are both individual *and* socially located (Livholts & Tamboukou, 2015).

Consequently, a third relational and dialogical strand of narrative research emerged (Andrews et al., 2013). In this thesis, I use a dialogical approach, placing epistemic value on multiple subjectivities and storylines. Through placing value on women’s stories and voices, I align this research with feminist narrative approaches, assuming

that storied lives are multiple and consist of entanglements of the personal and political (Andrews, 2006; Thompson, Rickett, & Day, 2018). Adopting a feminist approach is appropriate for this study given that often when women talk about abuse or traumatic experiences their accounts risk being smoothed out to a single storyline, neglecting the multiplicity of their stories and identities (Alcoff, 2018; Woodiwiss, 2007).

A feminist ontology and epistemology

In this thesis I take a plural approach to ontological and epistemological questions, drawing on Haraway's (1988) feminist politics of knowledge production (also see Hinton, 2014; Mauthner & Doucet, 2003; Nencel, 2014; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2013). That is, the assumption that knowledge is produced in and through power relations that shift across different times and places. From this view, knowledge is always situated. The value of plural philosophies has been advocated in feminist research because of the way that it enables attention to how subjectivities and 'personal' stories are intertwined and situated in social, cultural and political contexts (Thompson, Rickett, & Day, 2018; Yuval-Davis, 2006). A plural philosophy is well suited to this study as I seek to value the integrity and uniqueness of stories as individual to the participant, whilst also exploring how young women's stories are socially and culturally located.

Epistemology refers to the nature of knowledge, asking questions about how we come to know what we know (Crotty, 1998). As explored in the literature review, women, especially when talking about violence or trauma, are not positioned as authoritative knowledge producers, particularly if their stories are told in ways that change over time or do not align with what it might be expected they 'should' say (Alcoff, 1991; Woodiwiss, 2014). Feminist qualitative research has typically sought to challenge the myth of objective knowledge production and the marginalisation of women's voices, by centralising women's voices and viewing women as offering valuable knowledge about their own lives (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008; hooks, 2014; Kitzinger & Perkins, 1993; Woodiwiss, Smith, & Lockwood, 2017). In line with this, I draw on Haraway's (1988) notion of situated knowledges to position this work within a relational and dialogical epistemology (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). Knowledge is viewed as situated, located, and produced relationally. In other words, what we know is not static or fixed; it is located in contexts where the boundaries of social positionings are permeable and can change (Haraway, 1988). A relational epistemology is viewed as an appropriate, as my

interest lies in valuing women as credible and valid sources of knowledge, and from a feminist viewpoint it also lies in recognising and exploring the social, cultural and relational conditions within which women tell their stories (Andrews, 2006).

Ontology refers to the study of being, the nature of existence, and questions concerning what is 'real' (Crotty, 1998). In this thesis I adopt a relational ontology, assuming that multiple realities exist, and that they are constructed through interactions with others, and in relation to social and cultural contexts (Haraway, 1988). This study accounts for multiple subjectivities, rather than one single subjectivity, or 'voice'. A relational ontology values young women's many subjectivities as situated and suggests that it is not possible to make universal claims about personal experience. Embracing individual stories and subjectivities *and* accounting for the contexts in which they are situated, is neither an individualist ontology nor a social one, it is both. As explored in the literature review, childhood experiences of domestic abuse often risk categorisation, pathologisation or lack exploration of the context of individual's lives (Åkerlund & Gottzén, 2017; Överlien & Holt, 2018). A plural and relational ontological position is considered appropriate for this study, as it facilitates space for listening to the multiplicities and nuances of stories, as well as placing importance on the context in which people speak.

A plural and relational ontological and epistemological position also aligns well with my background in humanistic psychology, and with my practice experience. In the introductory chapter I outlined the importance of situating myself in this thesis, with the assumption that my experiential, professional and practice-based knowledge is carried with me through this work, and, inevitably, these theoretical and personal resources have shaped how I have made sense of the stories women shared. I have not drawn explicitly on Buber's (Buber, 1923/1996) philosophy of dialogue here, but I would like to draw attention to how his philosophies of being and knowledge are well suited to the feminist starting points that I outline. Firstly, Buber's philosophy of dialogue is centred around the premise that being human is about being in relation, and that it is through human relation and dialogue that we come into existence (Graf-Taylor, 2012). We come to 'be' through our relations with others, and in the space in-between (Walters, 2003). His comparison between the 'I-Thou' relationship and the 'I-It' relationship emphasises a relational ontology and epistemology, rejecting the possibility of objective knowledge production, suggesting that objective knowledge production requires

detachment, and detachment is not possible when we exist in person-to-person relationships (Graf-Taylor, 2012).

Working with narratives and stories

The terms ‘narratives’ and ‘stories’ are used in this thesis. These terms have particular meanings, which I define here. I understand storytelling as the practice and process of narrating the self. ‘Stories’ are defined as what people say about events or experiences, and stories are viewed as having ‘multiplicities of meanings’ (Tamboukou, 2008, p. 283). Importantly, and perhaps in contradiction to what is typically understood as a story, stories in this thesis are not viewed as coherent linear pieces of narrative. They may not have a beginning, middle and end, and they may not ‘finish’ or be ‘complete’ (Hermans, 2008). This study does not attend to the sequence or structure of stories; rather, it attends to the stories that are told, and *how* they are told. It should be noted that ‘stories’ should not be confused with the notion of storytelling as fantasy, made-up, or for ‘fun’ or leisure.

Within a plural epistemology, stories are viewed as neither static direct accounts of lived experience, nor as accounts told only through socially and culturally grounded discourses (Andrews et al., 2013). This study draws on the work of Hermans (2001, 2004) who proposed a dialogical self. I define the dialogical theory of the self more fully in the latter half of this chapter. However, what I will highlight here in relation to stories, is that the dialogical theory of the self (Hermans, 2001; 2004) views selfhood as multiple and dynamic, existing of many voiced ‘I positions’ that exist in relation to one another. Stories are viewed as dialogically constructed. Framed in this way, stories cannot be assumed to have the same meaning in different contexts and with different listeners, assuming that people speak in anticipation of the listener’s response in specific contexts and relational spaces (Bakhtin, 1981). Women’s accounts of abuse are often devalued if they are told in incoherent or inconsistent ways (Woodiwiss, 2014). Considered in this way, an approach to storytelling which considers the self as dialogic, rather than static, was necessary for this work.

I understand narratives as the resources that people draw on in order to tell their stories. Narratives are shaped by the power relations at play in particular times, places and spaces (Andrews et al., 2013; Hermans, 2008). Here, the assumption is that when people tell stories, they draw on the particular social, cultural or political narrative

resources that are available at that time. A narrative resource refers to a set of meanings, dominant ideologies, or understandings, that exist within social and cultural spheres (Livholts & Tamboukou, 2015; Taylor, 2010). Our ‘sense of selfhood is constructed and constrained by the resources we have available to tell our own story, as well as by the stories that are told about people like us’ (Frank, 2012, p. 4). This study explores the role of multiple narrative resources in the shaping of young women’s accounts of their developmental transitions following domestic abuse in childhood, and it aims to explore what these narrative resources are. Framed in this way, narrative resources are viewed as powerfully shaping which voices can be articulated and which are constrained through the stories that we tell.

Dialogical self as a theoretical frame

The methodology I use in this thesis is informed by the dialogical self (Hermans, Kempen and Van Loon, 1992; Hermans, 2001; 2008) as a theoretical frame. Hermans’ (2001; 2008) dialogical theory of the self assumes the self is constituted in and through the stories we tell about ourselves. Hermans’ theory is shaped by Bakhtin’s (1981) proposal that the ‘I’, or subjectivities, have the ‘possibility to move from one spatial position to another in accordance with changes in situation and time’ (Hermans, 2001, p. 188). Framed in this way, the dialogical model assumes that the self is constituted of many ‘selves’, which are fluid and dynamic. The ‘I’ can fluctuate among different, sometimes contradictory positions, and the self is storied through multiple I-positions. Each position is voiced, in some way, enabling dialogical relations to be established between these positions. These voices, according to Hermans (2001), ‘function like interacting characters in a story, involved in a process of question and answer, agreement and disagreement. Each of them has a story to tell about his or her own experiences from his or her own stance.’ (Hermans, 2001, p. 188).

From this view, storytelling is central to how the self is constructed and reconstructed across different times and places. The dialogical approach suggests that the self is narratively constructed through multiple subjective speaking positions. Further, it proposes that it is not just the speaker who shapes how they tell their stories, but importantly, the stories we tell are also shaped by the contexts in which we speak. It is a model of the self that de-individualises the stories we tell by attending to the audience and the context of the speaking, as well as attending to who is doing the speaking. It is a

useful approach for this study as it offers a way of attending to multiple subjectivities, exploring power relations and recognising the human capacity to change and to re-story the self over time (Hermans, 2008; Frank, 2012).

Here, I draw attention to the key features of the dialogical model of the self that Hermans (2008) outlined. These features shape the way I approach narratives and storytelling in this thesis. They are: (a) the-other-in-the-self, (b) multiplicity-in-unity, (c) dominance and social power, and (d) innovation.

The other-in-self

The dialogical model conceptualises the self as constructed by multiple co-existing and voiced I-positions. An I-position refers to a speaking position that generally starts with an 'I' statement, such as 'I am...', 'I feel...'. In this thesis it is also referred to as a 'voice'. These include both 'internal' and 'external' voices (Hermans, 2008). A focus on both internal and external voices enables a focus on how socio-cultural and political context shapes the stories that we tell about who we are. Framed in this way, it is a model of the self that is not restricted to 'inner voices' only, but that captures 'external voices' too (Hermans, 2001, p. 252).

The dialogical theory itself assumes that the stories we tell are never entirely our 'own' – rather, some are 'borrowed in parts' (Frank, 2012, p. 36) from the cultural and narrative resources that shape our experiences. An emphasis on both internal and external forces enables a focus on how the two are inextricably linked. As explored in the literature review, women's memories of traumatic events such as abuse have been framed as unreliable and unstable. When women speak about abuse, there is a risk that their accounts are measured against values of objectivity and rationality (Brown & Burman, 1997), erasing the impact of context and socio-structural forces that shape what is possible to say and how (Woodiwiss, 2014). From this view, exploring both internal and external voices is considered important for this study. It is necessary to approach young women's stories of domestic abuse from the assumption that the personal/individual and political/socio-structural are inseparable (Thompson, Rickett, & Day, 2018).

Multiplicity in unity

From a dialogical view, the self is multi-vocal, and always in dialogue. ‘Multiplicity in unity’ refers to the idea that a single coherent self is a constructed notion that does not align to how stories of the self are told and re-told across different times, places and contexts (Loots, Coppens, & Sermijn, 2013). The dialogical theory views the self as not organised around one central core, but self as multiple. Shaped by Bakhtin’s (1981) theorisations of time as non-linear, and space and place existing in both imaginary and physical worlds, Hermans (2001) argued for a ‘model of moving positions’ (p. 252). From this view, I-positions are viewed as having capacity to move in both imaginal space and physical space (Hermans, 2001). When adults tell stories about their childhoods, the stories they tell are not monologues; they are dialogues, and there are multiple potential stories that they could tell. From this view, the participants in this study can be viewed as the authors of many stories, not just one. And, these stories that they author, consist of ‘self-negotiations, self-contradictions and self-integrations, result(ing) in a great variety of meanings’ (Hermans, 2001, p. 252). Historically, women’s accounts of abuse, particularly abuse in childhood, have been considered less trustworthy, especially if they are told in inconsistent ways that change over time (Alcoff, 2018). Valuing multiplicity enables an alternative view. It does not consider narrative instability a sign of dis-believability; rather, it views narrative instability as sites of knowledge and meaning.

The inseparability of ‘selves’ has been argued consistently by feminist scholars (Choo & Ferree, 2010; Crenshaw, 1991; Staunæs, 2003). For the stories of young women in this study, this means that there is not one ‘truth’, but many. Attending to these voices and stories, and also attending to voices that are less likely to be heard, can help to understand how people negotiate the world and the self. Embracing multiplicity means challenging the idea of a single authentic voice – or at least challenging the individualised ontology that the notion of ‘authentic voice’ is grounded in (see Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013; Doucet & Mauthner, 2007; Nencel, 2014; Van Staple, 2014). This study explores the relationship and dialogue between multiple speaking positions, rather than questioning or interrogating the accuracy of memories themselves.

Dominance and social power

Assuming that people do not speak from decontextualised, isolated and neutral social and cultural spaces (Bakhtin, 1981), the dialogical theory is not an individualistic theory of the self. Rather, it assumes that individual voices are deeply shaped ‘by the culture of institutions, groups, and communities in which they participate, including their power differences’ (Hermans, 2001, p. 193). It is in line with a dialogical philosophy that humans come into being through dialogue and relationship (Buber, 1923/1996). To extend on this, Hermans drew attention to how social power and dominance play a role in the everyday experiences of people by attending to the ‘impact of collective voices on the self’ (Hermans, 2008, p. 191).

The question of how power is negotiated may be seen as speaking clearly to Foucauldian notions of knowledge and power. However, I have not chosen to use Foucault as a theoretical resource in this thesis. I was keen to maintain integrity within a feminist methodology, and I wanted to draw on theorisations of power that would explicitly speak to women’s experiences of power, instead of power more generally (Deveaux, 1994). Explicitly drawing on feminist scholars when making sense of the role of power in shaping women’s lives felt particularly important. Participants were women, and I have deeply considered how social structures surrounding gender may play a significant role in shaping women’s storytelling, and their negotiations of power through the stories they tell.

Alcoff (2018) cautioned that adopting a Foucauldian approach to analysis may risk placing Foucault in the ‘authoritative position’ in relation to survivor speech. She suggested this in the context of theorising power in women’s accounts of rape and sexual violence, due to the way that Foucauldian analysis of power does not sufficiently account for power involved in consent or the harm that can be caused by sexual violence. Whilst this thesis is not about sexual violence or rape, it is about women’s accounts of violence and I wanted to approach it with a clear feminist understanding of power and how power may feature in different ways in the lives and accounts of women. As I explored in Chapter 2 (pg. 25-27), the issue of epistemic power is crucial to keep at the centre when unpacking how women’s accounts of trauma are heard and treated. Issues of truth, reliability and accuracy of the account are routinely called into question when women talk about violence or abuse that has happened to them in their

lives. Further, this is not a gender-neutral issue, and feminist scholars have argued that memory is as much about power and politics, as it is about the event(s) that took place (Alcoff, 2018). For these reasons, in an effort to support a feminist theorisation of power in women's speech, I use Ahmed's (2014; 2017) feminist theorisation of power. In the context of this thesis, power refers to the idea that power is enacted through, and resisted and challenged, in institutions and also in everyday lives and experiences of being in the world (Ahmed, 2014; 2017). This definition and understanding will support the recognition of the complex interplay of the personal and political in shaping women's accounts of their lives, including gendered social structures. It is my intention that by welcoming of a feminist theorisation of power, I can make adequate space to directly explore gendered social structures that women navigate.

Framed in this way, the individual stories of young women are viewed as culturally and politically situated. An analysis that enables a focus on both personal and political enables the recognition of structures which can be simultaneously constraining and enabling, and can have a direct impact on the individual lives of people, and how they tell stories about their lives and their 'self' (Ahmed, 2014). The dialogical self as a model proposes that whilst there are differences between internal and external dialogues, voice still plays a central role in both. It proposes that some voices can be stronger and more dominant and influential, whereas other voices 'may be silenced, suppressed, or marginalized' (Hermans, 2008, p. 192). Power dynamics change depending on context, and these power relations can shape what is possible to say, to whom, and what is silenced (Hermans, 2008). From a dialogical view, power functions to enable certain voices and silence others (Hermans, 2008). A focus on power does not mean attending to individual subjectivities in *addition* to contextual and social factors, but it is about how stories are told and subjectivities are constituted, in *relation* to wider social, cultural and political contexts by attending to the narrative resources that shape how young women tell their stories. For example, historically, women's accounts of abuse have been devalued (Fricker, 2007; Tamboukou, 2003; Woodiwiss, 2007). In this thesis, a feminist approach to power means that the way power is enacted *through* this (i.e. the assumption that narrative instability means lacking objectivity and rationality) should be examined and challenged (May, 2015).

For people whose childhoods were characterised by coercion and violence, their voices and accounts of these experiences are likely to have already been silenced through

power structures which view children as vulnerable, unable to speak, or lacking credibility when they do (Callaghan, Alexander, & Fellin, 2018; Vetere & Cooper, 2005). For this reason, recognising the interplay of power and positioning in narratives, places value on young women's lived experiences of their childhoods and their meaning-making, and it positions their experiences within broader social and structural contexts. A dialogical approach to narratives in this study enables the complexity of located accounts to be acknowledged, opening up an analysis of how meanings shift over time, and facilitating the narration of counter- or extra-normative experiences (Alcoff, 2012). For young women who experienced domestic abuse in childhood, their childhoods might be defined as not fitting normative discourses about childhood and family life (Callaghan, Alexander, & Fellin, 2018). An approach which attends to stories that do not fit normative discourses, is viewed as necessary.

Innovation

Innovation refers to the self's capacity for innovation and renewal, assuming that people can position and reposition themselves through the stories that they tell.

Positioning and repositioning 'allows the dialogical self to take initiatives and respond to familiar situations in new ways' (Hermans, 2008, p. 193). The terms 'position' or 'positioning' are used in this thesis (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1991), as they are considered more dynamic and flexible, rather than the more static term "role".

Innovation implies that humans have the capacity to grow and change. According to the dialogical model of the self, 'humans are 'unfinalised' (Frank, 2012, p. 36) – they have capacity to grow, to change, to tell stories and revise their 'self-understanding' (Frank, 2012, p. 37), and from this view, stories do not necessarily have an 'ending'. The notion of innovation enables the recognition of the temporal nature of how childhoods can be reflected on and made sense of. By temporality, I refer to the idea that closeness and distance (in terms of linear time, physical, emotional or symbolic) can shape what a particular thing or experience means (Adam, 1995; Hermans, 2004). For example, for the women in this study, the idea of innovation enables the possibility that the meaning of their childhoods can change over time (Buitelaar, 2006; Orellana & Phoenix, 2017).

Bakhtin's (1981) theorisation of space, place and time are central to the dialogical self, proposing that the telling of stories is not a direct expression of the experience itself. Rather, what we talk about, and how we tell stories, is located and re-constructed across

different spaces, places and times. It is possible for the ‘self’ to be storied and re-storied differently in one of three ways. Firstly, when a new position is introduced to a person (for example, by becoming an ‘adult’, a ‘student’, or a ‘mother’), a new identity position can lead to the reorganisation of the self. Secondly, when positions move from background to foreground either symbolically or literally, the moving of identity positions can lead to a reorganisation of the self. Thirdly, when there is a cooperation or coalition between two or more speaking positions, it can lead to an orientation of the self that might have previously been viewed as contradictory but are later experienced as having the capacity to work together (Hermans, 2003).

Temporality is particularly important, as I listened to retrospective accounts of domestic abuse in childhood. Memories that resurface with new meanings, and meanings that emerge and change over time, are considered indicators of dis-believability in a patriarchal and neoliberal culture (Brown & Burman, 1997). Consequently, storylines that change or subjectivities that tell a ‘different’ story, risk becoming erased, silenced or dismissed by both tellers and listeners (Hermans, 2001; 2004). The dialogical model of the self is useful in this regard, because it enables an alternative way of exploring how stories are told by attending to inconsistencies and multiple storylines, rather than dismissing or risking pathologising stories that do not appear stable.

Summary

A narrative approach assumes that ‘we make sense of our lives, plan for the future and construct ourselves and identities through stories’ (Woodiwiss, Smith, & Lockwood, 2017, p. 15). The dialogical model of the self, developed by Hermans (2001; 2003), and shaped by Bakhtin’s (1981) philosophy of a ‘moving’ and fluctuating storied self, was considered appropriate for this study because it does not view the stories people tell as direct reflections or accurate representations of events or reality (Bakhtin, 1981; Mishler, 1986), neither does it assume that people tell stories that are to intentionally manipulate or distort the ‘truth’. It recognises and values the subjectivity of storytelling without problematising changing subjectivities and without seeking objective knowledge. This thesis draws on the work of feminist narrative scholars (e.g. Andrews, 2014; 2006; Phoenix, 2013; Tamboukou, 2010; 2008), assuming that storied lives are multiple, relational and that the personal and political are inseparable. An approach to narratives that views storytelling as both experience-led *and* socially/culturally

grounded was considered useful as it helps to challenge the individualising culture that young women operate in.

Assuming that the personal and political are entangled and interrelated in the practice and process of storytelling, a dialogical approach is hoped to support the resistance of an individualising philosophy of the self, and importantly, it is hoped to offer an alternative way of making sense of young women's experiences through and after domestic abuse in childhood. Having defined what is meant by a dialogical narrative approach, and why it was considered appropriate for this study, I will now move on to the methods chapter where I outline the methods I used.

4. Methods

Introduction

In the previous chapter I provided an outline of the theoretical framework that I use in this thesis, drawing on the dialogical self (Hermans, 2001; 2003; 2008). Lived experience as a source of knowledge is not new to social science research (Andrews et al., 2013; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Mishler, 1986). However, what is specific to the dialogical approach to the self is the idea that knowledge can be produced at the intersections – by exploring the dialogue between voiced subjectivities, and in the specific contexts in which these subjectivities are voiced (Frank, 2005; Hermans, 2004). I wanted to use a method of data collection and analysis which would help to explore the ways in which power functions to make some speaking positions available and others less so. In this chapter my aim is to transparently outline how the feminist, relational and dialogical strand of narrative that I described in the previous chapter, shaped the design of the study and analysis of data. In this chapter, I will outline and justify the methods I used. Firstly, the study design and methods used for data collection are outlined. I then explore the ethical issues that arose and how I dealt with them. Finally, I describe how I analysed data using a dialogical approach to narratives.

Study design and data collection

This study is a qualitative narrative study using interviews and a dialogical approach to narrative analysis (Hermans, 2001; Frank, 2005). Here I provide an outline the study design, the data collection methods, and the participants who shared their stories.

Narrative interviews

I conducted interviews with ten women who had experienced domestic abuse in childhood. Interviews were open and enabled space for participants to structure their own telling and retelling of their stories (Josselson, 2013; Riessman, 2008). An interview guide (Appendix 1) was used flexibly, and it was a guide only and was not prescriptive. It was developed based on the literature I had reviewed prior to conducting the interviews. Interviews were open enough to enable whatever emerged during interviews to be discussed, even if it did not feature on the topic guide. When setting up

interviews with participants I ensured that I communicated the open nature of interviews and that I was interested in their stories.

Narrative researchers advocate for the use of narrative interviews that are open, participant and story-led, and are not structured by the interviewer only (Josselson, 2013; Riessman, 2008). An open story-led interview style led to a rich, broad range of stories told. I considered an open style of interviewing appropriate for a dialogical approach to narratives because I hoped that openness would enable participants to speak relatively freely about things that they felt relevant to their experiences. I say 'relatively' because I do not assume that research interviews can ever be fully participant-led or can ever lead to a true 'authentic' account because power relations exist and always shape what is speakable and how, shaping how the 'self' comes into being in that particular interaction (Bakhtin, 1981; Buber, 1996). I do not assume that an open interviewing style removes those power dynamics nor was that the aim. Rather, these relational contexts were a site of interest. An open interviewing style was an effort to keep aligned to the spirit of a narrative approach where the first assumption is that lives are storied. Enabling and trusting participants to tell their stories in whichever way they did, was important.

As explored in the literature review, there may be some limits and constraints placed on the possible stories that participants could tell. For example, there are dominant discourses surrounding survivorship, accuracy of memory following experiences of abuse, and assumptions surround the developmental transitions of those who grow up with domestic abuse such as resilience or 'damage' after childhood adversity. These dominant discourses all play a part in shaping the narrative and discursive grounds from which participants told their stories, and I wanted to use a method that might facilitate and support the expression of stories without placing additional limitations due to a rigid interview structure. I hoped openness would support the dialogical philosophy that underpinned the analysis as I explored the polyvocality of storytelling, rather than emphasising one single storyline only. More information about the practice and process of interviews is detailed in this chapter. Firstly, I will outline the participant recruitment strategy and provide some information about the ten women who participated.

Participant recruitment

The inclusion criteria for participation required that participants lived in the UK, were a young adult (I provided a guideline of 18-30), felt it was safe for them to participate in an interview, and had not received support from a domestic abuse service in childhood. This refers to people who self-identified that they did not receive support to address their experiences of domestic abuse from a service during their childhood. Domestic abuse services are variable across different locations in England, due to commissioning of services, the allocation of resources, and variable risk assessment and needs assessment thresholds which children and families may have to meet in order to have a service made available to them. Also, it was highly likely that due to the different timeframes and the range of ages that participants were during the domestic abuse, the services that may have been available at the time would have varied greatly. For these reasons, I did not state what kind of support or service specifically, but when recruiting participants, I highlighted that I was interested in the experiences of those who did not receive support to address their experiences of domestic abuse. All participants identified with this.

All participants lived in England at the time of the interview, were a young adult (they were aged 21-35) and all felt it was safe for them to participate. I used social media (Twitter) to recruit participants. As the initial focus was on the experiences of young adults who had not received service support, I could not use services as a gatekeeper to participants. Social media is a frequently used participant recruitment strategy amongst researchers who want to reach communities that they might not have straightforward or easy access to, or for participant groups who for whatever reason, there may be additional barriers to their participation in research (Palys & Atchison, 2012; Whitaker, Stevelink, & Fear, 2017). For example, Kolar & Atchison (2013) used social media advertising to recruit the clients of sex workers. They found that traditional recruitment strategies (printed poster advertisements and recruitment through businesses) was unsuccessful. Internet-based recruitment strategies were used by Miller, Johnston, McElwee, & Noble (2007) to recruit participants who use party drugs, concluding that internet-based recruitment is 'quicker and cheaper' than traditional methods of recruitment (Miller et al., 2007, p. 169). However, they also highlighted that the sample they recruited may not be representative.

Social network sites to recruit participants are also proposed as useful by Masson, Balfe, Hackett, & Phillips, (2013) who used various social media sites to locate adults who had previously participated in research about social welfare users in childhood. Additionally, social media recruitment strategies were used, and are endorsed by Sikkens, van San, Sieckelinck, Boeijs, & de Winter (2017) who recruited young people for a study exploring youth and radicalisation/extreme views. They suggested that social media was a useful strategy as participants in their study were likely to distrust researchers and be suspicious about what would happen to their information.

I hoped social media would enable participants to contact me in ways that felt safe and comfortable to them, and in ways which ensured they could protect their identity if needed. I recruited participants over a period of 12 months, and I posted on Twitter several times during these 12 months. My experience of recruitment was slow. The tweet advertising the study and inviting potential participants to contact me was shared by accounts from a range of people including individuals (academics, practitioners, and people with a range of backgrounds) and organisations (some of these were organisations in the domestic abuse, sexual violence or violence against women and girls field). Accounts that shared the call for participants included those who knew me personally and/or professionally, and those who did not.

The sample is limited to those who use the internet and saw the call for participants, or possibly if the information was shared with friends or family members. Participants were recruited from August 2017 – August 2018. The last time Twitter updated its official statistics about the demographics of their users was in 2013, so I refer to other reports to look at the demographics of the social media users that I was likely to reach. The London School of Economics and Political Science (2017) estimated that ‘24% of all male internet users and 21% of all female internet users are on Twitter’. In terms of age groups, they estimated that ‘the largest demographic group of Twitter users are between the ages of 18 and 29 (37%). 25% of users are between 30 and 49 years old’. The majority of twitter users are the age group I wished to reach, but it should be acknowledged that the sample in this study does consist of only those who use social media, saw the call for participants, wished to participate, and felt able to do so.

There is little guidance about how researchers can ethically and appropriately use Twitter to recruit participants. The use of Twitter also increased the chance that some

participants might have already been known to me in some capacity (Kolar & Atchison, 2013). Palys & Atchison (2012) reflected on their social media recruitment. They suggested that social media networks are unique social spaces that bridge the virtual world with the ‘real’ world due to the way that it offers spaces where people can form and/or maintain relationships virtually based on ‘real world’ commonalities. For this study, I already knew four of the ten participants in various capacities prior to their participation, and they approached me to volunteer to participate after seeing the post on social media. The fact that I knew some participants introduced methodological and ethical issues in relation to managing the researcher-participant relationship and the relational space of the interview. I took extra care to establish the boundaries and expectations of the interview itself, and how the interview featured in the context of my relationship with that participant. I also carefully considered the power dynamics in those relationships. For any participants with whom I had a ‘power over’ relationship, I decided it would not be appropriate for me to interview them. For the participants who did know me, however, some familiarity between participants and myself might have meant that they felt more able to talk. I also maintained awareness that I may have known things about the participant that shaped my analysis of their story but that they did not share in the interview. My knowledge of these participants has some potential implications for the analysis of data, which I discuss as relevant in the following three analysis chapters.

Participants

Ten young women participated in interviews. Although the inclusion criteria did not specify gender, all participants were women. The women who volunteered to participate are people who felt able to talk about their experiences and felt it was safe enough to do so. In some ways, the participants are a diverse sample, in terms of background and the contexts of their lives, but they do all have several factors in common including a presence on social media, a willingness and interest in telling their stories and they are predominantly White. I recruited young adults with the assumption that young adults would be closer (emotionally, psychologically and temporally) to their childhoods and their stories of their developmental transitions to young adulthood would be ‘closer’. I was flexible about the age inclusion criteria as this was a ‘hard to reach’ population, so although I gave guidance that I was interested in recruiting people who were 18-30, participants were in fact 21-35.

Relying on social media meant ‘going with’ the participants who volunteered. It became evident that because of the depth of interview content and the layers of analysis required, more than ten participants would not be necessary. There are no clear guidelines for the expected or ‘right’ number of participants for a narrative study, and a range of sample sizes are evident in existing literature which uses narrative methodologies. For example, Orellana & Phoenix (2017) conducted a narrative analysis of one participant’s childhood experiences of childhood language brokering via four interviews over a period of 13 years. Coulter & Mooney (2018) interviewed ten women about the impact of the trauma their children had experienced, on them and their experiences of family life. Chadwick (Chadwick, Cooper, & Harries, 2014; Chadwick, 2009) analysed 33 women’s childbirth narratives. Woodiwiss (2014) interviewed 16 women who had experienced childhood sexual abuse, Johansen & Sundet (2018) conducted a narrative analysis of three stepchildren’s judicial interviews about experiences of domestic abuse, four mothers were interviewed by Smith, Estefan, & Caine (2018), ten grandparents were interviewed by (Sandberg, 2016), and 48 participants were interviewed by Prins (2006). Evidently, due to the flexibility offered by narrative methodologies, there are a range of ways of doing narrative analysis, and no guide for how many participants should be recruited (Andrews et al., 2013). I stopped recruitment once ten participants had been interviewed. I felt a larger sample size would not allow for the attention to complexity and nuance that was required, without losing the context of the individual stories. Additionally, within a narrative and qualitative paradigm, additional participants would likely not add any more weight to the study conclusions (Andrews et al., 2013; Riessman, 2008).

Participants lived in a range of rural and urban locations in England. The sample includes students, professionals, those with academic or professional interest in psychology or domestic abuse, and those who did not talk about an interest in these subjects. The sample includes participants from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds and family contexts. However, it is important to note that all participants but one are white, and the sample is a fairly educated group as all but two were educated to degree level. The domestic abuse they experienced includes physical, emotional, sexual, psychological and financial. Most participants experienced their father’s (or their mother’s male partner’s) violence against their mother. However, Emma experienced

her mother's violence against her father, and others described violence perpetrated by both of their parents (Frances, Liv, Hayley).

It is also important to note that some participants' experiences were not limited to domestic abuse, but they had also experienced other kinds of abuse and trauma too. Four participants experienced abuse towards themselves as well as parental domestic abuse, four participants had experienced the death of a parent or sibling, five had grown up with their parent using violence or abuse towards multiple partners, eight participants specifically spoke about their parents' struggles with alcohol, mental health or disabilities which they felt shaped their childhoods significantly, and three were carers for a member of their family. When participants provided accounts of their childhoods and recoveries, these accounts were not about domestic abuse in isolation, but mostly where domestic abuse intersects with other kinds of abuse or other issues that shaped their lives. Participant details are provided in the table below, based on what participants described in interviews.

Participant and age	Context and participant information
<i>Frances, 21</i>	<i>Frances was a university student, and we conducted a face to face interview. The domestic abuse she experienced was between her mum and dad, and she described both parents as abusive. She also experienced direct abuse herself throughout most of her childhood from both parents (physical, emotional and psychological).</i>
<i>Clara, 23</i>	<i>Clara was a university student and we did a face to face interview. The domestic abuse she experienced was her dad's violence (physical, psychological and financial) towards her mum. She emphasised the financial and emotional abuse that she recalled, and the ways in which she felt her dad still controlled several aspects of her life.</i>
<i>Sonia, 30</i>	<i>The interview with Sonia was on the phone. The domestic abuse she experienced was her dad's violence against her mum, including physical and emotional abuse. The participant described her sense that her mum was also abusive by re-directing her dad's violence and abuse towards her and her siblings.</i>

- Bethany, 29* *The interview with Bethany was on the phone. She described her childhood as constantly being around violence. The domestic abuse she described was her dad's on-going violence and abuse towards her mum. She described the domestic abuse as physical, emotional and psychological.*
- Liv, 23* *This interview was face to face. Liv's 'real dad' (her definition, referring to her biological father) was physically and emotionally abusive towards her mum. She also had an older brother who was violent when he was at home or when he would visit. Her biological father left when the participant was young, at which point her mum met a new partner whom Liv said then became the victim of her mum's violence.*
- Emma, 35* *This interview was face to face. The domestic abuse Emma experienced was her mum's abuse of her father. She described it as emotional, psychological and financial abuse. Emma took part in a second face to face interview.*
- Jasmine, 22* *The interview with Jasmine was via Skype. The domestic abuse that Jasmine experienced was her father's violence against her mother, and then her father's violence against his new partner when he had left her mother.*
- Nadine, 24* *The interview was face to face. The domestic abuse that Nadine experienced was her father's violence against her mother. She described the domestic abuse as extensive and severe, including sexual, physical, emotional and psychological violence. The abuse also included sexual and physical violence towards her.*
- Sochi, 32* *This interview was face to face. The domestic abuse that she experienced was not perpetrated by her biological father, but by her mother's several subsequent partners after her biological father separated from her mother. She described the abuse as physical violence mostly.*
- Hayley, 32* *The with Hayley took place via Skype. The domestic abuse she described was her father's violence against her mother. The domestic abuse she experienced was physical violence from both parents towards each other – she did not name one as perpetrating the violence, but she described that sometimes her dad directed the abuse towards her and her siblings instead of her mum.*

The process of interviewing participants

Prior to the interviews, I had already either met the participant face to face or had an informal conversation on the phone or via email about participating. The purpose of the research was explained, the topics likely to be discussed in the interview were shared, information about confidentiality and anonymity and right to withdraw was discussed, and eligibility to participate (checking if the participant met the criteria and felt it was safe to participate) was discussed. The initial conversation was also an opportunity for the participant to get to know me, and decide if this was a study that they wanted to take part in. It was necessary to communicate to participants that I respected their capacity to decide whether they wanted to take part, and that I was willing to take time to discuss their participation transparently, so that their trust was not mis-used (Fontes, 2004).

Because of the initial conversations, the interviews were not the first time talking with the participant. However, for the purposes of transparency and checking on-going consent, at the time of the interview, the purpose of the research was explained again, to check if the participant understood the purpose of the research and the topics the interview was likely to cover. Gaining consent in a process-based way necessary, as particularly in domestic abuse research or research that is about traumatic experiences, it might be difficult to predict what might surface or emerge during the research process, requiring sensitivity to issues around consent and right to withdraw at every stage (Fontes, 2004; Frank, 2004). Participants provided verbal and written consent via an information sheet and consent form (Appendix 2) before starting the interview.

In line with participants' preferences, interviews took place in various locations, including participants' homes, university rooms, or on Skype or the phone (as chosen by each participant). Interviews lasted between 75 minutes – 135 minutes (average length: 91 minutes). It was emphasised that interviews could be on Skype/Zoom, or the phone, and did not have to be face to face. It was deemed necessary to prioritise participants' choices by not assuming 'one size fits all' and not assuming that face to face interviews would suit everybody (Braun, Clarke, & Gray, 2017).

It is not uncommon for researchers to conduct interviews via Skype or phone (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014) because it makes accessing participants easier if participants are geographically widely dispersed. It is also accepted that it is entirely possible to conduct in-depth, and meaningful interviews using alternative modes that are not face

to face, challenging the idea that face to face interviews are ‘gold standard’ (McCoyd & Kerson, 2006, p. 390). A range of options about participation was deemed important. Offering options about what participation might look like, in a way that was comfortable for the participant, and offered them choices about their ‘level’ of visibility and engagement (e.g. video, audio, face-to-face) was considered necessary given that interviews contained discussions that could be considered sensitive (McCoyd & Kerson, 2006). The value of choice about visibility was particularly notable for one participant, Sonia, who interviewed over the phone and had only email communication beforehand. She explained that the anonymity of not meeting face to face, and talking on the phone rather than video, meant she felt more able and more comfortable to share her in depth experiences.

