THE IMPACT OF CHILDHOOD EXPOSURE TO DESTRUCTIVE FORMS OF INTER-PARENTAL CONFLICT AND OF SEPARATION/DIVORCE

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Abstract

Background: Existing theories and research are provided, detailing the harmful effects of childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict. This area of research is lacking in comparison to that of adult perpetrators and victims of domestic violence. Equally, there is a general emphasis towards inter-parental violence instead of other forms of inter-parental conflict.

Aims and Objectives: This thesis explores the impact of childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and parental divorce/separation. The five research questions considered were:

1. Chapter Two: What is the quality of the literature regarding the association between exposure to inter-parental violence and trauma symptomatology amongst children?
2. Chapter Three: How valid and reliable is the revised Conflict Tactics Scales-2 (CTS; Straus *et al.*, 1996) in measuring inter-parental conflict tactics in both clinical and research settings?
3. Chapter Four: How do university students appraise their experiences of inter-parental conflict and separation/divorce? And how did their appraisals impact on their academic performance and social relationships?
4. Chapter Five: How did individuals exposed to inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce recollect, make sense of and cope with their experiences?

Method: The following methods were undertaken to answer the above research questions; (1) a systematic review to assess the quality of the existing literature, (2) the CTS-2 was critically reviewed to determine its utility for clinical and research purposes, (3) a quantitative empirical research study, and (4) a qualitative empirical research study.

Findings: The following are the main findings identified in each chapter:

1. The systematic review in chapter two identified that exposure to inter-parental violence leads to elevated trauma symptomatology amongst children of all ages. However, the existing literature had a number of methodological concerns. Consequently, the link between exposure to inter-parental violence and trauma symptomatology was not considered to be strong.

2. It was concluded in the critique in chapter three that the CTS-2 is a robust psychometric measure if it is to be used alongside other complimentary assessment techniques. Although, more research is required to continue to assess its external validity and applicability across diverse populations, cultures and countries.

3. The results from the quantitative research in chapter 4 indicated that constructive forms of inter-parental conflict (e.g. negotiation conflict tactics) were strongly associated with more positive appraisals of inter-parental conflict. Furthermore, destructive forms of inter-parental conflict (e.g. psychological aggression and physical violence conflict tactics) were strongly associated with more negative appraisals of inter-parental conflict.

For those participants who had experienced parental separation or divorce, the perception of threat was significantly different between participants whose academic studies had suffered and those who had not suffered. Furthermore, significant differences were found in relation to perceived threat and negative appraisals between participants who reported that their social relationships had suffered and those who had not suffered.

4. The qualitative research in chapter 5 highlighted the individual's experience of destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and divorce. Specifically, from the themes identified, inter-parental conflict and divorce were not time-limited and the individuals' adjustment appeared to be mediated by the presence vulnerability and protective factors.

Conclusion: Exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict, separation or divorce are considered harmful to the child. Exposure affects the amount of negative appraisals the child experiences regarding the inter-parental conflict in childhood and social relationships for those who had experienced separation or divorce. This can have longer term consequences on the exposed child throughout childhood and early adulthood. Researchers and clinicians should allocate more resources to better understand and provide support to individuals who have been exposed to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict, parental separation/divorce in the past and currently. Organisational initiatives and interventions are

needed to provide independent support for children going through these adverse life experiences.

Preface

Thesis Aims: This thesis explores the short and long-term impact of childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and of parental separation/divorce. In order to explore this, there are two overall aims of the research:

(1) To explore the negative outcomes following childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and of separation/divorce.

(2) To explore the mechanisms behind childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict, and of separation/divorce and what makes these experiences harmful to the child's psycho-social development.

Thesis Structure: This thesis consists of the following six components:

(1) Chapter one – Introduces the background literature regarding destructive forms of inter-parental conflict. This chapter highlights the importance of the research topic and considers how the current literature can be built upon with further research.

(2) Chapter two – The systematic review is presented to evaluate the existing research literature regarding childhood exposure to inter-parental violence and trauma symptomatology. This chapter highlights the methodological concerns within the existing literature. These concerns are taken heed of in the proceeding chapters.

(3) Chapter three – The widely utilised revised CTS-2 (Straus *et al.*, 1996) is critically evaluated. This was the most used psychometric in measuring inter-parental conflict tactics within chapter two. Further, the CTS-2 was reviewed to determine its applicability for chapter four.

(4) Chapter four – The quantitative empirical research is presented, exploring destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and of parental separation/divorce in a student population. The research utilises the CTS-2 to measure the chronicity of inter-parental conflict tactics. This research addresses some of the methodological concerns highlighted within chapter one and two.

(5) Chapter five – The qualitative empirical research goes into further depth than chapter four, exploring through the accounts of six participants who have experienced parental divorce and what it means to be exposed to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict. In particular, how the experiences were recollected, made sense of and coped with. Again, this chapter addresses some of the methodological concerns highlighted within chapter one and two.

(6) *Chapter six* – In this chapter, a discussion is held regarding the overall research findings and how they add to the existing literature discussed in chapter one. Clinical and research implications are considered. Links between each chapter are highlighted and an overall conclusion is provided.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Inter-Parental Conflict

Inter-parental conflict is considered a typical and unavoidable occurrence within the family home (McCoy, Cummings & Davies, 2009; Reynolds, Houlston, Coleman & Harold, 2014). Reynolds et al. (2014) argue that this conflict is resolved either constructively or destructively. Constructive forms of managing parental conflict involve the parents' utilising negotiation tactics whilst remaining to show affection towards one another (McCoy, Cummings & Davies, 2009). However, destructive forms of dealing with parental conflict can include the following; (1) verbal aggression (LeRoy, Mahoney, Boxer, Gullan & Fang, 2014), (2) physical aggression (Kitzmann, Gaylord, Holt & Kenny, 2003), (3) high expressed emotion through intense arguments (Cummings & Davies, 2011), and (4) lack of communication between partners (Davies, Martin & Cicchetti, 2012).

Given that inter-parental conflict is a regular occurrence of family life, children are therefore likely to be exposed to both constructive and destructive forms (Reynolds *et al.*, 2014). It is the child's experience of destructive forms of resolving parental conflict that this thesis is focused upon. Specifically, the thesis relates to the effects of childhood exposure to domestic abuse. The introduction sections will define domestic abuse and childhood exposure to domestic abuse. Therefore, the impact of childhood exposure to domestic abuse will be discussed and compared to other forms of conflict. Finally, the mechanisms that may help to explain why childhood exposure to domestic violence is so harmful to the child will be outlined.

1.2 Childhood Exposure to Domestic Abuse

There have been many definitions of childhood exposure to domestic abuse and within the existing literature there is a lack of consensus in the definition of the phenomenon (Evans, Davies & DiLillo, 2008). Many terminologies are used inter-changeably which can make it difficult to ascertain what is being investigated by researchers. Firstly, we need to define what domestic abuse is. In the UK domestic abuse is legally defined as:

"Any incident or pattern of incidents 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" (Home Office, 2013, pp.2).

Through this definition, the spectrum of abuse can include one or more of the following; psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse (Home Office, 2013). This change in definition led to a new offence of emotional abuse and controlling behaviour which came into force in 2015 (Iqbal & Doran, 2014). Specifically, research on childhood exposure to domestic abuse has described the child as a "witness" or "observer" and only more recently have researchers begun to use the term "exposed" (Holden, 1998; cited in Evans, Davies & DiLillo, 2008). This shift in terminology could be construed as more inclusive. For example, the term

'witness' may assume that the child has seen the abuse occur. Researchers have reached agreement that a child's exposure to domestic abuse can encapsulate the following experiences: seeing the abuse occur, hearing the abuse from a different room, seeing the aftermath of the abuse (e.g. the injuries or psychological distress of the parents), receiving an injury by being in the vicinity of the incident or when trying to intervene to stop the abuse occurring (Edleson, 1999; Kitzmann, Gaylord, Holt & Kenny, 2003; Evans, Davies & DiLillo, 2008). The existing literature often utilises terminologies of different types of conflict interchangeably. This lack of distinction poses a problem when comparing studies and can create ambiguity.

1.3 The Extent of Childhood Exposure to Domestic Abuse

In a nationally representative sample of 16-59 year olds, 8% were exposed to domestic violence during childhood (Office for National Statistics, 2016). However, the true extent of childhood exposure to domestic violence will never be uncovered. There is a 'dark figure', not accounted for in the statistics of unreported or unrecognised incidents of domestic violence that children are exposed to. Researchers and clinicians rely heavily on the child or adult disclosing that they were exposed to domestic violence. However, there are a number of barriers that prevent disclosure, ranging from not realising it to be abusive to the child or blaming themselves for the violence (Rose *et al.*, 2011). Furthermore, it can be harder to quantify exposure to verbal aggression between parents as opposed to physical violence.

Therefore, we are reliant on the approximations and estimations from police recorded crime data and survey data. Both data sources have their limitations. Nevertheless, it is estimated that 1 in 5 children have been exposed domestic abuse between adults in their home (Radford *et al.*, 2011). To further highlight the prevalence of this phenomenon, a third of these children were exposed to an additional form of abuse (e.g. physical abuse, sexual abuse or neglect). The issue of co-occurrence of adverse life experiences creates difficulties in ascertaining the extent to which a particular type of abuse contributed to child's negative outcomes.

1.4 The Effects of Childhood Exposure to Domestic Abuse

Childhood exposure to domestic abuse was not researched until the 1970s and it was not until the 1980s that empirical studies were published (Davies, Evans & DiLillo, 2008). The first to review such papers was Fantuzzo and Lindquist (1989) who identified the effects on the exposed children aged between 4 and 10 years old across 23 empirical studies. Children who had witnessed domestic violence were generally reported to have: externalizing behaviour problems (e.g. behaviour problems at school, home or in the community, verbal aggression or physical aggression); internalizing behaviour problems (e.g. depression, suicidal behaviour, anxiety or sleeping difficulties); poorer social functioning (e.g. role-taking or social inference); and poorer intellectual functioning (e.g. verbal or cognitive abilities). Although, this review highlighted the some of the effects on the exposed child across a number of child functioning domains, the

results were far from clear. The majority of empirical studies did not use standardised measures to determine that violence had occurred and did not indicate the extent to which the child was exposed to the domestic violence (Fantuzzo & Lindquist, 1989). The design of the studies was also a limitation, with the majority being retrospective or correlational in design with no follow-up data. Further, there were inconsistencies in the reporting of demographic information such as ethnicity, socio-economic status, and employment. Additionally, the main source of the child outcome data was the mother of the child and only one study had involved the child being observed. Ultimately, these methodological limitations called into question the reliability, validity and level of confounding variable bias of the research findings.

Since Fantuzzo and Lindquist's (1989) review, researchers have employed more rigorous research designs and have explored the effects of childhood exposure amongst all ages of children and adolescents. There have been a number of systematic reviews and meta-analyses that have investigated and evaluated the quality of the studies reporting these effects. Kitzmann et al. (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of 118 studies investigating psycho-social outcomes of childhood exposure to domestic violence. Studies that had compared witnesses and non-witnesses, witnesses and those exposed to verbal aggression only, and correlational studies were identified to all show a significant association between childhood exposure to domestic violence and child outcomes. The effect size of these

aggregated studies indicated that 63% of the child witnesses were faring worse than the average child who had not been exposed to domestic violence (Kitzmann *et al.*, 2003). Clearly, this highlights a large proportion (37%) of exposed children who were faring better or just as well as non-exposed children. Interestingly, Kitzmann et al. (2003) found no significant differences between three groups; (1) children who were exposed to domestic violence, (2) children who had been exposed to physical abuse, and (3) children who had been exposed to domestic violence and physical abuse. Although there was a smaller amount of studies compared, this indicated that outcomes may not differ based on exposure to differing types of conflict. Kitzmann et al. (2003) compared the children who witnessed domestic violence to children who had witnessed other forms of destructive conflict (e.g. verbal aggression and no physical violence). The findings provided evidence that those exposed to domestic violence experienced worse outcomes than those exposed to verbal aggression only.

Sternberg et al. (2006) investigated the differences in the effects of family violence on child behaviour outcomes in a large mega-analytic study by combining the data from 1,870 studies. In particular, Sternberg et al. (2006) tested whether the type of violence that the child was exposed to rendered differences in the effects. Their results showed that 7-14 year olds who had been exposed to any form of violence had a greater risk of clinically significant levels of externalising problems than children exposed to no violence (*ibid*). However, only 4-6 year olds who had been abused and

witness to family violence were at a greater risk of significant levels of externalising problems than children exposed to no violence. In relation to internalising symptoms, Sternberg et al. (2006) found children of all ages who solely witnessed and those who were both abused and witness to family violence were of greater risk for displaying severe internalising problem scores than the no violence control group. However, children who were solely abused had on average significantly higher internalising problems scores when compared to the no violence group. Sternberg et al. (2006) provides support for Kitzmann et al. (2003) in regards to the combination of being abused and witnessing family violence puts children at greater risk of the development of internalising and externalising problems regardless of the child's age. Again, Sternberg et al. (2006) supported Kitzmann et al.'s (2003) finding that children who are exposed to domestic violence experience similar outcomes to children who have been physically abused. There was also evidence suggesting that the older the children were at greater risk of internalising problems than younger children (Sternberg *et al.*, 2006). In regard to externalising problems, witnesses were at greater risk than victims of physical abuse if they were aged 10-14 years old. In similarity to Kitzmann et al. (2003), 50-72% of children were reported to have displayed non-clinically significant behaviour problems. This highlights that a large proportion of the sample did not experience adverse effects from childhood exposure to domestic violence or physical abuse. Ultimately, this raises the issue of what makes these family violence experiences so harmful to children, and what

protective and resiliency factors may mitigate the risk of behaviour problems. Despite combining a large sample from multiple studies, Sternberg et al.'s (2006) mega-analysis only examined maternal reports of behavioural problems. This raises the question of whether the behavioural reports were accurate given that there is a tendency for mothers to over-report difficulties, if they themselves are distressed because of the family violence (Kitzmann *et al.*, 2003; Sternberg *et al.*, 2006). This highlights the need for researchers to obtain reports from multiple sources.

Wolfe et al. (2003) conducted a similar meta-analysis to Kitzmann et al. (2003), although they also investigated childhood exposure to additional trauma as well as domestic violence. Their results indicated that those children exposed to other child abuse experiences (e.g. physical abuse), as well as the exposure to domestic violence, had increased the likelihood of negative emotional and behavioural outcomes (Wolfe *et al.*, 2003). In other words, additional exposure was found to have a small 'bolt on' effect on the child. However, due to the limited amount of studies that were investigated, this conclusion should be accepted tentatively.