All interviews were audio-recorded with the participant’s permission. In order to understand what the participant considered to be important aspects of their identity and lives, and to understand more about the context of the participant’s life, interviews started openly, and participants were invited to tell me a bit about themselves. It also helped me get to know the participant and ease us both into the relational space. Some participants used the opening question as an opportunity to almost immediately tell me about the domestic abuse they experienced, and others spent longer easing in, checking how much they should share and what I wanted to know about. I felt some found the opening question to be a big and unstructured question, and it left both them and me unsure about how to navigate it. Where necessary, I invited participants to talk about their childhood and what growing up was like for them, almost always leading participants to talk about growing up with domestic abuse, probably because they knew that was the purpose of the study. For all participants, I explained it was up to them how much or how little they wanted to share. I was led by participants and used opportunities to reflect to the participant what I had heard, to check my understanding, or to communicate active listening.

The initial study design was to conduct two interviews with each participant. Second interviews commonly take place in narrative research, enabling an iterative process of data analysis (Josselson, 1996; Riessman, 2008). Riessman (2008) suggested second interviews can promote a richer understanding of both the participants’ and researcher’s experiences. The purpose of the transcript review was explained to participants, and it was also explained that they did not have to review it and did not have to provide a

reason why. However, only one participant took part in a second face-to-face interview. Following a first interview, I invited participants to review their transcript using the interviewee transcript review technique (Mero-Jaffe, 2011) and explore their reflections in a second interview. The purpose of the interviewee transcript review was to enable participants an opportunity to ‘speak back’ to the data and have a sense of control over the data I kept about their stories, by reviewing it and reflecting on it. I hoped that reviewing transcripts would enable them to have the opportunity to engage in a further interview about their reflections on the stories they had shared. Through inviting participants to review their transcript and participate in a second interview, the aim was to take a collaborative approach and put into practice the process of co-construction of knowledge (Woodiwiss et al., 2017).

The transcript review method along with inviting participants to participate in a second interview did not go as planned. All participants apart from one (Liv), chose to see their transcript. Of the participants who opted to see their transcript, two opted to provide their thoughts in response via email (Clara and Sonia) and one chose to take part in a second face to face interview (Emma). Multi-modal data has implications for analysis, as written text, rather than spoken word is a different kind of data (Braun et al., 2017). I could have chosen to focus more explicitly on the differences in multi-modal data, but I chose to take the position that non-verbal text is still considered as narrative data with the assumption that not all narrative data needs to be spoken; it can take multiple forms, including visual, text, media and movement (Andrews et al., 2013). For qualitative research more broadly, the analysis of non-spoken text or mixed sources of data can be done in a conscious and meaningful way and does not have to mean a fragmented analysis (Braun, Clarke & Gray, 2017). I considered the emails from Clara and Sonia as an extension of the first interviews, given that they were short in nature and did not contain a lot of detail, nor were they really a dialogue. The context they provided shaped the analysis, but the emails were not analysed as primary data. The second interview with Emma was treated in the same way as the other interviews, and it was considered ‘part two’ of the interview, as Emma explained she had not finished telling her story.

Developing a narrative interviewing technique

My interviewing technique developed significantly as I progressed with interviewing participants. In the introduction chapter I outlined my theoretical approach to therapy in an effort to situate myself and to provide a fuller picture in relation to how my interviewing style looked and the theoretical resources that I drew on. I consider my therapeutic training as inseparable from my approach to research interviews and consider it as informing my interviewing technique. In narrative research it is generally accepted as standard to include the researcher's own way of being, their story, and their 'self' in the analysis by way of acknowledging and analysing the contextual and relational production of knowledge and nature of storytelling (Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 2015). However, in the broader context of the social sciences, issues of researcher bias and gold standards of 'objectivity' still exist (Bondi & Fewell, 2017; Haraway, 1988). It is true that we do not conduct research to find out about the researcher and to tell the researcher's own story. However, it is also necessary to challenge values of objectivity by valuing and placing meaning on the role that the researcher plays in constructing knowledge (Andrews, 2006; Bondi & Fewell, 2017; Haraway, 1988; Riessman, 2015).

Research interviews are not different to psychotherapeutic work, in their shared quest for meaning-making and the capacity for dialogue to be reflective and to bring about new meanings (Bondi, 2013; Hydén, 2014). Practitioner-researchers might feel more inclined to want to help, especially if participants show emotion, become upset, or start to 'work out/work through' issues that might present similarly in therapy (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, & Liamputtong, 2006). However, I found that I was acutely aware of relational boundaries and the contracting and expectations of the research space. Being mindful about these boundaries helped to avoid a research interview that became something that it did not set out to be. Additionally, some people find that telling their stories can have therapeutic benefits in itself (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, & Liamputtong, 2008). In interviews, I found there were elements of identity exploration, 'working out' links between the past and the present, making sense of experiences, and reflecting on, and feeling emotions during the interview. These are all factors that are typically part of therapy processes. Despite these similarities, practitioner-researchers are often encouraged to, or feel that they should, bracket their practitioner knowledge and experience out of their research (Bondi & Fewell, 2017).

My own training in humanistic psychology and experience as a humanistic counsellor and psychotherapist is influenced by Buber's (1923/1996) dialogical ontology and epistemology. Psychotherapeutic knowledge and training does not have to present limitations to researchers who might, understandably, seek to establish researcher-participant boundaries for fear of straying into 'therapist' role during research interviews that might, at times, feel like therapy (Dickson-Swift et al., 2006). I found that there are ways that practitioner theoretical resources, in my case, humanistic psychology, can complement the dialogical (Bakhtin, 1981) and feminist (Haraway, 1988) resources that shaped this research.

Further, what I noticed was that my interviewing technique became more narratively informed over time, by engaging in an iterative process of interviewing, re-listening to the interview, transcribing, reviewing, and interviewing the next participant. Interviews were conducted across a 12-month timeframe (August 2017-August 2018). I was able to transcribe immediately after each interview, engaging with the content of interviews on a person by person basis. The slowness of recruitment was a worry at times, but I also grew to value the slowness. It enabled me to become more familiar with the stories women shared as I started transcribing and analysing interviews as I conducted them. What I mean when I suggest that my technique became more narratively informed, is that I refined an approach to interviewing that spoke well to a theoretical framework of polyvocality and dialogue (Hermans, 2001). Transcribing and re-listening to recordings helped me to become more aware, and to actively listen for contradictory or contrapuntal voices when participants spoke. I became more aware of when participants spoke from multiple I-positions. Awareness in the moment enabled me to reflect what I noticed back to the participant more directly, and it enabled participants to reflect on what these multiple co-existing subjectivities meant to them.

My ability to notice shifting subjectivities in the interview space was sharpened, and, as I would as a practitioner, I used reflective, active listening techniques to facilitate the participant's reflection on their I positions in the interviews. As noted in the introduction, typically therapists who are also researchers might be encouraged to bracket their therapist 'selves' out of the research interview space, in order to maintain the boundaries of the researcher-participant relationship and in order to maintain an 'objective' stance. However, as I explored, maintaining an objective stance when conducting a research interview is widely acknowledged as quite impossible, given that

as researchers we carry our own biographies, histories, professions and trainings into the interview space with us (Bondi & Fewell, 2017). My experience was that acknowledging the boundaries of the research interview was helpful – adopting a mindful approach to check in with myself about the purpose and intention behind my questions, ensuring that they were intended for exploration in the context of my research aims, helped. My sense was that the dual roles of therapist-researcher helped as I came to interviews with a skillset that enabled me to sit with stories, and use active listening, prompts, and reflection.

Towards the end of the interviews I checked in with participants to ask how they had experienced the interview process, and how they were feeling at the end. In part, the check-ins were because I adopted an ethics of care and I wanted to check how participants were feeling after the interview. On reflection, the opportunity to reflect also revealed something about the storytelling process for participants. Some participants explained that they were uncertain about how they would feel after sharing their stories, as some had never told their stories to another person before. Most participants thanked me for the opportunity to talk, and for listening to their childhood accounts. Most said that they felt heard, or that a weight had been lifted. Some participants explained the emotional and psychological relief they felt at having told their story without being broken down by it, and that they felt empowered. Some explained what they had planned for the time after the interview, to ensure they were supported, in case they needed it. For example, by meeting a friend, or spending an evening doing an activity they associated with self-care. The ethical considerations that arose are explored in more detail in the section that follows.

Ethical considerations

As I moved institutions during the process of my PhD, this project received ethical approval from my former institution, the University of Northampton's Ethics Committee. The BPS Code of Human Research Ethics was also adhered to (BPS, 2014). Before outlining the specific ethical issues that arose, firstly, it is important to explain the approach to ethics that I took. During the process of designing the study and engaging with participants I took ethical concerns seriously and reflected continuously on them. I adopted Frank's (2004) 'ethics as process' position, meaning that ethical responsibilities were considered as on-going, relational and process-based rather than a

check-list. I also adopted a feminist ethics meaning that ethics were considered as relational, situated and contextual, paying close attention to power relations, emotion and empathy in the research context (Letherby, 2003; Woodiwiss et al., 2017). In the sections that follow, I explore the ethical issues that are relevant to this study.

Informed and on-going consent

Informed consent was gained from each participant firstly by having an informal discussion prior to interview and offering opportunities for the participant to ask questions and take time to decide if they wished to take part. Most participants did not have questions about the interview process itself, as I had already shared the interview topic guide and had provided a study information sheet to the participant via email. What is interesting is that some participants had questions about their eligibility to participate – mostly concerned about whether their experience of domestic abuse ‘counted’. Uncertainty about eligibility to participate was for a range of reasons, including that it was their mother’s violence against their father, that it was a stepparent who perpetrated the violence, that there was not physical violence, and that they were also directly abused by their parent.

Consent was considered an on-going issue, and I checked for consent at appropriate opportunities during the interviews, understanding that participants might change their mind at any point (Hewitt, 2007). Participants were informed of their right to withdraw within a given timeframe. Given that most participants did not take part in a second interview, but did maintain some email contact post-interview in which they received their transcript and some discussed a second interview, it seems consent was negotiated in a process-based way, and participants felt able not to participate further if they did not wish to.

Four participants were already known to me prior to their participation, and the relational implications of dual relationships were discussed with each of these participants. Attention to power relations was crucial, particularly using the recruitment strategy described, as social media is a different way of accessing participants whose knowledge of me and communication with me might not necessarily end once their interview ends (Palys & Atchison, 2012). In order to avoid mis-using the trust placed in me as researcher, for participants where there was a risk that I had a ‘power over’

relationship which could not be ethically worked with, I decided I would not interview them. (Fontes, 2004).

Confidentiality and anonymity

Limits to confidentiality concerned issues where serious risk was revealed, though there were not any instances of significant risk that meant I had to break confidentiality. The anonymity of participants has been treated with respect and participants are anonymised as much as possible in this thesis. Specific geographical locations of participants are not revealed, names of participants, family members and others are changed, and any identifiable details are changed. Protecting the anonymity of participants in domestic abuse research is a non-negotiable issue as the risk of harm to participants may be significantly increased, should their identity be recognisable in any public facing documents or presentations (Fontes, 2004).

There is also an additional consideration when interviewing participants who are known to the researcher prior to their participation, that maintaining their confidentiality means additional management of the boundaries of ‘peer/colleague’ relationship and ‘researcher-participant’ relationship (McDermid, Peters, Jackson, & Daly, 2014). With the participants I knew prior to the interview, I discussed our dual relationship with them, ensuring they knew that just because we knew each other, confidentiality and anonymity still applied and was taken seriously. I also outlined the boundaries and expectations around the research interview itself and considered with the participant if we were likely to cross paths in other settings in which their participation might feel different. For instance, at an academic event or conference presenting the findings, where a participant may also be attending the conference as a peer.

Participant wellbeing and safety

Domestic abuse is considered a sensitive topic (Hydén, 2013; Morris, Hegarty, & Humphreys, 2012). I wanted to respect participants and not violate the trust placed in me as the researcher, particularly as violating trust might replicate previous experiences of abuse that the participant might have experienced (Fontes, 2004). Prior to interviews, I invited participants to have a discussion about their participation and to ensure it was safe for them to participate. The initial discussion was informal (via email or on the phone) and it was necessary due to the potential risks. Participants were also made

aware of the limits to confidentiality and that if they disclosed a safeguarding concern, I would explore my concern with them and seek to support them in accessing appropriate support, ideally with the consent of the participant/led by the participant.

Building empathy and care into research relationships

I was aware, and some participants told me, that interviews might have included talking about experiences that participants had not discussed in depth before. Participants were aware they did not have to talk about anything that made them uncomfortable, but I was also aware that what emerged during interviews could cause some distress that could not be anticipated, either during or after the interview. Participants were fully informed that might happen and I took the approach of assessing on-going consent by choosing appropriate moments to clarify that the participant was happy to continue. No participants terminated interviews. Some found moments or topics upsetting, and these were individual to each participant and negotiated in the context of each interview guided by a feminist ethics of empathy and care. When checking in with participants about how they found the interview, most participants thanked me and felt appreciative of the space to share their experiences.

Awareness of relational dynamics and an appropriate and caring response to situations that emerged as part of the research process was important. As well as a researcher bringing with me previous experiences of interviewing women and children about experiences of domestic abuse, I am also a therapist. When I talk with others, a set of values, shaped by being non-judgemental, accepting and empathic, are present. It was impossible to predict what may have arisen during interviews, but I view these values as necessary for research relationships, in particular when talking with participants about experiences that may be distressing to remember (Bondi, 2013; Letherby, 2003).

Participants received a debrief sheet which provided signposts for counselling and psychotherapy and other relevant services. Participants were provided with the debrief sheet regardless of whether they explicitly communicated distress or not. I only discussed if support may be needed explicitly with one participant, Liv, who explained some impactful current mental health difficulties and I felt concerned about her. By asking if she had considered accessing support, I aimed to communicate my concern for her wellbeing and to express my care. Although it was not a safeguarding concern, I felt

it was an appropriate and ethical way to relationally respond to what she had described during her interview.

Researcher wellbeing and safety

In addition to participant wellbeing and safety, my own wellbeing and safety was also a necessary consideration. Whilst researcher safety and researcher preparedness has been written about in existing literature, relatively little has been written about the emotional processes and impact of researching sensitive or potentially distressing topics (Fenge, Oakley, Taylor, & Beer, 2019). These issues are particularly important in domestic abuse research, or indeed any research that requires in depth relational engagement about topics that have the potential to be upsetting or ‘heavy’, and/or memories or experiences that might be traumatic that the researcher has lived experience of themselves (Dickson-Swift et al., 2008; Fenge et al., 2019; Gabriel et al., 2017).

The practical side of these issues was dealt with by carrying out an assessment of risk as part of the ethical approval process, including considering the health and safety of myself. For example, I considered my own safety and protection due to recruiting participants via my personal Twitter account. Although participants felt it was physically and emotionally safe for them to participate, many were in contact with the person who was abusive or was still using abuse at the time of the interview. For the safety of myself, for interviews conducted in person out of the university, I employed a lone-worker policy in which a trusted person expected a ‘check-in’ and ‘check-out’.

Wellbeing is not just about physical safety. Immersing oneself in research that contains sensitive or difficult topics can be emotionally challenging and demanding in numerous ways, constituting an emotional labour that is not often recognised in depth by reports on qualitative research about issues that are considered sensitive (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, & Liamputtong, 2009; Mitchell, 2011). A commitment to feminist ethics meant committing to care, empathy and power-sensitivity (Hydén, 2014; Letherby, 2003). As an act of care, I checked in with participants about how they found the interview. Most participants said that they felt good having shared their story. Some felt they had been listened to, and some felt that they felt a weight lifted or that they had understood or made sense of things that they hadn’t pieced together before. I do not want to over-state the potential benefits of participating in research interviews as it may be that there are other experiences that participants did not share with me as they may

not have wanted to share if some of the interview was difficult or not positive for them. Whilst interviews contained some emotive and hard to talk about topics, sensitivity or vulnerability does not necessarily imply an inability to share stories. Rather, awareness and sensitivity about the relational and power context of the interview by situating the self in the research context was useful. When researching the lives of participants who may occupy seemingly less 'valuable' social positions due to the nature of being a victim of domestic abuse, it is especially necessary to attend to power (Hydén, 2014).

A commitment to feminist ethics also means a commitment to applying care and empathy to the self. Domestic abuse is something that I have personal experience of, and the potential for vicarious trauma in research where the researcher also has lived experience is high (Dickson-Swift et al., 2008; Elmir, Schmied, Jackson, & Wilkes, 2011; Kumar & Cavallaro, 2018). My experience is that vicarious trauma is particularly high for feminist researchers who aim to be mindful of power dynamics, empathy and relationships, meaning that they bring more of themselves into the research process. It is true that this research was challenging and emotionally demanding at times. There is a particular kind of emotion work that is specific to those who identify as feminist researchers. Prioritising research relationships, engaging with the power disparities between the researcher and participant, and engaging with stories that may be emotionally distressing to work reflexively with, can present dilemmas and evoke responses that may not otherwise be engaged with so deeply (Carroll, 2013; Sampson, Bloor, & Fincham, 2008).

Listening to stories that might be challenging to hear can bring up issues of social justice and researcher positionality, including a range of emotions that can be impactful (Fenge et al., 2019; Råheim et al., 2016). This research had an impact on me that I did not anticipate. Participants' stories contained aspects that were close to my own, and sometimes prompted memories or reflections that I had not remembered or considered before. I do not believe this is problematic; in many ways, allowing space for emotion in research is human and it is necessary in order to engage reflexively with stories. However, given the prevalence of researcher isolation, particularly when studying topics that are considered sensitive (Johnson & Clarke, 2003), and particularly for doctoral researchers (Schmidt & Hansson, 2018), it was necessary to draw on my support networks when I needed to.

Self-care is strongly advocated amongst others who also engage with in depth 'sensitive' data and for those who get close to the stories of others that might bring up emotions and/or memories that can be hard to process (Bahn & Weatherill, 2013). I used research supervision and the support of peers and friends who also research topics that might be distressing or that might be 'close to home'. As a therapist, I also have regular clinical supervision in which all areas of my life are welcomed in. I used that space to explore some of the ways in which my engagement with trauma stories both in practice and in research impacted my own relationship to the topic I researched, and with myself and my history. Each of these resources were invaluable in enabling me to learn to apply a feminist ethic of care towards myself too. One of the points of learning that I take from this study is that a reflexive approach to acknowledging the self as human and applying an ethic of care to the self is necessary for those who research trauma, work with trauma in other roles, and also have experience of trauma themselves.

Dialogical narrative analysis

I used a dialogical narrative analysis informed by the dialogical self as a theoretical framework (Hermans, 2001) and I followed Frank's (2012) set of commitments for practising dialogical narrative analysis using The Listening Guide (Brown & Gilligan, 1993) as an analytical tool. Firstly, I audio-recorded and transcribed interviews verbatim. Transcription can be considered an interpretive process itself (Duranti, 2006). Transferring data from speech (audio data) to text (written data) can be viewed as the first level of analysis as decisions were made about what to record, what not to record, and how it should be represented in the data (utterances, non-verbal communication, tone) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). I transcribed all interviews myself, listening to interview recordings several times and increasing my familiarity with the data. A naturalistic style of transcription was used (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005). Transcriptions captured what was said during interviews, in its entirety, including non-verbal communication that I thought to be meaningful. For instance, pauses in speech, whispering of speech, or when a sentence was spoken as if it was a question (using a question mark or exclamation mark to indicate the tone). A naturalistic style of transcription was thought to be appropriate as it could capture any other communication in addition to what was said, such as laughter, crying, pauses, or sighs. Providing as

much detail as possible in the transcriptions was a way of ensuring that the data was detailed and would provide ample opportunities to explore how participants expressed their stories, as well as what they said verbally.

I developed a multi-layered approach to listening to young women's stories. There are limited 'how to' guides offered by narrative researchers for how to design appropriate analytical strategies. Frank (2012) proposed a set of 'commitments' for doing dialogical narrative analysis. Frank's commitments for doing dialogical narrative analysis do not clearly translate to a 'guide' or an analytical strategy, but they have informed my approach to analysis because of his emphasis on voice, multivocality and unfinalisability. These commitments seem aligned with what is at the heart of a dialogical approach to narratives. These are:

1. To recognise that any individual voice is actually a dialogue between voices.
2. To remain suspicious of the opposite of dialogue, which is monologue; analysis is not the pursuit of 'truth' or authentic 'voice', but it is the focus on hearing collective voices in dialogue.
3. That stories have 'independent lives' – they are both subjective (belong to the storyteller) and they are external (no story is entirely 'mine' as it is constituted of 'other' voices and forces too, i.e. it is 'borrowed in parts' (p. 36).
4. That humans are 'unfinalised' (p. 36) – that humans have capacity to grow, to change, to re-story the self, and revise their 'self-understanding', and stories do not necessarily have an 'ending' (p. 36-37).
5. Refraining from summarising findings or implying the end point of conversation or analysis. Clearly it is not entirely possible to refrain from summarising findings when analysing data and producing a thesis in which the claims I make do have a sense of being conclusive. The claims I make are relatively final as they stand at the point of time of writing, but this step is a commitment to remain open to continuous possibilities of listening to stories, responding to them, and allowing new and different meanings to be heard.

A multi-layered approach to analysis was necessary, given the emphasis on the interactions between several factors and 'voices'. In order to commit to a multi-layered approach that was voice-centred, I used the Listening Guide (Gilligan, 2015) an analytical tool. The Listening Guide was useful as a 'way in' to data for several reasons.

It is a feminist narrative methodology said to facilitate listening to stories on multiple levels (Woodcock, 2016), typically used in voice-centred narrative research (Chadwick, 2017; Mauthner, 2017). It is an appropriate method for capturing the multi-vocality within participants' stories, as it seeks to identify multiple 'I positions' (Gilligan, 2015; Gilligan & Eddy, 2017). It is well aligned with the dialogical self as a theory, and its capacity to facilitate reflexivity throughout the analysis. I followed the three stages of listening that Gilligan (2015) proposed. The Listening Guide is described below, and its capacity to incorporate the key features of the dialogical self as a theory are highlighted. I draw attention to links with the dialogical self theory so that it is evident how the analytical framework I used is useful in engaging with Hermans' (2001) notions of 'the other in self', 'multiplicity in unity', 'power and dominance' and 'innovation'.

Following audio-recording and transcription of each interview, the following three stages of listening to analyse data were used:

- 1. Listening for the plot line:** The first 'listening' that Gilligan (2015) suggests is to listen for the plot line, mapping the landscape of the interview to understand the psychological terrain of the participant in relation to the interviewer. The intention is to map the stories participants tell; key features/people, symbols, themes, and points of emotion, and to also identify any missing areas. The researcher also listens reflexively to their own responses. Mauthner & Doucet (2003) describe this as the researcher 'locating the self socially, emotionally and intellectually in the transcript... the researcher reads for herself in the text... places herself, her background, history and experiences in relation to the respondent' (p. 419). Re-visiting my reflexive journal helped me to maintain awareness of the relational and interactional space of the research interviews themselves.
- 2. Subjectivities: Producing 'I-Poems':** This listening promotes the production of 'I Poems'. Analysis here is intended to identify multiple 'I-positions'. In effect, I fragmented the interview transcript by listening explicitly for the first-person voice and producing a poem in the order in which each 'I' statement appeared in the transcript – each stanza break marking the new 'I' statement when the 'I' shifts direction or position. Identifying I positions by producing I poems puts into practice the commitment to recognising that any individual voice is actually a dialogue *between* voices, and to remain suspicious of

monologue (Frank, 2012), under the premise that the ‘self’ is constructed of multiple voices – **a multiplicity in unity** (Hermans, 2001).

- 3. Identifying contrapuntal voices:** Gilligan suggests a third listening where the researcher listens for contrapuntal voices (for instance, when ‘you’, ‘them’ or ‘I’ might drop off or present a contradictory position). The use of ‘I poems’ enables a dialogical narrative analysis of participants’ accounts through identifying the I-positions in the stories that participants tell, including the ones that are contradictory, the ones that are silenced, the ones that are louder, and the ones that are told through a different pronoun (e.g. ‘you’). This step puts into practice the commitment of recognising dialogue, particularly recognising the **‘other in self’** (Hermans, 2001). It also puts into practice Frank’s (2012) commitment to the notion that stories have ‘independent lives’ – they are, in part, shaped by and ‘borrowed by’ other external forces and voices.

Through the identification of contrapuntal voices, **dominance and social power** can be analysed (Hermans, 2001), evidencing a commitment to recognising that stories are both subjective and shaped by external forces (Frank, 2012). Here, I worked through each voice poem to identify narrative resources that I saw as shaping participants’ I positions, enabling a focus on how socio-cultural contexts play a part in shaping the stories told (Tamboukou, 2008). To identify narrative resources, I asked: ‘Who will be affiliated into a group of those who share a common understanding of a particular story? Whom does the story render external or other to that group? Who is excluded from the “we” who share the story? (Frank, 2012, p. 11). I asked how do these narrative resources act to make some speaking positions available and others not. This kind of questioning helped to identify what socio-structural power relations were at play through the narrative resources that shaped the availability of some I positions, and constrained others. In Appendices 3 and 4 I have included extended examples of coded and annotated voice poems to illustrate what this looked like in practice.

Developing narrative typologies

These three ‘listening’ are the three steps that I followed to analyse data. The final stage of analysis was to develop narrative typologies. Using a dialogical framework, the

identification of narrative typologies is proposed by Frank (2010; 2012). He suggests that each 'typology' should reflect the narrative resources, or lack of, that shape how people tell their stories. Developing narrative typologies was not an effort to thematise the data; rather, the purpose was to explore how certain stories shared similar qualities or effects, or contained similar strategies of storytelling (Frank, 2012). Using Frank's (2010; 2012) guidance for the development of typologies was appropriate because of the way that Frank captures the fluid and finite nature of storytelling and the way in which stories can be simultaneously useful and limiting for those who tell them. I have chosen to use Frank's guidance partly because there exists little explicit guidance for 'how to' conduct and present the analysis when a dialogical narrative analysis has been used. However, I also used Frank's guidance because it fits well with what I aim to achieve through the analysis.

What appeals about Frank's approach to dialogical narrative analysis is his proposal that 'while a typology can structure the content presented in a narrative analysis, a typology is never an end in itself...' (Frank, 2012, p. 15). A typology does not presume a finite version of the story, it is a recognition that lives are storied and that stories can change. The use of typologies is not intended to be a method of classifying people's stories, as classification can be constraining, finite and restricts opportunities for innovation and possibilities for the self to be storied differently as different positionings become available (Bakhtin, 1981; Frank, 2012). Nor is the use of typologies an assumption that these typologies are 'truth'. (Frank, 2012, p. 14-15). He also proposed that dialogical narrative analysis 'circles back, repeatedly, to asking this question: How well served are people by their stories?' (Frank, 2012, p. 15). I remain close to this question in the three typology chapters that follow.

In order to develop narrative typologies, Frank's guidance is rather un-strategic. He suggests to read and re-read stories and stay with where the narratives live. My approach was somewhat more structured, and, as outlined in this chapter, the approach I used was informed by the Listening Guide. The analysis was an interactive and iterative process. I read the transcripts and voice poems multiple times and began writing early in the process. Through writing and discussing early ideas in supervision meetings, I constructed visual maps which noted key stories and voices that were prevalent across the dataset. Through supervisory feedback and discussion about these early analytical

ideas, and deeper reflexive engagement with the women's accounts and the literature, I began to finalise which typologies would best represent my analysis of the data.

I developed three narrative typologies that are presented in the following chapters. These are: Transitions, Recoveries and Battles. These narrative typologies capture the essence, purpose and nature of the kinds of stories that young women told. They capture the tensions and challenges of narrating the self through the narrative resources identified, rather than presenting the narrative resource as the typology itself. Before moving onto the three narrative typology chapters, I will provide some information about how these are presented.

In the following chapters I use direct extracts from transcripts. Some of these extracts include my own responses in dialogue with the participant. The inclusion of these interactions is because it is necessary to contextualise the data. How I responded as the interviewer played a role in shaping what was said by the participant and how. In addition to direct transcript extracts the following three chapters also include some of the voice poems as it feels important to show the analytical steps that I took in the development of these typologies. Also, I found that the voice poems were powerful tools in bringing to light the tensions and ambiguities in young women's stories. However, it is important to view the voice poems alongside the full speech. Voice poems as standalone text, whilst powerful, are also fragmented versions of stories. They are not intended to be viewed as standalone text.

I do not draw on every participant in each chapter. I draw on one, two or three participants in each section of the analysis. It does not mean that other participants did not also evidence similar stories in their accounts. In fact, I have taken care to develop narrative typologies that are representative. However, the decision to use a small number of participants in each section is to avoid extensive fragmentation of individual stories as fragmentation would not be in line with a narrative approach. By that, I mean that in order to analyse in depth, including the participants' individual story and context, it would not have been appropriate to generalise particular analytical points across all participants without losing the contextual and relational context of the storytelling.

As I have outlined, capturing and exploring context in analysis was important. Where I felt it relevant, reflexivity is embedded into the analysis, guided by the epistemological

assumption that knowledge is relationally and contextually produced. Firstly, I assume that knowledge is produced in local contexts (direct interviewer-interviewee relational spaces), and secondly in social/cultural contexts (shaped by broader social and cultural narrative resources) (Hydén, 2013; Mishler, 1986; Phoenix, 2013). The analysis circles back to both of these contexts in order to make sense of the stories young women shared.

The language used in the following chapters is also important to define. I draw on concepts of credibility, coherency and stability. I do not use these words to imply that women themselves lack these qualities. These are terms that I use to talk about the function of the narratives rather than place a particular meaning or judgement on the way that women spoke. It is common that when women talk about trauma or abuse experiences, they risk being misjudged as lacking credibility, stability or reliability, but that is not my position in this thesis. Rather, I show that these assumptions are socially and politically located and can powerfully shape how women are able to voice their stories. In the following three chapters I explore the three narrative typologies that were constructed through the analysis of young women's stories. These are: Transitions, Recoveries and Battles.

5. Transitions

I don't know if it was a hormonal thing

I don't know

... maybe I just grew up

I just grew up immediately.

I had this very real realisation

I was a grown up

I needed to cope with stuff

I was still really young

- Clara

Introduction

Participants' accounts included stories of doing things differently, growing up, and stories of the future. I have constructed a narrative typology of transitions based on these stories that participants told where a transition was a key feature. Dominant narrative resources about developmental transitions – in other words, transitions from childhood to adulthood assume that child to adult development is linear and marked by age (Walkerdine, 1993; Zittoun, 2007). Women's stories, however, suggested that there were several factors that shaped their experiences of transitioning to and navigating young adulthood, and not all were age-based. In fact, women's accounts suggest that their experiences of their developmental transitions are relational and depend on the specific biographies and relationships that are unique to them, as well as broader socio-cultural scripts and structures that shape dominant assumptions about what growing up during and after domestic abuse in childhood means.

Becoming a mother: If my childhood wasn't normal, what is normal?

Here, I turn attention to participants' stories of becoming a mother. There are narrative challenges of telling a story of 'successfully' becoming a mother whilst also voicing uncertainties and fear. A transition to a new identity position such as adult or parent can enable people to story the self differently. One participant, Bethany, had recently

become a mother. Through her account, becoming a mother meant an opportunity to re-story herself. However, her story was also an account of learning how to make a home when she had little guidance to base her mothering on.

'I think I've been really – really like focusing on making a home, you know. I've moved around my whole life and the whole of my 20's really. Every year or two just going here or there and I think now, since I've had my daughter I've moved to the place my husband's from so his parents are round the corner. It's a very rural, quiet like, regular life. He had a really regular life and I think that's probably why I picked him. you know, and I'm trying to give them what I, you know, what my idea is of a normal – live in the same house forever, it's really safe and homely and you measure your height on the doorway. You know, that's what I mean' (Bethany)

Bethany's story of becoming a mother was told through a reflection on a childhood of instability. Instability sets up a picture of her childhood that is rendered unspeakable through this narrative. Bethany's story was told not as it was, but through an account of what it was not. She spoke about her husband's life which was 'rural, quiet, regular', and she also told a story of family homes that are 'safe and homely' with familiarity and markers of growth and memories. However, when Bethany spoke about her own childhood, there were limited available words. For example, 'I'm trying to give them what I, you know...' and 'you know, that's what I mean...'. Frank (2013) suggests that the deepest shame or chaos lives in stories where there are limited words, and that lacking the verbal language to express stories does not imply there is no story to tell, but rather the story might be embodied or communicated by silence. Others have also suggested that when dominant narrative frameworks fail to account for people's experiences, stories are difficult to articulate because there lacks an appropriate narrative framework through which to make sense of experiences (Callaghan, Fellin, Mavrou, Alexander, & Sixsmith, 2017; McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2011; Woodiwiss, 2014). Considering silence as a voice, the polyvocality of Bethany's story can be explored. Her story of doing things differently was told through voices that are voiced, and silences that also should be attended to. These silences tell a story that reveals something about the chaos and shame that was unspoken but still exists. Through Bethany's account, transitioning to new motherhood bolstered her desire to do things differently.

'I think I've really been aware since I've had her that it doesn't come naturally to me. Like I don't know what to do. I think so much when you have a baby people are like "oh just do what your mum did" you know, and "copy your older relatives" and I think if you don't have a good relationship or a traditional relationship with your older female relatives, you can't because you don't have anything to copy. You know, I find myself reading loads about parenting and I felt really lost. Well I didn't have the ideal childhood and I don't know what to copy. I don't know how to do this or how to make a home, and so I found it like a massive learning curve to almost fake it, you know. So I'm in that process, it's becoming real as time goes on - the more I act as if it is. But it's certainly been a process of pretending what you think a regular family is like, you know, just my childhood was not regular. I think I've really been aware since I've had her [child] that it [parenting] doesn't come naturally to me.' (Bethany)

The transition to new motherhood also offered Bethany a narrative possibility of doing mothering differently, even though to do things differently to her own mother was positioned as unnatural and unknown. Finding becoming a mother an overwhelming experience is not uncommon (Vincent, Ball, & Braun, 2010). However, becoming a mother had a particular meaning for participants when it was storied as a new identity that intersects with a history of domestic abuse in childhood. From a dialogical view, stories do not belong entirely to the storyteller, but nor are they entirely 'borrowed' from others (Hermans, 2003). Stories we tell are both our own, and they are shaped by the contexts in which they are told. In other words, our personal stories are political stories too (Andrews, 2006; Thompson, Rickett, & Day, 2018). Bethany's struggles in navigating her transition were made sense of by attributing her sense of being lost in motherhood to her lack of a 'regular' childhood. Through Bethany's storytelling, the self as mother was constructed relationally, and her position as a mother was intimately intertwined with her account of being mothered. The voice poem shows the interplay of these voices.

*I don't know what to do
you can't
you don't have anything to copy
I find myself reading loads about parenting*

I felt really lost

I didn't have the ideal childhood

I don't know what to copy

I don't know how to do this or how to make a home

The voice poem shows the intersecting narrative resources that shape the dialogical relationship between voices in Bethany's account. One of the key aspects of the dialogical self is the notion of the 'other in self' (Hermans, 2008) - the idea that stories have independent lives; they are told independently, but they are also told through dialogues we have participated in before. In Bethany's story of becoming a mother, narrative resources of adulthood responsibility and individualising neoliberal values of self-improvement and self-determined 'success' (Burman, 2017; Gill & Scharff, 2011; McRobbie, 2004) were powerful in shaping the availability of I positions. For example, by reading parenting books, learning on the job and 'faking it', Bethany's story was shaped by these individualising discourses of self-work and self-improvement. These also position her as an object of the expert lens, and as disciplined by psychotherapeutic processes and practices. Bethany rehabilitates herself as a mother by becoming the psychotherapeutic subject in this story. Woodiwiss, Smith, & Lockwood, (2017) wrote that 'we all have the right to personal happiness, success and satisfaction, but direct ourselves to construct ourselves as damaged and ultimately responsible if we do not live such lives' (p. 16). This highlights the power that narrative frameworks of success can have on women who tell their stories after abuse and trauma in childhood. Through the stories that are available for women to tell, there is a risk that women fall to a story of self-accountability. Self-accountability can be helpful if there is a 'success' story to tell, but it can be unhelpful if the story is one of not knowing what to do or feeling lost. A story of 'failure' would come with a risk of constructing the self as ultimately responsible for that failing.

Intersecting with an individualising framework, Bethany's story of becoming a mother was also shaped by gendered narrative resources of femininity and 'successful' mothering. For instance, her account frames mothering as femininity (Arendell, 2000) by locating 'good' mothering as dependent upon having older female relatives to copy. Mothering is also framed as natural (Baber & Allen, 1992) through the account that mothering does not come naturally and she does not know what to do. Further, through her account of mothering as requiring reading, learning and 'faking it' so that her lack

of expertise is not the reason for her failing, mothering is storied as expertise (Lawler, 2002). These narrative resources shape how Bethany constructed herself as somehow lacking in maternal competence. Through her account, lacking maternal competence is made sense of due to her lack of maternal guidance or lack of blueprint. Framed in this way, her story of becoming a mother is limiting, as Bethany wrote herself into a story of deficit as a result of her childhood, despite the fact that uncertainty and a sense of lacking maternal competence is not an uncommon experience. From this view, there are limited alternative stories that are available to women if they do not have stories of happiness or success to tell. Bethany's story was one of trying to find her own way to success for herself. However, a story of self-driven success does not make space for familial relationships and these relationships are not voiced in self-driven success stories such as Bethany's. The absence of familial relationships in her story suggests that if Bethany's narrative is shaped by her family biography, there is no space for a new identity of being a mother and there is little space for her to write herself into a new and different story of making a different kind of home for herself. A self-driven path to success is culturally valued, but it is also a story that shuts down voices of fear and uncertainty.

A transitions narrative is limiting in part, but it also does something useful. A further key aspect of the dialogical self is its recognition of the human capacity for innovation (Hermans, 2001). Becoming a mother has introduced a new identity position, a new voice from which to speak from, and the opportunity for innovation. A new identity as a mother is positioned as Bethany's opportunity to re-construct a 'regular childhood' for herself. What is framed as a deficit of her own childhood, is re-storied as having the potential to offer her the opportunity to do things differently. From a new mother identity Bethany reconstructed the self as more emotionally distanced from her childhood. A reconstruction can be useful. Here, it provides a distance that takes her away from the instability and unspeakability of her childhood and it offers her some sense of narrative agency about how her future mothering might be. She storied herself into a different life that on the one hand is positioned as unnatural to her, but it is also constructed as a learning opportunity. 'Faking' it to make it as a successful parent is not easy but it is a possibility. Through this account there is an opportunity to have a sense of agency over her future by reorganising the future imagined self around her new 'mother' position (Hermans, 2003).

Like most participants, stories of chaos and instability also framed Nadine's narration of her childhood. Nadine had experienced multiple kinds of abuse perpetrated by her father including direct sexual, physical and emotional abuse towards herself, and forced watching of her father's abuse of her mother. At the time of the interview, Nadine did not have a partner or a child, and she explained she did not intend on becoming a mother in her adult life. She spoke about her difficulties with her mental health and her admissions to psychiatric hospitals.

Nadine: I really struggled with one nurse who would say like, if I was angry she would just say 'well you're just being like your dad now aren't you?' And I just think that was one of the worst things I could have heard at that point. Yeah

Int: that's what they would say to you while you were there?

Nadine: not staff in general, but that's what she would say [Int: yeah] and that would make it a bit more ingrained. You're being like him so therefore you're going to turn out like him. And then once when, because I was asking like 'well, if my childhood wasn't normal? What is normal? I wanted to know – not challenging them but I wanted to know what you would normally do with a baby like when they are this age. But then she would say 'well you could never have children' and I said why? She said 'well because you would treat them like you were treated'

Int: my goodness

Nadine: yeah but then I thought like I took it on as she's right because I wouldn't know how to treat a child. It doesn't mean – I don't think that I'd, I'd hope that I wouldn't have it in me to do what he did. I don't think I'm that sort of person, but to be told that so directly that you should never have children because you'll end up like him and you'll treat them like he did because that's what you think is right –

Int: I mean [pause] to me, that is shocking to hear that that's what she said to you

Nadine: yeah

Int: yep

Nadine: and that's still in there. I still don't feel like I should have children just in case. Just in case that's the trigger point.

Maybe I'm not like that for the rest of my life, but what if having this baby turns me into that person.

Nadine's account here was centred around her interactions with the nurse in hospital. On the one hand, her story positions the nurse's assumptions as problematic and harmful by the acknowledgement that 'that was one of the worst things I could have heard at that point'. However, Nadine's story was also shaped by these assumptions that she also rejects. From this view, there are multiple voices from which she speaks. The voice poem shows the polyvocality of her account.

I took it on as she's right

I wouldn't know how to treat a child

I don't think that I'd –

I'd hope that I wouldn't have it in me to do what he did.

I don't think I'm that sort of person

I still don't feel like I should have children just in case.

From one voice, Nadine accepted the nurse's narrative about her; that she would not know how to treat a child and perhaps she should not have children in case she turns out like her dad. However, from another voice, Nadine rejected that narrative through I statements that suggest '*I don't think... I'd hope... I don't think I'm that sort of person*'. The voice rejected the story that she will turn out like her dad is tentative and hesitant, but it is still there. Hesitancy can be seen through the use of I position phrases, such as 'I think, I hope, I don't think...'. Hesitancy points to the challenge of articulating a voice that diverges from expert narratives. These are expert narratives that hold power in shaping how Nadine could author her life. Whilst Nadine was no longer in the hospital when I interviewed her, the operation of power between client/patient and expert professional still threads through her story. The operation of power and gender assumptions can be especially impactful in shaping the experience and treatment of women in mental health settings (Chesler, 2005). Particularly for women, anger, or any traditionally 'non-feminine' traits risk being pathologised due to their perceived emotionality rather than rationality (rationality being a traditionally masculine trait, and one which is privileged) (Chesler, 2005; Moulding, 2006).

The operation of power shaped the dialogical relationship between voices in Nadine's account. Narrative resources around the intergenerational transmission of violence –

that she may start to use violence or become a victim herself (Black, Sussman, & Unger, 2010), shaped an internalised voice that what if she does become violent like her father. Additionally, narrative resources of normative family life also shaped her narration, functioning to position her as different and deficient in some way because her experience diverges from normative ideologies (Burman, 2017; O'Dell et al., 2018; Walkerdine, 1993). Narrative frameworks of normative childhoods have been argued to be damaging to those who live non-normative childhoods because of their emphasis on what is abnormal or lacking (Burman, 2017). However, narrative resources surrounding normative family life can also be useful. Normative ideologies around family life provided a framework for Bethany and Nadine through which to make sense of their experiences. Writing the self into a story of deficit and difference can be damaging, given that difference is often labelled as pathology (Walkerdine, 1993; Rose, 1989). However, a story of difference can also validate difficulties and offer a framework through which to base future family life on. Normative narrative frameworks about childhood and family life can offer an opportunity for people to learn how to 'do' new roles by providing a framework for what family could look like. For Bethany, it provided her with a framework through which to base her performance of mothering on. For Nadine it provided her with a framework through which to articulate a version of her future story where she is different to her dad. However, these narrative frameworks can be limiting when they intersect with childhood experiences of domestic abuse. A non-normative lens can promote a deficit story (Walkerdine, 1993) rather than an opportunity to write the self into an alternative story where things can be different.

From a dialogical and relational view, stories are told in relation to the listener (Hermans, 2001; Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 2015). My own responses in this interaction – 'that is shocking', 'my goodness' and also my silences, were me trying to respond to something that I was horrified at hearing and that made me feel anger and sadness about how Nadine was treated. My own responses provided a 'third person' or a 'third voice' that can change the dynamic of storytelling and meaning-making (Hydén, 2014).

Taking a feminist ethics standpoint (Bondi & Fewell, 2017; Letherby, 2003), I did not want my response to be neutral because my response was not neutral. As a person who grew up with domestic abuse myself, and who is a mental health professional and has also accessed mental health services as a client, I listened to and responded to Nadine's story through a lens that is inevitably shaped by my own experiences.

I disclosed some of my own history prior to the interview partly because I knew Nadine before she participated in the interview and we had discussed mental health before. My responses are in a relational context where the participant knew a little of my history. Nadine explained that whilst she knew that she was not like her father, she still feared that having children might change that, and a voice of fear still existed. She explained *'that's still in there. I still don't feel I should have children just in case'*. The fact that Nadine knew some of my own history might have enabled the telling of hers, but it is not possible, without asking her, how Nadine read and interpreted my reaction to her story, so my interpretation is based on my reflexive consideration of the interview space. My explicit expression of shock at what I heard was a congruent response and it might have helped to achieve a relational space where there was permission to reject and resist 'expert' lens stories, particularly as my position as a therapist may also position me as an 'expert' myself. My expression of shock might have bolstered the voice of resistance against an expert lens that was expressed through the statement, 'I hope I'm not that sort of person'. Nadine's knowledge of some of my history might have enabled her telling of her story, but it could have also prevented the expression of other voices. My expression of shock was intended to be a congruent response to what she had told me. My response came from a lived experience place, having been on the receiving end of receiving therapy/treatment myself, and this might be why I have highlighted this dialogue specifically, because I did have a visceral and embodied response during the interview that informed my responses in the interview. My responses also came from a place of being a therapist and perhaps just being human. Treating someone in that way is not how I would aim to treat clients, and I felt deeply that this was, and would be for me, hurtful. However, my response might have shut down space for Nadine to elaborate more about her treatment because my shock might have been interpreted as an unwillingness to listen or an inability to contain something that was upsetting.

It is possible that telling the story in a context where her anger was not dismissed enabled Nadine to voice a different kind of future. However, the fact that Nadine's 'I' statements often started with 'I think' and 'I hope', suggest that her future is a future that is filled with uncertainty and ambiguity. Uncertainty is risky to voice, but it is only risky to voice depending on who is listening. Her story was shaped by the possibility of

resistance to the power of ‘expert’ narratives that are shaped by the intergenerational transmission of violence (Black et al., 2010) and normative family life (Burman, 2017).

To summarise this section, developmental transitions are not just about what has been, but they are also about what is yet to come. Developmental transitions for the women I interviewed were not ‘complete’, suggesting that becoming a young adult is a process rather than a fixed end point. There were limited possibilities for women to authorise their own biographies, including their stories of the future. Re-storying the self is tentative and uncertain, particularly when the new story includes a resistance to expert stories that have been told before about them or about people like them. However, depending on who is willing to hear, and depending on what kind of stories are available to tell, stories of transitions can be powerful. Depending on the context of the telling, the self can be written into resistance and hope.

Having a blueprint to guide relationships in adulthood

In the previous section I drew on the idea that the self has capacity for innovation and renewal (Hermans, 2001; 2003), meaning that the self is not fixed, the self has the capacity to change, and stories are a way of enabling the self to be re-constructed. The notion of innovation and renewal also applies to the stories Liv told about learning how to do things differently in young adulthood. Like Bethany and Nadine, Liv told stories about her future self through voicing the possibility of a different kind of future. In a similar way to Bethany, Liv’s account highlighted her lack of an adult role-model in childhood from whom to model her adult self.

Liv: it does feel like with my real dad being abusive, I have a lot of problems with men and I do have emotionally abusive relationships, you know like it’s really dead cold and then they just cut me off. If I’m in a relationship and they won’t listen to my feelings or anything, so I have to build it all up erm, I don’t have anyone to confide in. I was in a long-term relationship with someone and he used to self-harm and he’d threaten suicide and he’d be like “I’m gonna cut myself if you don’t come here – I’m gonna like, I’m gonna kill myself” and stuff, you know? I didn’t see that as being a massive red flag. I feel like the domestic violence growing up has kind of given me no guide to what a healthy relationship should be like and I accept a lot of stuff I shouldn’t accept and then I internalise it and blame myself.

Int: yeah it feels like you're saying you didn't have a guide and that you've been in relationships that haven't been good for you

Liv: yeah on reflection, yeah

Int: But at the time –

Liv: yeah I'd just go along with it, it was like a sense of security, but I think sometimes when you grow up in dysfunctional households you do seek out dysfunction as well. But then part of me – I don't wanna be in a dysfunctional relationship because it's too much stress, but I think a lot of people seek them out.

Liv drew on the idea of change and movement to a new part of life in adulthood, and this story of change through becoming an adult helped her to talk about learning how to do things differently. However, in Liv's account there existed a tension between what she would like for her future, in comparison to where she has been in the past. From one voice, Liv stated, 'I think sometimes when you grow up in dysfunctional households you seek out dysfunction as well'. She also stated: 'But then part of me – I don't wanna be in a dysfunctional relationship'. Liv's articulation was constrained by her sense of a lack of blueprint or guide as to what 'healthy' relationships should be, and how to do them. At the same time, her story was also supported by an individualising narrative resource of intergenerational transmission and risk. For example, Liv's account of her boyfriend's threats to kill himself were told through a self-blaming story as she accounted for her own lack of insight at not seeing the 'red flags'. Further, through her account, men are freed from being accountable for their violence through Liv's first person positioning of herself as responsible for her relationships. For example, 'I have emotionally abusive relationships', rather than 'men are abusive towards me'. Whilst she negotiated self-blame, her account also functions to self-blame. However, her experience of violence in childhood has alerted her to what is not good for her and provided her with a framework for what not to do in adulthood. From this view, a narrative framework of normative family life can also offer some useful alternative ways to be.

The interplay of contrapuntal voices is an example of what Bakhtin refers to as a 'multi-voiced' self; the self as not fixed, but rather, a 'multitude of situated, dialogic reinterpretations' (Gardiner & Bell, 1998, p. 45). The interplay between voices points to the challenge of telling stories about change, doing things differently, or the hope or possibility that things will be different in the future. Socio-cultural narrative resources

of intergenerational transmission of violence (Black et al., 2010), risk (Featherstone et al., 2014; Rose, 2010) and subsequent damage in adulthood (Callaghan, Alexander, & Fellin, 2018) shaped the interplay of voices here. The presence and the power of these dominant narrative resources means that there are limited alternative stories to tell. In Liv's account, the possibility of strength and survivorship was not unspoken – it was articulated through a voice of hope for the future. After stating that when you grow up with dysfunction you are more likely to seek it out in adulthood, Liv then said, *'But then there's a part of me - I don't wanna be in a dysfunctional relationship'*. A voice of hope for the future enables possibilities for innovation and change. It is a voice that rejects the dominant story that she told, that dysfunction in childhood means dysfunction in adulthood. However, a resistant voice of hope still exists in dialogue with voices of hopelessness and self-blame. The voice poem from the extract above illustrates this dialogue between voices.

*... when you grow up in dysfunctional households you do seek out
dysfunction as well*

I don't wanna be in a dysfunctional relationship

I think a lot of people seek them out.

In Liv's account, the 'I' slipped away, and she used 'you' when she provided an account of the dysfunction in her childhood. She articulated, 'when you grow up in dysfunctional households you do seek out dysfunction yourself'. The way that the first-person account slips away and 'you' is used to voice the struggle, suggests that there is a challenge in narrating both struggle and hope when talking about transitioning to young adulthood and the future. There is a dialogical relationship that is established between these voices, demonstrating the power that narrative resources of risk and damage have over how Liv told stories about who she is and the person she may become. 'Dysfunction' in childhood leading to dysfunction in adulthood is not an inevitable life trajectory, yet it is a powerful narrative resource that plays a part in shaping Liv's construction of herself as a young adult.

In Liv's account there also existed a voice of responsibility. She stated, 'I accept a lot of stuff I shouldn't accept' and 'I didn't see that as being a massive red flag'. Making sense of her difficulties in adulthood relationships in this way told a story of self-accountability and taking responsibility for doing things differently. Stories of self-

responsibility are also shaped by the expectation that women do emotional labour by attending to their own growth through being insightful and doing emotional work on themselves in order to better themselves (Alcoff, 2018; Woodiwiss, 2007). The narrative resource of risk not only shapes the articulation of the past and the future, but it also directs responsibility to the self for making changes, and blame of the self, if change is not always possible or articulatable.

Liv's statement, 'I don't wanna be in a dysfunctional relationship because it's too much stress' is a voice of hope for the future. A voice of hope establishes a boundary that was not possible to establish in childhood. It is also a voice that introduces the possibility of a future self that is not restricted by a trajectory of dysfunction that seems inescapable when telling a story that is shaped by narrative resources of inevitable damage. Hope can also be viewed as a voice of resistance and a voice which offers the possibility of a future that is not entirely constructed around and shaped by trauma and violence.

Additionally, it enables the construct of 'healthy relationships' to be used not to tell a story of deficit or damage, but to provide knowledge and a framework that enabled her to re-story a self that has the capacity to change. The dialogical self assumes that the narrative self is not fixed, and that the stories we tell about who we are, are unfinalisable, always situated in a 'loophole' of time and space that allows a way out of finalisation (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 37). By attending to multiplicity in this analysis, Liv did not tell a story of a self that is fixed. Rather, attention to the multiple I positions in her account reveals an open-ended quality of her storytelling. In other words, talking about possibilities for change suggests the self is not 'finished' and the story is not complete. How we tell stories of transitions in life may not conform to a typical idea of what a transition is, such as a beginning point and a linear movement to an end destination (Crafter, Maunder, & Soulsby, 2019). Instead, stories of doing things differently as told by participants suggest that transitions are a more dialogical, negotiated, and uncertain process that involves more than 'I'.

Here, I turn to a story of doing things differently in adult relationships. Emma also spoke about navigating relationships in young adulthood with no role models to base her own relationships on. Emma's account of childhood was that her mum used abuse and violence towards her father. In Emma's account there are stories of navigating intimate relationships in her early adult life without having a guide.

'I didn't have much to compare it to, to challenge the idea that you know, it [arguing and shouting] might not be right... it didn't really change until I got married - until I was 21 and you kind of learn on the job so to speak, don't you – and then you think that this isn't really an effective way to communicate to your other half' (Emma)

Emma spoke more about how she navigated the transition to young adulthood. Through her account, she explained that it was only since she started studying psychology that she had begun to figure herself out.

'I felt awful... I was just like, this is not right... I think I'm only, in the last four years, starting to figure myself out... I think my course has saved my life really' (Emma)

Like other participants, Emma told stories of change and doing things differently in adulthood. These stories consisted of uncertainty and instability, and they were told through multiple I positions. For Emma, 'Learning on the job' about how to do things differently was a story that enabled her to write herself into a position of an independent adult who can change and whose adulthood story does not have to be the same as her childhood one. Framed in this way, stories of learning on the job were valuable and useful stories to tell as they construct the self as independent and as successfully doing the work of self-development. However, the possibility of telling alternative stories – stories of failing, are limited. These would not be socially or culturally valuable stories to tell, and these alternative stories would risk writing Emma into a future of damage or struggle.

The self can be re-storied and re-organised if a new position is introduced to a person, and new positions can make available different kinds of stories (Hermans, 2001; Bakhtin, 1981). From this view, the stories that Emma told were temporal and have the capacity to change over time. Emma's emphasis was not on her future self, but on the changes that she had noticed in herself in her life so far. Firstly, Emma's speaking positions were temporally located. From one voice, Emma spoke retrospectively. Before marriage and before studying, she did not have much to compare her own relationships with. The fact that she had no comparison framed an account that she did not know that arguing and shouting might not have always 'been right'. For example, the way that Emma explained *'I'm only, in the last four years, starting to figure myself out'*, points to the on-going-ness of a voice of self-development. The fact that she is

‘only starting’ implies that there is more to go, and that the development story has not ended. A quality of on-going-ness draws attention to unfinalisability of the narrative self (Bakhtin, 1981) and points to the way that Emma’s story challenges the idea that a developmental transition from childhood to adulthood is one where there is an end point.

Self-development was central to Emma’s stories of her transition to young adulthood. In Emma’s account was also a voice, like Liv’s, that suggests self-development is work that women are responsible for. Emma’s articulation that her course had ‘saved her life’ was told through an account of the self-knowledge and self-development that she had taken from studying. Her story positioned self-knowledge and self-development as having the capacity to be transformative. It also positioned self-development as crucial to her capacity to tell a different story where she is different to her own mother. Stories of on-going learning and transition were made possible through the new identity positions that Emma occupied as an adult and as a student of psychology. These new identity positions enabled stories of change that were useful stories to tell. They positioned Emma as different to her mum who used violence towards her father, enabling the narrative possibility for things to be different in the future.

There are challenges of talking about transitions to young adulthood when these transitions are non-linear and uncertain. Change is a process, and transitions may never necessarily be complete. In summary, there exists dominant risk-based assumptions, particularly in domestic abuse literature, that those who experience trauma and adversities in childhood are more at risk of difficulties in adulthood (Sousa et al., 2011), and this risk discourse shaped young women’s accounts. In addition, young women’s accounts were also shaped by the assumption that self-development is work that women are expected to do, producing an individualising account of responsibility where women are positioned as responsible for their own self-success. Self-responsibilisation can be useful in offering a voice of hope and possibility of change, but individualising narrative resources have power as they provide a particular framework through which young women can make sense of their experiences, but leave little space for people to tell alternative stories without risking writing themselves into a position of failure or damage.

Getting older: Staying quiet and speaking out

Typically, age is one major way of conceptualising and framing developmental transitions (Crafter et al., 2019; O'Dell et al., 2018) with childhood being positioned as a time of 'becoming' an independent and autonomous person (Archard, 2004). The child-adult binary and linear developmental trajectory associated with growing up is a narrative resource that participants drew on to tell their stories. Sochi told stories where she negotiated power through becoming an adult. Her biological father left home when she was young, and her mum had several subsequent partners who were abusive. One major aspect of Sochi's identity as an adult was that she prides herself on being able to speak out and speak up against injustices. Using her voice to speak out was storied as a key feature of her adult identity, whereas her childhood was narrated as a time of lacking opportunities to speak out against the abuse.

'I just despised the man so much, I just really really did. I think even at that age, I think I just kind of kept my mouth shut and just kind of like got on with it really... I was at an age where I was too young to really be able to speak my opinion on that situation properly' (Sochi)

Sochi's story of childhood was told in opposition to stories of speaking out in adulthood.

'as an adult I find that very very difficult, like I can't ignore things, erm, having done that as a child for so long over so many different things, erm, I now find it almost impossible to ignore things, erm, and just pretend that everything is fine cos obviously I didn't have any say in that.' (Sochi)

Through her account, speaking out and using her voice against injustices is positioned as an act that is almost impossible not to do. The story of speaking out and staying quiet positions the constraints of childhood as a struggle. It also positions the strength of her voice and moral compass in adulthood as a consequence of not being able to speak out in childhood. The voice of despise she felt in childhood about her mother's partner was storied as a silent despise, whereas as an adult, it is not possible to ignore her feelings or to 'pretend that everything is fine' when it is not. Her story positions the transition to adulthood as pivotal in her capacity to use her voice and take action. Sochi's accounts of staying quiet and speaking out points to a negotiation of power that is temporal and

shifts depending on time and age. Narrative resources of adulthood independence enabled Sochi to write herself into a position as a capable, independent adult through the telling of her story, bolstered by the way that childhood is constructed as a time of passivity (Burman, 2017). For example, being ‘too young to speak my opinion properly’ speaks to notions of childhood as somehow lacking in rationality and competency (Archard, 2004). Sochi’s account told a story of childhood as lacking the authority to have a valued opinion and have it taken seriously by adults. As an adult speaker, these stories of growing up offered opportunities for voice and epistemic authority, particularly as adulthood is storied as a time where it is impossible not to stay silent.

To further explore the idea that growing up enables space to take action in ways that can be recognised by others, I explore another extract from Sochi’s interview. Sochi recalled an instance when her mum’s partner was physically violent as she had turned sixteen.

Sochi: it was my 16th birthday and I was out and I received a call from my mum and she was like ‘oh where are you?’ and she told me what happened – she had been on the sofa and they were arguing and he dragged her off the sofa, which she then tried to run out of the house, he dragged her back inside the house and got on top of her and was going to punch her but then something clicked and he didn’t and then he stormed off out of the house so then she called me. She was like oh he’s out, this has happened, etc, I just don’t want you to run into him on your way back. So obviously I’d come back and they stayed together after that again. So again it was the whole swallow what I think. And I did say this time, oh what I thought. But again this time, not my place, if that’s what you wanna do like, what can I do? But erm, the second time again they’d had an argument, we’d just had dinner. I think I took my plate back to the kitchen and was washing up and then when I came back my mum was like ‘oh I can’t believe you just did that’ and he had whacked her around the head with a newspaper – erm, and I just lost my shit (slight laugh) cos I was just like, oh I’d had enough. Ended up squaring up at him with him right directly in my face. He was swearing at me, and then he just refused to leave. He just went up to the bedroom and refused to leave. So I had to call the police and the police had to come and actually remove him from the property. Erm, so (pause) it got to the

point where I did eventually say something and it got to the point where (pause) obviously being older, erm (pause) it's yeah (pause) easier

Int: being older it was easier in some way?

Sochi: yeah yeah. Definitely

Int: did you say it was you who called the police? Do you remember –

Sochi: Do I remember? I think I did. I can't remember if I did, but I was definitely instrumental in making sure the police were called. Cos it was just at a point where it was like you can't get away with doing this shit. Like, you just can't.

Sochi's older age enabled her to speak out and take action. Social power is a key factor that shapes how we tell stories, meaning that the stories we tell are simultaneously our own, and they are also shaped by stories that are told by others about people like us (Frank, 2012; Hermans, 2001). Turning 16 has particular social and cultural meanings, including age-based notions of increased capacity and ability to act, making space for and enabling stories of action and agency. The idea that childhood is a time of 'becoming', reduces children to passive recipients of development, rather than active agents in their lives (Horton & Kraftl, 2006; Qvortrup, 2009). These notions of childhood shape the discursive ground from which Sochi spoke about growing up and speaking out. A deficit model of childhood is constructed in relation to adulthood, assumed to be a time of rational, autonomous thinking and independence (Burman, 2017; Walkerdine, 1993). Living with and experiencing domestic abuse diverges from social and academic discourse about normative childhoods and family life, as domestic abuse is not something it is assumed that children should experience. Framed in this way, Sochi told a story of speaking out and taking action with the premise that it was her 16th birthday, symbolising getting older and becoming an adult, and consequently, increasing her capacity to take action.

Storying the self into a position of autonomy and action through becoming an adult can be useful, but a narrative framework of the child to adult developmental trajectory and assumed adulthood autonomy and rationality can also be limiting and may not make space for uncertainty or change. Voices of anger also existed in Sochi's story. She said, 'I just lost my shit... I'd had enough' and 'you can't get away with doing this shit'. Attending to the multi-vocality here suggests that it is not only age that was a factor in Sochi's

negotiation of power, but also the growing anger she felt in relation to her mum's partner. Dominant age-based narrative resources of growing up provide a framework through which to tell stories of growing up in a linear way, but they do not make space for stories that include other experiences that are shaped by emotion or relationships. Opportunities to construct the self as agentic prior to turning 16 are limited due to the age-based narrative framework of child to adult development. For instance, 'I just kept my mouth shut... I was too young to really speak on it'. The narrative resource of childhood innocence provides a framework through which to talk about being able to act and speak out when Sochi reached 16, but it also constrains the speakability of agency and action in childhood, leading to the potential for these stories of childhood to construct the self as helpless or to blame (McKenzie-Mohr & LaFrance, 2011).

When stories of growing up and becoming an adult were voiced in dialogue with uncertainty, issues of memory and knowledge come to surface. In a neoliberal and patriarchal context, women's accounts of trauma and abuse are often dismissed or discredited and the authenticity of women's own autobiographies is thrown into question (Alcoff, 2018; Fricker, 2007). Sometimes issues of epistemic authority and memory came to the foreground in interviews. In the interview with Sochi, I picked up on the positioning of the adult self as knower when I asked if she remembered calling the police. I wanted to understand more about what happened, but on reflection, my question, '*did you say it was you that called the police – do you remember?*' did not prompt more telling of the events that unfolded. Rather, my question acted as a way of testing Sochi's memory, which I did not intend to do. The storytelling seemed disrupted when memory was called into question, and that did not feel comfortable, at least for me. It seemed as if I had shifted into an authoritative person who questioned Sochi's account, and that was not my intention, but it did reveal something about how young women who talk about their experiences of childhood domestic abuse might struggle to establish authority to speak.

My question prompted Sochi to question her own knowledge and memory. She asked, 'do I remember? I think I did. I can't remember'. The way that we internalise 'external voices' is what Hermans (2001) describes as 'the other in self'; when stories are both our own, and ones that we have 'borrowed, in part' (Frank, 2012). Sochi internalised a doubt about the accuracy of her memory. In this case, patriarchal structures are set up to discredit or question the credibility of women's accounts of trauma or abusive

experiences (Brown & Burman, 1997; Fricker, 2007; Schuman & Galvez, 1996), setting up a narrative framework about trauma stories in which women who tell their stories about abuse and trauma are treated with caution. If women do not conform to a particular way of telling their stories, they may not be believed (Brown & Burman, 1997; Schuman & Galvez, 1996). These dominant narrative frameworks surrounding women's memories of abuse or trauma are located in a history of the centralisation of masculinity and the myth of objectivity (Brown & Burman, 1997) but this still holds social power, becoming part of how women tell their stories, and in this instance, it became part of the relational dynamic of the interview context.

I was concerned that my question of Sochi's memory of the event might have reinforced social structures that already bring to question the authenticity of women's accounts of violence and abuse. I remain unsure about whether my question was entirely useful. However, my question did bring into the interview a negotiation of knowledge and memory. Perhaps my own discomfort and the disruption in the interview reveals some of the challenges that young women face when questioned or challenged about their accounts of the violence and abuse that they experienced. My question revealed a dialogue between voices of uncertainty and certainty. Sochi questioned, *'do I remember?'*, and then said *'I was definitely instrumental in making sure the police were called. Cos it was just at a point where it was like you can't get away with doing this shit'*. The interplay of voices points to issues around who has the power to author her biography. This is not only an issue of accuracy, but it is also about power - an issue that I explore further in the following two chapters. My questioning of Sochi's account brought to the foreground a question of the authority of Sochi to speak for herself and author her own life. What happened in the interview dialogue here might replicate what happens in other situations where the speaker comes into conflict with others who have the power to authorise their account for them through an 'expert' lens (Callaghan et al., 2017).

Re-negotiations of power through storytelling enabled Sochi to tell a story of action and agency, reasserting herself as active and independent in adulthood. The social and cultural power of narrative frameworks that associate adulthood with independence and maturity were useful in shaping her story, enabling her to write herself into a position of action and of having a voice. In the absence of stories of linear recovery from her experiences, and in the context of a childhood that Sochi emphasised as 'not normal',

her position as a young adult who has a voice and speaks out, was a central part of her identity, enabling her to reject stories of passivity, self-blame and helplessness. Other participants also drew on the growing up narrative framework to talk about their transitions to young adulthood. For example, Clara explained that her ways of coping with the domestic abuse changed as she grew older.

Clara: I had school which was, you know, trying to cope with all that sort of stuff all of the time, which is still quite stressful for a kid, on top of all of that. And then I also had [brother], which was kind of like an extra branch to that. There was a lot going on. I guess yeah it was easier to run away than fight it most of the time. Yeah, and it's interesting cos at high school that stopped. All of a sudden I become a teenager and it was like you know, very much reality - I definitely didn't use the escapism route in high school – definitely not.

Int: do you know what changed for you?

Clara: ermm I don't know. I don't know if it was a hormonal thing, or... I don't know. Maybe I just grew up. It sort of stopped at like, I was about [pause] I don't know how old you are when you go into year 8? 12 ish. Yeah that's when it all kind of stopped. It was like I just grew up immediately.

Int: so what stopped?

Clara: just that escapism. That ability to run away from stuff just stopped. I had this very real realisation that I was a grown up and I needed to cope with stuff even though I was still really young.

In Clara's account of growing up, there is a blurring of child and adult positions, and multiple I positions exist. I draw attention to the voice poem from her account to show the interplay between I positions.

I don't know

I don't know if it was a hormonal thing

I don't know

... maybe I just grew up

I just grew up immediately.

I had this very real realisation

I was a grown up

I needed to cope with stuff

I was still really young.

The voice poem shows the polyvocality of Clara's account, demonstrating that the self is constructed through multiple co-existing voices that are often contradictory. Hermans (2001) referred to these many co-existing voices as 'multiplicity in unity' assuming that the self is not a single coherent self, but it is always storied through multiple co-existing I-positions. On one hand, Clara stated, 'I was a grown up and I needed to cope with stuff', and she also said 'I was still really young'. Growing up means you need to 'cope with stuff', however, there is a challenge in 'growing up' when you are still young ('I was still really young') and things are still difficult ('there was a lot going on'). Clara's story, like Sochi's, was shaped by dominant narrative frameworks about growing up. Adulthood is a narrative resource that offers something useful in that it enabled Clara to write herself into a story of coping in 'adult' ways (not using escapism, which is framed as a childlike thing to do). Clara stated, 'I was a grown up and I needed to cope with stuff'. However, adulthood only offers limited stories to tell. It can be a constraining narrative resource, particularly when her experience may not align with normative frameworks about what adults are expected to do.

Age was a key part of these growing up stories, and this is not surprising given the social and cultural dominance of age-based developmental stages, and the subsequent framing of childhood and adulthood as separate entities (O'Dell et al., 2018). In my analysis of transition stories, growing up was storied as sometimes dependent on age, but not always, and not only. For Clara, growing up and moving on was also dependant on time, space and relationality. In Clara's account, turning 18 meant that she finally had 'no tie' to her dad and she could be 'done' with him. However, turning 18 did not necessarily mean no more contact.

'naturally you go and see your dad. You know, you have contact, it seems the right thing to do in those... I don't wanna say in those days cos it sounds like a really long time ago, and it wasn't. But it did seem like the right thing to do, to go see him, and actually it wasn't. And I think she (mum) felt a lot of pressure from him for us to go see him, so it just became a natural thing for us to go and see him, erm, but it was definitely a release to kind of finally say "I'm done. I don't wanna do this anymore". And even more so at 18 when I finally had no tie to him whatsoever, although I did – cos we asked him for that

money. And even now, he's bringing me into it and I'm not even a part of it' (Clara)

Turning 18 meant that Clara could decide that she no longer wanted contact with her dad. Growing up and becoming an adult was marked by becoming 18, when Clara decided that she did not want to have contact with her dad. Her statement of independence exists despite her account that you 'naturally' see your dad and that contact seems like the 'right thing to do'. Voices of autonomy and independence can be seen as a resistance to the taken for grantedness and naturalisation of family relationships that have been harmful to her. However, through Clara's account, it was also clear that it was not as simple as deciding to not 'do this anymore'. Clara's ongoing contact with her dad had not stopped just because she turned 18. Her family still needed financial input from him, particularly to contribute to the care of Clara's sibling who has a disability. Each time her mum asked her dad for money, her dad brings them to court and Clara becomes intimately caught up in the dynamics that she wanted to be released from when she decided at 18 that she 'was done'. From this view, growing up is not simply marked by age but it is relational too. The voice poem that I have constructed from Clara's account helps to show the dialogical relationship between voices.

I'm done

I don't wanna do this anymore.

I finally had no tie to him whatsoever

... although I did – cos we asked him for that money

he's bringing me into it

I'm not even a part of it

The theorisation of the self as multiple and dialogical (Hermans, 2001; Bakhtin, 1981) helps to make sense of the several voices that exist in Clara's storytelling. I draw attention to the contradictions and inconsistencies between I positions, with the assumption that rather than evidencing a fragmented self, these inconsistencies point to sites of knowledge and meaning. Clara's multiple subjectivities in her account suggest a tension between independence and dependence. Clara stated, 'I'm done... I don't wanna do this anymore' and 'I finally had no tie to him'. However, through another voice, she articulated, 'although I did', and 'He's bringing me into it'. Then, her voice

of independence re-asserted the story of autonomy and adulthood by stating, ‘I’m not even a part of it’. The story she told was a story of asserting autonomy and independence but through a web of coercive control that her dad still maintained in the family system. The relational context here makes telling stories of adulthood autonomy and independence challenging; voices of autonomy and independence were compromised by her dad’s ongoing abuse and Clara’s position in the family as her sibling’s carer. Clara occupied multiple positions, meaning that the stories she told were neither one-dimensional nor consistent. The interplay of voices demonstrates the way that her account of her transition to young adulthood is dialogically produced.

Adulthood and childhood are socially and culturally constructed to be separate phases in the lifespan (Archard, 2004; Burman, 2017; James & Prout, 2015), but the separateness of childhood and adulthood is not easily, and not only, defined by age markers (Archard, 2004). However, a binary logic of childhood and adulthood as separate entities provides a narrative framework through which young women told their stories. For Clara, she ‘just grew up’ when she was ‘still young’. The realisation of the situation seemed to bring her into an adult world, meaning that she was no longer protected by the innocence of childhood or the ability to escape into a fantasy world as a way of coping. Age-based markers dictated her storytelling, such as becoming a teenager or turning 18. However, her experience of these ages told different stories that do not conform to the narrative framework of what might be expected at these age-based points. For example, being brought into the family system even though she is an adult, and coping in a ‘grown up’ way, even when she was still young.

For people who have experienced domestic abuse, on-going control is a common experience as domestic abuse does not always stop on separation (Eriksson, 2011; Morrison, 2015). For people who experienced domestic abuse in childhood, becoming an adult, growing up, or turning 18, does not automatically mean being free from the relational ties of the kind of control that Clara spoke about. The tie to her dad was not a physical tie but it was a psychological and relational tie, which in her experience is governed by money, age and her position in the family. Turning 18 was a sign of reaching adulthood – reaching independence and no longer relying on her father for money, but independence was compromised due to the way that her dad withheld money and regularly took Clara and her mum to court. Adulthood independence (see Burman, 2017) is a narrative resource that shaped storytelling but a fixed story of what

adulthood looks like (e.g. adulthood implies independence and autonomy) does not make space for dynamic shifting of positions within relationships. Independence is not entirely age based but it is relational, situational and dynamic.