In addition to identifying a moderate association between childhood exposure to domestic violence and internalising, and externalising problems, Evans, Davies and DiLillo (2008) found a strong association between exposure and trauma symptomatology. This was the first time trauma symptoms and childhood exposure to domestic violence were

investigated through meta-analysis. However, this association should be taken with caution as only six studies contributed to the effect size.

The association between trauma symptoms and forms of childhood abuse has not been compared in a systematic review or meta-analysis. This would be useful in order to determine whether trauma symptoms are more likely to be an outcome of exposure to physical violence or emotional abuse. Generally, researchers have found more similarities than differences in negative outcomes between children who are exposed to differing forms of family violence (Mullen *et al.*, 1996; Sternberg *et al.*, 2006). However, McCloskey and Walker (2000) found that the death or illness of someone close to the child was the strongest risk factor for the development of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This was followed by the child being exposed to ongoing domestic abuse. Children who were also victim to abuse from their parents were almost twice more likely to develop symptoms of PTSD than those children who only witnessed the abuse between their parents (McCloskey & Walker 2000). This may indicate that the combined childhood exposure of different types of abuse exacerbate the short-term and long-term effects on the child. This also supports Wolfe et al.'s (2003) conclusions that the presence of additional adverse life experiences may have an 'add on' effect, increasing the likelihood of negative outcomes for the exposed child.

To further complicate matters, researchers have found a co-occurrence of different types of childhood abuse in children who have been exposed to domestic violence. For example, Appel and Holden (1998) found a 40% co-occurrence of domestic violence and child abuse in a review of 31 studies. This highlights the difficulty in ascertaining whether the negative outcomes are due to the child's exposure to domestic violence, child abuse or a combination of both. A limitation of this review was that the majority of included studies used samples from 'battered' women's shelters where the co-occurrence rates were higher than that of the community based samples, which had a base rate of 6% (Appel & Holden, 1998). Therefore, it can be argued that in the samples derived from shelters there is likely to be confounding variables when child abuse has not been accounted for. However, relatively consistent rates of co-occurrence have been found in other studies (Browne & Hamilton, 1998; Edleson, 1999). Despite this, there is an over-representation of clinical based samples. Therefore, there is a danger of basing what we know on complex and high risk samples (Herrenkohl *et al.*, 2008). This highlights the need to explore community based samples further. Overall, researchers need to explore the effects of family violence further given that children are likely to experience other forms of victimisation if they are exposed to domestic violence (Hamby, Finklehor, Turner & Ormord, 2010).

Researchers have investigated an array of negative outcomes associated with childhood exposure to domestic violence. The following includes some

of the specific negative outcomes that have been identified: attachment insecurity in early childhood and adolescence (Davies, Sturge-Apple, Bascoe & Cummings, 2013); poor social adjustment (McCoy, George, Cummings & Davies, 2013); and poor academic performance (Bernardi & Radl, 2014). These outcomes emphasise the importance of investigating childhood exposure to domestic violence because of its associated risks and the long lasting effect the phenomenon can have on the exposed child. Child adjustment and the effects of childhood exposure to violence are discussed in more detail in the relevant thesis chapters.

Overall, the key literature detailed above reach consensus about an association between childhood exposure to domestic violence and increased risk of emotional and behavioural problems during childhood (Fantuzzo & Linquist, 1989; Kitzmann *et al.*, 2003; Wolfe *et al.*, 2003; Evans. Davies & DiLillo, 2008; Yap, Pilkington, Ryan & Jorm, 2013). This was regardless of differing methodologies employed in the review, meta-analysis process, and the quality of included studies. Despite the well-established associations between childhood exposure to domestic violence and a range of internalising and externalising symptomatology, the research area is not as developed as other areas of adverse family experiences (e.g. domestic violence, physical abuse and sexual abuse) (Evans, Davies & DiLillo, 2008; Slopen, Fitzmaurice, Williams & Gilman 2012). This is somewhat surprising given research findings indicating the negative outcomes of witnessing domestic violence are similar to that of physically abused children

(Kitzmann *et al.*, 2003). Often those referred to as 'direct victims' (i.e. intimate partners) are the focus of research (Buckley, Holt & Whelan, 2007). Further, the following are considered reasons why there is a relative lack of research on childhood exposure to domestic violence; (1) previous researchers considering the child to be a 'passive observer' (Band-Winterstein, 2014), and (2) parents minimising the intensity and frequency of their child's exposure (Rivett, Howarth & Harold, 2006). Overall, this highlights the need to conduct further research to develop our understanding of childhood exposure to domestic violence.

1.5 Theories and Mechanisms for the Effects of Childhood Exposure to Domestic Violence

It is crucial to understand why childhood exposure to domestic violence can negatively impact the exposed child. As discussed above, there is evidence to suggest that a large proportion of children do not experience adverse effects following exposure to domestic violence. Therefore, it is important to understand what theories or mechanisms within the research literature may explain why some children experience negative effects and others do not. Further, it is important to understand why some children who experience negative effects, fare worse than others.

Researchers have considered a number of child-centred theories that can explain why childhood exposure to domestic violence can have a negative impact on the exposed child, for example; Emotional Security Theory (EST;

Davies & Cummings, 1994), Cognitive-Contextual Framework (CCF; Grych & Fincham, 1990), and Family Systems Theory (FST; Grych, Raynor & Fosco, 2004). These theories complement one another despite focussing on different aspects of the child's experience. For example, these theories relate to the child's cognitions, emotional responses and behaviours that are all inter-linked (Fosco & Grych, 2008). These theories highlight that the child is active in the construction of their social world (Holt, Buckley & Whelan, 2008)

EST emphasises that the child's primary goal within the family is to feel secure and safe (Davies & Cummings, 1994). Therefore, destructive forms of conflict such as verbal aggression and violence between parents threaten this goal and the child is likely to become emotionally distressed as a result (McCoy, Cummings & Davies, 2009). Additionally, the child is more likely to intervene with the ongoing conflict in an attempt to regulate their own emotions (Cummings & Davies, 1996). This could lead to more exposure and the child feeling involved or active in the conflict.

CCF proposed by Grych and Fincham (1990) explains that the level of a child's emotional stress following the experience would be mediated by their own perceptions of the conflict. These appraisals are formed by the characteristics of the conflict (e.g. verbal threats or violence used) and the context in which the conflict occurs (e.g. content of the threats or the situation in which the violence has occurred) (Grych & Fincham, 1990;

Grych & Fincham, 1993). This approach could account for why some children's experiences lead to adjustment difficulties and others do not. This is because the meaning the child ascribes to the conflict influences their thoughts, feelings and behaviours (Grych & Fincham, 1993). For example, the context of the violence could be the parents disagreeing on matters regarding the child. This may lead the child to blame themselves for the conflict. Researchers have found that children who display behavioural problems following exposure to domestic violence were also more likely to blame themselves for the conflict and perceive that their safety was being threatened (Fosco & Grych, 2008; Miller, Howell & Graham-Bermann, 2012). In support of this theory, Spilsbury et al. (2007) found that children's increased perceived control over the domestic violence event and the perceived threat directed towards themselves were associated with a greater likelihood of the child having clinically significant trauma symptom levels.

FST hypothesizes that the role of a third person (i.e. triangulation) can influence the child's adjustment following exposure to domestic violence (Fosco & Grych, 2008). Broadly speaking, triangulation relates the child's participation in their exposure and their sense of being caught between the two parents (Fosco & Grych, 2008). This theory could explain how domestic violence may affect family relationships and places emphasis on the family as a whole, not separate entities (Grych, Raynor & Fosco, 2004). For

example, the child's exposure to the violence may affect their relationship with the perpetrators family.

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) can be applied to the child's experience of exposure to domestic violence. The theory postulates that secure attachments with ones parents is more likely, if the parents are emotionally available, sensitive and responsive towards the child (Zeanah, Berlin & Boris, 2011). Moreover, the quality of the child's relationship with their primary caregiver becomes a blueprint (internal working model), helping to shape the child's expectations and beliefs about their current and future relationships with others, but also the child's view of themselves (Bowlby, 1969). Children who have predictable, sensitive and responsive parents are more likely to see themselves as lovable and competent. However, when a child has been exposed to domestic violence they may also experience a number of unmet needs such as lack of emotional availability and lack of responsiveness from the parents who are engaged in conflict (Fong, Hawes & Allen, 2017). For example, if the child's early life experiences are characterised by rejection and a lack of emotional support, the child is more likely to see themselves as unlovable or incompetent (*ibid*).

Empirical research investigating attachment and childhood exposure to domestic violence highlight a number of key findings. Levendosky, Huth-Bocks and Semel (2002) found children who had been exposed to either domestic violence or physical abuse were less likely to have a secure

attachment style and more likely have an avoidant attachment style with their caregivers. However, the authors noted limited support of the role of attachment as a mediator for the impact of childhood exposure to domestic violence in adolescent relationships. Relatedly, Huth-Bocks et al. (2004) found that women that have experienced domestic violence during pregnancy viewed themselves and their infant more negatively than women not exposed to violence during pregnancy. This finding highlights how attachment security may have a role in the development of child behaviour problems following exposure to domestic violence. However, these studies did not account for maternal parenting behaviours or other confounds that may have been present within the samples. Gustafsson et al. (2017) found children in middle childhood exposed to violence between their parents were more likely to be rated as insecurely attached after accounting for parenting behaviours, child directed physical aggression and many more child and family level variables (e.g. marital status, gender of child, and income). Overall, this study indicates that there is a strong link between exposure to physical domestic violence and children's attachment security.

Magidan et al. (2016) unpicks the role of attachment styles by conducting a meta-analysis to determine the association between attachment styles and internalising and externalising behaviour problems. The authors' found that avoidant, ambivalent and disorganised attachment styles were associated with internalising behaviour problems but disorganised attachment styles were associated with externalising behaviour problems

only. This poses a problem for children who are exposed to domestic violence as attachment security has been found to be relatively stable over the first 19 years of a person's life (Fraley, 2002). Overall, attachment security may explain why exposure to domestic violence can be more harmful to some children and not others. However, this relationship is far from clear due to the dearth in studies investigating parent-child bonds following domestic violence exposure (Gewirtz & Edleson, 2007).

Social Learning Theory (SLT; Bandura, 1977) provides a useful framework to emphasise why childhood exposure to domestic violence can be harmful to some children and not others. In context of domestic violence, the child who is exposed learns from their caregivers about what is acceptable behaviour within the home. Therefore, a child witnessing their parent solve conflict or stress by being verbally aggressive or violent, may learn that aggression or violence is an acceptable and effective way to solve problems and influence other people's behaviour (Fong, Hawes & Allen, 2017). These mechanisms are based on operant theory where the child models the parental aggression they experience (Mihalic & Elliot, 1997). In this regard, SLT would suggest that the child would be at greater risk of displaying externalising behaviour problems (e.g. shouting, making threats and hitting) (Fong, Hawes & Allen, 2017).

The role of SLT and childhood exposure to domestic violence has been explored through research. However, most researchers have focussed on

the impact of childhood exposure to domestic violence on the development of aggressive behaviour in adolescence and adulthood (Juan, Washington & Kurlychek, 2017). Ballif-Spanvill, Clayton and Hendrix (2007) found in a quasi-experimental design that children who were exposed to domestic violence were significantly more likely to respond aggressively and violently than a non-exposed control group if they felt socially rejected or excluded. Moreover, Moretti et al. (2006) found children who were exposed to domestic violence were more aggressive towards peers of the same age. Juan, Washington and Kurlychek (2017) found a strong direct effect of childhood exposure to domestic violence (during the first 3 years of life) on early childhood aggression (at age 5 and 9) indicating that patterns of behaviour can form early in a child's life. Overall, these studies highlight how children observing aggressive behaviour can model the behaviour of adults.

In support of SLT, researchers have found evidence of the Inter-Generational Transmission (IGT) of domestic violence (Heyman & Slep, 2002; Renner & Slack, 2006; Kerley, Xu, Sirisunyaluck & Alley, 2010). Stith et al. (2000) conducted a meta-analysis finding a weak-moderate association between children who are exposed to family violence and later involvement in intimate partner violence. This relationship can only be tentatively accepted due to the reliance on retrospective rather than prospective data highlighting potential issues with the reliability of the recollected memories. Stith et al.'s (2002) conclusions were based on

studies which used cross-sectional and case control designs that focussed on relationships between variables rather than causation. More complex research utilising longitudinal designs may help researchers to better determine the link between exposure to childhood family violence and violence perpetration in adulthood. Relatedly, Fergusson, Boden and Horwood (2006) conducted a longitudinal study investigating IGT of violence in New Zealand. The authors found no significant associations between childhood exposure to domestic violence and increased risk of perpetration or victimization of domestic violence in adulthood (*ibid*). However, this sample may not be generalizable to samples from other countries. Overall, the IGT link appears ambiguous and further research is required to explore the relationship further.

The traumatic experience of witnessing domestic violence between parents itself can provide an explanation for why some children are affected more than others. The experience of domestic violence is an abusive context for children (Holt, Buckley & Whelan, 2008) and can be considered a form of emotional abuse against the child (Brandon & Lewis, 1996). Within this abusive context, children can be exposed to differing forms of domestic violence. For example, McGee (2000) found 71% of the children in the sample had witnessed their mother being physically assaulted and 10% were witness to their mother being raped. However, this was a relatively small sample consisting of 54 children, limiting its generalisability to populations exposed to domestic violence. Another element that needs to

be taken into consideration by researchers is that the child is not only exposed to the domestically violent incidents alone but can also witness the injuries sustained by the parent and could hear the context of the arguments prior to the incident. Therefore, the characteristics of the child's exposure to domestic violence may affect the impact on the child.

Straus and Michel-Smith (2013) explored the characteristics of childhood exposure to domestic violence reported by university students in 15 nations. The authors found Dyadic-Concordance Types (DCTs) of violence between parents within a sample of 11,408 students; 25% Father-Only, 22% Mother-Only and 52% Both-Assault. Another key finding was that violence had occurred more than once for 82% of the families included in the sample (*ibid*). One limitation of the research was that the reporting period was set for the child at ten years old and not the entirety of the reporters' childhood. This could have affected the accuracy of the prevalence rates. Investigations into DCTs are relatively new within the field. However, these findings demonstrate the possible variance in children's exposure of domestic violence and the need for further exploration to determine whether DCT's (incl. the chronicity and severity of violence) impact the child differently. Overall, the study highlights the importance to classify childhood exposure to domestic violence based on severity and chronicity instead of whether any parent was violent (Straus & Michel-Smith, 2013). This is a limitation of previous research investigating childhood exposure to domestic violence.

Vu, Jouriles, McDonald and Rosenfield (2016) conducted a meta-analytic review of longitudinal studies that investigated the link between childhood exposure to domestic violence and child adjustment problems. The authors found evidence to suggest that the association between childhood exposure and adjustment problems becomes stronger over time. This highlights that children may seem unaffected by their exposure to domestic violence at first, as it may take years for behavioural problems to emerge (Vu *et al.*, 2016). Alternatively, the result could suggest that childhood exposure to domestic violence has an accumulative effect, meaning the more a child is exposed to domestic violence, the more likely the child will develop adjustment difficulties. However, Vu et al. (2016) were unable to rule out either of these possible explanations.

Jarvis, Gordon and Novaco (2005) found that the severity of the children's trauma symptoms in emergency domestic violence shelters were associated with the frequency and duration of the physical violence between their parents. This may indicate the children's outcomes may differ depending on the characteristics of the exposure. However, the authors selected a small sample from domestic violence shelters, limiting the generalisability of their findings and increasing the risk of confounding variable bias.

Severity of the domestic violence incidents may influence the development of behaviour problems for the child. For example, Jouriles et al. (1998) found that children who observed domestic violence that involved knives or guns displayed higher levels of behaviour problems than children whose mothers did not report such violence with weapons. Further, the authors did not find significant differences between the observed group (violence with weapons) and the occurred group (mothers reporting violence with weapons that the child had not directly observed). This would suggest that the use of weapons accounted for the increase in child behaviour problems rather than the child directly observing the act. Jouriles et al. (1998) also accounted for the differences between groups relating to the frequency of the exposure. This highlights that the severity of violence the child is exposed to can lead to more harmful effects. However, Jouriles et al. (1998) did not investigate other factors relating to the children's experience of domestic violence, for example the consequences of the violence (e.g. injuries or police involvement) and the context in which the violence occurred (e.g. argument about the child or separation). These factors may also exacerbate the effects of childhood exposure to domestic violence.

Domestic violence may continue after the separation of the parents and the violence may actually increase in severity once separation has occurred (Jaffe, Crooks & Poisson, 2003). Thus children may be embroiled in these abusive experiences where they themselves are at risk of being a target of verbal aggression, physical aggression or of abduction. Relatedly, Ross

(1996) found domestic violence between parents significantly predicted physical child abuse. In other words, the more violence there is between parents, the more likely the child will be physically abused by the parental aggressor (*ibid*). This has been supported by more recent research (Jobe-Shields *et al.*, 2015). However, this co-occurrence highlights the difficulty of separating the effects of domestic violence and physical abuse on the exposed child. For example, Holt, Buckley and Whelan (2008) describe that the intention of a parent may be to abuse the child in order to have an abusive impact on the other parent. Relatedly, Spilsbury et al. (2007) found that if the child was also assaulted during the domestic violence incident this increased the likelihood of the child developing clinically significant levels of trauma symptoms, more so than children who were only witness to the event. Overall, the existing literature indicates that the child is at increased risk of experiencing more adverse life experiences following to an initial type of abuse such as; exposure to domestic violence (Finklehor, Turner, Hamby & Ormrod, 2011). Additionally, exposure to multiple types of abuse has been found to be associated with poorer short-term outcomes, level of functioning and quality of life for children aged 4-17 (Witt *et al.*, 2016) and serious mental health consequences such as; PTSD, depression and substance misuse disorder (Bender *et al.*, 2014).

Environmental factors relating to the child's experience of domestic violence and other forms of victimisation have tended to be the focus of research (Fisher *et al.*, 2015). Genetic factors may provide an explanation

regarding the hidden physical alterations that may occur within a child's body when they are exposed to adverse life experiences such as domestic violence (*ibid*). Byrd and Manuck (2014) conducted a meta-analysis that found that the MAOA genotype moderated the effects of childhood maltreatment on antisocial behaviour in males. Further, Jaffee et al. (2005) found in a cohort study of 1,116 twin pairs that early-onset conduct problems were more likely to emerge if genetically vulnerable children were exposed to child maltreatment. However, the authors noted a relatively small sample were exposed to physical maltreatment and therefore could not explore sub-types amongst this sample (e.g. type of exposure, severity etc). Nonetheless, these studies highlight how genotypes can promote resistance to trauma exposure (*ibid*). Equally, they also highlight genetic factors can influence how children may respond to trauma (e.g. exposure to domestic violence) differently to others. The majority of research on genetic factors centres on child maltreatment and the risk for psychiatric disorders (Teicher & Samson, 2013). One limitation of these studies is that they do not focus solely on childhood exposure to domestic violence. Therefore, it is difficult to determine whether these genetic factors related specifically to childhood exposure to domestic violence.

Researchers have found childhood exposure to domestic violence has an environmental effect on children's behavioural problems when accounting for genetic effects (Jaffee *et al.*, 2002). Jaffee et al. (2002) were the first study to find this using a sample of 1,116 monozygotic and dizygotic 5 year

old twin pairs in the United Kingdom. This indicates that environmental factors alone can account for the harmful effects on the exposed child. However, the authors were unable to rule out whether the effects of childhood exposure to domestic violence are partially mediated by genetic factors.

Resilience and protective factors have been found to be an important mechanism that may prevent or protect the exposed child from developing harmful effects. Researchers have identified a number of protective factors such as; the availability of social and emotional support from carers or siblings (Kolbo, 1996; Levendosky *et al.*, 2002; Cox, Kotch & Everson, 2003), pro-social and quality parenting (Kolbo, 1996), easy child temperament (Martinez-Torteya *et al.*, 2009), families with effective problem-solving skills (Graham-Bermann *et al.*, 2009) and, secure attachment with a pro-social or non-violent parent/carer (Graham-Bermann *et al.*, 2006). One specific limitation of these studies relates to them having been conducted in the United States (Bowen, 2015). Therefore, the exploration of protective factors that promote children's resilience to exposure to domestic violence in European and United Kingdom is necessary to determine the generalisability of these factors.

Jaffee et al. (2007) conducted a study investigating individual, family and neighbourhood factors that may be distinguishable between resilient and non-resilient children who had been exposed to a range of child

maltreatment. The authors found that 'resilient' children would be protected against harmful effects if they were exposed to fewer stressors. However, if the children were exposed to multiple stressors then their individual, family and extra-familial resources are not likely to be sufficient to promote their adaptive functioning (Jaffe *et al.*, 2007). Overall, this highlights that children who are exposed to multiple forms of child maltreatment fare worse. Therefore, the co-occurrence of adverse childhood experiences (e.g. parental substance misuse, poverty, neglect, physical abuse etc.) may explain why exposure to domestic violence is more harmful to some children than others.

1.6 Moderating Factors of Childhood Exposure to Domestic Violence

In order to explore the effects of childhood exposure to domestic violence further, it is prudent to discuss the moderating factors of the phenomenon. This is in order to determine what factors may influence the strength of the association between childhood exposure to domestic violence and negative outcomes. Kitzmann et al. (2003) was one of the first meta-analyses to examine moderating factors linked to more harmful effects of childhood exposure to domestic violence. The authors did not find much evidence to suggest that a child's gender or age moderated the relationship between exposure and outcome. However, there was evidence to suggest that there may be a greater risk of negative outcomes for preschool children. This finding was tentative given the small number of studies compared. In contrast, Wolfe et al. (2003) did not find the developmental stage of the

child, the gender of the child, or type of outcome to be moderators. Although, the researchers argued this may have been due to methodological issues within the heterogeneity of the included studies.

In light of these discrepancies, Evans, Davies and DiLillo (2008) investigated age, gender and sample recruitment in terms of their moderating roles. Firstly, the researchers identified that externalising symptoms were associated more strongly with boys than girls. However, like Wolfe et al. (2003) the authors found no significant differences between boys and girls in regards to internalising symptoms. Unfortunately, methodological issues and the limited number of studies involved in the comparison still remained. This highlights the need to investigate the moderating effects of gender and age on childhood exposure to domestic violence further. In relation to sampling recruitment, Evans, Davies and DiLillo (2008) found no differences in the strength of the association. This was at odds with the assumption that children sampled in a women's shelter would have been exposed more severe levels of domestic violence. Further, there were no significant differences between those sampled from school, clinical or women's shelter settings (Evans, Davies & DiLillo, 2008). Overall, this suggests that childhood exposure to domestic violence increases the risk of negative outcomes despite how the sample was recruited.

Researchers have investigated other moderating factors of the association between childhood exposure to domestic violence and adverse outcomes.

In particular, studies looking into the individual and family characteristics that predict resilience among exposed children have been conducted (Martinez-Torteya, Bogat, von Eye & Levendosky, 2009). Martinez-Torteya et al. (2009) highlighted that resilient children had more protective factors and less risk factors compared to their less resilient peers (e.g. the children who fared worse). Overall, lower levels of maternal depression and children who had easier temperaments predicted resilience. However, these results were based on maternal report as the children were too young (aged 2-4) to report. This highlights a potential bias in gathering outcome data.

Parenting factors have also been found to have had a moderating effect. Levendosky, Huth-Bocks and Semel (2002) found that positive parenting moderated some of the outcomes of childhood exposure to domestic violence including symptoms of trauma and depression. In particular, studies have highlighted that the child's relationship with the mother can be crucial. For example, Rossman and Rea (2005) found parenting styles effected the exposed child's functioning. Inconsistent care-giving was associated with children who had poorer outcomes. Whereas children with better functioning had been subjected to a more authoritative style of parenting (Rossman & Rea, 2005). In adolescence, the level of peer social support has been found to act as a risk or protective factor for the exposed child (Levendosky *et al.*, 2002). Level of peer support moderated the exposed adolescents' abusive behaviour, victimisation and communication with dating partners (*ibid)*. Tajima, Herrenkohl, Moylan and Derr (2011)

found similar findings and reported parenting characteristics (such as acceptance and responsiveness), and peer support (e.g. trust and communication) moderated a range of adolescent behaviour problems. A limitation of the parenting style studies (Rossman & Rea, 2005; Tajima *et al.*, 2011) is that they focus on the parenting style of the primary caregiver which is usually the mother and the characteristics of the father is often missed.

Overall, the research literature pertaining to moderators of childhood exposure to domestic violence and its outcomes on the exposed child is limited. Investigation into protective factors is an area that warrants further investigation. Additionally, factors within the family context require focus (e.g. communication with the family, socio-economic status) (Tajima *et al.*, 2011). Severity and frequency have not been explored as moderators and that may be partly due to researchers using childhood exposure to domestic violence as a dichotomous variable (Evans, Davies & DiLillo, 2008). This is a limitation as the chronicity or severity of the domestic violence could lead to specific negative outcomes for the exposed child.

1.7 Mediating Factors of Childhood Exposure to Domestic Violence

Mediating factors are particularly useful for unpicking the relationship between childhood exposure to domestic violence and the negative effects on the exposed child. These factors may help us to explain why exposure to this phenomenon can be so harmful. However, little research has

focussed on the potential explanatory mechanisms for the longer term effects of childhood exposure to domestic violence (Miller-Graff *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, it is unclear how mediating factors that influence short-term effects vary from those linked to longer-term effects of childhood exposure to domestic violence (*ibid*).

There has been limited research conducted regarding the mediating factors between childhood exposure to domestic violence and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms. Kilpatrick and Williams (1998) was one such study, however, the authors found that the exposed child's age, gender and coping style as well as the mother's emotional wellbeing did not mediate this relationship. The researchers noted the small sample size of 20 exposed children meant that their results should be interpreted tentatively. Regardless, Kilpatrick and Williams (1998) provide some evidence that childhood exposure to domestic violence may be just as harmful to children despite the presence of these variables.

Allwood and Bell (2008) found PTSD symptoms and acceptance of violence cognitions significantly mediated the association between childhood exposure to domestic violence and youth violent behaviours. These results could help to explain why exposed children may display violent behaviours (e.g. as a response to threat/trauma or rationalising violent behaviour). However, the authors noted that they did not account for demographic information and relied upon a convenience sample of students.

Cognitive appraisals have been theorised to mediate the relationship between childhood exposure to domestic violence and child adjustment (Grych & Fincham, 1990). Kerig (1998) found support for this theory in a sample of 106 violent families and identified specific gender differences in outcomes for the exposed school-aged children. Perceived threat was found to act as a mediator of symptoms of anxiety in boys and self-blame was found to act as a mediator for internalizing symptoms in girls (Kerig, 1998).

A limitation in investigating mediating factors using cross-sectional data is that researchers are unable to determine the direction of associations (Grych, Harold & Miles, 2003). Most of the research on mediating factors is reliant upon cross-sectional data. However, Grych, Harold and Miles (2003) investigated the mediating role of perceived threat and self-blame appraisals in a longitudinal study. The researchers found that they are a mechanism that can explain how those exposed to domestic violence in childhood develop adjustment problems. In particular, children's appraisals of threat were related to an increase in internalizing problems (Grych Harold & Miles, 2003). However, other types of appraisals were not investigated in this research, highlighting the need for further investigation.

Parental characteristics and factors have been investigated as potential mediators in the relationship between childhood exposure to domestic violence and child centred outcomes. Miller-Graff et al. (2016) found

parent-child warmth to be a potential mediator, with it being linked to higher life satisfaction and lower levels of psychopathology in the exposed child's adulthood. This indicates that the presence of parent-child warmth could be a protective factor against the negative effects of childhood exposure to domestic violence. This research finding is supported by other researchers who have found positive caregiver-child interactions to act as a protective factor (Skopp, McDonald, Jouriles & Rosenfield, 2017; Hardaway, McLoyd & Wood, 2012). Relatedly, Yoon et al. (2015) found the caregiver-child relationship mediated the relationship between mild and moderate domestic violence exposure on the child's reported behaviour problems in adolescence.

Conversely, Huang, Wang and Warrener (2010) used a longitudinal dataset to create a cohort sample of pre-school children to determine whether maternal mental health and parenting behaviours mediate the relationship between childhood exposure to domestic violence and child behavioural problems. The authors found that maternal mental health and parenting behaviours such as spanking partially mediated the effect of domestic violence on the children's behaviour problems. However, there was an attrition rate of 80% between the original and final sample group, indicating that the result may not be as generalizable (Huang, Wang & Warrener, 2010).