Women's experiences of developmental transitions to young adulthood were not linear. Adulthood autonomy, independence and knowledge can be useful narrative resources which are drawn on in order to re-story the self as an active agent who not only 'knows' but can speak out and take action in ways that are taken seriously by others. It offers a point of departure from adulthood. But these narrative resources do not make space for alternative stories of anger, agency or action at other times too, and they do not always align with how participants experienced their lives. Young women whose growing up stories did not align with dominant narrative frameworks either negotiated those frameworks or found other stories to tell. Narrating uncertainty, non-linearity and compromised independence and capacity to act, are stories that are difficult to tell as they risk constructing the self as inherently responsible, or to blame, for the ways in which their lives have been different (Woodiwiss, 2014).

Narrating the future: When new stories are hopeful and old stories are heavy

Participants not only reflected on their lives to tell stories of the past, but they also told stories of their future selves. I explore this with the assumption that the stories we tell not only account for where we have been and where we currently are, but they can also act as guides for living (Rose, 1989). Here, I draw attention to how participants narrated the future when old stories still carry weight.

Liv was tearful in her interview as she spoke about her difficulties with her mental health, her relationship with her mum, and her relationships with men. Liv's biological dad was violent towards her mother and her older brother throughout her early childhood. When her biological dad left, he cut contact and her mum began a relationship with a new man who Liv described as her stepdad. He had learning disabilities, and Liv explained that her mum started drinking and became emotionally and physically violent towards her stepdad. Liv's stepdad died a few years prior to the interview, and her mum was left dependant on Liv as a carer. Despite these difficulties Liv wanted to be interviewed because she wanted to know that her experiences could be

used to help other people who had been through similar things. She wanted things to be better in the future for others. She also spoke about wanting things to be better in the future for herself.

'yeah I've been quite depressed the past couple of years. I was a lot more focused compared to how I am now, but I don't want just to resign myself to how I am now. I want to put plans in place because I know I'm not always gonna feel this way, or I hope I'm not' (Liv)

Liv's account of the future was shaped by a voice of hope and a belief that things can be different. She said, *'I want to put plans in place... I know I'm not always gonna feel this way... I hope I'm not'*. However, her voice of hope was constrained by the way that her difficulties immediately challenge the belief that things can change. When talking about the possibility of things getting better for her, her story fell to a place of doubt, pressing back against the voice of hope and change. For example, the following two I statements suggest two different things: *'I know I'm not always gonna feel this way'* is a voice of certainty that offers a story of confidence and certainty about the future. However, immediately afterwards in Liv's account is a voice of doubt that stated, *'I hope I'm not'*. A voice of hope pushes back against a story of certainty, producing a tension in Liv's account that shows the challenge of telling a consistent story of the future when stories of the past carry weight.

In Liv's account, there is a sense that she is still in the 'process' and her journey is not yet complete. Her story of transition enables her to locate herself as somewhere in the middle, a place where change is still possible, and she is not confined to a narrative trajectory of inevitable damage. The possibility of change introduces the possibility of a future self that is empowered and there is a voice of hope that rejects the sense of being restricted by old stories. Liv's statement, *'I don't just want to resign myself to how I am now'* can be viewed as a negotiation of power where stories of the future enable a voice of resistance to dominant narrative frameworks of risk and damage.

Voicing resistance and hope provided Liv with a sense of agency over her future story. However, the sense of agency is constrained when the belief in change exists in a dialogical relationship with a voice of uncertainty. The story here is also story in which she is restricted by her own difficulties and the weight of a past story that still holds

power. Liv stated, ‘I was looking at this PhD but then I have really bad social anxiety...’. She expanded on her story of the future further.

Liv: I feel like people can see – I feel like I wear my childhood on me. I feel like people think I’m a weirdo and stuff, and yeah. It puts me off like, mixing with people really

Int: yeah [pause] in like – in an ideal world now, can you tell me how things would be for you?

Liv: erm, I think I would have pursued this career – but I struggled cos people said oh if you wanna get anywhere you’re going to have to make contacts. And I was like oh, I’m never gonna make any contacts. You know? I didn’t pursue it, but yeah I’d have like a partner and I’d be more financially stable. I think I used to be really good with finances and stuff but now I’ve kind of fallen into the same trap as my mum and I’m just terrified that I’m gonna end up [pause]

Int: it feels like you’re in a trap? Like for you the same trap as your mum?

Liv: yeah, kind of like she’s a black hole and I’m being dragged into it

Int: do you know what’s dragging you into it?

Liv: just the way I’ve been brought up and it feels like I hit a load of blocks all the time. Even with jobs and stuff and you’ve got to be outgoing and I just feel like [sighs]

Int: it’s not always easy to keep up with all of that

Liv: no

Int: it’s not easy. No – I guess I’m struck with your feeling that you’re being pulled into a black hole

Liv: It all weighs heavy on you. Like [pause] it’s actually really hard to describe, but I feel like others can see it and I feel like it makes me different. And I feel like it’s like a tie – that I’m gonna end up like that. I do pick bad relationships and stuff - and I don’t even notice I’m doing it sometimes.

Through her account, Liv’s future self can be different. She said, ‘I’d have a partner, I’d be more financially stable’. An alternative story acts as a counter-voice and counter-story to the shame that is associated with her childhood (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004). Being invited to consider alternative versions of her future enabled her to imagine the

possibility of telling a different story. However, alternative stories have limited ways of being told and that is in part due to the dominance of narrative frameworks of risk and inevitable damage. The dominance of a risk and damage narrative framework can be seen through Liv's statement, 'she's a black hole and I'm being dragged into it'. It is also assumed that falling into that trap is something that Liv herself would be responsible for. A voice of self-responsibilisation can be seen through Liv's I statements, 'I do pick bad relationships... I don't even notice I am doing it sometimes'. Woodiwiss (2014) has argued that self-responsibility is shaped by neoliberal values – she suggested that in the absence of 'successful' healing and recovery stories, women who have experienced childhood trauma and abuse can fall back to a story of self-blame by claiming responsibility for their difficulties and by storying their adult difficulties as a direct consequence of their childhood trauma. Whilst Liv's hope and belief that the future can be different is not entirely unspeakable or silenced, it is consistently knocked back through the existence of an individualising narrative framework that positions women themselves as responsible for their own self-making and self-healing after trauma (Woodiwiss, 2007). From this view, Liv storied her future self with uncertainty and tension, with self-blame and agency threading through these stories of potential futures.

I asked Liv how things would be for her ideally for two reasons. Firstly, I was interested to hear how she would/could re-write the self, and how she could imagine things to be different. Secondly, I was not sure how useful my interviewing style had been. I wanted to create spaces in interviews that were open enough for participants to tell their stories in their own ways. I invited Liv to talk about how things were, but I started to worry that neutral responses meant that I was subscribing to a single, and what felt like an upsetting version of her future story. My responses, such as 'it feels like you're in a trap?' and 'do you know what's dragging you into it?' were in line with the open-ended interviewing style I wanted to use. However, it also felt that I was staying with Liv's story in a way that might have reinforced a sense of inevitability, for instance, by agreeing with the story that 'you're being pulled into a black hole'... 'I feel like it's a tie, I'm gonna end up like that'. I show the below interaction to explore how my own response to Liv's negotiation of agency and self-blame shaped the interview dialogue itself.

Liv: just the way I've been brought up and it feels like I hit a load of blocks all the time. Even with jobs and stuff and you've got to be outgoing and I just feel like [sighs]

Int: it's not always easy to keep up with all of that

Liv: no

My responses are indicative of the fact that I have therapeutic training. I would describe my response, 'it's not always easy to keep up with that', as empathic and congruent – in line with how I would interact with a client in therapy. It is not a typical research interview question or interaction. On reflection, my response was partially a product of loosening the 'rules' around what a 'good' research interview looks like. My response blurs the therapy-research boundaries, as Bondi & Fewell (2017) discuss, in that a similar response or intervention could well be used, albeit to a somewhat different (or similar) effect, in a therapy context too. However, my reflection is that my response was not problematic; rather, it enabled a further dwelling in, and exploration of, the stories that were being told.

My responses might also reveal something about the power narrative frameworks of risk and inevitable damage have in shaping how Liv made sense of her experiences. Through Liv's account, she linked her current difficulties to her childhood trauma to establish a causal link and then to story her future in accordance with that link. These causal links and consequent storytelling are also gendered. Liv spoke about hitting 'blocks' in her efforts to get jobs and be social in ways that are socially and culturally expected of her as a 23-year-old woman. These pressures and experiences are not uncommon. Regardless of trauma histories, and particularly as a woman in a society shaped by patriarchy and neoliberalism, the discourse of 'female success' is powerful in shaping women's experiences of 'becoming' women (Baker, 2010; McRobbie, 2004, 2015). My response, 'it's not always easy to keep up with all of that' points to my own recognition that the work of keeping up with social and cultural expectations as a young woman is not easy. It is a reflection on my own experiences, as well as empathy with Liv's story of struggle. As an interviewer, and specifically as an interviewer who also has therapeutic training and knowledge, I view it as important not to overlook or divert attention from the things that are difficult to talk about and listen to. My intention was to communicate empathy, but my response also points to the weight of a dominant narrative framework of risk and the inevitability of an adulthood that is filled with

struggles that are a consequence of domestic abuse. My response may have opened up space to express that weight more. However, it might have also shut down the space to articulate other alternative voices.

Telling new stories is not only dependent on the teller themselves, but the stories that people tell are also shaped by the context of the telling. There are narrative challenges of telling future stories that diverge from past stories that carry weight. Narrating transitions to young adulthood, which is generally framed as having a set end point that is fixed, becomes more difficult when the possibility to tell new stories is constrained by those of childhood. In the section that follows I consider how participants' accounts also frame the 'old' and 'new' as needing to bridge coherently in order to live an authentic and meaningful life.

Bridging old and new stories in the quest for authenticity

Through telling stories of developmental transitions, participants acknowledged that there can be a narrative disconnect between the past and present, and that a narrative disconnect between past and present can bring about a sense of lacking authenticity. Woven through these accounts is the assumption that living authentically is synonymous with doing adulthood 'successfully' after adversities in childhood.

Sonia narrated her transition to young adulthood and her desire to make changes in her adult life. Through her transitions story, she explained that as a teenager she wanted everyone to think that she was 'from a normal family' but things had changed and now she no longer wanted to live with a 'mask' on.

'it's quite strange because now I'm more honest as an adult and [pause] yeah, I just feel like if I carry on living like this, it's almost like you know, you're living with a mask on I suppose. But it just caused me so much stress. So now I'd just really rather be open and honest. Not about what happened in detail, it's only really my partner that knows about that side, but I try and kind of say to people "oh I didn't really have a good relationship with my parents". So I'm more open to saying things like that now, so the more I've said it, I often receive the same reaction, which is shock. Erm, and I don't know if that's because people think, oh you know, she's got a professional job or I don't know' (Sonia)

Sonia's account is an account of making old stories more speakable in order to live more authentically. Through her account, becoming an adult and occupying a new position of being a professional meant that Sonia was in part, no longer concerned about being 'normal' and 'fitting in' (something that is linked to childhood). Adulthood was an opportunity to re-story the self as 'successful', and it was an opportunity to live in a way that is open and that causes her 'less stress'. However, her story of transitions has tensions threading through it, because of how an adult positioning intersects with a professional identity and childhood experiences of domestic abuse. The below voice poem brings to light some of the intersecting voices that shaped her account of navigating young adulthood and authenticity.

I'm more honest as an adult
I just feel like
... if I carry on living like this –
you're living with a mask on I suppose
... it just caused me so much stress
I'd just really rather be open and honest.

The voice poem shows the interplay between voices in Sonia's account. There is a voice of shame, 'you're living with a mask on', and there also exists a co-existing wish to be authentic, 'I'd just really rather be open and honest'. The dialogue between shame and a desire to be authentic is shaped by a story that positions openness and authenticity as ideal. There is a sense that whilst she lives with a mask on, and has done for most of her life, the mask is unwanted; it has implications and is no longer worth the stress.

On the one hand, authenticity was storied as ideal living, but the desire for authenticity was not the only voice in Sonia's account. Considering the notion that the stories we tell are, in part, shaped by the voices of others (Hermans, 2001; 2003), voices of others were powerful in shaping Sonia's account of her quest for authenticity in order to achieve successful adulthood. Sonia's position as a successful professional means that stories of struggle from her childhood were less speakable as an adult who occupied a position of status as a professional. Sonia's position as a successful adult professional, in some contexts, can constrain the way in which she is able to voice her struggles, increasing the weight of shame, despite a desire to be open. The part of herself that wanted to be open and honest – the part of her that did not want to 'carry on living like

this... living with a mask on', was restricted by the social and institutional narrative resources that imply that particularly for women, being successful professionally does not allow space for personal struggle (Chowdhury, Gibson, & Wetherell, 2019). Storied like this, becoming a professional meant that stories of struggle were constrained, and Sonia still wore a 'mask' even though there was a personal cost to doing so. Sonia's explanation that she is greeted with the shock of others if she speaks about the violence she experienced in childhood, shines light on the mechanisms through which her struggles can be silenced. Through her transitions story, Sonia has navigated her transition to young womanhood and 'success', but the cost of doing self-driven 'success' work is high.

Similarly, Hayley's account was also one of bridging old stories with current stories in a quest to live more authentically.

'I talk about my experiences a lot – it's part of my way of coping with my life presently. It's like how do I fit into normal society? Because if people talk about their childhood or whatever, it's like 'oh I don't have that experience' and I went through a period of just being quiet – like, just don't say it cos people will judge you, whereas now I keep people in my life that would let me say it and wouldn't judge me – they might still occasionally be shocked and fall off their chair or cry, which is always really awkward – like you know it's sad, like my therapist brain knows it is sad but like my emotional response isn't necessarily appropriate. Erm and I keep those people in my life now – that are willing to hear it. Which means it's almost become quite normal for me to talk about it. It doesn't particularly bother me to talk about it. I don't very often like stop and take stock of how much things have changed.' (Hayley)

Hayley's account was shaped by similar narrative resources, but she told a different story to Sonia's. Hayley pointed to a time when she did not speak about her experiences because of the judgement of others. She pointed out, *'I went through a period of being quiet – like, just don't say it cos people will judge you, whereas now I keep people in my life that would let me say it and wouldn't judge me'*. The capacity for openness and authenticity was storied as a process; something that Hayley had taken action to achieve, and something that she has worked hard at. She reflected, *'I keep those people in my life now – that are willing to hear it'*. From this view, the transition to openness and authenticity was storied as work, and it is storied as something that is desirable. I

statements such as ‘I talk about my experiences a lot...’ and ‘it’s quite normal for me to talk about it. It doesn’t particularly bother me to talk about it’ write the self into a position of openness and authenticity, positioning the self as having done self-development work successfully and having bridged the old with the current in order to no longer be constrained by the past. A successful transitions story of self-development and authenticity can be a useful story to tell as it can support the production of a coherent self with a consistent and clear narrative of transition through which the past is narratively connected to the present.

To summarise this section, transitions stories intersect with accounts of growing up and becoming a professional. Openness and authenticity were storied as desirable, suggesting that bridging old stories with current ones is a necessary challenge to undertake. However, there are identity challenges in doing the work of authenticity and in claiming ownership of stories in a way that produces a narrative connectedness and coherency between childhood and young adulthood. There is a particular challenge in telling a story that contains and expresses both struggle and success. Stories of developmental transitions to young adulthood consist of polyvocality, and the voices of others can sometimes constrain the articulation and expression of a self that is open and authentic, even though openness and authenticity are positioned as desirable and even synonymous with happiness and success.

Summary

Dominant understandings of developmental transitions were powerful in shaping how young women told their stories. Child to adult transitions are generally framed through an age-based and stage-based lens, overlooking other factors that shape the experience of becoming an adult and other transitions during that time (Crafter et al., 2019; Zittoun, 2007; 2008). I have pluralised ‘transitions’ in an effort to show that transitions are plural and multiple, rather than a single-track linear trajectory with an end-point. Participants told different individual stories, and they told multiple stories of their transitions to young adulthood that were unique to their individual lives, histories and relationships as well as narrated in ways that were shaped by socio-cultural narrative resources. Further, transitions in participants’ lives were on-going and dynamic, indicating that transitions can be viewed as a process rather than work towards a product or end point of adulthood (Crafter et al., 2019; Walkerdine, 1993).

Transition stories in relation to developmental transitions have the capacity to support young women to construct the self as competent, capable and independent. Participants re-storied the self in ways that enabled them to negotiate power in important ways. For example, discourses of adulthood, femininity and ‘success’ enabled young women to construct a self that has the capacity to change and grow, enabling the production of a self that is stable and an account of the self that is culturally valuable. However, these same narrative resources can be limiting (Zittoun, 2007). Women can be left with few alternative ways of telling their stories if their experiences do not align with these success stories. Feelings of shame that are attached to stories of childhood domestic abuse and domestic abuse that has continued into young adulthood, can be intimately woven into women’s sense of who they are and into their stories of the future. For example, women’s own mothering capabilities or capabilities to be ‘successful’ in adulthood, were storied as dependent on their childhood blueprints, but these stories consisted of uncertainties, disruption, struggle and shame. ‘Success’ stories may not make space for tensions, contradictions, and feelings that do not align to how these stories of successful transitions ‘should’ look. Transitions stories were also shaped by narrative resources of risk, deficit and damage, which provide a particular narrative framework about the expected life stories of people who experienced childhood domestic abuse.

For women who have different stories to tell but limited narrative resources from which to draw on in order to tell different stories, some people can fall to a place of shame, self-blame or self-accountability. Self-accountability and self-responsibility in storytelling can offer a sense of agency, but these stories also exist in a socio-cultural context that is built on neoliberal and patriarchal values, in which women who succeed are responsible for their own success, and those who don’t, are ultimately responsible for their failures too (McRobbie, 2004). Framed in this way, stories of struggle and/or damage construct the self as inevitably damaged. There are ways in which young women may be simultaneously empowered and restricted by the stories that they tell about themselves.

To conclude this chapter, participants’ stories suggest that developmental transitions are a dynamic, interactive process (Zittoun, 2007). Young women told stories of non-linearity, despite the dominance of developmental transitions narrative frameworks that privilege age-based transitions that are linear and product-based, rather than process-

based. Individual participants told different and multiple stories of transitions that were associated with becoming a young adult, and not just one. Transitions can be considered as plural. Lastly, storytelling can hold power, not only in how the self is constructed at the time of the telling, but also stories can provide a framework for writing the self into a future life or identity.

6. Recoveries

I think

I realise (pause) well...

I'm trying to remind myself...

maybe I've just had some hard experiences that have made me – that have moulded me in that way

- Emma

Introduction

Women told stories of moving on, moving through, and recovery from domestic abuse in childhood. From their accounts I have constructed a 'recoveries' narrative typology that draws together these kinds of stories. In this chapter I explore where participants told stories of disrupting old stories, accounts of moving on, and stories where they turned the gaze inwards using a self-evaluative structure. I explore how these stories are shaped by an individualising neoliberal or psychotherapeutic recovery story, which intersects with gendered structures that also shape women's lives. These recovery stories can be useful to young women, but I also explore how existing narrative frameworks may simultaneously constrain which recovery stories are speakable and how they are told.

Expert gaze as disrupting old stories

Participants' accounts highlight realisations that they were struggling, realising their childhood was not 'normal' or piecing together parts of their life in ways that they had not done before. In this section I explore the power that the expert gaze has in offering an authorised account through which young women can talk about their experiences of domestic abuse and their recoveries. Hayley spoke about going to university and studying. Studying had provided an authorised account of her childhood and a different way of making sense of what she had experienced in childhood.

'I'd been like using drugs and alcohol and self-harm for 3 or 4 years by that point, and then I left home to be with this guy, he went to university and he was like 'student loan, free money' so I was like 'OK yeah let's go to university' so I followed in that path and chose to do criminal justice and I think because I

chose to do criminal justice I all of a sudden got this new language for this experience that I'd had in the context of what had happened at home and what happened outside of home as well, and erm I started developing PTSD which turned into anorexia, which turned into a hot mess for four years. And then (pause) eventually travelled through to the other side of that'
(Hayley)

Through her account, Hayley suddenly had access to a new language and framework through which to make sense of her childhood experiences of domestic abuse. She explained, 'I all of a sudden got this new language for this experience that I'd had', suggesting that access to new language and a framework acted as a critical realisation for her. Discovering a new language for her experiences prompted a re-orientation of her identity and opened up the possibility for her to story herself and her life differently. The access to different and new language occurred at a particular time and place in Hayley's life as she was a young adult and navigating university life. Hayley also spoke frequently about her realisations that her childhood was 'not normal'.

'I tended to like latch onto teachers at school in the hope that somebody in some way would see that I wasn't OK. So I must have had some concept, that - not that it wasn't normal because I really did think it was normal until I had therapy like in my 20's and I was like 'oh what, everybody's childhood is not like that?' erm but that - that maybe I wasn't ok. I wanted somebody to be like 'let me care for you' (slight laugh) and I tended to latch onto teachers in the hope that somebody would give me something. I don't know what it was that I was seeking, but I used to loiter around this class that was on a Monday every week - cos that was my class with the youngest teacher and I guess maybe I thought she would relate to me the most in some way? And I intentionally used to leave self-harm visible in front of one teacher specifically at school, because I felt like he might have a good response about it - he didn't - but something told me that he might - erm, I actually acted out a lot - I mean school wouldn't consider me a bad student but I acted out a lot - I would go away and hide in the toilets and wait for somebody to notice that I wasn't there' (Hayley)

Hayley explained that she thought her childhood was 'normal', but she also 'must have had some concept' that her childhood was not 'normal' because of the multiple ways she had tried to 'wait for somebody to notice' and have someone 'care'. On one hand,

she thought her childhood was ‘normal’, and on the other hand, she knew that she was not OK. From this view, there is a gap in the stories she told and there is a narrative incoherence in the family story. An account of not being ‘normal’ is not necessarily a story that Hayley would or could have told at the time of being a child, but a retrospective vantage point enabled Hayley to reflect, bringing to the foreground these contradictory voices. Her meaning-making had changed over time and the stories she told can be considered fluid, always located in a particular time and space. Central to the dialogical self is the idea that our expressions and story-telling practices are not static (Bell and Gardiner, 1998; Hermans, 2003). Given that storytelling changes depending on time, context and the particular narrative resources that are available across different times and places, it is important to explore the implications that has for what kinds of stories Hayley could tell, and the narrative resources that were available to her at different times of telling. In childhood, Hayley needed to be recognised by someone else – she needed to be ‘read’ by another to be able to differentiate and re-narrate her childhood as not ‘normal’. Being seen, having her distress visible, being read by others, and giving a name to her experiences that was not based on the internal logic of the family’s own narrative, was required in order to disrupt the family narrative and enable Hayley to authorise her own biography.

There is an expertise that is associated with adulthood in a way that does not tend to be associated with childhood (Burman, 2017). The fact that Hayley told her story from an adult position granted her a particular kind of authority as she authored her story in a different way than she had as a child. The fluidity and temporality of storytelling does not take away from or compromise the credibility of her account. However, in a social and cultural context that privileges women’s accounts of abuse that are unchanging and rationally told (Alcoff, 1991), the issue of truth and temporality is important to explore. I return to the ‘truth’ debate because Hayley’s reflection on her childhood told a story of struggle, but her childhood story of struggle was not always clear because it was not read or authorised by an adult when she was younger. Her teacher did not pick up on her efforts to communicate things were not OK. As an adult, during the interview, Hayley could tell her story of struggle as a rational authority on her own life, but from an adult speaking position, she faced a challenge in that talking about her struggles. In order to achieve coherence in her re-telling, her struggles were re-conceptualised and become the source of her strength and survivorship - they form part of an empowering

and coherent story to tell. However, when reflecting on this time in childhood, in the absence of a legitimised and readable story, she fell to a negotiation of agency and blame where these stories of struggle construct the self as agentic (by seeking connection and support, e.g. ‘I intentionally used to leave self-harm visible in front of one teacher specifically at school, because I felt like he might have a good response about it.’) but also helpless, because nobody noticed. Through her story, the realisation at university that her childhood was not ‘normal’ prompted a change of story. Realising her childhood was not ‘normal’ – that maybe that she, herself, was not ‘normal’, was a big shift.

Hayley: I remember sat in this abuse lecture and I remember like sat at the back and you can just see the other people like ‘oh my god that happens? That’s so bad’ and I was like ‘oh I thought that was normal’. (Int: yeah) yeah so you feel like – you feel on the periphery which is funny, cos I’ve since bumped into people from university and they’ve been like ‘oh we thought you were so sorted we thought you were just getting on with it’ whereas I perceived that to be ‘I don’t fit in with anybody, I’m on the outside and everybody else is better than me’

Int: yeah – I can relate. There have been times when people have said similar things to me – that I look like I’ve got it all sorted, and I think what!? Wow (slight laughter) I do a good job to present this image that I am very sorted then (both laughter)

Hayley: (laughs) yeah I remember leaving – I went to hospital in the last year of my degree – into treatment for an eating disorder, and I remember like it got announced in class (laughter) (Int: oh goodness) yeah that I wouldn’t be there for a couple of months (slight laughter) and people just didn’t get it – they were like, ‘but we thought you were so sorted!’

Hayley’s narration, that others ‘just didn’t get it’, positioned her on the periphery, rendering her story as unreadable. Hayley narrated her childhood experiences as transgressing what is considered normal, writing her into a story of being different or deficient in some way (Burman, 2017; O’Dell et al., 2018). A failure to be read story such as this communicates a sense of difference and also it functions as a way of communicating the distress that she experienced at that time. A failure to be read story shines light on a gap between the stories she can tell now and her family script around what was ‘normal’. From this view, a failure to be read story can communicate that

there are limited opportunities to tell a story that is in line with her experiences whilst also telling a story that is coherent and that has been authorised or 'read' by another. Coherence and stability of the account are features of an 'authorised' and credible story, and narrating the self through a normative narrative resource about childhood and family life provides a stable and coherent framework through which to make sense of her experiences. The story Hayley told at the time of the interview, about her realisation and a shift of a framework through which to make sense of her childhood, provided her with a story to tell that disrupted the family narrative. Given that Hayley had access to a different language and narrative framework as she grew older, her re-telling of her childhood is an account that has both remained the same, and that has changed over time.

Previous research has also explored the power of an authorised account of domestic abuse, suggesting that childhood accounts can be shaped by professionalised or therapeutic discourses, as these accounts are readable and accepted versions of the violence that happened (Callaghan et al., 2017). These authorised accounts do not always fit with children's experiences of domestic abuse and they smoothen out the multivocality of the expression of their experiences. However, authorised accounts also have the capacity to provide a stable story that is more likely to be considered reliable by those who are listening (Callaghan et al., 2017). Staying with the notion that the stories we tell are not static, and they are shaped by the time and context of the telling, a shift in meaning-making for Hayley occurred when she was at university and had access to a new kind of knowledge. A new kind of knowledge provided for the first time a 'legitimate' way of storying her childhood, made possible by the narrative frameworks made available through expert discourses.

Naming her experiences as abuse and locating herself within that narrative framework helped her experiences to be legitimised, pointing to the way that theory-based knowledge is privileged when people speak about abuse they have experienced (Alcoff & Gray, 1993). A binary of theory and experience sets up a challenging terrain for people who experienced abuse in childhood but lived away from the gaze of an authority figure or institution which could legitimise their experiences and provide a readable and authorised account. This binary of theory and experience also sets up a privileging of 'expert' speakers (i.e. professionals) over those who have less social power and status (i.e. children, young people, people who are marginalised in society),

setting up a situation where if a person with limited social power speaks about abuse they experienced drawing on experiential knowledge, their credibility and authority is likely to be dismissed in favour of experts who speak from a theory-based position (Alcoff & Gray, 1993; Fricker, 2007; Orgad, 2009). The privileging of theory-based knowledge over experiential knowledge has implications for whose story counts in which contexts. Hayley's positioning of having 'moved on' ('my awareness started to change... I started to experience more of life') is produced by an expert and professionalised discourse of recovery, assuming that recovery is a linear journey forward, bolstered by self-knowledge and self-awareness (Hayes, Laurenceau, Feldman, Strauss, & Cardaciotto, 2007). This story told through an expert gaze boosts the power her story has by making available credible and coherent stories, and through these stories, constructing the self as knower and a more credible speaker.

I also used some of my own experiences in the interview dialogue. When Hayley explained that she felt on the 'outside' and that other people at university thought she was 'so sorted' despite the fact that she did not feel it, I related to what she said. It is also something I experience and find it is both restrictive (is there space to be 'not sorted', if that is how I am perceived?) and empowering (it is a useful thing at times; it can be protective and can prevent me being treated as 'less than'). My response, 'I can relate... there are times when people have said similar things to me' was intuitive at the time of the interview. On reflection, Hayley and I shared several personal and professional positions which likely enabled the dialogue to unfold as it did. We are both therapists, both similar ages, and we have both grown up with domestic abuse. The relational context of the interview was shaped by the fact that Hayley and I had not met before, but we had known of each other for some time because of the nature of social media and mutual connections that we had.

These moments of self-disclosure felt appropriate. My understanding of being misunderstood facilitated Hayley's continued reflection that people just didn't 'get it'. My disclosure was not needed, but it did do something. Hydén (2014) interviewed people who had experienced domestic abuse and reflected on the similarities between narrative research interviews and psychotherapy. She suggested that research interviews and psychotherapy relationships alike, both have the capacity to offer a 'third person' witness and validation to the story that is being told, creating a new space for a different kind of meaning-making to unfold. With Hayley, my own responses enabled a

recognition of the tension that Hayley was talking about. What was produced through this disclosure is a story that disrupts the old one. It enabled her story to be recognised, supporting a sense of narrative coherence and readability. It directly challenged and disrupted a story of lacking readability and being unseen, establishing a visibility of her story in the interview dialogue. However, the disclosure may not be entirely enabling. Given the power relations between researcher and interviewee, my own disclosure could have prevented other aspects of Hayley's story being articulated. My own disclosure risks shutting down Hayley's expression of I positions that were different to my own, offering a story that is authorised (acknowledging I also occupy a 'professional' position) but perhaps not the story Hayley intended to be heard.

My reflection on my own role in shaping the telling of Hayley's story is not only an epistemological issue but it is because a dialogical philosophy assumes the self comes into existence relationally and contextually (Buber, 1923/1996; Mishler, 2004; 1986). A relational space was enabled that framed Hayley's previously unreadable stories as readable. I could read and hear Hayley's struggles and brought my own personal and professional selves into the relational space, perhaps supporting a validation of a story which for Hayley, people have not 'got' before. People do not speak from decontextualised or neutral social spaces (Bakhtin, 1981), and telling stories requires a listener who is willing to hear (Frank, 2013). My own recognition with Hayley that I experience some of that sense of being misunderstood too, might have made her story of difference and struggle more speakable. In other contexts, that voice of struggle may have been less speakable because of a socio-cultural context that values strength and survivorship, particularly when women talk about experiences of abuse (Orgad, 2009; Reich, 2002). These dominant narrative frameworks about survivorship are powerful. They function to position those who tell their stories through this framework as having done the work of 'recovery' and having come out of the other side – a sense of 'travelling through' the hot mess that Hayley spoke about.

Talking about struggles is not easy. Accounting for both struggle and survivorship is a precarious story to tell, and can risk inviting a speaker into a challenging negotiation of agency and shame (Alcoff & Gray, 1993; Woodiwiss, 2014). Hayley's construction of herself as 'other' was heightened and integrated into her sense of self, bolstering her sense of shame and struggle, limiting her ability to find ways of communicating how she felt. However, in the context of the interview and later in her adulthood from a

retrospective vantage point, Hayley's meaning-making had changed. As touched on earlier, Hydén (2014) suggested that bringing a 'third person' perspective to the interview (i.e. the interviewer) can be a way of bringing into being a different or new reality. Bondi (2013) similarly suggested that a third person presence can also help to address the gap between personal experience and its narration. There was a shift of tone to the interview where Hayley shifted from talking about the 'otherness' she experienced, to using laughter as a way of bridging the gap between her past and present meaning-making. Laughter can have several functions in interview dialogues, and I do not assume that it has the same function across different interviews and for different people. However, the laughter we shared might reflect the challenge of negotiating the challenge of telling stories that capture the co-existence of shame, strength and struggle.

I now turn to Nadine's stories of disrupting old stories to further explore these themes. Nadine narrated her realisation that her childhood was 'not normal'. She explained that realising that her childhood was 'not normal' was the start of the unravelling of a different kind of truth about her childhood, prompted her early adulthood to be filled with psychiatric hospitalisations and diagnoses.

'that just blew my mind completely, cos I didn't even - just didn't understand. So then that almost like just causes you to break down mentally and you just can't get your head around it. So then I was admitted and I stayed there for 8 months whilst they just [slight laugh] and I think that's what made me ill, was them telling me how different my life was compared to how they were perceiving it. I just couldn't get my head around it and then that's when I got really angry. But not with my dad or with the men or my mum, it was just with them because they'd popped my bubble. They'd ruined – I remember shouting at one member of staff that they'd ruined my life. And she was probably utterly bewildered and she didn't know what she'd done, but it was that it was all OK until they told me that it wasn't normal and tried to pull it apart' (Nadine)

Nadine's sense that 'it was all OK until they told me that it wasn't normal and tried to pull it apart' points to a shattering of her reality - a disruption of the family story, threatening her version of her life story with incoherence and instability. Like Hayley, this was a critical moment. It was one in which a new kind of expert knowledge – a new story - meant a re-construction of her story, her reality and her identity. The notion that

the new story just ‘didn’t make sense’ was repeated frequently in Nadine’s interview, suggesting that the disruption of her story challenged her worldview and sense of self. However, the disruption of stories, like Hayley’s was framed by previous childhood experiences of lacking readability. Nadine spoke about being taken aside in school to speak to a pastoral care person who Nadine felt must have noticed something was not OK even though they did not do anything.

‘I got sent to her and thought oh my gosh, what have I done, why did I get sent here - why am I here? But it was actually that they’d noticed – they felt like I still wasn’t really like contributing in class and that I was a bit closed down and wasn’t speaking. She was asking me all these questions like, ‘can you talk? Do you talk at home? Do you do all of this?’ and I was like ‘yeah I don’t really know why I’m here’. So I don’t know what they noticed, or how, or why, but I got sent to this woman. But nothing really came of it, like I went two or three times but she probably just thought, ‘oh she’s fine’. But I think that was the start of mentally things going downhill. I still don’t understand why or how? I think it’s sort of that build up inside you maybe’ (Nadine)

Nadine did not know how or why but being taken aside in school was ‘the start of mentally things going downhill’. Nadine’s story again was one of failure of recognition and not being readable by the other. Being taken aside had opened up an opportunity to disrupt the ‘build up’ of things inside of her and perhaps a space to question why she had been taken aside. From the retrospective vantage point of the interview, Nadine reflected on her confusion about why she had been taken aside. Yet at the same time, she wondered how anyone could not have noticed that she was not OK.

‘I think like looking back now and having had that admission and finding out about how different my life was to how it should have been, it’s kind of almost, how could you not notice? I don’t know – yeah’ (Nadine)

Through her story, there is a sense of a problem – a disruption, but no narrative within which it can be named or contained. The passing of time had offered Nadine a different way of making sense of her childhood, specifically in relation to the notion that her childhood was ‘not normal’. Time is a point of interest to the dialogical self theory, which assumes that temporality shapes how we tell stories about our lives, and how we make meaning about our experiences (Hermans, 2003). For Nadine, the realisation

about how different her life was, shifted how she made sense of her childhood. Attention to the dialogical relationship between voices here reveals the polyvocality here. From one voice, Nadine felt that, *'I don't know what they noticed, or how, or why, but I got sent to this woman. But nothing really came of it, like I went two or three times but she probably just thought, 'oh she's fine''*. Yet on the other hand, Nadine questioned *'how could you not notice?'* The existence of both of these subjectivities points to a contradiction in her sense of how visible her struggles were to others, again pointing to the challenge of readability when there is a narrative incoherence in the story.

Telling a story of not being noticed positions the self as invisible and left Nadine with limited ways of telling her story. Like Hayley, in the absence of an authoritative or expert gaze, there was not a legitimised way of making sense of her experiences and there were limited narrative frameworks through which to talk about the abuse. Nadine was left with few options for how to story what not being seen was like, often leaving her to bridge the gap between experiential knowledge and 'expert' knowledge with statements such as 'I don't know' and 'I just – I'm not sure'. In the absence of a narrative framework that represented her experiences, Nadine's stories were told through the narrative resources that were available to her.

Nadine's reflection on the realisation that her childhood was 'not normal' was told in a linear way - she went through a process of realisation, had a break down, then she started to work on her recovery. This linear structure of storytelling aligns with dominant narrative frameworks of recovery from traumatic experiences from a psychotherapeutic point of view (Hayes, Laurenceau, Feldman, Strauss, & Cardaciotto, 2007). A linear structure of recovery produces coherence and readability. A linear structure of a recovery story is a 'neat' form of storytelling and it is a story that can serve people well because it erases some of the messiness and chaos, and ultimately helps to construct the self as having survived. Through a linear recovery story, people can write themselves into a position of survivorship and strength, and these are culturally valuable positions for women to occupy (Orgad, 2009; Ovenden, 2012; Reich, 2002). However, a linear recovery narrative framework does not make space for uncertainty, negotiation or fluidity. Nadine negotiated the complex terrain of requiring a coherent story but having little certainty through which to narrate a recovery that made sense. Her account offers a reflection on what uncertainty and confusion left her with.

Nadine: I think because I didn't know it was any different to anything else, or wrong, or any of that, there was no reason to like question it or to ask for help or – yeah [pause] [Int: mmm] so I just –I'm not sure

Int: Yeah - yeah. So it's almost like for you, how would anyone –

Nadine: be able to do that

Int: yeah. And you said after you saw this woman [Nadine: yeah] at school that's when things started to go a bit downhill for you?

Nadine: yeah. I think by that point my dad had left, but I think maybe it was more the stress of having to look after mum or just trying to be normal, or yeah. Because I think it was going from like having such strict rules to nothing and you just don't know what to do with yourself. You have so much time. I used to dread coming home from school. So much time just to, I don't know – not do much, just think

Int: and what did you do, in that time?

Nadine: erm, clean. I did a lot of cleaning. House work. Anything that meant you're not sitting there. Washing, cooking, clearing, ironing, just anything that would fill that time. Erm yeah [pause]

Int: did that help?

Nadine: erm [pause] I think it did like in that moment, like you just yeah – or when you find yourself like getting angry or feeling really angry or really upset and you don't know why and like as a child always knowing that it's not OK to be angry and it's not OK to cry, so why are you? What's my body doing?

Nadine reflected, 'I didn't know it was any different to anything else, or wrong, or any of that, there was no reason to like question it or to ask for help'. She also reflected on her confusion, 'when you find yourself like getting angry or feeling really angry or really upset and you don't know why'. Narrative incoherence is scary and potentially explosive, and this can be seen as Nadine attempted to disrupt this incoherence by finding an explanatory story for her distress. The below voice poem shines light on the multivocality of this story.

I think by that point my dad had left

I think maybe it was more the stress of having to look after mum

I think it was going from like having such strict rules to nothing

you just don't know what to do with yourself

You have so much time

I used to dread coming home from school.

I don't know

Incoherence and instability in Nadine's story was produced by several attempts to story her distress through explanatory stories; efforts to find a logic and reason to her distress. However, Nadine had trouble producing a story that was stable due to the fact that there was no story that had been authorised through an expert or adult gaze in her childhood. Nadine suggested maybe it was the 'stress' of having to 'look after mum', maybe it was going from 'strict rules to nothing' or maybe it was that her 'dad had left', eventually concluding with 'I don't know'. Narrative incoherence here produced an account of 'I' that is unstable. However, the professional and 'expert' gaze through being hospitalised provided an authorised account and explanatory story that disrupted this instability and challenged Nadine's pre-existing family narrative. Retrospectively, Nadine reflected that *'looking back now and having had that admission and finding out about how different my life was to how it should have been. it's kind of almost, how could you not notice?'* Nadine's positioning as 'knower' changed over time. As an adult, Nadine was more able to speak with authority and occupy a position as knower, but her position as 'knower' is also shaped by the language and theory of professionalised explanatory accounts of her distress. Power has a part to play here. As a child, her story was not authorised or 'read' by others. However, adulthood as a narrative resource and speaking position enabled Nadine's authority as a speaker, positioning her as a knower and narrator of a stable account. However, the story of not knowing and uncertainty in childhood was still a precarious story to tell, functioning to challenge the credibility of what she says when she reflects as an adult.

Uncertainty is a particularly risky story to tell as a person who has experienced abuse and as a woman in a social and cultural context which is shaped by the privileging of masculine ideologies about what constitutes truth (Burman, 2017; Woodiwiss, 2007). The expertise of people and institutions that are in positions of power can shape how young women tell their stories of recovery after childhood domestic abuse. These

recovery stories were narrated as a disruption of old stories. They were also told as epistemic battles for the 'truth' through stories of (in)visibility, being seen and heard, and tensions around what kind of story is credible and counts. Storytelling depends on the context of the telling; who is telling the story, and importantly, if the listener is willing to listen. Nadine and Hayley reflected on their realisations that the abuse they experienced was not 'normal'. Through these reflective accounts, access to new knowledge and language enabled the production of new stories. Telling new stories can be useful, particularly as the production of new stories were authorised by an expert gaze, providing a coherency and credibility to the recovered self. However, narrative frameworks that were available for making sense of these new stories were shaped by social and institutional power structures that oppress the experiential knowledge gained through living through childhood, privileging knowledge based on expertise and theory. These authorised stories can erase the way that women's transitions to young adulthood might have transgressed some of these dominant narrative frameworks. Transgressing dominant narrative frameworks risks positioning the teller as deficient or lacking in some way, but these stories can also be useful to tell as they offer an opportunity to re-write the self into a recovered self with a readable story to tell.

Looking inwards: 'I don't know if it's that or if it's all the trauma'

Here I turn attention to narrative practices where participants turned the gaze inwards. Through participants' accounts of recovery, they asked what it was about themselves that they could change, diagnose or understand, in order for things to be different or better in their lives. A self-reflective inwards gaze was one way in which young women narrated their recovery stories and made meaning out of what had happened in their lives. It was also an important way of enabling women to story a self that has moved on and recovered. These stories evidence the production of a neoliberal therapeutic self, offering a coherent recovery story that is authorised and credible. However, there were also significant challenges that young women faced in producing a coherent and authorised therapeutic self.

Through Hayley's account of recovery, she highlighted the likelihood that she would be more 'at risk' of mental illness because of the risk factors she felt she faced.

‘I had more risk factors that I was going to choose to go down the path that I went, therefore there was more chaos during my adolescence and there was more risk of mental illness’ (Hayley)

Hayley reflected on why she went down a path of struggling with her mental health, explaining that she grew up on a poor council estate, had young parents, and was around drugs and alcohol from a young age, in addition to parental domestic abuse. Through her account she turned the gaze to herself by using statements that point to her negotiation of agency and choice, for instance, ‘I had more risk factors... I was going to choose to go down the path that I went’. This is a self-evaluative structure using expert language such as ‘risk factors’ that Hayley used to talk about the path that she went down. A self-evaluative structure points to psychotherapeutic and psychiatric discourses that promote a self-reflective and internalised gaze (Rose, 1985; 2010). It could be that because Hayley and I are both therapists, she might have felt that a psychotherapeutic discourse was one that I might understand; it could have been a shared narrative framework that we could both use, so it made sense for her to narrate her story in that way. Narrating her recovery through a psychotherapeutic discourse like this also positions her as a subject of the therapeutic gaze, enabling a coherent narrative and one that we might both have understood in the context of this interview. A psychotherapeutic narrative resource is one that has social and cultural power. It offers ways of making sense of distress whilst also offering solutions (i.e. therapy, medication, forms of healing) that on the one hand are individualising by their focus on the individual subject, but on the other hand, offers hope for change by implying change is possible.

Hayley also spoke about the ‘chaos’ during her adolescence and the ‘risk of mental illness’ as a consequence of chaos. Narrative resources of risk and ‘problematic families’ also shape her account, embedding the assumption that families who experience adversities, poverty, or divert from a normative ideology of family life, are different or deficient in some way (Burman, 2017; O’Dell et al., 2018). This narrative resource has power in shaping how Hayley told her story and it intersects with the self-evaluative psychotherapeutic and psychiatric narrative resources that also shaped her story. However, existing narrative frameworks such as a psychotherapeutic and self-evaluative one, may not provide a diverse enough, or appropriate frameworks within which young women can make sense of their experiences of childhood domestic abuse.

Liv's narration that she had internalised a sense of shame about her childhood also points towards some of these self-evaluative structures that shape storytelling practices about recovery from domestic abuse in childhood. Liv spoke about the 'black mark' that she felt her childhood had left her with.

Liv: it makes me feel like scum. Like I feel like my whole childhood is like a black mark and people can see it – makes me feel dirty and like, different [tearful].

Int: [pause] is there anything I can -

Liv: - no no sorry I am, it's fine I'm not like upset this is just what I do [pause] but it just makes me feel really dirty and I feel like I can't connect to people because of what happened. [pause- extended]

Int: are there people around for you now?

Liv: no. no. I really struggle with relationships and friendships and stuff. I'm actually going through an assessment for Asperger's because I feel like, I don't know [pause] I feel like I do score highly on all the tests and stuff and I don't know if it's that, or if it's all the trauma that makes me this way.

Liv's uncertainty, 'I don't know if it's that, or if it's all the trauma' points to the challenge she faced in narrating a sense of self that is coherent and stable. Efforts to understand herself by making links between childhood trauma and adulthood difficulties threaded through Liv's interview. Liv made sense of her current struggles by linking them to her past trauma. Liv's inward gaze shows her efforts at making sense of her childhood but making sense of her childhood is not straightforward. A diagnostic and psychotherapeutic framework enabled possible alternative constructions of the self that were not led by self-blame and shame and that enabled a legitimised way of making sense of her struggles. Telling her recovery story through a 'self-evaluative structure' (Alcoff & Gray, 1993) made possible a story in which at least her struggles can be recognised and her own sense of shame might be lightened. However, the 'black mark' constructs the self as 'damaged', and that voice of shame and damage was shaped by a powerful narrative resource of the trajectory of 'inevitable damage' that people who grow up with domestic abuse are assumed to experience (Callaghan et al., 2018). A psychotherapeutic narrative framework offers a way of making sense of difficulties and childhood trauma, but there are limited possibilities to tell stories that

diverge from this framework that do not leave her in a position of shame or helplessness.

For Liv, on one hand, she did not know if it is ‘that’ (i.e. the Asperger’s she may have), or ‘all the trauma’ that caused her struggles in young adulthood. Both of these are explanations that could make sense, and both draw on a self-evaluative and psychotherapeutic or psychiatric narrative resource. However, the tension and contradiction suggests there is a sense of fluidity about whether she accounts for her childhood trauma in how she stories a sense of self, or whether she erases that complexity, in favour of an explanation that might be less chaotic or messy to tell. When Liv was tearful during the interview, I checked in with her and asked if there was anything I could do. Her response, ‘no sorry.. it’s fine, I’m not upset this is just what I do’ functions to dismiss her distress and position distress as something that is unacceptable. However, there also exists a voice in Liv’s account that considers the possibility that her adulthood struggles are related to her childhood trauma. Liv reflected, ‘I don’t know if it’s that, or if it’s all the trauma’. A dialogical philosophy rejects the idea that there is a single coherent self (Hermans, Kempen, & Van Loon, 1992), assuming that when we tell stories about ourselves, we tell multiple stories and not just one.

Stories of recovery were shaped by neoliberal ideologies that promote an inward gaze and a self-evaluative structure in which the self is constructed as a therapeutic subject, and the ‘work’ of recovery is to work on the self ‘successfully’ (Woodiwiss, 2014). Tuning into multiplicity and fluidity shines light on some delicate negotiations that have implications for how Liv understood herself, her place in the world, and how she communicated things about herself to others. Like the interview with Hayley, the context of the interview is important to explore. Liv was a student when I interviewed her, and she was studying psychology. She knew that my background was in psychology, and that we might have a shared language or a shared set of assumptions available to us that are located in diagnostic and psychotherapeutic discourses about the origins and nature of distress, in other words, psychology is based around assumptions of individual diagnosis and individual ‘cure’ (Rose, 1985). Mishler (1986) suggested that when we speak, we speak in anticipation of the listener’s response, and we speak in relation to the listener. In many ways, the assumption of a shared language might be right; I related to how Liv spoke about her quest to self-evaluate and her efforts to tease

out the origin and reason for her struggles, as this is something that I have done myself. Also, the fact that I am a practitioner too means that I am often inviting space for clients to be curious about themselves, potentially a curiosity about the origins of their distress. However, what the self-evaluative structure also does, is function to decontextualise her struggles and distress. This risks writing Liv into a story in which she, herself, is responsible for her happiness and recovery, erasing the social, relational and political ways in which she, her history, and the domestic abuse she experienced, are located (Rose, 2010; Wastell & White, 2012).

There are powerful implications of an individualising narrative framework, and I will explore these more in more depth as I explore Emma's accounts. These individualising narrative frameworks also shaped the way that Emma spoke about how she made sense of her difficulties.

Emma: I kind of referred myself for an ADHD diagnosis and cos as time's gone on I've kind of learnt about myself and about ADHD and I kind of (pause) don't (pause) really see it in that way (pause).

Int: in what way?

Emma: I don't want to say (pause) – like I can kind of rationalise my struggles (pause) as something you know – (pause) I just find it interesting that I had to pathologise myself (slight laughter) to give myself an OK, and a reason why I do these things, a reason that I get anxious and a reason that I behave in this way. It's because I've got ADHD. But actually I think now I realise (pause) well I'm trying to remind myself (pause) that maybe I've just had some hard experiences that have made me – that have moulded me in that way.

The passing of time had changed Emma's knowledge of herself and the way that she made sense of her struggles. Reminding herself that her childhood experiences have shaped who she is in adulthood was useful to her, but on the other hand, rejecting pathologisation had helped to give her a sense of self-acceptance, and rejecting pathologisation had also been useful. However, as Woodiwiss (2007; 2014) has also explored with women who had experienced childhood sexual abuse, pathologisation had also been Emma's route to understanding herself. From this view there exists a dialogical relationship between multiple voices in Emma's account. The voice poem constructed from her account evidences the interplay of voices.

I can kind of rationalise my struggles
I just find it interesting that I had to pathologise myself
It's because I've got ADHD
I think
I realise (pause) well...
I'm trying to remind myself...
maybe I've just had some hard experiences that have made
me – that have moulded me in that way

In Emma's account there is a voice of self-acceptance, for example, 'I'm trying to remind myself that maybe I've just had some hard experiences'. There is also a voice shaped by a psychotherapeutic and medicalised lens that exists in Emma's account. For example, 'it's because I've got ADHD'. At the same time, there is also a voice that rejects self-evaluation from a psychotherapeutic gaze. Emma said, 'as time's gone on I've kind of learnt about myself and about ADHD and I kind of don't really see it in that way'. She also said 'I find it interesting that I had to pathologise myself...'. From this view, whilst Emma rejected a psychotherapeutic discourse, a diagnosis also offered her a sense of empowerment. An 'expert' story functioned to authorise Emma's struggles in young adulthood, making her story credible and readable to others, bolstering the acceptance she could give to herself. Through the same account, there also exists an explicit rejection of the fact that she had to pathologise herself, pointing to the tension in narrating the reasons for her struggles and the location of a story that renders her recovery credible. Emma's negotiation of these tensions continued. In the extract below her account points again to the way that her stories were shaped by an underpinning gaze towards the self.

Emma: I think I'm learning to be a bit kinder to myself and think, you know I didn't experience you know a rape you know, or an event, but I saw lots of little things over a long period of times and I have to remind myself that that can be quite traumatising

Int: yes. It's almost like a process of validating how you feel, to yourself.

Emma: I think so

Int: that feels important

Emma: I think I'm getting to a point in life where I need to. Like I've held onto it for so long and it tears you apart. [Int: mhmm] and I think I have a friend as well, who is quite similar in that way, she feels kind of, she feels anxiety a lot of the time. It seems to come from nowhere and she's trying to make sense of it and I try to say you know, she had a few kind of unpleasant experiences as a child and that's enough to have a knock on effect. And I think well actually, perhaps I should apply that advice to myself as well [laughs] hmmm

Emma suggested that 'perhaps I should apply that advice to myself' and 'I'm learning to be a bit kinder to myself'. A voice of self-compassion bolstered Emma's account that even though she did not experience something that she counts as extreme, her on-going experience of violence when she was growing up did have an impact. Emma reinforced to herself, 'that's enough to have a knock on effect'. The voice of self-compassion has changed over time and it is shaped by psychotherapeutic narrative resources of recovery and healing. Telling a story through a self-evaluative structure enabled Emma to link the past to the present in a way that made sense (Woodiwiss, 2014), stabilising her story and her 'self' through expert discourses and the adult gaze. Psychotherapeutic self-evaluative structures may also enable the possibility for the self to be constructed as someone deserving of kindness and empathy (e.g. 'I try to say, you know, she had a few kind of unpleasant experiences as a child and that's enough to have a knock on effect... I think well actually, perhaps I should apply that advice to myself' and 'I'm learning to be kinder to myself... I've held onto it for so long and it tears you apart'). Emma's recovery story told through this inward gaze was powerful in enabling Emma to reconstruct herself as someone who was not responsible for her struggles - she owns them, but through this self-evaluative recovery story, she is not responsible for them.

Emma's story was also shaped by assumptions that children might not be directly affected by domestic abuse, and she may not feel she has a right to be impacted in the way that she is and has been. Intersecting with uncertainty about her right to be impacted is the dominance, mainstreaming and popularisation of talking about trauma (Alcoff & Gray, 1993). The popularisation of talking about trauma has mainstreamed the risk discourse that assumes those who experience adverse childhood experiences will usually be impacted negatively by those experiences (Felitti et al., 1998; Finkelhor, 2018). Given that Emma's childhood experiences of domestic abuse took place entirely out of the gaze of services or institutions which might have validated and legitimised

her experiences, there are limited ways of talking about it or even naming it as domestic abuse. Her childhood is not counted through existing narrative frameworks that tell a particular story about childhood experiences of trauma and abuse. From this view, Emma's experience becomes less speakable due to the power of survivor and recovery discourses which are only available fully to those whose experiences of abuse have been recognised and validated.

These psychotherapeutic discourses provide a framework for people that suggest you have to recognise and own the 'damage' and then you can move forward. Emma said, 'it's almost like a process of validating how you feel' and 'I saw lots of things... I have to remind myself that can be traumatic'. The social context in which participants told their stories is important to explore. Some have argued that neoliberalism underpins the concept of 'survivor' identities (Alcoff & Gray, 1993; Rose, 1985), meaning that these stories of recovery are both personal and political stories to tell. These narratives of self-improvement were told in a neoliberal context that privileges self-driven success and happiness and they are culturally valuable stories to tell. The existence of these narrative resources can be useful and can help women to move through, survive and construct a sense of self that has the capacity to change and has the power to do so. However, these psychotherapeutic and psychiatric narrative frameworks also risk blaming women and dismissing their distress by focusing on individual processes rather than the contexts in which the violence happened. For instance, the tension of whether Emma's struggles are because she has ADHD or because of the trauma that she experienced demonstrates a search for a reason for her struggles so that she can move on. Narratives of self-improvement can be useful in enabling a sense of choice and empowerment in moving forward. However, it also means that there are limited opportunities to tell alternative stories.

My analysis here suggests that participants drew on several narrative resources when telling their stories of recovery, and also, that they had many different recovery stories to tell. Their stories were shaped by psychotherapeutic and psychiatric narrative resources of recovery and healing, and normative ideologies surrounding family life. However, these narrative resources also limited the recovery stories that participants could tell. The dialogical self conceptualises the self as constructed by multiple co-existing I-positions, including both 'internal' and 'external' I-positions (Hermans, 2008). In this section I have focused on where participants turned the gaze inwards and

used a self-evaluative structure, constructing the self as a neoliberal therapeutic subject, and constructing recovery from domestic abuse as an individual, self-determining piece of work. When participants spoke about doing the work of recovery, their accounts included self-discoveries and self-reflections. Participants' accounts reflected a struggle to locate the reason for their struggles. Finding an explanatory reason for their distress and challenges was an important part of constructing a recovery story that was readable and made sense, and one way of finding explanatory reasons were through telling stories that focused on the self. However, there are narrative challenges that young women faced in producing a coherent and authorised therapeutic self. The challenge lies in telling a story that validates struggles associated with trauma, and at the same time, also resisting the self-responsibilisation this might inscribe.

Moving on

In addition to telling stories that disrupt old stories, and stories that turn the gaze inwards, moving on stories were also central to the recovery narrative typology. Stories of moving on included accounts of healing, recovery, and self-improvement. These stories constitute recovery stories as they enabled women to write themselves into a different kind of life than the one that they had experienced in childhood. Frances experienced domestic abuse between her parents and also both parents directed physical and psychological abuse towards her too. She had disclosed the abuse to teachers and had social workers visit her home, but nothing was ever done, and nobody had believed her when she disclosed to teachers.

Frances: I think it just kind of shines a light to me about how resilient I am and how proud I am of myself. But then talking about it, and reflecting on it with you, has started like a bit of an anger fireball going, where I just think how did I get let down so badly? How did I get ignored by the people that could have got me out of that situation so many times? And it makes me feel sad for other people that may have experienced similar things to me but they didn't have the resilience to choose the better life. And they would have just been let down by all these people and by the system. Erm and that makes me feel incredibly sad for them and I guess the way that the world works and the things that people can get away with. Erm you know, potentially revisiting kind of like the social services that let me down is something that I have thought about, you know? And going 'well you visited me on this day, you really let me down', and giving them

that feedback. But for me to do that I need to know that – I need to be ready to do that, and right now I'm not ready to do that
[Int: yep]

Int: It's funny – it's not funny, but I think I'm kind of sat with some of your fireball of just lividness of anger that there were so many people that you reached out to in different ways. And I feel a kind of sadness too, about how that's worked – or not worked, for you. I don't know whether it's a newer thought for you about going back to social services and giving that feedback. It's almost like – well what do you do with that feeling?

Frances: yeah – it's something I have thought about. But it's just something that I have not achieved – something I have not done [slight laughter] – it's something that should definitely be done. I would never want anyone to experience what I went through or the feelings that I had to endure or the behaviour that I was subjected to. I'd never want anyone to go through that. And the way I could do it is by going back to the services and giving them some feedback. But then on the flipside I just think, well what's the point? They let me down before, they're not gonna take my feedback seriously. And that trust isn't there. And that almost kind of – on their part I don't want to cooperate with them because I'm angry with them, but then I want to be able to help others. So it's just kind of this thing that I need to navigate. [Int: mmm] yeah right now I tend to live my life without thinking about the past, it's not something I think about, it's not something I talk about, so it's not something that really crosses my mind.

Through Frances' account of moving on in her recovery, she told a story of pride and resilience. There has been a focus on resilience in the literature, particularly what constitutes resilience for those who experience domestic abuse in childhood (Jenney et al., 2016). However, in Frances' account of moving on, there also exists a voice of anger that does not always align with a stable and credible account of resilience. Through her account of moving on, Frances suggested that one day she would like to make sure that others do not experience the same as she did. She explained '*the way I could do it is by going back to the services and giving them some feedback*'. But she also felt that '*on the flipside I just think, well what's the point? They let me down before, they're not gonna take my feedback seriously*'. Using her experience for good in order to help others is framed as central to a recovery story in which she has chosen 'the

better life'. From this view, an account of 'using my experience for good' is framed part of the neoliberal recovery story. However, a story of resilience and recovery is at odds with the anger that is also voiced. There is a dialogical relationship between a voice of anger and a story of recovery here, and as noted, anger does not seem to appear as 'belonging' in narratives of recovery and resilience that others have explored (Alaggia & Donohue, 2018; Jenney et al., 2016). Anger is a voice that becomes less speakable, perhaps existing on the margins or becoming silenced in favour of an account of resilience that enables space for a certain version recovery but less space for anger.

Through her account, Frances positioned herself as an adult with knowledge about 'how the world works'. Through this positioning she expressed her anger with anticipation that it would be dismissed. On one hand, she knew that her anger meant she is less likely to be heard. However, she also felt a responsibility to her memory, to herself, and to others, to provide the service with some feedback in the hopes that what happened to her would not be repeated, producing a tension in her storytelling. The below voice poem draws out the multiple 'I' positions that shaped her story.

I would never want anyone to experience what I went through

I'd never want anyone to go through that

... the way I could do it is by going back to the services and giving them some feedback

I just think, well what's the point?

They let me down before

they're not gonna take my feedback seriously

I don't want to cooperate with them

I'm angry with them

I want to be able to help others

I tend to live my life without thinking about the past

... it's not something I think about

... it's not something I talk about

... it's not something that really crosses my mind.

Threading through the voice poem is a sense of anger and injustice about the times that she was let down. However, Frances did not feel she could put her anger to use because

she was ‘too’ angry – she was not ready, and she did not see the point. She knew what she experienced was not right, but she also felt she would not be taken seriously because anger is not consistent with rational recovery. Anger is storied as raw emotion, unprocessed and as producing a sense of incoherency. Emotion – anger in this case, is not just individual but it is politically and socially constituted, produced and expressed (Ahmed, 2014; Alcoff & Gray, 1993). Frances’ sense that she was ‘too angry’ to speak points to the power at play in the socio-cultural context that shaped how she told her story. Using her experience to do good, by speaking out and helping others is part of a neoliberal recovery story that allowed her to talk about gaining strength and empowerment in her recovery. However, Frances’ recovery story is regulated by neoliberal ideologies that risk silencing the anger she carries – so much so, that her anger drowned her capacity to articulate it.

Anger operates within power relations that are gendered. If women speak with ‘too much’ emotion, it is said to ‘transgress appropriate survivor talk’ leading women to police themselves and be policed in relation to their emotion (Alcoff and Gray, 1993, p. 285). Frances’ anger at the way she had been let down by services motivated her to consider going back to services to give them feedback in the hopes it would help others. She said *‘I would never want anyone to experience what I went through or the feelings that I had to endure or the behaviour that I was subjected to. I’d never want anyone to go through that. And the way I could do it is by going back to the services and giving them some feedback’*. Frances’ account suggests that anger can be used to motivate action. However, Frances also voiced ambivalence about how her anger is expressed and used. There can be particular ambivalences for women about how anger is expressed and used, because anger is not always considered synonymous with femininity (Holmes, 2004). Other feminist violence researchers have suggested that women expressing anger on their own behalf can function to pose a threat to a patriarchal society where women are generally invited to stay small and anger is a typically ‘masculine’ expression (Alcoff & Gray, 1993). Through a neoliberal recovery story, women might be more able to express anger on behalf of others, rather than themselves. Through a neoliberal lens, expressing anger on behalf of others is a more ‘appropriate’ and socially acceptable response to violence and it is a recognised and credible story of moving on. Considered in this way, Frances’ proposal to go back to services so that the same does not happen to others is central to her recovery story.

These narrative resources of credibility, femininity and emotion also intersect with Frances' sense of pride that she chose the 'better life' and had the resilience to do so. Some participants spoke about being OK enough to tell their stories – about having done the work to enable them to feel OK with talking openly about their experiences. Others said the interview was the first time that they had spoken openly about their experiences, but they felt a responsibility to contribute to research to help others. Regardless of how participants framed their capacity and motivation to share their stories, a sense of having moved through to the other side, a sense of having 'travelled through', puts their struggles in the past and supports the narrative construction of the self as being self-knowledgeable and having survived. A survival position is not explicitly named as 'survivor' in participants' accounts, but the way that participants narrated recovery, resilience, self-development and 'travelling through' does align to dominant discourses that surround survivorship (Alcoff & Gray, 1993; Orgad, 2009; Ovenden, 2012). Survival stories can be empowering. They can provide a framework for talking about trauma and recovery in a way that can be heard by others and it can help to construct the self as resilient. However, stories that construct the self as survivor can simultaneously be limiting (Alcoff & Gray, 1993; Reich, 2002). Struggles can be difficult to articulate because of the lack of narrative frameworks through which to tell them through.

Trauma has been popularised in social and cultural discourse, for instance, survivor movements such as #metoo and the increase of trauma-informed and trauma-sensitive awareness across communities and health and social care settings (Alcoff, 2018; Elliott, Bjelajac, Fallot, Markoff, & Reed, 2005; Walkley & Cox, 2013; Zaleski, Johnson, & Klein, 2016). The popularisation of the language and understanding of trauma strengthens the survivor discourse that shaped these stories of recovery and moving on. However, it also limits what can be said and it may put pressure on people to disclose in a certain way or before they may feel ready. There are particular challenges for women whose stories and lives have existed outside of the gaze of the state/services where only accounts of domestic abuse that have been authorised through professionalised, adult or 'expert' discourse are considered credible and speakable. Frances storied herself as a person who has gained resilience and strength from her experiences, positioning her in a survivor position, despite the ways in which her experiences transgress dominant survivor narrative frameworks due to her ambivalence about using her anger to speak

out. However, participants whose stories typically have not been verified or validated by those with theoretical expertise or social power, are left in an epistemic gap where their experiential knowledge is not counted and has limited ways of being told.

I now further explore moving on stories by shifting attention to Jasmine's account. Jasmine also spoke about gaining strength from her experiences. When I asked what helped Jasmine to move forward, she explained that in order to forget and move on, she had to forgive what happened and accept that it was part of life.

'I kind of learned that in order to forget I've kind of gotta forgive what happened. Not necessarily forgive him but forgive what I was put through and accept that it was part of life, so that when I did see him, [pause] I was – I was over it, I guess you could say. I wasn't too bitter about it.' (Jasmine)

Jasmine reflected on the internal battle she experienced, and her learning that her life did not have to be dictated by her sense of feeling worthless.

'I was just always like in a battle. I was always thinking about things and thinking about how I was worthless and as I said, eventually I learned to forgive that do you know what, that did happen to me but it doesn't necessarily mean that my whole life has to be ruined because of that.' (Jasmine)

I bring attention to the above examples to illustrate the way that Jasmine's storytelling in relation to recovery was dominated by the idea that she has moved on. Jasmine spent her early childhood visiting her dad over weekends when he would use violence towards his partner. Jasmine would want to see her dad and also she would be afraid of him. Jasmine explained the self-development work she had done in order to forgive, forget and move on. Stories of healing, strength and forgiveness featured often in Jasmine's interview, functioning to position her as moved on and establishing herself as no longer impacted by the violence she grew up with. For most participants, participating in the interview was the first time that they had told their stories, and this was something that I invited participants to reflect on. I asked Jasmine what it had been like to reflect on her childhood.

Jasmine: it's always kind of strange. Because I have dealt with it, it always feels like I'm talking about someone else, which is really weird. [Int: OK] it's just something that I think, because I'm so at peace with it now, it's just something that kind of happened, like I brushed my teeth yesterday, like I brushed my

teeth this morning. It's just something that happened that is just [pause] part of who I am

Int: So it feels a little like you're talking about someone else - I can really understand how that might make sense for you. Who else is it, do you think, that you're talking about, if you - if it feels like it's almost a different kind of life that you're -

Jasmine: I feel like - it sounds weird, but when I'm talking about it I picture myself as a little girl, and that's who I'm talking about. And obviously I know that I am that little girl, but it's kind of like all of that happened to a little girl and that isn't me. Although it is - but it's just like I've lived like two lives. Like that was that stage of my life - that little girl went through that.

Int: yeah, so how does that little girl differ from who you are now, do you think?

Jasmine: I think I'm definitely stronger, wiser - erm, but I still have inner conflicts about that because I sometimes wanna be that little girl again, and I know that sounds really strange, but - but I think everyone goes through that anyway, I think that's normal to wish you were a little girl again, but I wish I was a little girl to have my mum and my granddad, even though I still have them

Jasmine spoke about her transition to young adulthood by establishing a sense of narrative distance from her childhood, positioning adulthood as separate, and her childhood as something that she is no longer impacted by; it is just 'something that happened'. Through her account, the violence happened to the child and it is not connected narratively to the adult. There is a lack of narrative continuity but there is also a need for autobiographical connectedness in order to establish a sense of coherence. The gap between experiencing ('it's kind of like all that happened to a little girl and that isn't me') and knowledge ('I know I am that little girl') is something that Hydén (2014) explains as common for people who have previously been victimised. She suggests that telling stories that help to establish a sense of distance can be a form of psychological protection against overwhelming pain. A sense of closeness and distance can be understood as having a narrative function that does something useful for Jasmine, by establishing a sense of psychological safety. However, distance and disconnect does not align well with the coherence of the therapeutic recovered self that requires a story that can connect the past to the present in a linear and coherent way.

The idea of living two lives, the metaphor of ‘wearing a mask’ and a separateness of childhood and adulthood were ideas drawn on frequently by participants.

Differentiation and narrative distance does something useful because narrating childhood as separate to adulthood, conforms to the assumption that childhood is part of the ‘work’ of becoming an adult by being a therapeutic subject, in a time and space in which the adult is being formed (Burman, 2017; James & Prout, 2015). From this view, Jasmine narrated herself as having done this work of becoming an adult ‘successfully’. Childhood has been argued to be a time associated with innocence, vulnerability, immaturity and lack of authority to claims to knowledge (Archard, 2004; James & Prout, 2015). Differentiation and distance helps to position Jasmine as secure in her adult identity, and affords her epistemic privilege – a position where she is more likely to be considered a trustworthy source of knowledge (Alcoff, 1991; Fricker, 2007). However, being an adult is not a simple position to write herself into. Jasmine’s articulation, ‘I know I am that little girl’, but ‘that little girl isn’t me’, followed by the knowledge that ‘it is’ her, illustrates this identity tussle and suggests that recovery, rather than being linear, could be considered fluid, dynamic and perhaps even interrupted or fragmented in places.

The child to adult transition was told in Jasmine’s story of recovery. Jasmine normalised reminiscence, providing a sense of self-reassurance that ‘I think everyone goes through that... I think that’s normal’. However, her reassurance also suggests there is challenge in narrating a child that her adult self does not identify with, yet which she knows is part of her life. A gap between knowing and experiencing serves a useful function by offering safety and a sense of having navigated a transition to adulthood ‘successfully’. However, that knowledge-experience gap is also difficult to talk about. On one hand, narrative separation of childhood and adulthood can function as a useful story, because it enabled Jasmine to re-negotiate power through stories of success and strength. However, her story of disconnect also leaves gaps. It prompts questions of where and how stories of childhood, violence, struggle and instability are able to be told and heard. These are experiences that victimised her and they are not culturally valuable stories to tell. As Hydén (2014) reflects, they are stories which tend to position people as unlovable and unvaluable, and these can be unspeakable stories to tell. Jasmine reflected that now, as an adult, she is ‘stronger and wiser’, but she still has ‘inner conflicts’. These inner conflicts refer to the unanswered questions she still has

about why her, why her father left her, why he continued his violence, and why he could not change and did not 'love' her enough. Through her account of moving on, she reflected that she had 'dealt with her demons' and she had been able to forgive and forget. However, I also got a sense that some of these conflicting feelings that Jasmine described as a 'push and pull' were not entirely left in her childhood. Jasmine explained that some of these questions still exist now, so that sense of narrative distance is challenged and not always possible.

Jasmine: A lot of it was self-esteem as well, I used to have really low self-esteem when all of that was going on. I'm not saying I have great confidence now, but I kind of realised that I was sick of hating myself and doubting myself when actually it's not always you that's the problem. You think that it's you, when in actual fact, you kind of realise – I think it's when your older, you kind of realise, well no

Int: so when you were younger you kind of believed that what was happening was your fault

Jasmine: yeah so I used to think that – so one of my biggest things, I used to think that my dad didn't love me and he put me through all of that cos I was a girl. I used to think it was because I was a girl and he wanted a boy. And then I also thought – and I still kind of think to a degree, erm, I used to think and I still kind of think he put me through that and stuff because I looked like my mum. So I used to think that he struggled with me because he'd look at me and see my mum. I used to think that that was obviously [emphasis] my fault – I used to think that it was me.

From one voice, Jasmine has put her demons behind her, but from another voice, she still 'kind of thinks' that some of it might have been her fault. This hesitancy breaks that sense of narrative distance and suggests that recovery is not as simple as 'moving on', but rather it is fluid, dynamic and consists of conflicts that may get erased through linear stories that do not hold space for fluidity and interchanging positions.

At another point in the interview, Jasmine reflected, 'I'm older now, I have moved on, you have to forgive and forget – that is how you survive'. She also reflected, 'I'm definitely stronger, wiser – erm, but I still have inner conflicts about that'. Her story of becoming an adult and dealing with demons is supported by narrative resources of adulthood and resilience that have a particular kind of social power for women who

have experienced trauma (Reich, 2002). When women speak and tell stories of surviving, these are socially valued stories; they position women as strong, resourceful and successful (Alcoff & Gray, 1993; Reich, 2002). These stories of getting older and moving on are useful in enabling a sense of empowerment. However, these are stories which do not always enable the articulation of conflicts and tensions that are not only located and left in childhood, but which exist in adulthood too.