Overall, there is a paucity of research investigating the potential mediators regarding the effects of childhood exposure to domestic violence. In particular, there is a lack of research into the mediators of the effects on adolescents and adults who have been exposed to domestic violence. It appears as though mediators are considered an afterthought by researchers due to authors theorising or suggesting a variable has a mediating effect in the discussion sections of their research articles without testing the factor themselves. However, this could also reflect the stage of the existing literature. Clearly, additional research is required in this area. Specifically, research investigating the mediating role of separation or divorce in child outcomes and other types of appraisals such as triangulation would help researchers to unpick the mechanisms behind which childhood exposure to domestic violence can be so harmful.

1.8 Methodological Concerns

There are a variety of methodological issues associated with the existing literature on childhood exposure to domestic violence (Edleson, 1999; Kitzmann *et al.*, 2003; Evans *et al.*, 2008; Holt *et al.*, 2008; Kimball, 2016). These concerns are as follows; (1) over emphasis on maternal report (Edleson, 1999; Sternberg *et al.*, 2006), (2) over use of clinical and shelter settings (Kimball, 2016), (3) researchers failing to elaborate on the extent of exposure (Evans *et al.*, 2008), (4) difficulties in separating those who have experienced other forms of abuse (Edleson, 1999), (5) lack of research utilising complex methodologies or longitudinal designs (Kitzmann

et al., 2003), (6) inadequate controls for confounding variables (Kitzmann *et al.*, 2003), (7) over emphasis on behaviour based outcomes (Kimball, 2016), (8) over use of measures that do not capture the breath of the exposure experience (Kimball, 2016), (9) lack of expansion beyond the adult's experience (Kimball, 2016), and (10) the dominance of quantitative research (Øverlien, 2010). Therefore, these caveats highlight directions for researchers to investigate, improving on the existing literature base. Herein emphasises scope for this thesis.

1.9 Current Thesis

In summary, the current thesis aims to explore the effects of exposure to domestic violence on the exposed child, including the childhood experience of separation or divorce and whether any allegations of domestic violence were made. By investigating childhood exposure to domestic violence this thesis is intended to develop the existing knowledge and facilitate the growing recognition of the effect exposure to domestic violence can have on a child as they develop into adulthood. In the process this thesis could contribute to policy and clinical practice in the identification of risk and protective factors. Furthermore, the thesis may help to inform government service funding and early intervention programmes to support those in need of therapeutic intervention.

To begin, chapter two of this thesis systematically explores the existing literature relating to exposure to inter-parental violence and trauma

symptomatology. Following scoping searches, no previous systematic review had focussed solely on trauma symptomatology. Further, the most recent systematic review search was conducted in 2006. Therefore, this provided scope to review recent research on childhood exposure and trauma symptomatology and to update Evans et al.'s (2008) findings. Furthermore, the review provided an opportunity to determine whether the limitations highlighted within the previous reviews (and above) had been improved upon.

Chapter three of the thesis critically evaluates the Revised Conflict Tactics Scales-2 (CTS-2; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy & Sugarman, 1996) a widely utilised psychometric measure in both research and clinical settings. The CTS-2 is a measurement tool for determining the nature and extent of conflict tactics utilised between partners within the family home (Straus *et al.*, 1996). Unlike the twelve previous research articles evaluating the CTS-2, this critique took an eclectic approach. Instead, the critique explored the clinical applicability and scientific properties. The psychometric measure was the most common tool used to determine the severity and frequency of childhood exposure to inter-parental violence within chapter one's systematic review. Further, the tool has been used in the empirical research in chapter four.

In light of chapter two and three, the fourth chapter considers university students' retrospective experiences of destructive forms of inter-parental

conflict and of divorce/separation. This empirical research fills a niche in that it gives voice to the child (albeit retrospectively) about their experiences and their views on the impact of destructive forms of inter-parental conflict, parental separation/divorce and allegations of domestic violence. Furthermore, it considers the impact their experiences have had on their University lives. By investigating the impact it is hoped that the results develop our knowledge of the longer term effects of childhood exposure to domestic abuse and contribute to the provision of services to support those affected. The methodological issues noted above and within chapter two and three are considered and addressed within the empirical research discussed in chapter four.

Chapter five explores individuals' experiences of inter-parental violence for those who had experienced parental divorce, via qualitative methods using the CTS-2 (see chapter three). Through qualitative methods it is hoped that the second empirical research sheds light on how individuals exposed to inter-parental violence recollect, make sense of and cope with their childhood experiences.

Finally, an overview of the thesis findings and a discussion of the links between each chapter of the thesis are presented in chapter six. An overall model is provided to highlight the effects of childhood exposure to domestic violence. Limitations of the thesis are discussed and clinical/research implications are considered.

Chapter Two:

Childhood Exposure to Domestic Violence and Post Traumatic Stress Symptomatology: A Review

Abstract

This systematic review is aimed at discovering the association between trauma symptomatology in children exposed to domestic violence. The true extent of this phenomenon remains relatively hidden due to lack of reporting (Holt, Buckley & Whelan, 2008). Five bibliographic databases and seven reference lists were searched. Two experts were also contacted to provide relevant studies. Inclusion/exclusion criteria were run against relevant studies, included studies were then quality assessed and data were extracted from the included studies. A total of 2168 hits were found, 705 duplicates, 50 reviews and meta-analyses, 1219 irrelevant studies and 170 studies that did not meet inclusion criteria were removed from the analysis. 24 studies met inclusion criteria and were included in the review. Included studies indicated that children exposed to domestic violence experience elevated trauma symptomatology. Six prevalence studies using DSM criteria for PTSD that were included in the analysis indicated that on average nearly a quarter of exposed children would qualify for a PTSD diagnosis. Evidence suggests that increased frequency and severity of exposure were both associated with greater trauma symptomatology. Future improvement on the methodological concerns were discussed.

Keywords:

Review, Trauma, Childhood Exposure, Domestic Violence

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Background

Researchers have attempted to estimate the extent of childhood exposure to domestic violence. It has been posited that annually somewhere between three to 17.8 million children in the United States are exposed to at least one incident of domestic violence (Holden, 1998; Evans, Davies & DiLillo, 2008; Øverlien, 2009). Exposure to domestic violence may cause harm that can impede a child's development and lead to negative short and long term difficulties (Wolfe, Crooks, Lee, McIntyre-Smith & Jaffe, 2003). Herein lays the importance of understanding the direct/indirect impact of exposure to domestic violence in its varying forms. Children in violent families may experience a number of adversities which can lead to the development of other problems. Previous research suggests that parents underestimate the amount of domestic violence exposure their children have suffered (Jaffe, Wolfe & Wilson, 1990; Edleson, 1999). Therefore, there is a risk that the impact of exposure remains hidden with their development exacerbated without intervention (Holt, Buckley & Whelan, 2008).

2.1.2 Definitional Caveats

Previous research has seldom come to a consensus of terminology to describe exposure to domestic violence. Few studies have detailed what the term exposure to domestic violence means and many fail to elaborate on the extent of the violence that the children are exposed to (Evans, *et al.*, 2008). Many previous reviewers have noted this issue (Wolfe *et al.*, 2003;

Edleson *et al.*, 2007; Evans *et al.*, 2008). Mohr, Lutz, Fantuzzo and Perry (2000) concluded that greater precision in definitions to provide standardisation across policy, research and practice domains are necessary.

One of the most common definitions of exposure relates to observing and/or hearing violence (Edleson *et al.*, 2007). Previously terms such as witnessing or observing have been used to define the phenomena (Edleson, 1999). For the purpose of this review the following definitional quote heralded an agreement amongst researchers;

> *"…childhood exposure to domestic violence occurs when children see, hear, are directly involved in (i.e., attempt to intervene), or experience the aftermath of physical or sexual assaults that occur between their caregivers." (Evans et al., 2008).*

2.1.3 Effects of Exposure to Domestic Violence

Researchers have reviewed the literature on the effects of exposure to domestic violence (Appel & Holden, 1998; Edleson, 1999; Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999; Lehmann, 2000; Holt, Buckley & Whelan, 2008). These reviewers have looked at a large number of outcomes, the following list is not exhaustive; internalizing symptoms (such as anxiety and depressive symptoms), externalizing symptoms (such as anti-social behaviour and physical aggression). To date there are three meta-analyses investigating the effects of childhood exposure to domestic violence: Kitzmann, Gaylord, Holt and Kenny (2003), Wolfe et al. (2003) and Evans et al. (2008). In addition, there are four systematic reviews Fantuzzo and Linquist (1989),

Kolbo, Blakely and Engleman (1996), Edleson (1999) and Holt, Buckley and Whelan (2008) looking into the childhood exposure to domestic violence. Both male and female pre-school children have been identified to be at greater risk of developing such outcomes as problems with social competence and negative affect in response to simulated episodes of inter-parental conflict than children of other age groups (Kitzmann *et al.*, 2003).

There have been a number of methodological concerns with the previous literature base. For example, sampling bias has been an issue for the studies prior to the 1990's (Evans et al., 2008). Samples have either been taken from children sheltered in women's shelters or clinical environments. Selecting clinical samples such as these increases the risk of confounding variables, as these environments can be very distressing experiences altogether. Alternatively, children in these samples may have been exposed to more severe forms of inter-parental violence than those in general population samples. Additionally, earlier papers on childhood exposure have failed to separate those children who have also been directly abused from those who have witnessed domestic violence alone (Edleson, 1999). Further, these studies have relied upon the mother reporting the incidents, which can lead to bias and discrepancies within the accounts (Edleson, 1999). To elaborate, maternal reporting could represent an under estimation of the severity or frequency of the child's exposure (Rivett, Howarth & Harold, 2006). Alternatively, Kitzmann et al. (2003) found mother's reported significantly larger adjustment problems compared to

their child's report. Possible explanations may include; (1) the mother over-exaggerating the child's difficulties, or (2) the child minimising their difficulties.

In addition, previous researchers have not distinguished between mild and severe forms of childhood exposure to domestic violence (Kitzmann *et al.*, 2003). This is an issue noted within Kitzmann et al. (2003) as severe incidents could lead to distinctive stressors that would not happen as part of a child's experience of most spousal violence (e.g. violent incidents involving weapons or resulting in serious injury). Therefore, the higher severity of violence, the more likely a child will be traumatised by the event. This makes comparing studies that do not distinguish different levels of severity problematic. Furthermore, some studies fail to differentiate between lengths of exposure (Kitzmann *et al.*, 2003).

The existing research base has been questioned on whether they have adequately controlled for confounding variables such as social economic status and parental substance abuse (Kitzmann *et al.*, 2003). The designs of studies have also been put into question. Reviewers have criticised the existing literature highlighting a dearth of longitudinal studies and complex design methodologies (Kitzmann *et al.*, 2003).

2.1.4 Trauma Symptomatology

In order to robustly assess trauma symptoms, it is prudent to define what is meant by trauma symptomatology. However, researchers in the field of childhood exposure to domestic violence tend to not define the trauma symptoms they are measuring as an outcome. This is problematic and can often mean that broad measures are considered to measure trauma symptoms. Therefore, trauma symptoms can become an umbrella term to link all possible symptoms following the experience of a traumatic event.

For the purposes of this review, trauma symptoms are defined as a singular or set of negative outcomes following an individual's experience of a traumatic event. More specifically, the trauma symptoms experienced by the individual may include, but are not limited to, the following clusters of symptoms; (1) increased arousal (e.g. hypervigilance), (2) avoidant (e.g. avoiding people or situations relating to the traumatic event), (3) re-experiencing (e.g. having nightmares or flashbacks about the traumatic event), or (4) negative alterations in mood or cognitions (e.g. feeling isolated or disconnected from other people) symptoms (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Childhood exposure to domestic violence is considered to be a traumatic event. Despite being a trauma-eliciting event, childhood exposure to domestic violence has characteristics that makes it harder to conceptualise what constitutes as a trauma symptom. These aspects present difficulties

in diagnosing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for children and young people (Margolin & Vickerman, 2007). For example, there may not be a pre-trauma state for the child due to the chronic nature of domestic violence and the instances of physical violence may not be life-threatening (*ibid*). Therefore, when assessing a child's trauma symptoms, a PTSD diagnostic interview may provide false-negative results. However, assessments using trauma symptoms as opposed to PTSD specific symptoms may take into account the child's development (*ibid*). This is because children may present with age-specific traumatic stress rather than adult-type PTSD symptoms (*ibid*). Furthermore, Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM) criteria of PTSD has changed over time meaning definitions of trauma symptoms has also changed over time (Lehmann, 2000). This subsequently would affect the accuracy of reviews investigating the extent of trauma symptomatology. Therefore, a reliance on the DSM to define what constitutes trauma symptoms may not be appropriate. For example, the range of possible trauma symptoms may be broader than that detailed in the DSM. Instead, there may be trauma symptoms that develop in a particular context (e.g. during childhood exposure to domestic violence). Another problem clinicians' face with relying solely on PTSD diagnosis is the comorbidity of PTSD symptoms with other disorders (Lehmann, 2000). For example, symptoms of depression, anxiety and aggression can overlap with PTSD symptoms.

A solution to the above problem may be to use trauma-specific instruments instead of more general psychological measures of depression or anxiety (Lehmann, 2000). This could enable practitioners and researchers to use a set of strict criteria when measuring trauma symptoms in children and young people. Not only could these measures provide a more detailed and accurate portrayal of trauma symptoms, but they could also prevent clinicians from linking PTSD symptoms with externalising problems such as conduct problems in school (Lehmann, 2000). Subsequently, this would ensure that the individuals displaying trauma symptoms receive the right kind of treatment. Another benefit of using trauma specific instruments are that they could be made specifically to assess the impact of exposure at different stages of the child's life (Lehmann, 2000).

Child exposure to domestic violence is considered by experts as fitting into the Complex Trauma bracket due to its repeated, chronic and developmentally adverse nature (Cook et al., 2005; van der Kolk, 2005, cited in, Margolin & Vickerman, 2007; Margolin & Vickerman, 2007). Furthermore, researchers have opined that PTSD diagnosis alone cannot fully account for or highlight the breadth of symptoms and negative effects following exposure to complex traumas such as domestic violence (Ford & Courtois, 2009).