Jasmine's account was shaped by narrative resources of recovery and survival. Psychotherapeutic discourses about recovery from trauma and abuse in childhood are shaped by assumptions that people recover in a linear way. These assumptions are strengthened by the magnitude of research that focuses on outcomes following therapy or intervention (Howarth et al., 2015; Lee, Kolomer, & Thomsen, 2012; Smith, Belton, Barnard, Fisher, & Taylor, 2015) or following exposure to domestic abuse in childhood (Howell, 2011; Sousa et al., 2011), suggesting that there is an end point to recovery that is fixed and measurable. The recovery discourse is powerful and invites people to story themselves into a psychotherapeutic and individualising story where there is an end point to the recovery process. Narrating recovery as linear can be useful because it provides a credible and authorised way to tell a story of recovery, it is also a limiting narrative framework for women as it leaves little space to also tell stories of tension and chaos where recovery is not a product and it is more of a dialogical and fluid process.

Summary

Women's narratives of their developmental transitions included accounts of their recoveries following domestic abuse in childhood. Their accounts of recovery intersected with accounts of navigating their transitions to young adulthood. Recovery stories consisted of multiple stories; stories about the self that disrupt old stories, accounts of moving on, and stories that draw on psychotherapeutic and neoliberal narrative frameworks that invite self-evaluation. I have highlighted the plurality of recoveries in an effort to show that there are many recovery stories that women told and there is not just one version that applies to all.

The assumption that recovery is linear and that the end point is fixed, does not align to how participants experienced their childhoods and continued to experience their lives in young adulthood. Despite the fact that there were many recovery stories participant shared, stability and coherency were important features in telling a legitimate and

readable recovery story. The nuances that thread through experiences of getting by, moving on and surviving were messy and sometimes hard to articulate. For example, Jasmine's position as having moved on was central to her articulating her strength and resilience, but that positioning left little space for her expression of the uncertainties and hesitations that she still held. Recovery stories, from this view, were relational and temporal and did not necessarily have an end point. In line with a dialogical philosophy (Buber, 1923/1996), the recovered self only comes into existence through dialogue and relationship. Recovery stories were not fixed and consisted of nuances and marginalised voices such as shame, doubt, uncertainty, loss and hope. However, articulating these nuances risks producing an incoherence in narrative, destabilising the recovery story and producing an unstable 'I'.

Power plays a significant part in shaping recovery stories, as neoliberal and gendered social structures operate in ways that can be both limiting and empowering. Telling a neoliberal recovery story that does not contain 'too much' emotion or struggle is useful; it can provide a quality of coherency that has the capacity to stabilise the therapeutic recovered self. However, individualising psychotherapeutic narrative frameworks invite all adulthood difficulties to be correlated with the abuse experienced in childhood, and this can limit the way that recovery stories can be articulated, inviting participants to conclude that it must be something about them that they should work on in order to 'do' recovery well. 'Self-responsibilisation' (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) and self-autonomisation (Rose, 1992) individualises the work of recovery, leading women to self-blame and leading to the erasure of socio-political and relational contexts that shape experiences and that bring the self into being. In conclusion, dominant psychotherapeutic and neoliberal recovery narrative frameworks do something useful for participants in providing a coherent story, but they also put significant limitations on what kind of story of recovery is possible to tell.

7. Battles: Struggles and survival

*I can totally rationalise this person is bad
you're brought up thinking that's my dad –
if I don't –
if I don't,
if I lose contact with him
I lose... that's my dad.
- Bethany*

Introduction

This chapter explores a narrative typology that I have defined as ‘battles’. The ‘battles’ typology describes the stories told when participants’ accounts included a sense of inner conflict. These battle stories consist of stories of survival and struggles in women’s transitions and navigations of young adulthood. In previous chapters I explored how dominant narrative frameworks can be both useful and limiting when young women tell their stories. Young women’s accounts of their transitions to young adulthood were shaped by gendered and neoliberal discourses that can be both useful and constraining, and further, tensions, ambiguities or contradictions in their stories can risk destabilising the self, compromising the readability and legitimacy of their stories. Here, I extend this argument by exploring the narrative work that women do in their efforts to reject individualising hegemonic discourses which do not serve them well. I discuss the strategies that women used in efforts to avoid being misunderstood where there were tensions, ambiguities or contradictions in their stories. I continue to explore the importance of having a story to tell that is readable by others, and I extend the notion that storying emotion can produce challenges for young women, particularly when storying emotion can risk compromising the coherency and ‘rationality’ of their accounts.

Survival as a battle

Participants drew on dominant narrative frameworks of survival when they spoke about recovery from domestic abuse in childhood. Not only was survival framed through recovery stories as a desired outcome, but survival was storied as a non-linear path

despite the dominance of recovery narrative frameworks that are linear and offer a sense of beginning, middle and end. The analysis so far has shown that the identity position of survivor can be both empowering and restricting for women. In this section I built on these arguments by exploring aspects of recovery and survival stories that get erased through dominant narrative frameworks, and I explore how women storied survival as a battle. Firstly, I turn to Clara's account of the impact of her dad continuing abuse through the courts.

'Often the court cases and stuff are between mum, [brother] and my dad. Because he still pays maintenance for [brother]. And I'm often disregarded, and that's fine, you know, I don't mind not being part of it. But when there is an impact on me, I want them to be brought up because I think it's important they get a picture of what's going on. If they go to court and the judge doesn't know that I've been told to sell my car or that I've been missed off a form, you know, I'm just totally ignored. Or he's said something nasty to me in a letter or directed something at me, and that's not said... how is the judge ever gonna get a picture of this man, he's just gonna see what the solicitors want him to see.' (Clara)

Clara was involved in legal proceedings because she was also a carer for her sibling who had additional needs. She explained that court proceedings happened regularly each time her dad withheld maintenance money. Through her story, being missed out and ignored in the court proceedings meant that the judge did not get a full picture of her dad's abuse and coercive control. Given that the court proceedings were ongoing, survival was not something that Clara spoke about retrospectively, but it was ongoing. From a dialogical view, we speak from multiple voices and there is the assumption that any individual voice is not a monologue, but it is a dialogue between voices (Frank, 2012; Hermans, 2003). In Clara's account there is a dialogue between I positions. On the one hand, she wanted to be included in the court proceedings and she wanted the things that her dad did that impacted her such as writing nasty letters and withholding money to be accounted for in court. However, she also said, 'I'm often disregarded and that's fine you know, I don't mind not being a part of it'. Clara occupied two seemingly incongruous positions about her involvement in the court proceedings, explaining it can be like a game of chess in which negotiating her place and power in the game is difficult.

Clara: there's a lot of stuff going on, a lot of power dynamics and a lot of control dynamics. I think everybody has a role and everybody has a place in it. It's almost like a game of chess. My mum calls it that actually

Int: Game of chess?

Clara: yeah she says it's a game of chess – I've always got to be one move ahead otherwise he'll get me

The game of chess was a metaphor that Clara's mum used, rather than Clara herself. However, the use of the chess game as a metaphor enabled her to communicate something important about how she could negotiate her power and place within the family. I extended her use of metaphor and asked more about where she would place herself in the game of chess.

Clara: dad probably likes to think that he's moving us, but he's not. Definitely not. But [sigh] I don't know where I'd put myself on a chess board with it. I'd like to think I'm not even on the chess board anymore, I mean I probably am because I'm still involved, but I'd like to be –

Int: Where are you instead? Do you know where you'd like to be?

Clara: Like around the chess board. Just somewhere else [laughs]. I don't even care where, as long as I'm not playing the game, I don't really care. Like I can be my mum's cheerleader, you know what I mean? But I don't wanna be on the board, I don't wanna be involved.

These games not only shaped Clara's childhood, but they were ongoing during the time of the interview. Clara positioned herself as 'out of' the family system, implying that she was no longer part of these games. However, at the same time, she has to always be one move ahead because she is 'still involved'. Her account suggests that she did not want to be involved in these games, yet her very existence in her family relationships means that she is. The tension here constitutes a story of a battle. The notion that she has to be 'one move ahead otherwise he'll get me' points to a constant awareness that being one step ahead is necessary for survival. For Clara, the tensions that constitute the battle she narrated means that her story of survival is not necessarily a coherent story; the fabric of the battle story is that it is a tension and a struggle – a constant to and fro.

A desire to be both in the game and out of it. However, the voice of survival and motivation to keep one move ahead indicates that the survival story has power.

In previous chapters I have discussed that survival from violence or abuse is typically framed through neoliberal ideologies (Ahmed, 2014; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Rose, 1992; 2010). Telling a survival story carries social, cultural and political power because it can provide coherency. I learnt that Clara felt strongly about the times when she was overlooked in court proceedings despite the fact that her father's ongoing abuse and coercive control still impacted her. Clara's statements, 'I don't care... I don't wanna be on the board, I don't wanna be involved' suggest a voice of struggle that is constrained, and simultaneously a voice of self-sufficient survival that has power.

The risk of storying the self as still involved and emotionally impacted is that Clara may write herself into a position of helplessness or lacking autonomy in her survival. There are limited narrative resources that provide a useful framework through which Clara could talk about her experience of surviving the abuse and coercive control her dad continued to use towards Clara, her mum and her sibling. To return to the idea that stories are told through multiple I positions, the dialogical self as a theoretical frame not only suggests that the self is polyvocal and told through multiple voices, but it proposes that socio-structural power relations shape which voices are available and which voices are constrained (Hermans, 2003; Bakhtin, 1981; Frank, 2012). The power of these survival discourses significantly constrains the speakability of other voices. For instance, Clara rejected emotional involvement (e.g. 'I don't even care, as long as I'm not playing the game, I don't really care'). She also voiced her desire to 'cheerlead' her mum and the necessity for her to always be 'in' the game in order to be one step ahead. From this view, in order to tell a survival story that is logical and stable, she needs to not care in order to survive. However, the need to not care constrains the speakability of the voices that do care, the parts that are still involved and the parts that might struggle.

Clara's storytelling practices evidence the challenges that arise when dominant narrative frameworks fail young women. McKenzie-Mohr and Lafrance (2011) wrote about the use of metaphor as a strategy to help women talk about the nuances of their experiences when dominant narrative resources fail them. In Clara's account, the metaphor of a game of chess functioned as a strategy for her to communicate contradictions and negotiate power. It also suggests that the 'game' is not an individual

game; chess is a fluid and relational game. When one person moves, so does the other, and there are opportunities for negotiation and movement.

It is not uncommon for domestic abuse to continue post-separation as Clara described. It is common for the person who perpetrates the abuse to continue the abuse post-separation, having significant impacts on those they abuse (Anderson & Saunders, 2003; Davies, Ford-Gilboe, & Hammerton, 2009; Holt, 2017; Cathy Humphreys & Thiara, 2003). Given that children are intimately involved in the relational dynamics of the family (Vetere & Cooper, 2005), the option to leave the board was not an entirely free option for Clara, even though it might be assumed that she can leave as an independent adult. It is challenging to narrate a sense of personal agency and the coexisting impact of the coercive control that Clara's dad continued to use. Clara turned to the chess metaphor to articulate these nuances. She wanted to support her mum, and she also wanted to live independently of her dad's abuse. But her position in the family – and her unique position that she is a carer for her sibling, means that she is involved, even though her involvement is not a matter of choice entirely.

I explore the polyvocality of Clara's account to draw attention to the tensions that constitute a battle story. Notably, battle stories do not necessarily follow logic as these stories explicitly bring to light tensions and struggles, often in a way that produces an emotion-logic binary in the story. In a culture where emotion and logic are often positioned as separate, these tensions risk being overlooked (Alcoff, 1991; Buitelaar, 2006). For Clara, her desire to support her mum and sibling, and her coexisting desire to live independently from her dad risks being overlooked in a culture that privileges single storylines that are based on rationality and logic. My analysis suggests that the privileging of 'logic' and rationality does not serve young women well. Using metaphor can be a way of communicating to the listener that it is important to dwell in and pay attention to seemingly incongruous stories (McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2011; Woodcock, 2016). The chess metaphor was a useful way of enabling Clara to articulate her struggles.

Clara: Cos again they've got control haven't they? Cos I'm obviously still thinking about it. I mean with dad, I don't think about it on a daily basis, it's only because of this conversation that I'm thinking about it, but specifically with other relationships, I do think about it quite often. But with that relationship, that's just like - with dad I ask myself why we're

talking about it, and then it's like 'right, I've got my own life now', you know, he's not my dad, he's just the man that created me [laughs] you know?

Int: The man that created you – that is who he is?

Clara: [laughs] yeah yeah. In the distance. It's not tangible. It's just something that happens, and I think it'll happen till the day he dies if I'm honest, I think he will try to regain control at every opportunity. And again, cos we're talking about it, I don't know why, but that why doesn't bother me all the time. Most of the time it's just yeah, it's just dad.

When Clara spoke about how she had coped and how she continued to cope, she explained that whilst her dad still had control over her life, it was useful to remind herself that she is also independent. Clara worked hard to attempt to ensure that I, as the listener, understood. She checked, 'you know?' suggesting that she was aware that what she said risked misinterpretation. The below voice poem, produced from the interview extract above, shows some of the nuances and ambiguities of her story.

they've got control haven't they?

I'm obviously still thinking about it.

I don't think about it on a daily basis

I do think about it quite often.

I've got my own life now

he's not my dad

he's just the man that created me

The idea of multiplicity in unity embraces the self as whole, whilst also recognising that the self is constructed of multiple subjectivities that are not always consistent. The voice poem suggests an orchestration of voices where Clara shifts back and forth between a voice that thinks about the violence and is impacted by it, and a voice that rejects the emotional impacts of her dad. The I statements evidence that shifting of I positions; for instance, 'I think about it', 'I don't think about it', 'I've got my own life now'. This polyvocality is important, enabling a focus on the many subjectivities that existed in Clara's account (Hermans, 2004; Loots et al., 2013). In Clara's account, the availability of I positions is shaped by socio-structural forces and ideologies (Frank, 2012; Hermans, 2004). Her assertion that she has her own life and she does not think

about the violence is shaped by hegemonic discourses of neoliberal self-made survivorship (Rose, 1992), and it is bolstered by the idea that transitioning from childhood to adulthood comes with independence and autonomy (Burman, 2017; Crafter et al., 2019). Through her account, striving to have her own life points to the importance of constructing the self as independent and self-sufficient. However, Clara's account also suggests that in order to have her own life, she cannot think about the violence. There is limited space for voicing struggle if she is to write herself into a convincing story of independence and survival.

In some ways, telling this battle story is useful as it evidences her capacity to live independently. Clara's statement, 'he's not my dad' is a rejection of the emotional ties that biological family might inscribe. However, her statements, 'he's just the man that created me' and 'it doesn't bother me all the time' points to the ambivalence of rejecting her dad. Dominant ideologies surrounding family life assume that family is something that is characterised by togetherness, warmth and closeness (Burman, 2017; Corsaro, 2014; Damant et al., 2008; Haselschwerdt, Maddox, & Hlavaty, 2019), and this shaped Clara's account through the explicit rejection of this ideal, yet the small hint that some of the time, it might still bother her, the fact that she did not have this family life. Clara stated, *'that why doesn't bother me all the time. Most of the time it's just yeah..'*, implying that there is some of the time where there is a different story to tell.

Clara reflected, *"I can't compute it in my own head... I speak to other fathers, when I speak to [my boyfriend's] dad... I often wonder why us? I'd love to sit down with him one day and ask him "why us?"*". Clara both accepted and rejected dominant ideologies of family life and fatherhood. Her recognition, 'I can't compute it in my own head' suggests that her experience does not align with dominant ideologies surrounding family life and fatherhood. In other words, her experience was not characterised by warmth and closeness, but her experience of her dad was one of coercive control and abuse. The account of confusion highlights that there are limited words available to make sense of her experience. There are few available voices from which she can articulate her experience because there are no narrative resources available that would make space for a story that is useful to tell. However, she still rejected the position of helplessness that the confusion may lead her to. In order to negotiate these dominant ideologies and tell a story that is more aligned with her experiences, Clara invited the listener to dwell in the confusion with her by acknowledging that her desire for both

closeness and distance does not make sense to her. Clara consistently invited the listener to listen closely to the ways that her experience is nuanced and transgresses these dominant narratives of family life.

Emotion also played a part in shaping Clara's account. There exists a logic-emotion binary that puts women in a double bind when it comes to telling stories that acknowledge their distress without dismissing the thought or reason of their story. On the one hand, Clara rejected any emotional or relational ties to her dad by suggesting 'he's not my dad, he's just the man that created me'. Simultaneously, she acknowledged that the control he maintains over her and her family will probably exist 'till the day he dies'. Clara did not explicitly name emotion here, but these are stories that are emotionally weighted with loss, confusion and anger. Clara's statement, 'I don't think about it... I've got my own life now', can be understood as shaped by masculine and individualistic social structures. In other words, logically, she is 23 and is an adult, she does have her 'own life' and does not necessarily have to think about the violence or her dad. However, her account of having her own life and growing up was told in a way that prioritised logic and reason over emotion. Logically, growing up means that she has her own life. However, emotionally, growing up is more ambiguous, relational and fluid. Ahmed (2004) wrote that women operate in a social and cultural context where emotions are seen as 'soft touch'. Emotions are constructed in feminised ways and become risky to express, particularly when they compromise the logical thought or reason of what is being said. She wrote that emotionality is 'deeply dependent on relations of social power' (p. 4). From this view, there exists a social hierarchy of emotion and logic that shaped how women wrote emotion into their stories. These social structures feminise and de-value emotionality, meaning that when emotions are expressed through stories of struggle and survival, women risk being pathologised rather than understood (Alcoff & Gray, 1993; Rose, 2010; Woodiwiss, 2014).

Survival stories can be storied as a battle. An emotion-logic binary shaped some survival stories, and this binary can be useful in that it bolsters a voice of logic that means survival stories are more likely to be taken seriously by others. However, survival is not linear and in order to ensure that tensions, contradictions and relationality of the stories of women are heard, women can employ strategies, such as using metaphor, to ensure that the ambiguities of their stories are more likely to be

heard. Storying survival is a battle brings to light the tensions and contradictions in their stories that may otherwise be overlooked. Articulating tensions and contradictions can be risky to do depending on the context of the telling. However, framing survival as a battle in this way is also a strategy of inviting the listener to hear the nuances of their stories.

‘If you didn’t have to keep going’

I now turn attention to how Nadine and Frances storied their struggles and survival by exploring how battle stories enabled women to articulate negotiations of agency and resistance. In participants’ accounts there was often an underlying story of struggle that was voiced as a fight. Here, Nadine’s account points to her fight to stay at school when she was younger.

‘I went back again the next year but that was really stressful because I tried to get help in that year saying that my mum’s really ill and this is why I’m not coming into school, well, sixth form, and this is why my grades are slipping, erm, but then my personal tutor who was a bit of a twit and got my mum in and my mum was like ‘no everything’s fine, I’m not ill at all’ – so then my tutor just outright accused me of lying and I just broke down in his office, but he just didn’t – like nothing was done about it. It was just, I was seen as this problem. So I really had to fight to come back for the third year because they were saying ‘well your attendance, you’re not gonna come back, you’re not gonna get these grades’. It was just mad’ (Nadine)

Nadine emphasised the importance of moving forward. However, despite the value placed on moving forward, she also emphasised that falling into a ‘black hole’ is always possible.

‘if I didn’t come to university, I don’t know what I would have done with my life. It’s just that [Int: yeah] and that feels like a hole – like a really big black hole that you just fall down into there, if you didn’t have to keep going, you’d think too much’ (Nadine)

Nadine’s account of fear that she would fall into a black hole if she did not have something to keep her going captures the need to hold on to something to keep her from falling. As previously explored, metaphor can be a useful way of telling stories when dominant narrative resources fail women (McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2011). Like the

chess game metaphor, the black hole metaphor is a useful strategy. Phrases such as ‘you just fall down into there’, enable Nadine to communicate a story of despair, assuming an inevitability and lack of agency. At the same time, her voice of strength, that ‘you have to keep going’, alongside a sense of gravitational pull, bolsters a thread of agency and struggle that does not tend to be recognised through existing narrative frameworks of victimisation and survivorship. Existing narrative resources about women’s success and survivorship do not make space for coexisting stories of struggle and despair that were voiced through the black hole metaphor. Framed in this way, dominant narrative resources that are available to women are shaped around the idea that if women remain positive and productive even in the face of struggle and adversity, they will eventually live happy and successful lives (Chowdhury et al., 2019; Gill & Orgad, 2018; Gill & Scharff, 2011). The voice of fighting to ‘keep going’ left Nadine with little alternative options. Given that Nadine’s battle story here emphasised the importance of fighting to keep going, regardless of the gravitational pull of struggle and despair, her story suggests that telling a success story of survival is necessary.

Gendered social structures shape the telling of this battle story. The feminisation of success has been well explored in literature that suggests post-feminist discourses have re-shaped womanhood around individualising ideologies in Western contexts (Adkins, 2001; Chowdhury, Gibson, & Wetherell, 2019; McRobbie, 2004, 2015). Instead of assumptions that women are passive and vulnerable, ‘women are drawn on as a metaphor for social progress’ (Baker, 2010, p. 2). However, the feminisation of success and increasing autonomy has consequences for how women are able to tell their stories. The discourse of women’s success becomes another way in which women’s lives and selves are narrated. Nadine’s emphasis on her efforts to keep going despite the struggle of resisting the gravitational pull of the black hole, communicates something to the listener. The story of a fight to keep going despite the struggle to do so, supported her to write herself into a desirable position of having successfully done recovery work in the face of adversity, enabling her to write the self into a position of survivor.

The dominance of a success story in Nadine’s account does not mean that there are not other stories to tell. Informed by a dialogical theory and philosophy (Buber, 1923/1996; Hermans, 2001) stories are never monologues, and the absence of a clear voice does not mean that it is not there. Rather, it might suggest that it is the context of the telling that shapes what is speakable and how. It is the social, relational and cultural power

relations that inform which voices are more dominant and which are constrained (Hermans, 2001; Mishler, 1986). Nadine's emphasis on the need to keep going prompts the question of what alternative stories there are available to tell. The power of the 'fight to keep going' story suggests that there is a silencing of the struggles that young women face in order to keep going. In other words, if young women do not do the work of productivity and achievement successfully, the alternative story is one of failure; not only failure of success, but also as a young woman.

Women I interviewed demonstrated their belief in choice and the possibility of happiness. This helped them to demonstrate the agency and autonomy deemed necessary to occupy a successful position as young women. For example, 'I really had to fight to come back' (Nadine), 'I've got my own life now' (Clara), and '(I) feel sad for other people that may have experienced similar things to me but they didn't have the resilience to choose the better life' (Frances). It can be useful to story the self through discourses of feminised success in which young women evidence their believe in choice. These stories can support women to construct a self that has indeed succeeded, offering a sense of empowerment, support for their ambitions, and a sense of value and worth. However, as McRobbie (2015) noted, the feminisation of success for young women is limiting and potentially harmful for women whose experiences are only partially accounted for through a discourse of contemporary successful femininity. This discourse maintains gendered power relations whilst inscribing women into individualistic values on their search of the 'good life' (McRobbie, 2015, p. 7).

Participants negotiated the 'successful girls' discourse by demonstrating their capacity to still succeed despite adversity and struggle. However, they also employed strategies of resisting these dominant narrative frameworks. Here, I explore how participants also rejected neoliberal accountability by using strategies to communicate that an emphasis on individualisation and choice does not necessarily serve them well. Nadine's 'black hole' metaphor was used as a way of communicating deep despair and distress, and it was also a way of recognising her agency and choice. It was a metaphor that enabled her to challenge and resist neoliberal ideologies that shape dominant narrative frameworks of survivorship and success. The metaphor enabled Nadine to communicate her understanding that there is potential for her to be misunderstood. It was a recognition that dominant narrative frameworks of survival that hold social and cultural power may not align with her experiences. When viewed in this way the metaphor of a

black hole can also act as a way of resisting dominant narrative frameworks of neoliberal accountability and feminised success that do not serve her well.

I frame this as a battle story because of the inherent tensions that exist when facing the gravitational pull of the 'black hole' but also resisting the gravitational pull. In line with Nadine's use of a metaphor as a strategy to tell the nuances of her story, survival was storied as a battle for other participants too. When I asked participants what helped them to cope during their childhood, some participants fell into a space of not knowing how they coped or at least not having a story available to tell about this. For example, Frances had made several disclosures to adults and had not been believed. She spoke about her pride that despite everything, her strength, determination and ambition enabled her to keep going. In previous chapters I explored the way that when stories are shaped by neoliberalism, it can enable the self to be constructed as strong, independent and resilient. However, when I asked Frances about what it was that she felt helped her to keep going, she fell to a place of not knowing. She explained:

'I honestly don't know, and I don't know how I ever picked myself up every single day and pretended that it wasn't happening. Like, I am not aware of how I did that' (Frances)

'I just don't know how I did that'... 'I didn't cope. I don't know how – I thought I was going to die, I was ready to give up' (Frances)

Frances' story of survival but also being ready to give up serves several functions. Firstly, the fact that she was ready to give up makes her survival story that bit more of a fight, functioning to bolster her recovery story and her position as having done the autonomous work of survival successfully. However, viewed through a dialogical framework, stories are never monologues. What this survival story does is constrain the articulation of the voice that did not cope and the voice that was ready to give up. These voices shine light on the alternative stories that women have available to them to tell, if they do not have readable survival stories. Frances was not the only participant who had trouble finding a way to story the self from the past to the present. She is not the only participant whose experiences were not reflected in available narrative resources. For example:

'I don't really know how to describe it really. Cos as I say, it is literally just carrying on... I think not thinking about stuff, not

talking about stuff and just acting like it didn't really happen'
(Sochi)

'I felt so lost before, but not knowing that I felt lost, it was just confusion and frustration and anxiety. It wasn't a pleasant place to be. I actually don't really know how I kind of plodded on' (Emma)

The gap between experience and knowledge – a disconnection between the before and after, is not uncommon for people who have experienced violence and abuse (Alcoff, 2018; Herman, 2015; Hydén, 2014). However, the fact that there are limited words available to make sense of how women kept carrying on, suggests that women can tell stories of survival and struggle, but there are limited ways of storying the 'how'. When I asked if Frances could say more about how she carried on, even though it was difficult to articulate how, she explained that she was 'done with fighting'.

'I was just done. I was done fighting for this kinda like better life. You know, my parents, it was awful, I was like you can do whatever, I don't care, if you wanna hurt me, just do it. and that was reflected so much in school, you know the people that I really had a lot of respect for and enjoyed company and had you know, teachers when I started off that were kind of like role models for me, I didn't care about them, I didn't care about impressing them, just you know, nothing mattered' (Frances)

Frances constructed her survival as a fight. The notion of a 'fight' constructs her as an active agent in her survival. At the same time, the notion that she was 'just done' communicates her distress that coexists with that fight. When storying the fight, the dominant story is one of survival and keeping going. This fight, for Frances, was about power and it was also about believability. She explained that she had a social worker at her house and her attempts to communicate her distress were not seen.

'I was a child screaming for help, absolutely screaming. Albeit it was in silence, but they should have picked up on it, they absolutely should have done. Erm [pause] and again if the first incident had been reported to social services they would have been like, you know, two accounts. I just – I remember just feeling – I feel like that evening, though I didn't know it at the time, now I reflect on it, that evening I very much didn't want to be alive. Very much did not want to be there, did not want to be alive anymore. I tried, I tried, you know? I felt like I was just constantly trying to go and hope that things would change or

things were gonna get better and they just wasn't, you know?'
(Frances)

A battle story was woven through Frances' account. Frances' emphasis that she did not want to be alive invites the listener to tune into the distress that she experienced.

Frances reflected, *'I very much didn't want to be alive. Very much did not want to be there, did not want to be alive anymore. I tried, I tried, you know?'* The emphasis on the alternative story points to important contradictory I positions, of fighting and trying to keep going, and at the same time, being ready to give up. Frances recognised the risk that her story might be misunderstood, and through her narration, she invited the listener to really listen by pausing to check my understanding: 'you know?'. She also occupied a both/and position that recognises her distress ('I did not want to be alive') and her agency ('I tried'). Occupying a 'both/and' position like this has been suggested to be a strategy employed by participants when dominant narrative frameworks fail them, but when there is also an important story to tell (McKenzie-Mohr & LaFrance, 2011).

I have drawn attention to the gendered and neoliberal discourses that shaped the stories that were available to participants. I have explored the way that women's distress is often individualised, due to homogenous and intersecting gendered, psychotherapeutic and neoliberal discourses. This section has explored the dominance and power of these discourses that leave little space for women to construct themselves as agentic and at the same time, recognising the depths and nuances of their struggles. Acknowledging success and achievements is useful and helps women to write themselves into a position of empowerment and resilience. However, there are significant ways in which the post-feminist discourse is limiting. Women I interviewed did significant work to articulate their struggles and distress and simultaneously demonstrating where they have employed choice and autonomy. Women's storytelling about their survival both maintains and resists these discourses surrounding femininity and success. Women used strategies to articulate multiple I positions by using metaphors, occupying both/and positions, and taking time to check in that I understood, or pausing to invite me to 'dwell in' the ambiguities they expressed. These tensions were narrated through battle stories that help to shine light on tensions and ambiguities in their stories of survival and struggle that may otherwise be overlooked. In the next section I continue to explore battle stories by turning attention to accounts of hope and loss that participants told.

Storying hope and loss

Through stories of hope and loss, participants evidenced the challenge of telling stories that others may not understand. These stories included conflicting voices about hope and loss. Here I continue to explore how these conflicts and tensions were narrated as battle stories, and I continue to point to the strategies that women used to articulate these coexisting and sometimes contradictory subjectivities. Firstly, I turn to Bethany's account of how she tried to maintain contact with her dad after her parents had separated.

Bethany: I kept in contact with my dad, well I tried to. He was a total shit about it actually he let me down a lot, even up until having my daughter, but I still tried to keep in contact with him, which is so hard to understand from the outside, you know. Why would you want to?

Int: can you tell me a bit about how you've tried to keep in contact with him and what that's been like for you?

Bethany: oh well, when he, when he left my mum I think he did that whole thing of extending the abuse through child contact court. They went to court for ages and wrangled with the kids. Anyway they decided it would be once a month at a weekend, and I don't think my mum disclosed domestic violence to the court actually at the time anyway, so she was going through this thing, you know, without them realising that either. Because it just wasn't the done thing, well she didn't you know - never tell anyone. So he would just hardly ever turn up, so he spent all this time getting the order and then he would mess my mum around really or not turn up and then she'd have to meet him half way and she'd be in cold sweats like dripping, and most of the time I wasn't involved because it wasn't like I could decide.

Bethany articulated the challenges she faced when trying to maintain contact with her dad and constantly being let down. Bethany had experienced being 'wrangled with' through the court, and contact with her dad was mandated post-separation, she had also chosen to try to maintain contact with her dad into adulthood. She reflected on the way that she was 'emotionally torn'. Her account of that inner conflict implies that it is difficult to tell a story that others might not understand. She reflected, '*I still tried to keep in contact with him, which is so hard to understand from the outside, you know. Why would you want to?*'. Bethany's account evidences the challenge of narrating a

coherent story about why she wanted to keep in contact with her dad. Voices of hope and loss were central to her story. I include the voice poem here as a way of bringing to the foreground the coexisting voices that shaped this conflict.

I kept in contact with my dad
I tried to.
He was a total shit about it actually
he let me down a lot
I still tried to keep in contact with him
Why would you want to?
he would just hardly ever turn up
I wasn't involved
it wasn't like I could decide
he was just –
he just let you down

On the one hand, Bethany wanted a sense of closeness with her dad. She explained, 'I still tried to keep in contact with him'. On the other hand, there is a voice that exists in dialogue with her wish for closeness, which questioned, 'why would you want to?'. The questioning voice is bolstered by the reality of what happened when she tried to meet up with her dad – the fact that she was let down constantly. Her wish for closeness is constantly shut down because that wish for closeness compromises the stability and consistency of the account. These accounts of hope and loss required participants to articulate inner tensions that risk destabilising the stories they told. However, in order to articulate these tensions, contradictory perspectives needed to be communicated. This is what constitutes a battle narrative typology. Bethany spoke more about her inner battle in relation to her dad.

'He told me that he was on his way and I waited for an hour with a new born and he didn't turn up and it's just constant. And I can't believe I never – this is the thing, in my professional life, I never tell anyone - oh god, I still gave him chances till I was 28. You know, he walked me down the aisle on my wedding day because I always felt like "well what if we made it up once and I regretted it?" – it's like that hope never goes, even though you totally, you can totally rationalise this person is bad. But

and let down. Bethany had grown up with some hope that her dad might change, but becoming a mother had shifted how she negotiated that conflict.

'I always have it in the back of my mind what if he changed and then I really regret that my own dad wasn't there. I had a lot of those moments where what if, what if, and then I realised when I had my daughter, if he can't even do it for his own grandchild, like for me in this situation, I just can't put her [pause]. And it's just the feeling of putting someone else through it, like I can't put her through – I've been an idiot and it's been a long time. Rationally I feel ashamed even saying it. I know from a rational point of view it's just crazy but yeah, I just didn't want her to grow up with that conflict of oh granddad, but I know him, but I love him, but I thought no, it's better if she just doesn't have him. [Int: yeah] Yeah, and it was easier to make the decision for someone else than it was for myself. I've had such a lot of conflict about it' (Bethany)

Bethany's suggestion that putting an end to contact with her dad would come at the cost of losing her dad, is characterised by a dialogical relationship between voices of hope and loss. Bethany highlighted her desire for closeness with her dad with her coexisting question of 'why would you want to?... you can totally rationalise that this person is bad', and 'it's very difficult for people to understand'. Bethany's statements, 'I know him, but I love him, but I thought no' brings to the foreground this dialogue that is shaped by ideologies of normative family life that provide scripts of family as togetherness, closeness and happiness (Burman, 2017; James & Prout, 2015; O'Dell et al., 2018). Her voice of loss in this account suggests that she would lose the father that walked her down the aisle on her wedding day; an idealised story of family life and father-child relationships. However, an idealised account through a voice of loss does not recognise the other parts too. A narrative resource of family life and father-child relationships is useful in that it enabled a framework through which to make sense of and validate the ways that she was let down. However, through a narrative framework of normative and idealised family life, she also risked writing herself into a story of victimisation and deficit if she does not find ways of negotiating her power and agency in ways that can be heard by others.

Bethany's new identity as a mother offered her the opportunity to re-story the self with a different kind of power. It was difficult to put an end to contact in order to protect herself from being let down, but bringing her own child into the picture was an

opportunity to re-negotiate her agency and power, enabling her to make a decision to cut contact with her dad and decide that ‘I never want to see you again’. Through this battle story, Bethany could write herself into a position of power rather than deficit. However, when retrospectively storying her struggles, these very same dominant ideologies of family life (e.g. her dad walking her down the aisle on her wedding day, her dad having contact with her child, and the hope that one day he may change) were powerful and constrained the articulation of stories of being let down. Despite the re-negotiation of agency being useful in offering Bethany a new way of storying the self, Bethany’s struggle to make sense of these conflicting voices was not only located in the past, but her struggle was on-going.

Bethany: it's not normal, it's not rational to want contact with the person who's done that. But [pause] you know, you can't... it's really messy when it happens to you because you're confused about all the societal messages about love and family and blood and blood's thicker than water and [sigh] you know? So I just don't think people would – unless they'd had, or even maybe if they'd had a life themselves that hadn't quite gone to plan, maybe they would understand more. But I'd just be too scared that they would think I'm you know, just not – I don't... [sigh] not thinking the right things

Int: Not thinking the right things?

Bethany: Well you know, even that. Even thinking oh my god you know, my dad walked me down the aisle at my wedding. It's even hard to explain why I did that when all those things have happened but [pause] yeah it's hard to explain – even I'm not sure why

Like other participants, in the interview, Bethany often emphasised that things were hard to explain because it was not rational. In previous chapters I have explored the dominant narrative resources that script normative assumptions about how people recover from domestic abuse in childhood. These recovery narrative resources shaped Bethany’s storytelling here about her life that has not ‘gone to plan’. Her recovery story also intersects with ideologies that surround family life, shaping the assumption that she does not think the ‘right things’. These external voices, or as Bethany named them, ‘societal messages’ that ‘blood’s thicker than water’ demonstrate that her storytelling was shaped by these dominant ideologies about family life. This normative ideology validates the struggles and abuse she has experienced but simultaneously functions to

erase her coexisting desire for closeness and her hope that her dad will change. Framed in this way, her story of hope and loss is also storied as a battle between rationality and emotion.

I found myself also internalising these external narrative resources by wondering why Bethany kept trying to have contact with her dad. My own internalisation of these external voices shows the power of these narrative resources. They shaped Bethany's storytelling and they also shaped how I listened. During analysis, I kept returning to Bethany's interview, I became more aware of Bethany's own internalisation of these voices, and the power that they had in constraining some of her other voices, such as disappointment, hope and shame. When Bethany said, 'I always have it in the back of my mind, what if he changed, and then I really regret that my own dad wasn't there', this is a voice of hope that one day her dad may change and she may regret cutting him out of her life. However, the voice of hope coexists with a voice of shame: *I've been an idiot and it's been a long time. Rationally I feel ashamed even saying it. I know from a rational point of view it's just crazy but yeah*'. This is a story of an internal battle through which the process of articulating a voice of hope alongside powerful dominant ideologies of family life, produced a complicated story to tell that Bethany was aware risked positioning her as 'crazy'.

Bethany's awareness of the potential to be misunderstood is evident, not only by the way that she acknowledged the risk of sounding crazy, but she also pointed to that risk in other ways. For example, she said, 'in my professional life I never tell anyone'. She explained that it is 'hard to understand from the outside', and that it is 'hard to explain' because people might think that she is 'not thinking the right things'. In the absence of adequate narratives, it is important to note that women are not entirely failed. In this study, and as others have also found when researching issues such as recovery from rape and sexual abuse (Woodiwiss, 2014), recovery from, and/or living with depression (Chowdhury et al., 2019; Lafrance, 2007), and distress about birth (Chadwick, Cooper, & Harries, 2014) women find creative, nuanced and strategic ways of communicating their stories. However, as other feminist scholars have suggested, it requires nuanced, critical and sensitive listening in order to hear women's voices, particularly voices that challenge dominant storytelling practices (Chadwick, 2009; Doucet & Mauthner, 2008). McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance (2011) suggested that 'in the absence of adequate

narratives, dominant scripts take hold so easily, swallowing up the nuances of speakers' meanings' (p. 63).

Here, Bethany was aware of the potential for her meaning to be misunderstood, so she took up a both/and position so that the nuances in her story had a chance of being heard (McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2011). She articulated stories where she explicitly voiced multiple I positions. For example, *'he's done horrific things to me. You know he strangled me in public. It doesn't mean – it's not normal, it's not rational to want contact with the person who's done that. But [pause] you know, you can't... it's really messy when it happens to you'*. She also falls to phrases like 'it's messy' and her sentences drop off, for example, 'it doesn't mean – it's not normal' or the 'I' speaking position drops off and she uses 'you': 'it's messy when it happens to you... you're confused'. These storytelling practices point to the challenge of articulating stories that dominant narrative frameworks do not make space for. Similarly, Nadine reflected on the pull for her dad to be in her life.

'there are times, even now, when I look at people and they've got both their parents coming to see them at uni or they're being helped by their parents and I just think, would I have him back just so I could have that stability and he could do everything like now when things go wrong in the house, part of me is like oh I kind of wish he was still there, cos like nothing ever went wrong when he was there. Like he'd just get it fixed straight away, and yeah, the reality of him not being around even though rationally I know god, I don't want him back ever. I don't want to see him ever. But it's that kind of pull, because they're still your parent as well, and that kind of, I don't know like you almost still want them to be proud of you and to love you, even though that's not gonna happen, but there's still that innate drive to just yeah' (Nadine)

Nadine, like Bethany, narrated her story through dominant narrative resources of family life. Nadine said 'it's that kind of pull, because they're still your parent.... There's still that innate drive to just yeah'. Whilst words fail Nadine and she fell to silence here, the innate pull still exists in contradiction with voice that stated 'god, I don't want him back ever'. From a dialogical and relational view, Brison (2002), in her personal narrative of recovery in the aftermath of violence, suggested that 'in order to construct self-narratives we need not only the words with which to tell our stories but also an audience willing and able to hear us and to understand our words as we intend them'

(Brison, 2002, p. 51). Attending to these multiple voices helps to do the work of dwelling in, tuning in, and staying with the inconsistencies in her story. It helps to do what Chadwick defines as resisting ‘efforts to ‘smooth over’ ambiguity and discontinuities’ in women’s storytelling’ (Chadwick, 2017a, p. 71). I draw on Chadwick’s work here as she has specifically called on narrative methodologies and feminist listening practices as having the capacity to analyse the embodied and non-verbal ways that stories are told. Other feminist scholars have also called for ‘listening for, and lingering in, the spaces where language fails’ (McKenzie-Mohr & LaFrance, 2011, p. 65). I wanted to listen for and linger in these spaces here. Bethany, and other participants, regularly fell to phrases such as, ‘I don’t know’, ‘I’m not sure why’, ‘it was confusing’, and other ways of filling spaces such as silences, sighs, and gaps in speech, for example, ‘*they would think I’m you know, just not – I don’t... [sigh]*’ (Bethany). These ambiguities constitute battle stories when the contradictions are the focus of the story like this.

Jasmine had also met her dad with questions for him. She described the meeting as offering closure, but she also explained that her questions were still unanswered and, like Clara, she still wondered why me.

Jasmine: it was kind of the unasked question that I got the answer to. So obviously I asked questions and he answered them, but I guess my real question was, what is he like? [Int: yeah] and that was kind of answered subtly by the way there was always an excuse for every question that I asked. It was always someone else’s fault, and that kind of reassured me of the kind of person he is actually really like. I didn’t say ‘what are you like?’ I asked him questions surrounding my childhood and the fact that there was always, it was always someone else’s fault, it was always oh, he was young and just stupid [emphasis] stupid excuses kind of, answered all of my questions in one way, if that makes sense?

Int: yeah it does. So the subtext – the question that you didn’t ask, but that you needed to ask, was answered?

Jasmine: yeah it was answered in his response, which was always, yeah things were shit but he said that he was always really sorry and that he loved me – all this crap [emphasis] basically, is the only way I can say it.

Jasmine directly voiced her struggle, saying *'I was the one that used to tell him that I didn't wanna go round so then he'd stop seeing me, but then I was really hurt by that. So it was always, I was always really confused in my head until I kind of pictured together that it wasn't me – it wasn't my fault'*. Like Bethany, the sense of inner conflict was woven through her stories. Her account explicitly invited the listener to hear the nuances of this battle through acknowledging these tensions and conflicts directly using statements such as *'it's confusing'... 'it was a confusing time'... 'I was just always like in a battle'*. Like Clara and Bethany, telling a story that drew attention to these contradictions and multiple I positions was a strategy of inviting the listener to hear all of what she communicated, despite, and because of the way that her story does not align with ideologies about family life. Jasmine went on to speak more about the things she wanted to say to her dad.

'I wanted to erm, sort of ask why [pause] he gave up. So I think – when I was younger I was always confused as to why he did give up, although I knew that I made excuses not to see him, I always kind of wanted him to want me, and kind of stop it all and stuff, and obviously that never happened. Eventually he got sick. So I used to say 'oh I don't wanna come round because I didn't like the food' but that wouldn't mean that I wouldn't want to not see him, cos if he'd offered to take me somewhere I would have been fine, but he never did and so I just never saw him again. One of my things was 'why did you just never speak to me again?' but it – I'm still confused now, because I remember having all my nightmares and being so worried that he would come back, but then at the same time being so hurt that he rejected me in the first place. All really confusing. So that was one of my big things was why would you ever give up on someone? Especially your child?' (Jasmine)

Jasmine was fearful of her dad and did not want to see him, but at the same time, she desired closeness, stating, *'I'm still confused now, because I remember having all my nightmares and being so worried that he would come back, but then at the same time being so hurt that he rejected me in the first place'*. A voice of confusion points again to a battle of rationality and emotion. She stated, *'I remember having all my nightmares about being so worried that he would come back'*. This voice coexists with a voice that was hurt and felt rejected, and even a voice that wanted to see him, for instance, *'that wouldn't mean that I didn't want to see him'*.

The emotion-logic battle is shown more clearly through the polyvocality of Jasmine's account. Jasmine's account is told in a social context where logic is privileged over emotion (Ahmed, 2004). Voices of desiring closeness are positioned in opposition to rationality, and these voices of emotion consequently hold less power. The articulation of that battle through explicitly voicing confusion is a risky way to articulate conflicting voices. Considering the self as polyvocal helps to shine light on the work that women in this study did when there were limited narrative frameworks available to them that supported them to tell a story that aligned with their experiences.

Before moving on to the final section of this chapter, I have explored stories of hope and loss, and I have considered the impact of socio-cultural structures that privilege logic over emotion. Stories of hope and loss evidence that an emotion-logic binary plays a part in shaping which voices are dominant and which risk being overlooked. Framed in this way, there is a risk that emotion compromises the stability of the account. However, storying these tensions through battle stories makes space for emotion and enables young women to articulate the nuances of their accounts. It can be useful to find strategies of articulating nuances through battle stories, as these strategies can invite the listener to hear tensions and contradictions whilst at the same time, acknowledging that a 'rational' voice may be dominant but it does not mean contrapuntal, emotion-led and 'non-rational' stories do not exist.

Anger and accountability

In this final section of this chapter I continue to explore how an emotion-logic binary featured in participants' accounts. I have explored some of the challenges participants faced in articulating contradictions and tensions. In this section I will draw attention to these contradictions and tensions when participants' stories contained reflections on who was responsible and accountable for the violence they experienced. I start with Sonia's account and explore her negotiations of anger and blame.

'I do kind of blame my mum and feel more feelings of anger towards my mum, even though the violence came from my dad. I mean I know there was a couple of times, she didn't really hit us or anything it was just throwing things really but yeah I feel like she didn't protect us and I feel like she could have put more effort into their relationship to make him happier, and [Int: right] yeah.' (Sonia)

'I kind of feel more angry now as an adult because I look and I think, if I were a mother and the same thing happened, I'd like to think – and I know it is difficult, but I'd like to think that [pause]. Because I feel like sometimes she'd keep the violence away from her, like the violence and the aggression away from her. So she'd tell my dad that we'd been naughty, or something like that, which I look and I feel that is so bad, that's the other thing, when I read some stories, normally you read that the mother would do anything to protect the children, and I found the opposite in my case. I think I have a question as to why'
(Sonia)

Sonia described her dad as the perpetrator of domestic abuse, and she also described situations where her dad would be violent towards her and her sibling. Not only did Sonia describe a sense of not being protected by her mum, but she explained that her mum redirected violence towards the children at times. Sonia also spoke about times when she considered phoning the police but would have felt guilty if she did.

'I would have felt really guilty on dad because deep down I knew that he wasn't really a bad person, it was just the drink, and now as an adult especially, I mean he had a really difficult upbringing himself and yeah, I just – I couldn't have done that. And I was actually closer to my dad than I was my mum. It's really interesting because he was the one that was scary and unpredictable. And he used to upset me a lot, but when he was sober he was just the best person.' (Sonia)

In Sonia's account is a struggle to hold her dad accountable for the violence that he used. Nadine also spoke about these tensions of accountability. There were times when she would stand up for her mum, but it felt that her mum did not do the same for her.

'my dad used to like, I don't know why he did it, he used to drive and just drive with me and mum in the car. And then make me get out and then drive away. And he always came back – he always came back and got me but it was like that 10 minutes which feels like hours when you're a child. And you think this is it, I've finally been so bad that he's just gonna abandon me here. That used to make me really upset. He used to do it to my mum as well, but I – when he'd drive off and leave her, I'd be screaming and shouting and crying and begging him in the car, like don't leave her there. So – which he always did. I never could quite get my head around that as a child – he never left me there, but I just thought every time that this would be the last

time [Int: mmmm]. Then I was always sad when I got back in the car because it didn't seem like my mum had put up a fight like I did' (Nadine)

It was difficult for Sonia and Nadine to express the voice in their accounts that blamed their mums. These are stories that were shaped by voices of closeness and love and fear, and struggle and anger. I frame these as battle stories because the focus of the story is a sense of push and pull; a tussle between what participants often called a 'rational' voice, and a voice that was shaped by emotion. Through these battle stories, emotions are constructed as in opposition to rationality, as Sonia and Nadine spoke about the anger they felt towards their mums for not being protected. In previous chapters I have drawn attention to how gendered discourses about mothering and ideal femininity shaped the stories that women I interviewed told. I have explored how these discourses shaped how women constructed a sense of self in their transitions to young adulthood and in their recoveries from domestic abuse. However, these discourses of mothering and femininity also shaped how they narrated and made sense of their relationships with their own mothers. Sonia and Nadine reflected:

'I look and I feel that is so bad, that's the other thing, when I read some stories, normally you read that the mother would do anything to protect the children' (Sonia)

'I was always sad when I got back in the car because it didn't seem like my mum had put up a fight like I did' (Nadine)

Bolstered by ideologies of mothering and gendered discourses of femininity, in domestic abuse contexts mothers are written into particular roles (Damant et al., 2008; Heward-Belle, 2017). It is assumed that the role of the mother is to protect the child, positioning mothers as a central source of protection for children, by acting as a buffer to protect against long term effects of exposure to violence (Easterbrooks, Katz, Kotake, Stelmach, & Chaudhuri, 2018; Holmes, 2013), or even by their presence and protection having a therapeutic containing effect (Katz, 2015; Leung, 2015). This provides a narrative framework through which young adult women can talk about their mothers and make sense of issues surrounding blame and accountability or responsibility for the violence and their protection as children.

Nadine went on to explain that it was hard to make sense of her anger and a sense of blame.

'I remember being angry with my mum but never really with my dad. Like internally I'd be cross with my mum. Because I guess what he said – that she was useless and pathetic and weak, and it was just like his voice. But it was her that I'd be angry with, even though she never did anything to me. She never hurt me in any way, she just let him do that, or like I don't know' (Nadine)

Nadine's sense that her mum just 'let her dad do that' (sexually abuse her) did not sit easy with me. Likewise, Sonia's account that 'I feel she didn't protect us and I feel like she could have put more effort into their relationship to make him happier' also left me with a sense of discomfort. My discomfort at listening reflected the fact that I found it uncomfortable to make sense of accountability for men's violence in this way. Others have also critically reflected on the reproduction of the ideal mothering discourse in domestic abuse contexts, bringing attention to dominant discourses of failure to protect (Heward-Belle, 2017; LaPierre, 2008). Notions of ideal mothering boost the power of the failure to protect discourse in domestic abuse contexts whereby the protection of children tends to be presented as the mother's responsibility (Moulding, Buchanan, & Wendt, 2015). The failure to protect discourse provides a narrative resource that shaped participants' storytelling and meaning making. Sonia and Nadine struggled to locate the blame firmly on their dads, as they also voiced a sense that their mothers were in some way responsible for not protecting them. For instance, Nadine's account that 'it was her that I'd be angry with, even though she never did anything to me...'

Socially constructed gendered discourses around mothering and femininity reproduce a version of motherhood which some women have described as impossible to attain (Lapierre, 2010; Moulding et al., 2015). The mother blaming discourse is further promoted through the idea that to leave the perpetrating partner is the ultimate act of protection for the child(ren) (Lapierre, 2008; Moulding et al., 2015). The double bind of the maternal protectiveness discourse makes ideal mothering 'illusory or even impossible' (Moulding et al., 2015, p. 255). In other words, women can be blamed for attempting to prevent contact post separation, but they can also be blamed for not protecting children during domestic abuse (Holt, 2017; Humphreys & Absler, 2011).

Several researchers have highlighted the need to challenge the over-simplification of the failure to protect discourse (Heward-Belle, 2017; Holt, 2017; Lapierre, 2008; Moulding et al., 2015). Lapierre et al. (2017) challenged the assumption that the mother-child relationship is always one of mutual protectiveness and closeness. His

analysis of children's accounts suggests that closeness and distance can co-exist in mother-child relationships during and after domestic abuse. Additionally, Pernebo & Almqvist's (2017) thematic analysis of children's descriptions of their mothers includes acknowledgement of narratives which conform to the protectiveness, support and nurturing that dominant narrative frameworks surrounding mothering propose. However, they also explore co-existing narratives which challenge dominant views of mother-child relationships in the context of domestic abuse. These alternative narratives are suggested by the authors to show children's less coherent descriptions which reveal vague, disorganised accounts that the authors interpret as implying absence and passivity in their relationships with their mothers. Although women I interviewed did not imply absence or passivity in their relationships with their mothers – in fact, their account suggest the opposite – they did narrate stories that existed of multiple voices and perspectives. These are stories that risk appearing vague and disorganised due to the inconsistencies in storylines. However, my analysis suggests that disorganisation does not imply vagueness or passivity. Rather, it points to multiplicity and contradiction – it points to the human self as dialogical (Buber, 1923/2996; Hermans, 2001), and this is a necessary starting point if we are to deeply engage with the intersecting voices from which we speak.

Sonia summarised the challenge of narrating a story that is in line with how she made sense of her experiences, but that can also resist some of these powerful mother blaming discourses that thread through these accounts.

'I look and I think, if I were a mother and the same thing happened, I'd like to think – and I know it is difficult, but I'd like to think that [extended pause].' (Sonia)

Sonia acknowledged, 'I know it's difficult', and then her sentence dropped off and her story changed focus. The way that her sentence drops off and the way that there are disjunctions in her talk, suggests that her articulation of blame is constrained. The maternal protectiveness discourse, although useful in part, may also be insufficient and may not capture the reality of Sonia's experience. Dominant narrative frameworks about maternal protectiveness and mother-child relationships had failed her in this instance. She went on to say, *'even though it was him who was violent I just feel that she had more of a responsibility and she could have actually, I dunno, sounds not very – you know, made him happy. But she was just so selfish in so many ways'*. Again, the

way that she reflected, ‘I dunno, sounds not very – you know, made him happy’, suggests that there are significant limitations to maternal protectiveness and mothering narrative resources, as Sonia fell to gaps, silences, uncertainties and hesitations in her articulation.

Some existing literature has explored similar themes in relation to adults’ experiences of mother-child relationships in domestic abuse suggesting that mothers and children are disadvantaged by gendered socio-structural forces that provide homogenous and sometimes harmful scripts. Moulding et al., (2015) interviewed adults about growing up with domestic abuse. They found some adults reflect that their mother may not have protected them, but they were also aware of the emotional work involved in trying to make sense of this ‘failure’ to protect. My analysis here suggests that even though young adults can hold some anger and blame towards their mothers, they still struggle to account for why their mother did not leave or did not do more to protect them.

These maternal protectiveness narrative resources can be limiting by constraining the articulation of stories that reflect the experiences of women. However, these narrative resources can also be useful as they can support participants to tell a story of struggle that dominant scripts surrounding recovery and transitions stories do not always make space for. For most of the women I interviewed, it was an ongoing battle to negotiate a sense of blame and accountability. It was also an on-going battle to make sense of love and anger that co-exists, as well as fear alongside a desire for closeness. Battle stories can offer a way of acknowledging the violence and abuse that women experienced, whilst also articulating their active ways of negotiating and renegotiating autonomy and power. These battle stories have a particular purpose for women in this study, supporting women to take up dominant narrative frameworks and discourses to tell their stories, but enabling them to actively reject narrative frameworks that did not serve them well. It is through these battle stories that women reject a story that would risk writing the self into a position of only victimisation. Directly drawing attention to the challenge of telling a coherent story that is readable by others can be seen as a way of rejecting a position of victimisation.

‘I think it’s just like the magnitude that you try and get your head around, it’s just impossible, you can’t. But then I’m still like not angry with my dad? And even I don’t understand that cos I feel like I should be’ (Nadine)

It is the magnitude of the abuse Nadine experienced from her dad, that is impossible to get her head around. Nadine used the interview space to question herself – to question why she was not angry with her dad. From a dialogical view, when we speak, we do not speak in monologue, we speak in dialogue (Hermans, 2001). However, in a social and cultural context that privileges monologue and single storylines that are unchanging, women risk their dialogues being simplified, and the less dominant voices risk being erased (Chadwick, 2017a). The voice poem from the above extract draws attention to this dialogue.

I'm still not like angry with my dad?

I don't understand that

I should be

Nadine's account is reflective of other participants too. It consists of 'self-negotiations, self-contradictions and self-integrations' (Hermans, 2001, p. 252). Her question of why she was not angry with her dad, in dialogue with a sense that she 'should' be, points to the power of external voices that do not align with her experience. Her sense that she should be angry and should hold her dad accountable for his violence would mean relinquishing the anger she felt towards her mum for the part Nadine felt her mum played in not stopping the violence. Through this battle story it is difficult to hold her dad accountable when maternal protectiveness discourses also shape a self that felt let down by her mum. If she tells a story of anger with her dad, she does not get to voice the sense of being unprotected and let down. The internalisation of external narrative resources has been framed by Hermans (2001) as the 'other in self' – a model of 'participatory thinking' in which the boundary between self and other is fluid and intangible. From this view, human is not a self-contained subject, but human exists on the boundary between self and other (Bell & Gardiner, 1998; Buber, 1923/1996). Hermans (2001) argued for a 'model of moving positions' (p. 252), suggesting that I positions have the capacity to move in both imaginal space and physical space in an intertwined way. The intertwined and fluid way that these I positions exist means that it is not possible to separate Nadine's coexisting voices here, and it is necessary to attend to all of what she says. On one hand, the inconsistency compromises a sense of logic in her story. However, the act of telling these stories of conflict and contradiction is also useful because it brings to light a sense of battle and acts as an invitation to the listener to hear the multiplicity, rather than iron out the contradictions.

I have explored how participants told stories of anger and accountability. These are battle stories because the very construction of these stories relies on a sense of tension; a to and fro between I positions. The explicit movement between I positions through the stories young women told constitute battle stories because the battles remain unresolved and that causes a sense of being ‘emotionally torn’. Voicing anger can validate the way that participants felt let down, but stories of anger and accountability also show the emotion-logic binary that shapes what is possible to say and what is risky to articulate. Speaking from a rational voice can provide women with a credible story that is fixed and a story through which they can be understood by others. However, participants often explicitly expressed the risk that others would not understand, sometimes even questioning themselves, for instance, Nadine’s account of confusion, ‘I’m still not angry with my dad? I don’t understand that...’. This strategy of storying these battles by explicitly expressing that their story may not make sense, invites the listener to stay with these tensions instead of smoothen them out. Tuning into tensions and contradictions can make for uncomfortable listening, but to really tune in demands a commitment to dwelling in these tensions. For instance, storying a struggle to hold the father accountable, and at the same time articulating anger towards the mum, was difficult to stick with as a listener. However, the discomfort I felt also helped to explore the socio-political contexts in which young women spoke. Sticking with the tensions rather than smoothening them out helped to explore the gendered ideologies that shaped how young women storied their mothers’ roles whilst they also struggled to hold their fathers accountable.

Summary

This chapter has explored battle stories of struggle and survival. At the core of battle stories lies a push and pull and a story of conflict. In existing literature, typically these multiplicities have been, or risk being smoothened over in favour of clear storylines that do not present ambiguities or inconsistencies. Women speak and live in a socio-cultural context which privileges masculine and rational storylines, and there exists a hierarchy of emotion and logic that does not always make space for stories that are led by emotion (Ahmed, 2004). Women I interviewed internalised these external socio-cultural forces through the stories they told. The emotion-logic binary produces epistemic injustices where women are disadvantaged particularly if the stories they tell contain voices that contradict logic (Ahmed, 2004). Participants were aware of the risk that

their stories might be misinterpreted or misunderstood and some of these battle stories functioned to directly acknowledge multiple I positions, in an effort to invite the listener to ‘dwell in’ the tensions. Women were able to write themselves into a position of survival and struggle by recognising the coexisting weight of struggles and the strength of their resistance. The notion of polyvocality and plurality helps to shine light on the emotionality, the ongoing-ness and the fluidity of these battles that are not necessarily resolved and that may be ongoing. Battle stories were an important feature in young women’s stories and show that developmental transitions and recoveries after domestic abuse are a fluid process shaped by multiple factors.

These battles were storied as internal battles, but they can also be considered as epistemic battles, bringing to light questions of epistemological power – who can claim knowledge and how, especially when there is uncertainty and unanswered questions, leaving gaps in knowledge and limited ways of narratively connecting the past, present and future. As listeners, we need to attend to the alternative stories that fill these gaps when there are no answers and limited narrative frameworks available. Feminist scholars have argued that we need to adopt feminist listening and analytic practices that support women’s meaning making and narrative practices – that we need to pay attention to nuances, listen beyond words, and dwell in the silences and places where words can fail women (Chadwick, 2017a; Mauthner, 2017; McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2011; Woodcock, 2016). In line with this, I have argued that listening beyond words to young women’s accounts of navigating young adulthood after domestic abuse in childhood is necessary. Paying attention to the nuances of young women’s experiences helps in hearing and making space for the expression of the ways in which stories diverge from dominant narrative frameworks.

Tuning into narrative instability meant holding these instabilities myself and finding ways to represent what I had heard as a story listener. Tuning into nuances and the stories that lie in-between or on the margins, was supported through the use of voice poems, but I also want to acknowledge that the task of representing nuances and contradictions also came with a listening lens that was unique to me. As explored at various points in this thesis, I came to this work with my own history, knowledge and experiences, and although I can make claims to knowledge using theoretical resources, it is not as simple to make claims to knowledge using the personal and experiential knowledge and biography that I also came with (Bondi & Fewell, 2017). Listening to

and representing participants' multiple stories of battles and narrative instability really required holding these narratives and representing them through my own lens as well as the theoretical resources I used. It is my hope that through articulating my own sense of the relational contexts of interviews, as well as the theoretical resources that informed my analysis, the thesis reader has an idea of how I reached these conclusions.

To conclude, the strategies I have explored in this chapter were used despite and because of the limited available narrative resources for women I interviewed. Battle stories enabled women to reject and resist the ways that their stories and nuances of their meanings may be swallowed up in favour of dominant scripts that can be limiting. There are challenges of storying the self from struggle to a place of strength with a credible and coherent story particularly if some struggles are ongoing, stories have emotion, and battles live on. However, using the typology of a battle to tell these stories can also be helpful in enabling the articulation of agency, the co-existence of strength and struggles, and the non-linear way that developmental transitions following domestic abuse were experienced.

8. Conclusions and implications

Introduction

My aim in this thesis was to tune into the multiple aspects and voices that constituted young women's stories of domestic abuse in childhood and their transitions to young adulthood. In the previous chapters I explored three narrative typologies that I developed based on the stories of young women. These were: transitions, recoveries and battles. I argued that women's accounts consisted of multiple stories, and specifically that transitions, including transitions to young adulthood, were storied as flexible, relational and dynamic. In this concluding chapter, I discuss the overarching themes of this thesis. I argue that pluralising developmental transitions offers an important contribution to the existing domestic abuse literature. I also argue that social structures intersected with individual biographies and relational lives in intricate and multifaceted ways. The intersections of individual lives and social structures had the capacity to facilitate a useful construction and configuration of the self. However, social structures and dominant narrative resources surrounding femininity, childhood and family life could simultaneously constrain what was speakable and how. These factors weaved their way through women's accounts and shaped how women established the authority to construct and tell a biography that was in line with their experiences.

In this chapter, I also explore the methodological, theoretical and practical contributions of this thesis. I show that this work extends the current domestic abuse literature by arguing that there is a need and value in a broader focus on the lives of young adults following domestic abuse, and that a sole focus on resilience, coping and outcomes is narrow and restrictive. I argue that developmental transitions are multifaceted and plural (Crafter et al., 2019; Zittoun, 2007), that there are strengths and limitations of the 'haunting' and potential lasting impact of creative poetic devices as a mode of story telling and interpretation, and I suggest that there are ways practitioners can work with and address the social and relational barriers to hearing women when they talk about domestic abuse in childhood. I draw attention to the need to hear women when they tell their stories, even if disclosure does not appear 'stable' and even if reporting is late or fragmented.

In drawing conclusions, it is also important to acknowledge that research can never tell us the whole story. A dialogical philosophy of the self (Buber, 1923/1996; Hermans, 2001; 2003) posits that the self is always unfinished; there are always more stories to tell and more selves to narrate into being. Stories are not fixed but are open to re-telling and revision. For this reason, I have refrained from proposing rigid conclusions that do not make space to acknowledge fluctuating, fluid and changeable selves (Frank, 2012). The conclusions I offer in this thesis should be considered in this spirit – as interpreted, subjective, and capturing a dialogue and a moment in time.

Pluralising developmental transitions after domestic abuse

There is a sizable literature-base about child to adult transitions or outcomes that focus on resilience, coping or the impact of domestic abuse. This research extends and enhances existing literature by offering an exploration of how that transition is experienced by young women. Prior to this research, we have only had a fairly singular and binary way of understanding that transition – i.e. people can demonstrate resiliency in the face of adversity or not, setting up a narrow narrative framework for young adults who navigate developmental transitions and tell their stories. Transitions, for the women I interviewed, were narrated by and constrained by social structures that shaped the stories they told and their configurations of the self (Zittoun, 2007). The women I interviewed, navigated these narrow narrative frameworks in ways that could be both useful to them, by offering hope and empowerment, and also in ways that constrained what was speakable and how.

Some existing literature in Canada, Australia and the US has explored the retrospective views of adults in relation to their childhood experiences of domestic abuse (Alaggia & Donohue, 2018; Anderson & Danis, 2006; Jenney et al., 2016; O'Brien et al., 2013), and these cited studies only focus on accounts of coping and resilience. However, Dumont and Lessard (2019) conducted a study with young adults in Canada using a life course theory approach to explore the meanings that young adults assign to their childhood experiences of domestic abuse. They suggested that there are multiple transition experiences that constitute the life course and that shape the meanings young adults assign to their experiences. Although their focus was on meaning making, their

suggestion that there are multiple developmental transitions that are not just age-based aligns with the arguments I have made in this thesis.

My pluralisation of the term ‘transitions’ reflects the fact that women I interviewed told multiple stories of their developmental transitions and experiences. There were several transitions that indicated and shaped ‘becoming’ an adult which were not necessarily age-based or experienced in a linear way (Zittoun, 2007; 2008). Young women I interviewed storied their transitions to young adulthood as fluid, non-linear, relational and multiple. Drawing on the work of Zittoun (2007), I have shown that women’s transitions were individual to their unique histories, relationships and biographies, and they were also shaped by wider socio-cultural resources surrounding gender and family life. Despite the fact that women’s stories consisted of many transitions, the assumption that becoming an adult is marked by age and characteristics such as dependence and autonomy still shaped women’s stories and provided women with a framework through which to tell their stories of becoming a young adult (Walkerdine, 1993). However, I have shown, particularly in chapter 5, that young women’s lives and developmental transitions were not necessarily lived or experienced in a linear way, and age was not necessarily a marker of adulthood.

The fact that multiple intersecting stories were told surrounding the process of becoming a young adult suggests that ‘becoming’ a young adult is a negotiated and fluid process. Critical developmental psychologists have challenged the notion that development from childhood to adulthood is a single linear trajectory (Burman, 2017; Crafter et al., 2019; O’Dell et al., 2018; Zittoun, 2007; 2008). The idea that adulthood is marked by age does not account for the relational fabric or the dynamic nature of human lives (Valentine, 2003; Zittoun, 2008) and it does not account for the multiple stories of ‘becoming’ a young adult that participants told. I demonstrated that relationality was a core part of how developmental transitions to young adulthood were experienced and narrated by women I interviewed. For example, in chapter 7, I showed that as a young adult, Clara was still living through the on-going coercive control that her father used. Clara was ‘pulled into’ games even though she is an adult and has her ‘own life’. Even though she didn’t want to be, and even though she had independence and a ‘successful’ adulthood by view of traditional markers (a partner, a house, she is studying), she was still ‘pulled into’ the same dynamics of her childhood, compromising her capacity to articulate her ‘adult’ self. Other transitions participants

spoke about that I explored in chapters 5 and 6 were influential transitions or ‘markers’ of adulthood, including becoming a mother, getting a job, the ability to use their voice and speak their mind, and the ability to tell a ‘successful’ recovery story.

Many participants spoke of taking on ‘adult’ tasks and roles in childhood, such as caring for siblings or their parent, caring for themselves, getting jobs, dealing with schooling decisions themselves, or leaving home ‘early’. ‘Adultification’ tends to be problematised in literature, assuming that growing up too fast is problematic and produces lasting damage because individuals have missed out on the opportunity to be children (Burman, 2017). This has also been shown explicitly for children in the context of domestic abuse, given the likelihood that children take on caring positions within family relationships where domestic abuse occurs (Callaghan et al., 2016). In chapter 2, I argued that it is important to recognise the impact that domestic abuse can have on children and I do not intend to overlook the fact that experiencing domestic abuse can be impactful and have long-lasting effects. However, through this thesis I have shown that children navigate multiple challenges unique to their families and biographies that diverge from normative family life and that these challenges do not stop once they reach adulthood. In fact, women’s experiences of childhood alongside dominant socio-cultural scripts about people ‘like them’, provided powerful scripts and guides for living (Rose, 1989) that can be both empowering and constraining.

The ability to tell a neoliberal recovery story that evidenced resilience, self-knowledge and having ‘moved on’ was also a central part of young women’s navigations of young adulthood. As I explored in chapter 6, the notion of ‘success’ in young adulthood was closely linked to the concept of a ‘successful’ and readable recovery from domestic abuse. I have argued that developmental transitions following domestic abuse in childhood may also be marked by the assumption that growing up ‘successfully’ is synonymous with the ability to tell a successful recovery story. Neoliberal recovery stories are stories of recovery that are shaped by an individualising ideology (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Rose, 1992). I showed, in chapter 6, that these neoliberal recovery stories following domestic abuse consisted of a sense of self-sufficiency, self-determination, self-knowledge and a sense of having pushed through and survived due to their own merit and hard work, despite adversities. Having a recovery story such as this to tell was useful in offering some validation, empowerment, hope that recovery is possible, and a framework through which to articulate the struggles of the past whilst

occupying a position of independence and resilience as an adult. These ‘success’ stories provided stability, readability and coherence and I have argued that this can be useful to young women by producing a stable self and a self that was readable to others.

However, I have also shown, particularly in chapter 7, that these success stories do not always make space for struggles, distress or challenges that are ongoing.

Developmental transitions for young adult women after domestic abuse were multiple, relational, and not only age-based, but dependant on the unique biographies and socio-cultural contexts of women’s lives. As I demonstrated in Chapter 5, dominant narrative frameworks of developmental transitions were helpful to young women in enabling a narrative framework that makes their stories readable and visible to others. They also provided a framework for how to ‘do’ adulthood in a way that was different to the blueprint of their childhoods. However, women who grew up with domestic abuse can also be disadvantaged by gendered socio-structural forces that provide homogenous scripts about family life, femininity and recovery.

Authority to construct a biography

As well as exploring how young adult women experienced and narrated their transitions to young adulthood after domestic abuse, I also set out to explore how power played a part in shaping the stories that they told. Women’s stories often disrupted or diverged from dominant narratives or from stories that have been told about them or about people like them by those in positions of power. For example, in chapter 6, I showed that women’s stories could be narrated and legitimised through an expert lens, such as by a professional or by dominant discourses such as psychotherapeutic discourses, shaped by ‘expertise’. For women I interviewed, I have argued that establishing a sense of authority to tell their own stories was challenging, particularly when the accuracy of their account might risk being questioned under certain conditions or contexts (Alcoff, 2018; Campbell, 2003). Framed in this way, epistemic power shaped how young women told their stories of domestic abuse in childhood, and how they navigated authority to construct their own biographies – in other words, the power a person has in enabling them to construct and produce knowledge about themselves (Fricker, 2007).

My focus was not on the accuracy of women’s memories, but as shown in chapter 5, the issue of memory, particularly the accuracy of recall played a part in shaping the contexts in which women spoke about memories of traumatic events or abuse. As I

argued in chapter 2, memory as a concept is largely framed and studied in cognitive and social psychology, and even trauma theorists and researchers have written that trauma can have an impact on memory recall meaning that sometimes people struggle to recall events and their memories might be fragmented (Herman, 2015; Thomason & Marusak, 2017; Williams & Banyard, 1999). Although it is useful to understand how trauma can impact memory, the impact of trauma on memory itself has not been my focus. It is important, particularly in clinical contexts, to recognise the multiple ways that people can be affected by experiencing trauma, but a delicate line should be balanced, as arguably what these theorisations do is make invisible the role that power and politics play in self-knowledge, self-representation and storytelling (Alcoff, 2018). Alcoff (2018) called this the ‘thorny question of experience’ (p. 56), meaning that the question of experience is not black and white; it is subjective, subject to interpretation, and subject to telling and re-telling. In this thesis, using a dialogical framework, I have de-individualised how trauma is understood in the lives of young women who grew up with domestic abuse by drawing attention to the social conditions and structures that women navigated when they told their stories. This includes dominant narratives of childhood, motherhood, family life and being ‘grown up’. These exist as narrative resources and as shared social constructions.

It is common that women who have experienced abuse, subordination or victimisation, face particular kinds of epistemological battles and barriers when ‘speaking for themselves’ (Alcoff, 2018). As explored in chapter 2, historically, when women have spoken out about abuse, they have risked being not believed and even accused of having ‘false memories’ (Brown and Burman, 1997; Farrants, 1998). Woven through this history is debates about the accuracy of trauma memories and the credibility of women’s accounts (Brown & Burman, 1997; Campbell, 2003; Farrants, 1998), shaping how women told their stories in this study. Women’s stories of violence and trauma risk being lost through the false memory debate, where the authenticity of women’s own autobiographies is thrown into question. Women I interviewed navigated this by establishing authority to speak through telling credible stories that had been authorised by an expert gaze. I have demonstrated that ownership of stories became a negotiated process, as stories that were authorised by expert discourses and the adult gaze became more credible stories to tell, and others became marginalised or risked being lost in the

spaces in between, in the silences, or through articulations that were less likely to be heard.