Lehmann (2000) conducted a systematic review solely on post-traumatic stress and childhood exposure to domestic violence. However this review

included both empirical research and commentary papers. Furthermore, the review included many studies which had fallen victim to the methodological issues mentioned above. Lehmann (2000) concluded that trauma symptomatology and childhood exposure to domestic violence was a relatively new research direction in need of further exploration. Wolfe et al. (2003) were the first researchers to examine trauma symptomatology as part of their meta-analysis. However, only four studies met their criteria, resulting in the review authors making tentative conclusions regarding the association between exposure to domestic violence in childhood and trauma symptoms (Wolfe *et al.*, 2003).

Evans et al. (2008) meta-analysis was the most recent review to use trauma symptomatology as a measurable outcome following childhood exposure to domestic violence. The inclusion criteria of this meta-analysis included trauma symptomatology as an outcome alongside internalizing and externalizing outcomes. Evans et al. (2008) found trauma symptomatology to be their strongest outcome of exposure to domestic violence, however only six studies were included in the analysis. Issues were raised with the effect size due to the limited amount of studies which lacked homogeneity (Evans *et al.*, 2008). The authors noted that this finding was concerning given the strong theoretical associations that have been made between exposure to domestic violence and trauma symptomatology (*ibid*). The literature search conducted by Evans et al. (2008) was performed in 2006. Therefore, providing scope to update their

findings with a search of the last nine years of journal publications and disseminated theses.

2.1.5 Review Questions

Primary Objective: To review the association between exposure to domestic violence and trauma symptomology amongst children.

Secondary Objective: To explore the strength of the evidence of trauma symptomology among different age groups.

2.2 Method

2.2.1 Search Sources

The following electronic bibliographical databases were systematically searched;

a) OVID: PsycINFO (1806 – week 1 Aug 2015, completed on 09th Aug 2015).

b) OVID: MEDLINE ® (1946 – week 1 Aug 2015, completed on 09th Aug 2015).

c) OVID: EMBASE (1980 – week 32, completed on 09th Aug 2015).

d) PROQUEST: ASSIA (1990 – week 1 Aug 2015, completed on 09th Aug 2015).

e) Web of Knowledge (Science Citation Index Expanded (SCI-EXPANDED); Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI); Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI); Conference Proceedings Citation Index- Science (CPCI-S);

Conference Proceedings Citation Index – Social Science & Humanities (CPCI-SSH); 1990-2015, completed on 09th Aug 2015).

The reference sections of the following reviews were hand searched and each potential hit was considered using the inclusion/exclusion form; Edleson et al. (2007), Mohr et al. (2000), Lehmann (2000), Kitzmann et al. (2003), Wolfe et al. (2003), Evans, Davies and DiLillo (2008) and Holt, Buckley and Whelan (2008). An internet search was performed to check for references that may have been omitted in the main searches.

The following websites were examined in this internet search to provide grey literature sources; NSPCC, Save the Children and Learning to End Abuse websites. Additionally, the following experts in the field were contacted to see if they could provide any unpublished dissertations on the topic of question; Professor Kevin Browne (University of Nottingham, UK) and Professor Peter Jaffe (University of Western Ontario, Canada). All these measures were taken in an attempt to reduce publication bias. All hits from each source were imported and managed in Endnote.

2.2.2 Search Terms

The following technical terms were used in the search criteria using a combination of the Boolean AND OR operators and truncation:

Table 1: *Search Terms*

Search term Category	Search term Boolean phrases
Childhood	Child*, pre-school, adolescen*
Exposure	Witness*, observ*, expos*
Domestic violence	Domestic violence, spouse abuse, partner abuse, marital violence, intimate partner violence, interparental violence
Trauma symptomatology	Trauma symptoms, emotional trauma, post traumatic stress symptoms, trauma symptomatology

The search syntax for the review is provided in appendix 1 including the number of hits for each stage of the search. Appendix 1 also highlights the search strategy from sources other than the electronic bibliographical databases.

2.2.3 Study Selection Rationale

Studies were included if they met all the criteria outlined in the inclusion/exclusion form (see appendix 2). Excluded studies which did not meet the inclusion criteria are documented in appendix 3 with the reason they were excluded. Table 2 below highlights definition terms used to inform the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Table 2: *Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria*

Population	Exposure	Comparator	Outcome
Children	Exposure to or witnessing Domestic Violence (i.e. violence between parents or caregivers)	No violence OR other types of violence	Child's behaviour Trauma Symptoms Post Traumatic Stress Symptoms
Pre-school (3-6 years)			
School age (5-12 years)			
Adolescence (11-18)			

The following rationale was used to determine whether a study was included or excluded. Duplicates, reviews, opinion/commentary papers and clearly irrelevant articles were excluded before the eligibility criteria were checked. Eligibility criteria were checked by an independent assessor who reviewed 20% research articles found through the search process. Due to methodological difficulties found within earlier studies (Evans *et al.*, 2008), all studies published prior to 1990 were excluded. This exclusion criterion is commonplace amongst the current crop of systematic/meta-analytic reviews (mentioned above). Fantuzzo and Linguist's (1989) qualitative systematic review highlighted ambiguous results within the previous empirical research.

For the purpose of this review, domestic violence was searched for as physical violence that occurs between the parents/caregivers of the child,

either uni-directionally or bi-directionally. Therefore, other forms of domestic violence were excluded from the search criteria (i.e. emotional abuse, elder abuse and child abuse/neglect). In addition, studies examining childhood exposure to verbal violence, community violence or sibling violence were excluded.

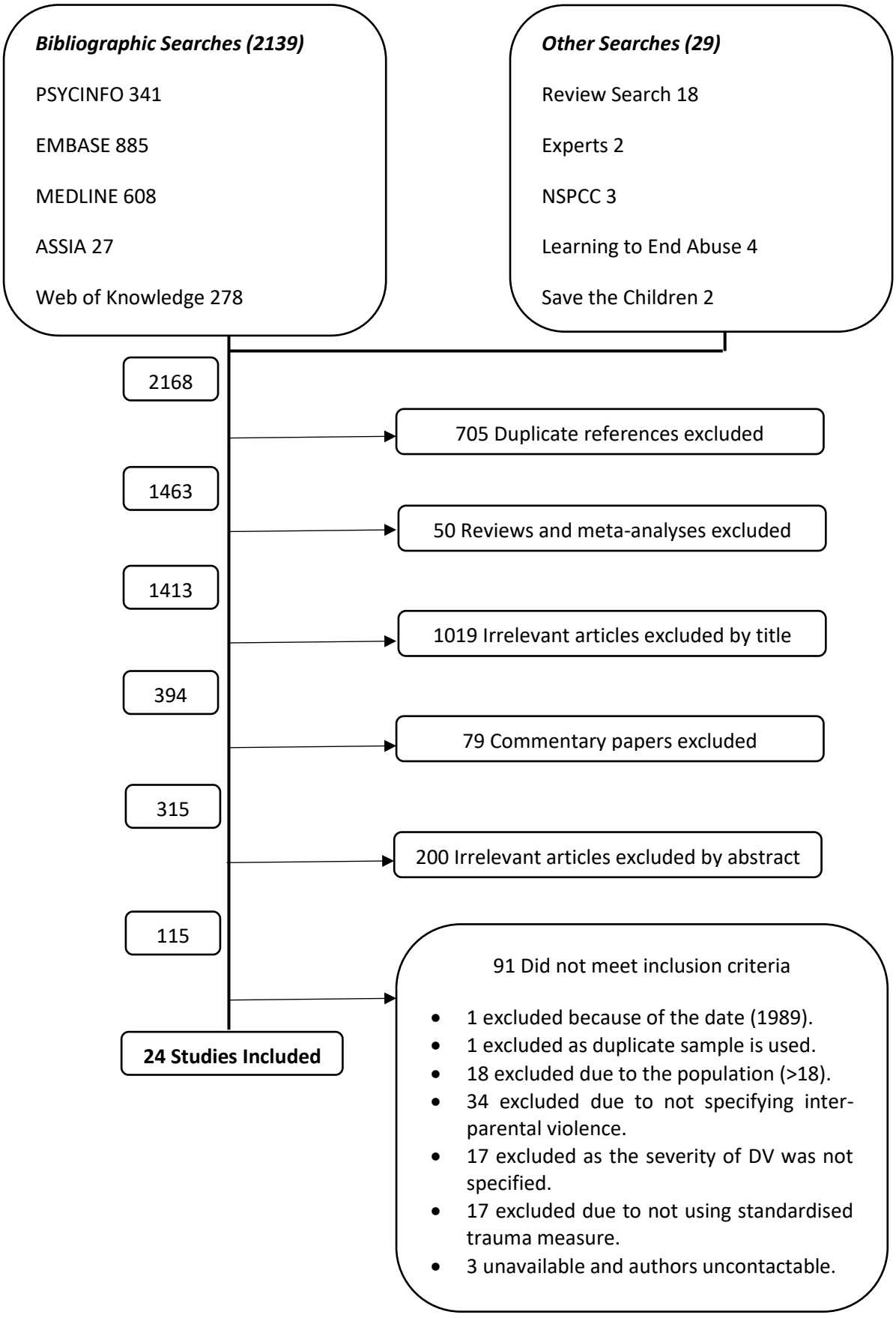
In order to measure trauma symptomology/emotional trauma or PTSD symptoms accurately, studies needed to assess this via an assessment tool rather than using clinical opinion to make a judgement. If clinical opinion was used but an assessment tool corroborated the judgement then the study would be included. This assessment tool must have been standardised and known to have good reliability/validity. As discussed in the introduction section, trauma symptoms must be assessed using a standardised measure of trauma. This is because of the difficulties in defining symptoms of trauma and diagnosing PTSD in children and adolescents. Furthermore, trauma-specific measures are used to prevent overlap with other psychiatric disorders symptomatology.

This review focusses solely on trauma symptoms as opposed to externalising problems because there are strong theoretical links between childhood exposure to domestic violence and trauma or PTSD symptoms. However, the previous empirical research has been somewhat lacking in quality and quantity as reviewed in Lehmann (2000), Wolfe et al. (2003) and Evans et al. (2008). These reviews have also highlighted tentative

findings regarding the association between childhood exposure to domestic violence and trauma symptomatology. Moreover, Evans et al (2008) search process was conducted in 2006, providing scope for this literature search in this review.

The level of severity of the exposure must have been stated by the authors of the journal papers. Level of severity can be explained by authors either qualitatively or quantitatively. Previous systematic reviews and meta-analyses have not included studies based on the presence of severity data. This provides an opportunity to assess how researchers are defining severity of exposure to domestic violence, given that this is an issue with the previous research (Kitzmann *et al.*, 2003). Additionally, the age of the children must have been clearly defined. Studies with participants over the age of 18 were not included.

Figure 1: ***Search Process Flow***



2.2.4 Quality Assessment

The included studies were quality assessed using the quality assessment template in appendix 4. This appraisal checklist was created with guidance from Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP; 2013) checklists for cross-sectional, case control and longitudinal study designs. Two assessors were used for this stage of the review. The independent assessor quality assessed 20% of the included studies.

2.2.5 Data Extraction

Data was extracted using the pro-forma in appendix 5. This was developed from the guidance of The Cochrane Public Health Group (CPHG; 2011). This pro-forma was used in order to help eliminate bias by providing consistency and transparency in the approach to extracting data. If there was any missing data, authors of the papers were contacted to give them the opportunity to disclose the information required.

2.3 Results

2.3.1 Description of Studies

The complete search yielded 2168 articles, 705 duplicates were removed, 50 reviews, 79 commentary papers and 1219 irrelevant articles were excluded. Inclusion/exclusion criteria forms were used on the remaining 115 studies, 91 of which were excluded. The reasons for exclusion are noted in appendix iii. The majority of studies were excluded for not specifying inter-parental violence, severity of violence and for not using a

standardised measure of trauma symptomatology. The remaining 24 studies were included within this systematic review and were eligible for quality assessment.

2.3.2 Descriptive Data Synthesis

Study Characteristics

Of the 24 included studies, sixteen were cross-sectional[1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 23], five were case-control[3, 11, 12, 22, 24], two were cohort[2, 17] and one was RCT[21] in design. Data was able to be extracted from the RCT study because the study assessed the efficacy of a community based intervention for children exposed to inter-parental violence. Further, exposure and trauma symptoms were measured prior to treatment in this study, therefore the study was eligible for inclusion. Studies were primarily conducted in the USA[1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23] (n=18) with Australia[12] (n=1), USA and Canada[19, 20, 24] (n=3), Iran[3] (n=1) and the Netherlands[21] (n=1) being the other locations. The studies in the USA were conducted mainly within mid-western states[1, 4, 5, 6, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20]. The included studies had publication dates ranging between 1998 and 2015, 21 of them were published in peer reviewed journals and three were disseminated unpublished dissertation theses.

Participant Characteristics

A total of 3,650 participants were included in the 24 studies with a mean age of 1.10[1]-15.90[9]. Participants were recruited from a single source in

twelve of the included studies [1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 23]. The twelve remaining studies had recruited participants from two sources. Twenty studies focussed on children within the school age category[2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24] and the remaining four studies used pre-school aged children[1, 14, 16, 20]. Eight studies had predominantly Caucasian participants [5, 6, 11, 12, 18, 19, 20, 24], five studies incorporated primarily African-Americans[7, 9, 13, 16, 23]. Four of the studies did not report ethnicity[8, 10, 15, 17]. The remaining eight studies had samples using a large proportion of mixed race[1, 14], Hispanic[2], Fars[3], Minority[4, 22] and Dutch[21] ethnicities. In relation to Socio-Economic Status (SES), the majority of study authors noted that the participants families met low SES criteria[1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24] (n=18). Please see table 3 for further information regarding the characteristics of the included studies.

Measurement of Exposure

The dominant method of measuring exposure to domestic violence was psychometric assessment. Specifically, the Conflict Tactics Scale-2 (CTS; Straus *et al.*, 1996)[1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 19, 20, 21] (n=12) or variations of this psychometric tool i.e. Conflict Tactics Scale (n=5) (Straus, 1979)[4, 5, 12, 22, 24] was the main measurement tool selected by authors. Other tools used included; the Severity of Violence Against Women Scales (SVAWS; Marshall, 1992)[14, 16, 17] (n=3), the Index of Spouse Abuse (ISA; Hudson & McIntosh, 1981)[10] (n=1), The History of Violence Witnessed By Child Questionnaire (HVWCQ; Lehmann & Wolfe, 1992)[15] (n=1) or the authors

developed their own standardised questionnaires[18, 23] (n=2). In total, eight different measurement tools were used across the 24 included studies. Predominantly, study authors focussed on uni-directional domestic violence perpetrated by males on females (n=18). However, five study's authors measured bi-directional domestic violence[9, 11, 21, 22, 23] and one study's authors had assessed uni-directional domestic violence perpetrated by female on males due to receiving more data on this phenomenon[24]. Relatedly, 83% of the included studies relied on maternal report of IPV exposure (n=20). Two studies included child report[11, 23] (one involved maternal report as well) and two studies involved paternal report (as well as maternal report) to some degree[21,22]. All 24 included studies reported some form of severity data, however this data varied based on authors definitions of severity. Some authors chose to present percentages of physical violence (i.e. from CTS-2 or other measures) or defined severity based on the setting they collected their sample from (i.e. domestic violence shelters). Regarding frequency data, most study authors were consistent in reporting percentages of either lifetime occurrence or IPV occurrence in the past year. Five study's authors did not report frequency data[6, 7, 10, 13, 14].

Measurement of Outcome

In contrast, trauma symptoms were measured with a total of ten different outcome measurement tools. The majority of studies used the Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children (TSCC; Briere, 1996)[2, 3, 9, 10, 21, 23] (n=6),

the Posttraumatic Stress Disorder-Reaction Index (PSTD-RI; Pynoos et al., 1998)[7, 8, 11, 12, 13] (n=5) or the Child Behaviour Checklist PTSD subscale (CBCL: PTSD; Achenbach & Edlebrock, 1983; Wolfe, Gentile & Wolfe 1989)[16, 19, 22, 24] (n=4). Children were the sole source of outcome reports in 33% (n=8) of the studies[2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 23]. Maternal report only for outcome measurement was present within 46% (n=11) of the studies[1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 24]. Both maternal and child report were measured at outcome in three studies[18, 21, 22]. One study's authors measured the outcome on both mother and therapist[20]. The remaining study's authors used maternal, child and therapist to report of the outcome measure[12].

Key Reported Findings

Authors of all 24 studies presented findings indicating that childhood exposure to IPV leads to children experiencing elevated trauma symptomatology. Six study's authors reported percentages of the exposed sample meeting DSM criteria for PTSD *(see table 2)*. The reported findings (n=6) indicated 13% - 95% (range) of children qualified for a PTSD diagnoses[4, 5, 6, 12, 15, 16]. One of these study's authors reported 95%, which compared to the other studies, appeared an outlier[12]. Therefore, the median was calculated as 24.5%. These results may indicate that nearly a quarter of children exposed to domestic violence would likely qualify for a diagnosis of PTSD.

Table 3: ***PTSD Prevalence Studies***

Study Authors	% Qualified for PTSD Diagnosis (DSM Criteria)
[4]Graham-Bermann and Levendosky (1998)	13%
[5]Graham-Bermann et al. (2006)	25%
[6]Graham-Bermann et al. (2012)	17%
[12]Kilpatrick, Litt and Williams (1997)	95%
[15]Lehmann (1997)	56%
[16]Levendosky et al. (2002)	24%

29% (n=7) of the study's authors presented findings which indicated greater trauma symptomatology amongst children who experienced more frequent exposure of IPV[1, 7, 10, 11, 15, 17, 19]. 50% (n=12) of the study's authors reported findings which suggest severity of exposure to IPV was associated with greater trauma symptomatology[4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 15, 18, 20, 22, 23]. In contrast two of the included study's authors highlighted non-significant findings related to severity being associated with trauma symptomatology[9, 16].

Five of the control-group studies have used a non-exposure control group[3,11,12,22,24]. Table 4 below highlights the characteristics of these studies. Trauma outcome mean scores in the exposure groups were all higher than that of their respective control group. This indicates that trauma symptoms are more prevalent amongst children exposed to domestic violence than those who are not exposed. Furthermore, Cohen's

d effect sizes are included and demonstrate that the effect size between the mean trauma outcome scores for non-exposure compared to exposure groups, ranges from small to huge (Cohen, 1988; Sawilowsky, 2009).

Table 4: ***Control Group Comparison Table***

Study Authors	Trauma Outcome Measure	Outcome Reporter	Non-Exposure Control Group Mean (*SD*)	Exposure Group	Exposure Group Mean (*SD*)	Effect Size Cohen's *d*
[3] Ghasemi (2009)	TSCC (Briere, 1996).	Child	27.91 (17.9)	C	49.87 (20.79)	1.23
[11] Kimura (1998)	PTSD-RI (Pynoos *et al.*, 1998).	Adult	1.47 (0.33)	C	2.51 (0.88)	3.15
				S	2.93 (0.66)	4.42
		Child	1.63 (0.33)	C	1.74 (0.38)	0.33
				S	2.04 (0.40)	1.24
[12] Kilpatrick, Litt and Williams (1997)	PTSD-RI (Pynoos *et al.*, 1998).	Child	8.6 (3.0)	C	36.7 (6.5)	9.36
[22] Rossman (1999)	CBCL-PTSD Scale (Wolfe, Gentile & Wolfe, 1989).	Adult	0.28*	C	0.56*	-
				S	0.50*	-
				SA	0.49*	-
[24] Tailor, Stewart-Tufescu and Piotrowski (2015)	CBCL-PTSD Scale (Wolfe, Gentile & Wolfe, 1989).	Adult Young[a]	7.49 (5.14)	C	10.75 (5.98)	0.63
		Adult Old[b]	8.47 (5.28)		13.67 (6.16)	0.98

**SD* not reported therefore effect size could not be calculated. [a]outcome measure completed in respect of the youngest sibling. [b]outcome measure completed in respect of the oldest sibling. C refers to the exposure group being recruited from the community. S refers to the exposure group being recruited from a shelter. SA refers to a shelter exposure group having also experienced child abuse.

In relation to the accuracy of the reporting of trauma symptomatology, four of the study's authors noted mixed results[2, 11, 18, 21], Figueroa (2011) indicated that children reported higher trauma symptoms than the maternal reporter of the child's symptoms. Likewise, in one of Masbad's (2008) conditions the children also noted more trauma symptoms than the adult reporters. In contrast, Kimura (1998) and Overbeek et al. (2013) found that the adult reporter than identified more trauma symptoms.

Similarly inconsistent results were noted with regard to trauma symptoms and the age of the child exposed. Both Modrowski's (2013) and Spilsbury's (2007) results suggested the older the child the less likely the child's trauma symptoms would reach clinical significance. However, Levendosky et al. (2013) highlighted that trauma symptoms increased with the child's age. Likewise, Rossman (1999) found that younger age of exposure was a risk factor for trauma symptoms. This may indicate that the trauma symptoms develop an accumulative effect with the child's exposure to IPV.

There appeared to be no discernible differences in trauma symptoms between pre-school and school age children. Six studies used pre-school age participants[1, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20] and the other eighteen studies used school-age or included all children's ages for the investigation[2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24].

Study authors who investigated exposure to different severity levels of IPV highlighted some notable findings. Both Graham-Berrman et al. (2012) and Masbad (2008) noted that if the child was exposed to additional traumatic life events they would exhibit more trauma symptoms. This suggests additional exposures may have a bolt-on effect. Although, Levendosky et al. (2002) found no significant differences in trauma symptoms between those children directly witnessing the IPV and those children who were present in the household. Lannert et al. (2014) noted variations of IPV exposure, for example, pre-natal IPV (i.e. the IPV the pregnant mother was exposed to) had a statistically significant effect on trauma symptoms (Lannert *et al.*, 2014). This suggests that there may be proximal (e.g. child being in the womb) and distal (e.g. parental physiological and psychological) mechanisms that could affect child outcomes (*ibid*). Similarly, other authors looked into variations of IPV exposure, Jarvis et al (2005) found that children who reported that they had intervened in during the IPV episodes had higher levels of trauma symptoms. Moreover, children who perceived that they had some element of control (Spilsbury, 2007), and the more violent father figures they were exposed to was found to lead to higher levels of trauma symptoms (Lehmann, 1997).

Table 5: *Study Characteristics Table*

Reference *Location* *Study Design* *Sample*	**Sample** Inclusion Criteria	**Participants** *Mean Age (M)* *Gender (%)* *Ethnicity (%)* *SES*	**Exposure** *Direction of Violence* *Measurement Tool* *Severity/Frequency*	**Control**	**Outcome**	**Findings**
[1]Bogat et al. (2006) Michigan, USA Cross-sectional	Community Mothers aged 18-40 with children	48 Infants (1 year olds) M = 1.10yrs Gender = 33.3% M 66.6% F Caucasian = 39.6% Mixed = 31.3% African-American = 22.9% Native-American = 2.1% SES = Low	Male-on-Female Conflict Tactics Scale – 2 (CTS-2; Straus *et al.*, 1996) *Severity* = 28 exposed to severe violence and 20 exposed to less severe *Frequency* = 9.31 events in past year	N/A	Infant Traumatic Stress Questionnaire (ITSQ; Bogat *et al.*, 2006)	44% had at least one trauma symptom Number of IPV episodes correlated with total number of infant trauma symptoms (r=.33, p<0.5)
[2]Figueroa (2011) San Diego, USA Cohort	DV Shelter Mother-child dyads School aged children between 8-12	32 Children (8-12 years old) M = 10.00yrs Gender = 59.4% M 40.6% F Hispanic = 68.8% African-American = 21.9% Caucasian = 9.4% SES= Low	Male-on-Female CTS-2 (Straus *et al.*, 1996) *Severity* = 57% - 68% of children endorsed physically violent acts at all three time periods. *Frequency* = 46.9% = 11 episodes or more 25% = 4-10 episodes 25% = 2-3 episodes 3.1% = single episode	N/A	Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children (TSCC; Briere, 1996)	Children reported clinically significantly levels of symptoms on TSCC: 44% PTSD subscale 41% Anxiety subscale 44% Dissociation subscale Mothers reported clinically significant levels of symptoms: 28% PTSD subscale 34% Anxiety subscale 28% Dissociation subscale
[3]Ghasemi (2009)*	Community	53 Children (11-19 years old)	Male-on-Female	64 Non-Exposed Children	TSCC (Briere, 1996)	Exposed children had significantly higher scores

Shirnz, Iran Case-control	Mother-child dyads Recent incident of DV	M = 11.32yrs Gender = 71.7% M 28.3% F Fars = 76% Turkish = 24% SES = Low	CTS-2 (Straus *et al.*, 1996) *Severity* = Mild/Severe IPV *Frequency* = Past year no score stated	(11-19 years old) M = 11.53yrs Gender = 56% M 44% F Fars = 68% Turkish = 32% SES = higher		on TSCC (M = 49.87, SD = 20.79) than the children in the clinical control group (M = 27.91, SD = 17.9).
[4]Graham-Bermann and Levendosky (1998) Michigan, USA Cross-sectional	Community and DV shelter Mother-child dyads Emotional and physical abuse had happened in the past year	64 Children (7-12 years old) M = 9.50yrs Gender = 52% M 48% F Ethnic Minority = 45% Caucasian = 35% African-American = 21% Other = 8% SES = Low	Male-on-Female Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, 1979) *Severity* = 18 severe violence episodes past year 28 mild violence episodes past year 70% of sample where eye-witnesses *Frequency* = Total sample exposed to 191 episodes of domestic violence in past year.	N/A	Traumatic Stress Symptoms Child Scale (TSSC; Graham-Bermann & Levendosky, 1998)	13% qualified for a complete PTSD diagnosis. 52% experienced intrusive re-experiencing. 19% displayed traumatic avoidance. 42% had traumatic arousal symptoms.
[5]Graham-Bermann et al. (2006) Michigan, USA Cross-sectional	Community Mother-child dyads Mothers who had experienced either mild or severe violence in the past year.	218 Children (5-13 years old) M = 8.49yrs Gender = 50% M 50% F Caucasian = 52% African-American = 34% Mixed = 9.5%	Male-on-Female CTS (Straus, 1979) *Severity* = 71% witness to severe violence tactics 19% sexual violence 78% mild violence 83% physical threats 92% coercion and control	N/A	TSSC (Graham-Mermann & Levendosky, 1998)	Mean Total TSSC score = 6.40 (SD = 4.24) 25% met the diagnostic criteria for PTSD. 76% of children met the criteria for traumatic re-experiencing 34.7% for avoidance

		Other = 4.5% SES = Low	*Frequency* = 31.30 violent acts/tactics witnessed in past year.			31.4% for physiological arousal Witnessed violence (β=.308) was a strong and significant predictor of child traumatic stress.
[6]Graham-Bermann et al. (2012) Michigan, USA Cross-sectional	Community and Clinical Mother-child dyads with children aged between 4-6 years old Exposure to physical IPV in the past 2 years	120 Children (4-6 years old) M = 4.93yrs Gender = 53% M 47% F Caucasian = 38% African-American = 37% Mixed = 20% Hispanic = 5% SES = Low	Male-on-Female CTS-2 (Straus *et al.*, 1996) *Severity* = 62% Experienced IPV only, 38% IPV and at least one other event, *Frequency* = not stated	IPV only (74) vs IPV plus other events (46)	Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms Questionnaire (Scheeringa *et al.*, 2001)	17% met DSM-IV-TR criteria for PTSD. 91% met criteria for re-experiencing. 17% met criteria for avoidance. 77% met criteria for arousal. Significant differences were found between those exposed to IPV only and those exposed to IPV and other traumatic events.
[7]Israel and Stover (2009) Connecticut, USA Cross-sectional	Criminal Justice System (CJS) Mother-child dyads with children aged between 2-18 years old Children must have been exposed to at least one DV incident in the last six weeks	80 Children (2-18 years old) M = 8.84yrs Gender = 45% M 55% F African-American = 56.3% Latino = 28.8% Caucasian = 11.3% Other = 3.6% SES = Low	Male-on-Female CTS-2 (Straus *et al.*, 1996) *Severity* = low CTS-2 scores noted but not reported. *Frequency* = not stated	IPV witnessed involving biological father (25). IPV witnessed involving non-biological father (35). IPV witnessed involving multiple violent father figures (20).	Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Reaction Index (PTSD-RI; Pynoos *et al.*, 1998)	There were no differences on the PTSD-RI amongst the three groups, F (2, 72) = 85.86, p = .48.