Storytelling as dependent on context as well as the teller: Alternative ways of telling

This thesis extends the argument that messiness and multivocality is not a quality of storytelling that tends to be privileged or valued when women talk about their experiences (Bondi, 2013; Chadwick, 2017a, 2017b). Narrative instability is not, in itself, problematic; rather, it is the socio-political contexts in which women speak, that renders instability as a problem. Additionally, I have demonstrated that the instability of narratives is rendered problematic for particular people and particular stories. For example, in chapter 7, I showed Bethany's struggle to articulate her desire for her dad to remain in her life even though he had constantly let her down. This was a story of narrative instability that she framed as a story she kept to herself because it sounded 'crazy' and she may not be understood. Additionally, in chapter 6, I explored Jasmine's challenge of articulating a readable and coherent recovery story of moving on where she had learnt to 'forgive and forget'. However, this recovery story compromised the articulation of other storylines of doubt, uncertainty and self-blame that were rendered almost unspeakable in favour of a coherent and consistent recovery story that was centred around self-accountability and self-development.

Storytelling was not only shaped by the teller, but it was also dependent upon the context of the telling. In this thesis I have argued that there are multifaceted storytelling challenges that young women faced when telling their stories of domestic abuse in childhood and their transitions to young adulthood. In chapters 5 and 6 I showed how the context of the telling shaped how women told stories of growing up or recovery from domestic abuse where there is a sense of a problem – a disruption in their story, but there existed no narrative within which it could be named or contained. Narrative coherence has power and enabled young women opportunities to story a stable self through a narrative that was not fractured, but through a narrative where there was a connection between past and present. However, such narrative coherence does not reflect human life, nor does it reflect the experiences of women I interviewed. From a dialogical philosophy, humanness, selfhood and the essence of being, is fluid, messy

and never static (Bakhtin, 1981; Buber, 1996; Hermans, 2003), with the assumption that humans come into being and existence through dialogue and relationship. Producing an authorised account and a stable sense of self can be a challenge given that our contexts, listeners and audiences rarely stay the same over time.

From a dialogical philosophy (Buber, 1923/1996; Hermans, 2001; 2003) I approached my analysis of women's stories from the position that we are always at meeting points in relation with others; always impacted and affected by the other, and from this view, neutrality was impossible. This approach enabled me to explore the effects of social contexts and the relational contexts of the interviews themselves. It enabled me to explore the impact of social contexts and shared narrative resources which may not have provided adequate narrative resources, nor sufficiently supportive spaces for young women to construct a sense of self that was agentic through a story that also recognised their despair and struggles (Fricker, 2007). This was necessary, given that existing literature has tended to smoothen out what this transition looks like for young adults following domestic abuse, focusing only on resilience, coping or outcomes.

Participants found strategic ways of storying both struggles and survival in efforts to articulate the nuances of their stories. However, telling alternative stories could be risky. Telling alternative stories meant telling stories that contained ambiguity and uncertainty; stories that articulated the messiness and sometimes opposing thoughts, emotions or desires. These were not stories that were authorised or conformed to dominant narrative resources, but they were stories that, heard in their multiplicity, evidenced the many 'voices' and subjectivities that young women live and experience following domestic abuse. Hearing these stories in their multiplicity was important. In the absence of an authorised story, participants often turned to alternative storytelling strategies in efforts to tell a story that was credible, such as using metaphor to invite the listener to 'dwell in' the spaces in between that may not have made sense or that elicited confusion, or by direct acknowledgement that 'others don't understand', 'it sounds crazy', or 'it might not make sense'. Such strategies have also been referred to as 'tightrope talk' (McKenzie-Mohr & LaFrance, 2011), showing the efforts that women can make in articulating tensions, nuances and ambiguities that are more risky to express. In chapter 7, I demonstrated that for women I interviewed, the risk was that ambiguity, confusion or emotion risked destabilising a story that might otherwise be stable and readable. Alternative stories, those that were more marginalised and had less

space to be articulated, became mechanisms that risked un-doing women's authority to construct their own biographies. However, I have also argued that there were opportunities here, in that through telling alternative stories, the self had an opportunity to be re-written and re-told.

Women I interviewed were able to occupy multiple positions of strength and struggle, and these were important aspects of their stories to convey. In existing literature, these multiplicities and ambiguities have been, or risk being smoothed over in favour of clear storylines that do not present ambiguities or inconsistencies. This smoothing out can serve to legitimise their experiences as consistent and 'true'. However, smoothing out women's stories of domestic abuse in childhood not only produces an inaccurate and partial story, but it is a harmful practice that (re)produces dominant homogenising ideologies, leaving women with limited stories available to tell. In chapter 7 I demonstrated that taking a story and making it one's own was not impossible, but it was a task that required nuanced and power-sensitive 'feminist listening' (Chadwick, 2017a; Mauthner, 2017). In order to commit to feminist listening, my analysis of women's stories embraced a 'both/and' position (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; McKenzie-Mohr & LaFrance, 2011) that feminist scholars have suggested is necessary, if we are to recognise both the power and agency of women whilst centralising the impact of oppressive social structures that shape their lives. Claims to knowledge is an epistemological issue (Alcoff, 1991; Fricker, 2007) but it is also a relational and contextual issue. This offered an opportunity for the messiness and plurality of women's accounts of domestic abuse and their transitions to young adulthood to be more audible.

I have demonstrated that individual biographies, contexts and relationships were central features in the stories that participants told, but there is more to storytelling than the individual storyteller themselves. Individual storytellers in this study negotiated how to tell their stories in ways that would be readable and in ways that would produce a stable self where previously, versions of their stories had risked being rendered instable or unspeakable. I have shown that stability of the self through storytelling enabled the production of a story that was coherent, and it supported the production of the self that was credible and may be heard. To my knowledge, this kind of narrative instability has been explored in relation to sexual abuse (Woodiwiss, 2007), rape (Alcoff, 2018), and childbirth (Chadwick et al., 2014), but it has not specifically been considered in relation

to young adult women's accounts of their developmental transitions after domestic abuse in childhood. This firstly shows that domestic abuse experiences in childhood can be traumatic and have lasting impacts on how people make sense of their experiences and construct a sense of self, in similar ways to other experiences of trauma. Secondly, it suggests that when young women tell their stories of domestic abuse, feminist listening practices are necessary, in order to hear, listen to, and dwell in the stories which are stable, but also the ones that are erased, marginalised or less speakable.

Theoretical implications

This thesis enhances the domestic abuse literature by demonstrating that child to young adult transitions can be experienced, lived and storied in multiple, different ways (Crafter et al., 2019; Zittoun, 2007; 2008). Specifically, I have argued that developmental transitions following domestic abuse in childhood go beyond only the 'impact' of domestic abuse, and that a sole focus on the impact and/or resilience, is a very narrow and limiting lens through which to understand women's lives after domestic abuse. A key contribution of this thesis is the pluralisation of transitions in the context of domestic abuse, in that it has opened up possibilities to consider developmental transitions following domestic abuse in childhood as plural.

Prior to this study, few existing studies had focused on this transition specifically in the context of domestic abuse, though as discussed in chapter 2, many had explored how coping, resilience and outcomes can promote an understanding of the impact and experience of domestic abuse in childhood. Through this thesis I have offered a theoretical implication that broadens the scope of what developmental transitions look like for those who experience domestic abuse in childhood. I have challenged the linear assumptions of developmental psychology, and I have challenged the idea that resilience, outcomes and coping are the only lenses through which to consider developmental transitions after domestic abuse in childhood. Transitions to young adulthood were experienced by young women I interviewed as relational, and dependant on multiple intersecting factors that were unique to their own lives and biographies and that were also shaped by broader social contexts and dominant narrative resources that both facilitated and constrained their articulations of their stories (Zittoun, 2008).

Methodological implications

Working with stories as poems

Something that is unique to this thesis is the use of poems as a way of listening to, reading, and making sense of women's stories. I used the Listening Guide (Brown & Gilligan, 1993; Gilligan, 2015; Gilligan & Eddy, 2017) to produce voice poems from interview transcripts and I found that poems were powerful in drawing out the nuances and ambiguities of participants' stories. The voice poems helped to shine light on ambiguities and dialogues that may have remained obscured otherwise and they helped to tune in to way that women told several stories, not just one. Although voice poems were powerful, there were also some challenges to working with stories as poems. Producing voice poems enforced a fragmentation of dialogue which sometimes de-contextualised the account.

Sometimes the effect of the voice poem as a standalone text was powerful and emotive – much more-so than the interview transcript itself. Going by my own affective response, and the responses of those who read some of the voice poems, these poetic representations of women's accounts invited the reader 'in' to difficult and complex lives and experiences in 'haunting' ways (Gordon, 2008). Peers and supervisors who read the voice poems commented that they were heart-breaking, powerful, emotive and strong. The poems, to me, were each of these things, and they also felt delicate, fragile, weighty and raw. They showed the multiple and co-existing voices that threaded through women's accounts. That was the intention after all; however, they also evoked a more affective, visceral response in me that stayed with me even after becoming familiar with the transcripts and recordings. There was something markedly different about the voice poems in comparison to presenting transcript extracts alone. Creative, different or alternative forms of representation can help to communicate 'absence', 'complex personhood' and challenge stigmatisation (Gordon, 2008; Wilson, 2018). In other words, different forms of representation that do not look like the conventional academic publication or output, can mean that stories stay with and 'haunt' the reader/audience, 'provoking empathy and potentially action' (Wilson, 2018, p. 1214). It felt important to recognise the need for different modes of representation in order to evidence the complexity and polyvocality of women's stories in a way that short transcript extracts did not capture. However, I did not want to present voice poems

simply for their emotive or powerful impact on the reader, nor because they had such an impact on me.

Ethical issues became important here. In narrative research such as this it was possible that participants might have revealed more than they intended to (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997) given the unstructured nature of interviews, my open interviewing style, and the fact that I am also a therapist meaning I was likely to be more comfortable with the expression of emotion, difficult stories and perhaps more likely to 'stay in' the stories that women shared. Additionally, informed consent was important to consider. It is unlikely that participants knew at the beginning what their voice poems would consist of, how I might select which extracts and poems to include, and what my interpretation of them might imply (Holloway & Freshwater, 2007). There was a risk that there may be an unknown emotional impact of 'having one's story reinterpreted and filtered' through the researcher's own personal and theoretical lens (Smyth & Murray, 2000, p. 321) and consequently stir up an emotional response from participants who may read what the researcher has written about them (Josselson, 1996).

From this view, working with stories as poems offered a helpful way of listening and tuning in to multiple subjectivities, and it helped to present stories in a non-conventional way that could potentially evoke an emotive, affective and perhaps action-oriented response from the reader. Certainly, the poems evoked emotional and visceral responses from me that have had a lasting effect. However, the fact that they were impactful for me suggests that the use of poems should be approached sensitively and with care. It is possible that for particular poems that had a significant impact on me as a listener and researcher, I might have 'seen' stories that related more to myself than the story of the participant (Smyth & Murray, 2000). That need for care does not imply that myself as the researcher should have approached this work in a neutral and objective position; I have argued that this was not possible, nor was it desirable considering the dialogical philosophy and feminist framework that was my starting point. However, using poems required reflexive listening, careful consideration of ethics, and critical reflexivity in relation to why I chose to include particular poems, and the potential impact of story fragmentation and interpretation.

Storytelling as relational: The dialogical spaces in between

There was a particular challenge of telling a coherent story through the writing of this thesis when participants' stories were often messy and were not told in 'neat' ways. I became not only a researcher and a story-listener, but also a holder of stories and a story-teller; listening to and re-telling the stories of participants through my own lens. I want to draw attention to this collaborative, relational weaving of narratives between people, rather than storytelling being an individual venture (Mishler, 1986). I believe this relationality shaped the conclusions I reached, and I believe this is also a dual role that narrative researchers occupy (Mishler, 1986).

The relationality of storytelling extended beyond the interview too. Participants were invited to review their transcripts and participate in a second interview if they wanted to. I hoped that providing opportunities for participants to 'respond to' and reflect on their interview during a second interview would enable them to have a greater sense of input in relation to how I made sense of their stories. However, only one participant took part in a second interview and only three engaged with the interview transcript when I sent it to them. It is difficult to know why most participants opted not to do a second interview without asking them, but it might be that attempts to be collaborative and involve participants more may not always be desired by participants. Whilst research not going to plan is not ideal, I am thankful that participants were able to opt out if they wanted to. This was perhaps because reviewing a transcript is time and emotion demanding. Alternatively, it might have felt better to leave what was explored during interviews 'in' the interview space instead of unpacking it again.

Chandler (2010) reflected on her experience of inviting participants to review transcripts, outlining some similar challenges she encountered. She suggested that participants seemed to accept her version of their narratives rather than feel empowered to suggest anything different, despite her efforts to work with 'power over' dynamics, using transparency and appropriate self-disclosure. Carlson's (2010) reflections on using similar methods are also useful, suggesting that it might be helpful for participants to be fully informed about what to expect (e.g. how long transcripts can be, that they also contain utterances and may not make grammatical sense). Secondly, that providing participants with some guidance about how to respond (e.g. perhaps some questions) may be useful, and thirdly, that inviting participants to review their transcript

assumes all participants are able to read and write, and that is not an inclusive practice. On reflection, transcript reviewing may work well in some situations, but there are multiple factors at play that need to be fully and sensitively engaged with. It is necessary to maintain a reflexive position in relation to whose agenda is being met at each stage of the research, especially when asking things from participants that involve the giving of their time and emotional resources.

Practical implications

This thesis raises some issues that have practical implications. Storytelling is powerful for young women who have experienced domestic abuse. Through stories, we make sense of our experiences, as we construct and re-construct our biographies and our sense of self (Frank, 2012; White & Epston, 1990). Specifically, in a place and space where there is an audience willing to listen to our stories as we intend them to be heard, stories can be empowering and transformative. The idea that storytelling can be empowering and transformative draws on psychotherapeutic applications of storytelling whereby clients might be invited to re-write their stories in ways that are useful to them (White & Epston, 1990). I found that storytelling was a useful methodological tool, and it may also be a useful therapeutic tool that practitioners in domestic abuse contexts may choose to draw on. In relation to implications for therapeutic practice contexts, meaningful engagement with the idea that developmental transitions, particularly the process of ‘becoming’ a young adult, are non-linear and relational, may be useful to therapy practitioners and their clients. It may open up possibilities to explore the intersecting opportunities and challenges that young adulthood may offer those who experienced domestic abuse in childhood. It is important for practitioners to work with these ambiguities and tensions and facilitate space for the expression of them.

Secondly, supporting women and girls to tell their stories is important. Women face structural inequalities that shape how they talk about trauma, and further, how they talk about and view their recoveries. In this thesis I have pluralised recoveries in an effort to reflect the fact that women experienced different recoveries, but there are still dominant scripts and narrative frameworks that determine what ‘successful’ or ‘correct’ recovery or survival should look like. It is important for those who work with people who have experienced domestic abuse, to work with and take into account the way that their experiences of recovery are not only individual but may also be also shaped by

gendered ideologies and social structures. Additionally, participants did not identify with a victim or survivor identity, so I did not use these terms. Although I did not set out to explore victim-survivor identities, I found myself considering how best to reflect how participants identified themselves. In practice, practitioners should take into account the social structures that women exist in, including those that shape victim-survivor discourses, potentially opening up opportunities for people to meaningfully explore issues around identity in their recoveries.

There are also barriers to hearing women in contexts beyond the therapy room. I have demonstrated that broader social change is needed in order to address some of the social barriers to hearing women when they talk about childhood experiences of domestic abuse and abuse more broadly. For instance, in legal and criminal justice systems it is important not to over-question the legitimacy and authority of women's accounts. This kind of over-questioning in relation to the accuracy and 'truthfulness' of women's accounts does not suggest 'false memory' (Brown & Burman, 1997) or an inherent disbelievability (Alcoff, 2018). Rather, I have demonstrated that this suggests that women's stories have constantly been rendered illegitimate and thus, unspeakable in part. Additionally, because women's stories may have constantly been rendered illegitimate and thus, unspeakable, it may take those who experience domestic abuse longer to report or disclose. As I have demonstrated in chapters 6 and 7, Frances, had disclosed several times and had not been believed, and Nadine did not have the narrative resources available to her to locate and name her experiences as abuse, and therefore it took longer for her to name, and disclose her experiences as abuse. In fact, and similar to the stories of other women I interviewed, it took an 'expert' authorisation of her story - an expert version of her story to provide the words and meaning-making resources needed in order to re-frame and re-narrate her experiences as abuse. The development of modalities and access to narrative resources in order to locate and name experiences as abuse, can take time, and can often rely on education or interaction and dialogue with professionals who offer a different kind of story – one that is authorised and has power. Therefore, in practice, time-delay in disclosure and reporting does not imply that the abuse did not take place, or that the account might not be 'true'; rather, it might suggest that the person has had access to different narrative resources making it more possible to name and locate domestic abuse experiences in a way that renders their story more legitimate and speakable.

Limitations

This thesis should be read in the context of its limitations. Using social media to recruit participants only reached those who use Twitter, those who are English speaking, and those for whom participating in a spoken interview was possible. The fact that it was only women who volunteered to participate meant that gender became a key part of analysis. However, the fact that I did not reach any men can be viewed as a limitation as it was not my initial intention to focus on women's stories only. Further to this, domestic abuse can be positioned in a discourse of being a 'woman's issue', risking excluding men from the conversation (Damant et al., 2008; Gilbert, 2002). It is likely that my own positioning as a female researcher played a part in this. This being said, this research does represent a non-homogenous sample in some ways. The socio-economic background of participants was varied, and types of abuse experienced was varied. However, there was only non-white participant, and the majority of participants were studying for a degree, had completed their degree or were engaging in postgraduate study. From this view the sample remains quite homogenous and highly educated.

It is also a limitation that the interview guide I used was not as theoretically aligned to a voice-centred approach as it could have been. Initially I did not set out to use a dialogical approach to narratives. However, after it was clear that this study was becoming about women only, I became more interested in the way that women are disadvantaged by structures that erase or problematise multivocal storytelling, and I decided to use a voice-centred dialogical approach to analyse women's stories in an effort to facilitate deeper, attuned listening to multiple subjectivities. My interviewing style developed throughout the study as I refined my approach to analysis. I became more attuned to shifting I positions as they occurred in interview dialogues and was more able to actively reflect with participants on these as they occurred in interviews. Had my interest from the outset been on multivocal storytelling the interview guide and interviewing style could have been designed in a way that was more aligned with a dialogical approach.

My intention was to conduct safe, ethical and power-sensitive research that was collaborative. I believe I did this even though my efforts to be collaborative by conducting second interviews were largely unsuccessful. Due to this, there are some

questions raised, and procedures that could have been in place which I did not foresee. Had I anticipated that participants would not wish to participate further, I would have put some mechanisms in place. It would have been helpful to consider other ways of checking in with participants, such as an email debrief and closure to their participation. Others have suggested that a more formal checking in process may be useful in order to assess the impact of participation on participants and adjust practice if necessary (Chandler, 2010). There is a balance between openness to facilitate participant choice, and a rigid set of procedures which do not enable participants choice. I believe that I chose an appropriate approach. However, it is a limitation that I did not consider more robust mechanisms that would enable me to adjust my practice if necessary, or if there were any negative effects on participants.

Additionally, I offered no compensation to women for their time or contribution, beyond a thank you expressed during interviews and in an email following the interview. Although offering payment to participants can help with gaining access to participants (Head, 2009) I was unsure about the ethical implications of using payment to encourage participation. I was mindful that I did not want payment to compromise the voluntary nature of participation by using a monetary incentive (Goodman et al., 2004). The stories I invited participants to share were potentially difficult and I felt uneasy about the possibility that participants may feel they ‘owed’ me more than they felt comfortable sharing, due to the fact that I offered payment (Head, 2009). That being said, and certainly on reflection, it is still an issue worth considering, as payment can also provide a way of expressing gratitude and thanks to participants for their time and for sharing their stories and it can also be framed as a social justice oriented decision to provide participants with payment for their time (Goodman et al., 2004).

Future research

Domestic abuse researchers still need to make efforts to ensure that recruitment strategies are inclusive. We need more intersectional approaches, including recruitment strategies that make studies accessible to a people from a range of backgrounds and identities so that knowledge is built on a more diverse range of stories. This thesis enhances existing literature by adding to the small body of researchers who have argued that there is a value and need for more contextual and reflexive analyses of people’s accounts that can work to de-individualise struggles and strengths of people following

domestic abuse in childhood (Åkerlund & Gottzén, 2017; Callaghan et al., 2017; Etherington & Baker, 2018; Överlien & Holt, 2018). More research that attends to the socio-cultural and political contexts that shape people's lives is needed. Specifically, more research should address the socio-cultural resources that shape people's meaning-making and understandings of their resources, their struggles and their sense of self after domestic abuse in childhood. Further research should be done to explore developmental transitions more, specifically to understand how young adults make sense of the idea of recovery after domestic abuse and what recovery has looked like for them. Additionally, a gendered lens was helpful in enabling me to more deeply explore how gendered structures shaped young women's accounts and narrations of their accounts. However, more needs to be done to understand the experiences of all genders, specifically aiming to broaden the scope of our understanding beyond that of resilience, coping and outcomes.

A further area that future researchers could explore is the issue of 'complexity' in domestic abuse contexts. The majority of studies that explore the direct accounts of children or young adults have been conducted with people who have received a form of domestic abuse service intervention. The accessibility of services is an area that future research could address by exploring the experiences and stories of more people who did not have access to services. This thesis demonstrates, like many others have done, that domestic abuse does not exist in isolation (Hughes et al., 2017; Lamers-Winkelmann et al., 2012). Most participants in this study not only experienced parental domestic abuse but they experienced physical, sexual or emotional abuse themselves, raising questions more broadly about how services are set up to accommodate for this. Whilst children's services, particularly domestic abuse services have been hit hardest by austerity (Sanders-McDonagh et al., 2016), they have also been criticised for their mechanisms of categorisation, meaning that people who present with multiple issues are more likely to bump up against barriers as a result of categorisation of need (Eriksson & Appel Nissen, 2017). An issue that could be addressed in future research is that those who present with 'complex' issues may simply not find service involvement an option because they do not meet criteria neatly.

Participants did not seem to have trouble communicating their experiences, despite assumptions in practice and research that people might struggle or be too vulnerable to talk about violence that has happened. Experiences of violence are harmful and can be

difficult to talk about, but future research should also consider that how people tell their stories is also about the listener. A willingness to listen and to be in a space where participants have choice about how they tell their stories can support future researchers in considering their methods and approaches to gathering data.

Conclusion

When we tell stories about our lives, they are not only told in and through dominant narrative frameworks and stories that are available to us at the particular time and place of telling, but these stories also act as ‘guides for living’ (Rose, 1989, p. 257). These guides for living, for women I interviewed, were individual to their own personal, biographical and relational lives, and they were also shaped by wider gendered and neoliberal narrative resources. These were powerful external forces that shaped women’s authority to construct a biography that was in line with their experiences (Baker, 2010). I have argued that whilst narrative coherency does something useful for women, in enabling them to articulate a stable self and a readable story of becoming a young adult after domestic abuse, it is necessary to also attend to the stories that are disconnected or interrupted, or those that are less speakable. These stories that exist on the margins, or in the spaces in between, are valuable and have the capacity to tell us something about women’s lives, specifically the socio-structural conditions that shape the telling of their stories. I have focused on women’s stories of navigating young adulthood, and through this, I have shown that when young women speak about domestic abuse, their stories take many forms and they may tell many stories. Multiplicity is not something that should be pathologised or mis-read as instability. Rather, drawing on a dialogical and relational philosophy of what it is to come into being, in other words, that we come into being through dialogue and relation with others (Buber, 1996; Hermans, 2003), narrative instability can be seen as an indication of fluid, messy, non-static humanness. Through storytelling, such instability can have the potential to offer depth, nuance and meaning, if the listener and the context are set up to facilitate tuning in to multiplicity.

Through a feminist voice-centred approach, with an emphasis on dialogical philosophy, I explored women’s stories through a lens of multiplicity, as opposed to singularity, enabling me to attend to the social, relational, biographical and political contexts that shaped women’s lives and the stories they told. A key contribution of this research is

that rather than focusing on coping, resilience or outcomes, I invited women to share their stories more broadly. This broader and more flexible focus opened up an exploration of how women had experienced navigating their transitions to young adulthood and how power and social structures played a part in shaping the stories that they told, as well as their own individual biographies and circumstances (Zittoun, 2007; 2008). I have enhanced the domestic abuse literature by arguing that developmental transitions and recoveries, after domestic abuse in childhood, can be viewed as plural, and this pluralisation can help to broaden our understanding of how young adult women experience and narrate the process of ‘becoming’ a young adulthood after domestic abuse.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

I will start by outlining the research. As a way of getting to know about the participant, I will start by asking them to describe a little about their life and themselves (e.g. work/home/who is at home/study)

The interview is relatively unstructured, guided by the participant, mainly. However, I will refer to the following topics/types of questions to guide the interview process.

1. Sources of support when you experienced domestic abuse and specialist professionals were not involved
2. The things that helped you to cope with your experiences of domestic abuse
3. Sense of self in childhood and young adulthood
4. How you feel about your experiences now
5. What sense you make of your experiences now

If the participant agrees, I will invite participants to a second follow-up interview, if appropriate, in which we will discuss any further themes or questions.

Appendix 2: Information Sheet and Consent Form



Project information and invitation to participate

This is an invitation to take part in a study exploring your experiences of growing up when there has been domestic violence (including controlling behaviour). I am particularly interested to hear how you coped and what your experience of domestic violence means in your life now.

This research is part of a PhD study, at the University of Northampton. The aims of the research are:

- To understand more about how young people cope with domestic, what has helped and how young people move forward with their lives, when no professional/specialist services have been involved.
- To understand young adult accounts of growing up with domestic violence when no specialist support was accessed as a child/young person.

If I decide to take part, what will this involve?

After reading this information, if you are still interested, you will be invited to have a conversation with me (in person, on the phone or via Skype) where we can discuss the project, ensure that you meet the criteria and I will answer any questions you might have. If you decide to take part, we will meet for a research interview (we will agree on a timeframe together. It is likely to last between 45 – 90 minutes). The interview will be informal and you do not have to share anything that makes you feel uncomfortable. We will have this meeting at a location of your choice, and we will make sure that the location is safe, and your privacy is respected. Our conversation will be voice-recorded, with your permission, but this is treated as confidential information. The interview will be transcribed, and the recording will be destroyed once the project is finished.

What happens after the interview?

After the interview, I will transcribe our interview and send it to you, so that you can make sure that you are happy for me to keep the transcription or if you would like to make any changes. I may invite you to have further conversations with me, but you are not obliged to do this. I will write a final report/thesis and I will treat your identity as anonymous – your real name will not be used, and any identifiable details (location, family members, personal details) will be changed.

Can I change my mind?

If you decide now, but you feel differently later, that is OK. You have the right to withdraw up to three months after the interview takes place. You do not need to provide any explanation, and there will be no consequences. If you do decide to withdraw, I will remove any information you have given to me and you will no longer be part of the project.

Confidentiality

In my final report/thesis, I will write up the findings of this study. However, your real name or any identifiable details will not be used. I will take every effort to treat your information with respect for your privacy.

If, during your participation, you disclose something that reveals risk to your own life or risk to somebody else, I would have a duty to share this information with the appropriate statutory agency.

Potential risks

I understand that it could be difficult to talk about some experiences. You do not have to talk about

Project information and invitation to participate

anything that feels too uncomfortable. My aim is to provide inclusive spaces during this project. | However, you can withdraw at any point, and regardless of whether you withdraw or not, I will provide you with a list of places you can go to for support if you feel it is needed.

Potential benefits

Some people find that talking to another person about their experiences is a positive experience. I also hope that when this project is finished, I will be able to share what I find. I will write a final thesis and I also aim to write some papers to be shared in academic and professional fields – I hope that this project will help others to understand more about young people’s lives when there has been domestic violence, but no specialist professionals have been involved. Some people find it is meaningful to know that their participation can help to contribute to change.

My contact details are below. Please do contact me, if you have any questions about this project. I will be happy to talk.

Email: Tanya.Beetham@northampton.ac.uk

Phone: 07419 848746

Address: University of Northampton

Division of Psychology
Park Campus
Boughton Green Road,
Northampton, NN2 7AL

Project information and invitation to participate

Young Adult Consent to Participate

Please read the statements below, and tick the boxes if you agree with them.

I have read and I understand the information about the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider my participation and to ask any questions about my involvement All my questions have been answered satisfactorily.	
I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed. I will be sent the transcription to review. The transcription and audio-recording will be confidentially disposed of once the project is over, and the need for data is no longer required.	
I understand that extracts from the transcription may be used in the researcher’s thesis and in any publications or conference presentations. I have had the opportunity to discuss any implications of publication and I understand that my anonymity and confidentiality will be treated seriously with respect.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw up to three months after the interview with no explanation needed.	
I am aware of any potential risks and benefits of my participation	

Please write your name, signature and the date if you fully agree with the above statements.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 3: Coded voice poem 1

P3 Analysis [redacted]

I don't ever go into the detail about, you know, yeah...

I wouldn't -

I've only ever told my partner about [pause] the kind of, the truth about the domestic abuse

I just feel a bit more confident today...

I don't know whether it's because society has changed a little bit?

I can remain anonymous.

I just feel it's important, to share my experience as someone from erm, you know, a decent, in quotation marks, family.

I just think it's misrepresented a lot.

I have been quite nervous

I've been worried about getting upset about talking about it

I'm not used to it.

I said to myself, just, it would be for a good cause if you like?

I think there's a lot of people who are probably in the same boat and they've bottled it up all their life as well..... again people just assume that they come from a happy home and yeah.

I really struggle with - even some of my friendships

I've been friends with some of these people since I was a teenager

I just have feelings of, like [pause] I don't know

I just don't feel understood.

I don't feel that they (old friends) really know the real me

I've lost contact with -

I still -

I meet people now,

I moved

I've actually found that's been really helpful because they've (newer friends) met me as they've met me now. Yeah

3

adult self as partner? diff through voice (external) of partner.

dialogue of adult prof self + adult self that is without 'mask' - anonymity of interview enabled voice of 'honesty' to be strengthened - less compromised.

diff between private + public spaces - Bakhtin spatial factors shape availability of voices.

- Public narrative? DA awareness raising? external voice added in dialogue with voice of worry/anxiety

'decent family', 'happy home's

external voices voice of others shape this voice - she is not 'others'

idea of 'real me'

'me' as changing

Commented [TB4]: is the normal life a 'happy home' and 'decent family'?

P3 Analysis: [redacted]

I'm a bit more confident and a bit more open.

I feel like I can tell them, and I feel that they know me more than my old friends... They may have known me for like 20 years. But they've met my family and [pause] yeah, I struggle with that sometimes.

I think that - erm [pause] I don't know if they think something was up

I feel they probably didn't know anything

I don't know

I just feel maybe they think that I'm just like them

I can just assume that

I don't know that they haven't been through similar experiences in that respect.

I don't know why it affects me so much but it does now.

I relate to more people who are open and they've maybe not had such a normal childhood.

I'm more drawn to those people.

..... maybe when you are that age you do just want to fit in.

I mean I used to think I was really different at school.

I wanted to be quite different when I was a teenager but in a way that's kind of fitting in isn't it

..... you do that kind of rebellious thing

I just think yeah - and it's just so important maybe cause of the age but now I care less about that.

I think maybe in too much depth about people's circumstances

..... Maybe studying psychology also makes you feel like this as well

I'm really affected by people's actions

I give so much of my energy worrying about how I've come across to someone

I think [pause] I think I do know what they mean.

I think I can be like that

I don't know if that stems from the experiences that I've had

voice of others - external - 'just like them'

Commented [TB6]: THEY think I am just like them - normal. I am not.

Commented [TB6]: This voice of not being normal identifies with others too.

Self as knowledgeable positioning as empathetic?

Commented [TB7]: TEMPORALITY - CHANGES OVER TIME. Childhood as a time which you do rebellious things and you want to fit in. Adulthood as a time of being sensible - not caring about those things, having the capacity to study and understand more.

Time + space - physical + Symbolic positionings.

voices of others as shaping narrative of self. dialogue + construction

- an adult self as a constraining self but also enabling position - constrains availability of 'openness' and 'suffering' but it enables a liberation of caring what others think. YET when 'others' from childhood enter her internal dialogues, this also change changes; adult self no longer liberated but it is constrained / ashamed / muffled / silenced.

Appendix 4: Coded voice poem 2

P7 Analysis

I think it gave me the closure that I needed

I also think, erm, I see it all the time in the job that I'm in and from my own experience, when you've got someone that's not there, when you're processing your emotions, you kind of try and paint them in a different light

..... when I was going through the difficulties of blaming myself I kind of used to think well, maybe it was me and maybe he is this amazing man and I just couldn't see it

..... when someone's not there you paint a picture – kind of what you want them to be.

I think going and meeting him really helped me get that ideal picture out of my head and realise 'no, you are exactly what I remember'

when I was going through the confused state, yeah, I painted a picture that maybe he was just young and maybe he's sorted himself out.

I got older and more towards like 17, I realised like 'no, I can't think like that'

I was always conflicted between he's bad, maybe he's not bad, he's bad, maybe it was my fault, he's bad, maybe yeah it was really confusing

I couldn't have done anything more, I was a 4 or 5 year old child.

I think the anger I dealt with was I saw him as something that I definitely didn't wanna be.

I didn't want to be violent like he was, so I kind of used that as a picture of something that I never wanted to become. So I used my memories as a tool to not become like that.

When I used to get angry I used to say to my mum all the time that I'd get scared cos when I was angry I felt like I wanted to hit people all the time.

I couldn't – when I was angry, I couldn't show it and I – I had urges to just lash out.

..... when I was at peace with what happened, it made me piece together everything else.

Once I'd kind of come to terms with what had happened in my own head, I realised that my stepdad wasn't my own dad so there was no reason to hate him.

I'm now much bigger, so if I hold a baby and it screams, it's what babies do – it's nothing that I've done

age as a factor that shapes how stories of the self are told.

do I also shape this construction of the self? the participant knows I am a therapist, that I am a psychoanalyst, that I might witness?? this kind of narrative? how was I responding?

moment(s) of transformation / transition.

states kind of bracketed off in storytelling - old self' does not feature heavily in reconstruction of identity as strong/moved on/resilient.

Resisting dominant narrative resource of cycle of violence.

Moving on narrative resource kind of silences the vulnerability/anger / unanswered Q's.

Commented [T1822]: Voice of moving forward/healing/closure – sits in opposition with voice that is still conflicted/confused.

Commented [T1823]: Self as child – voice of self blame, self as adult – voice of certainty, closure, moving forward, strength.

Commented [T1824]: Voice of conflict/confusion located in childhood – it also dialogues with current adult voice of conflict too.

Commented [T1825]: Navigating placing blame/responsibility. Between self blame and anger/bitterness/resentment?

Commented [T1826]: Voice of anger, voice of peace – explore which narrative resources shape this. How do these voices dialogue?

10

..... like piecing together my childhood made me realise how much of it affected – how much of it I was kind of echoing onto other areas that it didn't actually need to. Cos now I absolutely love babies, I love kids

I was the one that used to tell him that I didn't wanna go round so then he'd stop seeing me but then I was really hurt by that.

I was always really confused in my head

I kind of pictured together that it wasn't me – it wasn't my fault.

I asked questions and he (dad) answered them

I guess my real question was, what is he like? [T: yeah] and that was kind of answered subtly by the way there was always an excuse for every question that I asked.

I think that is what saved me I guess, from going insane

I was just always like in a battle.

I was always thinking about things and thinking about how I was worthless

eventually I learned to forgive that do you know what, that did happen to me but it doesn't necessarily mean that my whole life has to be ruined because of that.

now when I – it's always kind of strange. Because I have dealt with it, it always feels like I'm talking about someone else, which is really weird.

I think, because I'm so at peace with it now, it's just something that kind of happened

like I brushed my teeth yesterday, like I brushed my teeth this morning. It's just something that happened that is just [pause] part of who I am

I feel like – it sounds weird, but when I'm talking about it I picture myself as a little girl

I know that I am that little girl

..... it's kind of like all of that happened to a little girl and that isn't me.

Although it is –

..... it's just like I've lived like two lives.

Like that was that stage of my life – that little girl went through that.

I think I'm definitely stronger, wiser

Commented [TB27]: Voice of forgiveness/healing/resisting on/peace, dialogue with voice of anger, voice of distress, voice of upset/pain/condict. Potential for insanity – mobilisation of wellness here? Is it possible to speak about feeling insane too?

forgiveness narrative in dialogue - again, is this for a particular audience? maybe for readers of my thesis even? If felt an important bit of w's story or advice for me to 'pass on' via this interview - she wanted to help others.

Commented [TB28]: Opposition – that wasn't me, but it is me. Negotiating owning her story, negotiating child identity/vulnerability/hurt/anger, though adult self who is constructed as resilient, independent and at peace?

again a sense of stages of life - closure, re-fashioning self.