[8]Jarvis, Gordon and Novaco (2005) California, USA Cross-sectional	DV Shelter Mother-child dyads, one child from each family aged between 6-12 years old (usually oldest) Participants were currently residing in the DV shelter.	30 Children (6-12 years old) M = 9.40yrs Gender = 50% M 50% F Ethnicity = Not stated SES = Not stated	Male-on-Female CTS-2 (Straus *et al.*, 1996) *Severity* = mothers reported severe levels, 20% reported more than 100 episodes of physical abuse in past year. *Frequency* = 59.3 physical violence episodes in past year. 18.8 sexual violence episodes 117.6 psychological abuse in past year	Children who reported that they intervened (76.75% of sample) Intervened by either calling 911 or others to help, yelled for the violence to stop or physically intervened.	PTSD-RI (Pynoos *et al.*, 1998)	On average, the children's PTSRI scores were high (M = 43.5, SD 10.9). The PTSRI classified the sample of children with 40% exhibiting moderate PTSD, 50% severe PTSD, and 10% very severe PTSD.
[9]Jouriles et al. (2012) Dallas, USA Cross-sectional	Community and CJS Teenagers between ages of 14-17 years old Teenagers or their mothers confirmed that the teenagers had lived at home for the past six months Mother or teenager reported DV between mother and her partner.	88 Children (14-17 years old) M = 15.90 yrs Gender = 49% M 51% F African-American = 58% Hispanic = 19% Caucasian = 8% Mixed = 5% Other = 10% SES = Average	Bi-directional CTS-2 (Straus *et al.*, 1996) *Severity* = 65% at least one act of severe IPV in lifetime, Mean = 2.94 *Frequency* = Mean = 0.23 in the past year.	N/A	TSCC (Briere, 1996)	Severe IPV was not correlated with trauma symptoms in general (*rs* (88) <.07, *p* > .54). Severe IPV was not related to general or anger-specific trauma symptoms (*ps* >.75).
[10]Kaslow and Thompson (2008)	Clinical Mother-child dyads with	152 Children (8-12 years old) M = 10.00yrs	Male-on-Female Index of Spouse Abuse (ISA; Hudson & McIntosh, 1981)	N/A	TSCC (Briere, 1996)	High levels of IPV was related to increased levels of post-traumatic stress

	children aged 8-12 years old Mothers had to be in a relationship over the past 12 months The children had to have lived with their mothers at least 50% of the time in the past year.	Gender = 45% M 55% F Ethnicity = Not stated SES = Low	*Severity* = 18.71 episodes of physical abuse experienced by mothers. *Frequency* = not stated.		symptoms (t = 4.33, p <.001)
[11]Kimura (1998)* Denver, USA Case-control	DV Shelter and Community Mother-child dyads with children aged 5-14 years old Screened and assigned to exposure groups; community verbal, community physical, community non-witness, and DV shelter witness groups.	149 Children (5-14 years old) M = 8.26yrs Gender = 49.7% M 50.3% F Caucasian = 36% African-American = 25% Mixed = 20% Hispanic = 15% Other = 4% SES = Low – Upper Middle	Bi-directional CTS-2 (Straus *et al.*, 1996) *Severity* = shelter sample (severe) exposed to significantly more verbal aggression and physical aggression than community witness sample (mild). *Frequency* = Mean for shelter group, 4.87 episodes of verbal aggression and 2.95 episodes of physical violence in past year. M 3.83 and 1.5 for community witness group respectively.	52 Community non-witnesses	PTSD-RI (Pynoos *et al.*, 1998)	Community Non Witness Adult report PTSD-RI score M 1.47, Child report M 1.63. Community Witness Adult report PTSD-RI score M 2.51, Child report M 1.74. Shelter Witness Adult report PTSD-RI score M 2.93, Child report M 2.04. ANOVA. Significant group effects for both adult report [F(2, 144) = 76.58, p =.00] and child self-report [F(2, 144) = 12.20, p =.00] of child's PTSD symptoms. Child witnesses had significantly higher PTSD-

						RI scores than non-witnesses by adult report, and shelter witnesses had significant greater symptoms than community witnesses by both adult and child report.
[12]Kilpatrick, Litt and Williams (1997)* New South Wales, Australia Case-control	Clinical Mother-child dyads with children aged between 6-12 years old Presence or not of DV in the family Lack of DV over 6 week period	35 Children (6-12 years old) M = 8.10yrs Gender = 65% M 35% F Caucasian = 100% SES = Low	Male-on-Female Violence Subscale of CTS (Straus, 1979) *Severity* = 12/20 child witnesses, 6.7% - 22.5% life threatening violence. *Frequency* = 1-3 episodes = 15% 4-6 episodes = 15% 7-10 episodes = 25% More than 10 episodes = 45%	15 Non-witnesses (6-12 years old) M = 8.6yrs Gender = 33.3% M 66.7% F Caucasian = 100% SES = Low	PTSD-RI (Pynoos *et al.*, 1998)	PTSD-RI score = 36.7 for child witnesses, 8.6 for non-witnesses. Non witnesses did not meet diagnostic criteria of PTSD. All but one child witness met the diagnostic criteria of PTSD. Chi-square analysis indicated a significant association between witness status and PTSD diagnosis (regardless of severity; x^2 = 31.172, df = 1, p<.001).
[13]Lang and Stover (2008) Connecticut, USA Cross-sectional	CJS Mother-child dyads with at least one child (if more oldest took part) between the ages of 2-17 years old	74 Children (2-17 years old) M = 8.70yrs Gender = Not stated African-American = 57% Latino = 28% Caucasian = 11% Mixed = 4%	Male-on-Female CTS-2 (Straus *et al.*, 1996) *Severity* 49% present at index offence *Frequency* Not stated	N/A	PTSD-RI (Pynoos *et al.*, 1998)	Total Sample: Post-Traumatic Stress Symptoms M 8.99 (SD = 9.64). Cluster Analysis indicated four clusters amongst the sample: (1) Typical 37% (n=27), (2) Asymptomatic 39% (n=29), (3) Acute PTSD 9% (n=7) and (4) General Distress 15%

	IPV occurred between 2004-2005	SES = Low				(n=11). There were significant differences between groups. Acute PTSD group had very high PTSS levels (31.86) and General Distress had mild to moderate (12.64). Typical had mild (9.41) and Asymptomatic had relatively low levels (2.49). Results were significantly different, [$F(3,70) = 70.86$, $p < 0.001$].
[14]Lannert et al. (2014) Michigan, USA Cross-sectional	Community Mother-child dyads and infants (approx. age = 1 year old) Mothers had to be 18-34 years old, not pregnant, not lactating, involved in heterosexual relationship for at least six week during her pregnancy and have had no premature delivery	133 Infants (11-15 months old) M = 11.77yrs Gender = 50% M 50% F Mixed = 36% African-American = 29% Caucasian = 28% Others = 7% SES = Low	Male-on-Female Severity of Violence Against Women Scales (SVAWS; Marshall, 1992) *Severity* = At minimum threats of moderate physical violence *Frequency* = Pre-Natal = M 20.72 Post-Natal = M 12.57	N/A	Infant Social and Emotional Assessment Trauma-Related Symptoms Scale (ITSEA-TRSS; Briggs-Gowan & Carter, 2007)	PTSD Symptom Clusters = Re-experiencing M = 1.68 (.34) Avoidance M = 1.38 (.47) Arousal M = 11.63 (.82) Postnatal IPV did not exert a statistically significant effect on infant trauma symptoms. Prenatal IPV did exert a statistically significant on infant trauma symptoms ($d = .38$, $p < .05$). Therefore prenatal IPV predicted infant trauma symptoms.
[15]Lehmann (1997)	DV Shelter and Clinical	84 Children (9-15 years old)	Male-on-Female	N/A	Children's Impact of Traumatic Events Scale – Family	56% (n=48) met the PTSD criteria, 44% (n=36) did not.

Texas, USA Cross-sectional	Mothers with their children aged between 9-15 years All members of the child sample had to have witnessed at least one violent act against their mother	M = 11.00yrs Gender = 57% M 43% F Ethnicity = Not stated SES = Low	The History of Violence Witnessed By Child Questionnaire (HVWCQ; Lehmann & Wolfe, 1992) *Severity* = 68% IPV relationship longer than four years 9.5% three-four years 16.7% two-three years 3.6% one-two years 1.2% <1year *Frequency* = 58% average of 59 assaults 42% average of 75 assaults		Violence Form (CITES-FVF; Wolfe & Lehmann, 1992)	There were significant differences in the duration of witnessing, frequency of assaults and multiple abusive partners in the PTSD sample compared to non-PTSD group.
[16]Levendosky et al. (2002) Michigan, USA Cross-sectional	Community Mother-child dyads with children aged 3-5 years old DV currently occurring in the family at the time of study.	62 Children (3-5 years old) M = Not stated Gender = 40.3% M 59.7% F African-American = 42% Caucasian = 24% Mixed = 19% Other = 15% SES = Low	Male-on-Female SVAWS (Marshall, 1992) *Severity* = 63% saw incidents 37% living in home when it occurred *Frequency* = On average in past year: 10 physical threats 4 mild violence 2 severe violence 1-2 sexual violence	N/A	CBCL (Wolfe, Gentile & Wolfe, 1989) PTSD Scale	92% had at least one re-experiencing symptom. 47% had at least three avoidance symptoms 91% had at least two symptoms of hyperarousal 24% met diagnostic criteria of PTSD according to DSM-IV. No statistical differences between those who directly witnessed IPV or those who were present in the abusive household.
[17]Levendosky, Bogat and Martinez-Torteya, (2013)	Community and Clinical	206 Children (1-7 years old) M = Not stated	Male-on-Female SVAWS (Marshall, 1992) *Severity* =	N/A	ITSQ (Bogat *et al.*, 2006)	Frequency of IPV was significantly related to total

Michigan, USA Cohort	Pregnant women during their third trimester. Children whose mothers indicated they had witnessed IPV during the past year.	Gender = Not stated Ethnicity = Not stated SES = Not stated	More than half of the women experienced IPV during pregnancy. *Frequency* = Not stated			PTSD symptoms at all ages. 21% of sample (aged 7) met diagnosis for PTSD using Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health (DC: 0-3R). The likelihood of traumatic symptomatology increases as the children age.
[18]Masbad (2008) Texas, USA Cross-sectional	DV Shelter and Clinical Mother-child dyads with children 9-18 years old (first born children only)	405 Children (9-18 years old) M = 13.00yrs Gender = 51.6% M 48.4% F Caucasian = 34.1% Hispanic = 26.7% African-American = 19.8% Other = 19.4% SES = Low	Male-on-Female Standardised Questionnaire developed by Author Severity = 99.3% Emotional Abuse 54.3% Physical Abuse 35.1% Financial Abuse 5.7% Sexual Abuse *Frequency* = 53.8% Weekly Average length of exposure 9yrs 7months	N/A	CROPS and PROPS (Greenwald & Rubin, 1999)	Exposure to IPV and Physical Abuse group (n=121) = [PROPS: M 32.74], [CROPS: M 29.28]. Exposure to IPV only (n=284) = [PROPS: M 20.36], [CROPS: M 20.50]. Both groups of children had elevated PTSD symptoms higher than measure cut-off scores. Children in the exposure and physical abuse group displayed significantly more PTSD symptoms than children in the exposure only group.
[19]Miller, Howell and Graham-Bermann (2012)	DV Shelter and Community Mother-child dyads with	120 Children (4-6 years old) M = 4.90yrs	Male-on-Female CTS-2 (Straus *et al.*, 1996) *Severity* =	N/A	CBCL (Wolfe, Gentile & Wolfe, 1989) PTSD Scale	Mother report indicated that the children were experiencing on average 9 of the 31 PTSD symptoms.

	children 4-6 years old	Gender = 53% M 47% F	56 physical injuries per year resulting in an average of 14 injuries per year			Frequency of violence was significantly and positively related to traumatic stress symptoms (r=.37, p<.001).
Michigan, USA + Ontario, Canada Cross-sectional	IPV occurred within the past two years	Caucasian = 38% African-American = 37% Mixed = 20% Latino = 5% SES = Low	*Frequency* = 191 episodes of IPV in past year 56 physical 96 psychological 18 sexual 14 injuries			
[20]Modrowski, Miller-Graff and Graham-Bermann (2013) Michigan, USA + Ontario, Canada Cross-sectional	DV Shelter and Community Mother-child dyads with children pre-school aged Children exposed to IPV within the past two years	55 Children (Pre-schoolers 0-5 years old) M = 5.00yrs Gender = Not stated Caucasian = 45% African-American = 24% Mixed = 24% Hispanic = 7% SES = Low	Male-on-Female CTS-2 (Straus *et al.*, 1996) *Severity* = 56 physical injuries per year resulting in an average of 14 injuries per year *Frequency* = 184 episodes of IPV in past year 56 physical 96 psychological 18 sexual 14 injuries	N/A	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Semi-Structured Interview and Observational Record for Infants and Young Children (Scheeringa & Zeanah, 1994)	On average, mothers reported their child displayed: (1) 6.76 out of 22 total PTSD symptoms (2) 3.69 re-experiencing symptoms (3) 2.06 avoidance symptoms (4) 3.73 physiological arousal symptoms. No significant differences in PTSD symptoms between children who resided in shelters or at home. Re-experiencing and arousal symptoms were significantly correlated with total violence exposure [r (54) = .36, p < .01, r (54) = .23, p <.05, respectively]. Therefore, the authors' hypothesis children exposed to more violence display more

						PTSD symptoms was partially supported.
[21]Overbeek et al. (2013) 7 urban cities and rural areas, Netherlands RCT	CJS and Clinical Parent-child dyads Children exposed to either psychological or physical violence Violence had stopped by the time the parent-child entered the program	155 Children (6-12 years old) M = 9.22yrs Gender = 55.5% M 44.5% F Dutch = 43% Antilles = 20% Turkish = 19% Other = 18% SES = Low	Bi-directional CTS-2 (Straus *et al.*, 1996) *Severity* = 10.46 - 11yrs in abusive relationship *Frequency* = Reporting mother: 27 episodes of physical 64 episodes of psychological Reporting father: 7 episodes of physical 47 episodes of psychological	Intervention (100) vs Control condition (55)	TSCC (Briere, 1996) and Trauma Symptom Checklist for Young Children (TSCYC; Briere, 2005)	TSCYC parent report scores on baseline for intervention condition: M59.87 SD14.58 16.5% above clinical cut-off. TSCYC child report scores on baseline for intervention condition: M49.46 SD9.65 10.8% above clinical cut-off. TSCYC parent report scores on baseline for control condition: M66.79 SD14.15 38.1% above clinical cut-off. TSCYC child report scores on baseline for control condition: M50.52 SD9.42 10.3% above clinical cut-off.
[22]Rossman (1999)* Colorado, USA Case-control	DV Shelter and Community Mother-child dyads with children 4-13 years old Recruited for each specific group (e.g. non-witness, community witness, shelter	508 Children (4-13 years old) M = Not stated Gender = 41.3% M 58.7% F Minority = 33% SES = Not stated	Bi-directional CTS (Straus, 1979) *Severity* = 32 community witnesses 180 shelter witnesses 63 shelter and abuse witnesses *Frequency* = 2.55 - 7.25 episodes of verbal aggression in past year.	Community non witness (233) vs community witness (32) vs shelter witness (180) vs shelter and abuse witness (63)	CBCL (Wolfe, Gentile & Wolfe, 1989) PTSD Scale	Levels of PTSD symptoms were elevated for exposed children regardless of the reporter. CBCL-PTSD adjusted mean scores for each group were: (1)Community non-witness = .28 (2) Community witness = .56 (3) Shelter witness = .50

	witness, shelter and abuse witness)		0 - 3.33 episodes of physical aggression in past year.			(4) Shelter and abuse witness = .49 Significant $F = p < .01$ Younger age of child was a risk factor for PTSD symptoms.
[23]Spilsbury (2007) Ohio, USA Cross-sectional	CJS Children 5-17 years old Witnessed a violent incident and referred to a community program by a police officer responding to the incident Families given permission for their children to take part	687 Children (5-17 years old) M = 10.00yrs Gender = 51.7% M 48.3% F African-American = 48.3% Caucasian = 32% Other = 19.7% SES = Not stated	Bi-directional Standardised Questionnaire developed by Author. *Severity* = 7.5% saw aftermath only 83.9% heard/saw event 8.6% was also victimised *Frequency* = 21% once 24.6% more than once and ceased 54.4% more than once and continued	N/A	TSCC (Briere, 1996)	11.9% of children's scores on post-traumatic stress reached clinical significance. Increasing the child's age indicated decreased odds of clinical significance on post-traumatic stress (OR =0.73, 95% CI= 0.60-0.88, p <.01). Type of exposure was significantly associated with trauma symptoms. Compared to children who were also victimised, those who witnessed the event had lower odds of reaching the clinical cut offs for post-traumatic stress (OR =0.14, 95% CI= 0.05-0.40, p <.001). Children who perceived they had some/lots of control over the DV index event had 4 times the odds of a significant score for PSTD symptoms (OR

						=4.58, 95% CI= 1.62-10.24, p <.001).
[24]Tailor, Stewart-Tufescu and Piotrowski (2015)* USA + Canada Case-control	Community and Clinical Mother-child dyads with at least two siblings aged 5-18 years old Exposure group mothers needed to report an IPV history	92 Children (5-18 years old) M = 11.33yrs 8.51yrs Gender = 60.9% M 39.1% F Caucasian = 62% Aboriginal = 30% Mixed = 8% SES = Low	Female-on-Male CTS (Straus, 1979) Severity = Older siblings exposed for 44% of their lifetime. Young siblings exposed for 46% of their lifetime. Frequency = 66% of male partners directed at least one violent tactic towards mother. 68% of female partners direct at least one violent tactic towards father.	Exposed (47) vs Control (45)	CBCL (Wolfe, Gentile & Wolfe, 1989) PTSD Scale	Mean scores on CBCL-PTSD indicate violent group displayed a greater extent of trauma symptoms: (1) Violent group – Younger sibling = 10.75 Older sibling = 13.67 (2) Non-violent group – Younger sibling 7.49 Older sibling 8.47 Higher levels of young sibling trauma (t (89) = 2.79, p = .006), and older sibling trauma (t (87) = 4.28, p = .000) in families exposed to domestic violence.

*Studies are suitable for meta-analysis due to using parametric tests/chi-square analyses and the presence of a non-exposed control group

2.3.3 Quality of Included Studies

The majority of studies included in the review demonstrated high risk of sampling bias (83%). Although the average sample size of the included studies was 152 the median was 84. This was representative of studies that have adequate power to a medium effect size. However, other criteria related to sampling bias was the unrepresentativeness of the samples selected. For example, 50% of the studies had participants selected from only one source. Participant related confounding variables were often not reporting upon within the studies or adjusted for. This highlights that the authors' findings are not generalizable across different populations in the world. For example, a significant proportion of authors recruited from mid-western states in the United States from Caucasian families who had a low SES.

The quality of the reviewed studies highlighted exposure measurement and outcome measurement to be relative strengths of the included studies of childhood exposure IPV studies. Study authors tended to adopt standardised, reliable and valid measures to examine IPV exposure and trauma symptomatology. Furthermore, authors had generally used consistent measures and settings to collect data. Although, there is a high proportion of reporting bias noted within the study characteristics section. Overall, this indicates that the measures used by authors have accurately represented the participants' exposure to IPV and the presence of trauma symptomatology.

In relation to confounding variables, ten of the included studies had not accounted for additional variables which may have impacted trauma symptomatology[1, 5, 7, 8, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 24]. For example, authors did not highlight additional exposure to traumatic life events (community violence, sexual abuse and physical abuse etc.). Furthermore, statistical adjustment was only employed in two studies that had accounted for confounding variables within their studies[12, 22]. Overall, by not adequately controlling for confounding variables the authors are unable to rule out whether the trauma symptoms are a response to exposure to inter-parental violence or other forms of childhood adverse life experiences such as; physical abuse, sexual abuse or community violence. Please see table 6 and table 7 below for further details of the quality assessment of the review studies.

Table 6: ***Study Quality Assessment Summary Table***

	Sampling Bias	**Exposure Measurement Bias**	**Outcome Measurement Bias**	**Confounding Variable Bias**
High Risk	83% (20/24)	4% (1/24)	0% (0/24)	42% (10/24)
Unclear Risk	4% (1/24)	21% (5/24)	25% (6/24)	50% (12/24)
Low Risk	13% (3/24)	75% (18/24)	75% (18/24)	8% (2/24)

Five of the twenty-four included studies appeared suitable for meta-analysis because these studies were similar in sampling procedure (source and inclusion), design (case-control) and type of comparator (non-

exposure controls). However, after gathering the data for quantitative synthesis the decision was made not to perform a meta-analysis due to inconsistency in the reporting of outcomes and key missing data.

Table 7: ***CASP Checklist (2013) Quality Assessment by risk of bias***

Study Authors	Sampling and Selection Bias	Exposure Measurement Bias	Outcome Measurement Bias	Confounding Variable Bias
[1] Bogat et al. (2006)	◆			◆
[2] Figueroa (2011)	◆			●
[3] Ghasemi (2009)	●			●
[4] Graham-Bermann and Levendosky (1998)	◆		●	●
[5] Graham-Bermann et al. (2006)	◆			◆
[6] Graham-Bermann et al. (2012)	◆		●	●
[7] Israel and Stover (2009)	◆	●	●	◆
[8] Jarvis, Gordon and Novaco (2005)	◆	●		◆
[9] Jouriles et al. (2012)	◆			●
[10] Kaslow and Thompson (2008)	◆			●
[11] Kimura (1998)	◆			●
[12] Kilpatrick, Litt and Williams (1997)	◆			
[13] Lang and Stover (2008)	◆			●
[14] Lannert et al. (2014)	◆			●
[15] Lehmann (1997)	◆	●	●	●
[16] Levendosky et al. (2002)	◆		●	◆
[17] Levendosky, Bogat and Martinez-Torteya (2013)	◆	●	●	◆
[18] Masbad (2008)	◆	◆		●
[19] Miller, Howell and Graham-Bermann (2012)	◆			◆
[20] Modrowski, Miller-Graff and Graham-Bermann (2013)	◆			◆
[21] Overbeek et al. (2013)				◆
[22] Rossman (1999)				
[23] Spilsbury (2007)	◆	●		●
[24] Tailor, Stewart-Tufescu and Piotrowski (2015)				◆

◆Denotes high risk of bias. ● Denotes unclear risk of bias.

2.4 Discussion

The main aims of this systematic review were to discover the association between trauma symptomatology and childhood exposure to IPV and to determine whether pre-school aged children exhibit more trauma symptoms than school aged children. All studies included in the review lead to the conclusion that exposure to IPV leads to elevated trauma symptomatology amongst children of all ages. After descriptive synthesis six of the included studies highlighted that approximately a quarter of children exposed to IPV would qualify for a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). There was a general trend within the included studies to suggest that both severity and frequency of exposure to IPV can increase the presence of trauma symptomatology experienced by the child. Although, two authors found severity to not be significantly related to trauma symptoms (Jouriles *et al.*, 2012; Levendosky *et al.*, 2002).

Two authors provided evidence to the contrary of Kitzmann et al's (2003) findings that pre-school children were identified to be of greater risk of negative outcomes associated with exposure to IPV. However, research evidence remains inconclusive regarding whether pre-school or school age children fare differently in terms of trauma symptomatology after exposure to IPV. Despite this PTSD and the onset of trauma symptoms can be a delayed response. Herein arguing the accumulative effect of increasing chronicity, severity and frequency leading to increased trauma symptomatology as a child matures. This may explain why only a quarter

of children exposed qualify for a PTSD diagnosis. On the other hand, the DSM-IV criteria for PTSD does not take into account developmental patterns within traumatised children and may lead to false negatives. The actual number of children exposed to IPV with PTSD may, in fact, be larger than what is reported within these studies. The DSM-V criteria have been changed since the researchers conducted these studies and we are yet to see whether the new criteria more accurately accounts for development patterns within children presenting with trauma symptomatology. Researchers should consider adapting or amending questionnaires/psychometric tests that are closely based on the DSM-IV in order provide up to date research related to the accuracy of PTSD diagnostic criteria.

In relation to the quality assessment, the strength of the association between exposure to inter-parental violence and children's trauma symptomatology is up to debate. Although the measurement of exposure and outcome demonstrated a low risk of bias, the presence of high risk of confounding variable bias alongside high risk of sampling bias leads the authors to conclude that the association cannot be strong, given the current evidence. In order to improve our knowledge regarding the strength of the association, further research needs to be conducted improving on the methodological biases highlighted within the next section of this review.

2.4.1 Limitations of the Current Research

Regardless of improvements in measurement, the methodological concerns of the pre-1990 studies as commented upon in Evans et al. (2008) have not been fully addressed in later research. Although authors have increasingly selected participants from more than one source (50%), nearly all of the included studies showed high risk of selection bias. Only 63% included community based samples. Other authors opted for clinical, shelter and criminal justice recruitment sources where the presence of confounds are more likely due to the nature of the environments (e.g. distressing situations). Additionally, it is likely that these specific samples, as opposed to community based samples, would be unrepresentative as the authors would have selected for more troubling cases of childhood exposure to IPV. Further issues with the samples of the post-1990 studies relate to the predominantly North American settings (75%) – some of which were from mid-western states (29%) – and that the majority of included studies involved samples from low socio-economic backgrounds (75%). Although there is greater awareness of the confounding variables present in samples more innovative methods to address these concerns could be considered (i.e. census surveys, case-control/cohort study designs or specific targeting of higher SES participants). Specifically, the lack of studies with a comparison group is a limitation as there is a need to investigate the negative outcomes of childhood exposure to IPV compared to children who are not exposed to IPV. Further, the lack of control groups highlight that other factors may be relevant that influence the elevated

levels of trauma amongst children who are exposed to IPV. Therefore, the concerns presented in Kitzmann et al's (2003) meta-analysis are still evident in this systematic review.

Issues were noted in previous research relating to the definition of exposure to domestic violence (Wolfe *et al.*, 2003; Edleson *et al.*, 2007; Evans *et al.*, 2008). All studies included in the review had appropriately defined the child's exposure to domestic violence due to the inclusion criteria used by the review authors. Although, exposure to domestic violence was defined consistently, authors still focussed on male-on-female IPV (79%) with only five authors focussing on bi-directional IPV (21%). Despite the majority of authors using the CTS-2 (Straus *et al.*, 1996) or an adapted version of this psychometric tool, to measure levels of IPV, authors have not utilised the possibility of both paternal and maternal report. This highlights one of the biases with measuring IPV from only one source. This issue has not been improved upon since Edleson's (1999) recommendation. However, it may not be appropriate to utilise both paternal and maternal reports as the perpetrator of the IPV may be an unreliable informant. Partner agreement on the CTS-2 has been found to be low to moderate, with partners generally reporting lower levels of aggression for themselves (Simpson & Christensen, 2005). Although low exposure measurement bias is reported, the majority of studies used the CTS-2 (Straus *et al.*, 1996) which is a parent report measure. Therefore, there is potential bias as the young children or adolescents have not reported the levels of IPV they were

exposed to. In comparison to Kitzmann et al. (2003), there is evidence of an improvement in reporting of severity and frequency within the included studies. However, bias is still present due to rather arbitrary definitions of severity and frequency, with researchers either relying on psychometric tools or some type of percentage to determine frequency or severity. This hinders researcher's ability to investigate differences in levels of trauma symptoms and prevents reviewers from being able to compare studies effectively. Overall, this points towards a lack of definitional consensus between authors regarding what would constitute as frequent and what would constitute as severe exposure to inter-parental violence.

There is an overlap between children who are exposed to domestic violence and those who experience child maltreatment in forms such as child physical abuse. It is thought that these co-occur in a minimum of 30% percent of cases (Appel & Holden 1998; Edleson, 1999). This highlights the importance of accounting for confounding variables. Studies included in this review have improved in separating those children exposed and abused by their caregivers. Researchers have also compared those who have witnessed and those who have been exposed and abused. However, the authors have been found to have either not sufficiently accounted for confounding variables (42%) or they have acknowledged potential confounding variables without adjusting for them in statistical analyses (50%). For example, other non-familial traumatic experiences are unanimously unaccounted for (i.e. community violence) in the included

studies that could significantly impact participants' levels of trauma symptomatology.

Previous researchers have noted that parents underestimate the amount of domestic violence suffered by their children (Jaffe, Wolfe & Wilson, 1990). There is evidence to support that parents also underestimate the extent of trauma symptomatology experienced by their children (Figueroa, 2011; Masbad, 2008). The majority of reviewed studies relied solely on maternal report for exposure (83%) and a significant proportion on trauma outcome (46%) data. Although it may not be possible to obtain child report from pre-school children, this certainly is possible within the school-aged samples where there are specific measures that have been developed such as TSCYC (Briere, 2005). Ultimately, this questions the accuracy of our knowledge of children's exposure to IPV and experience of trauma as the extent of the issue could be far greater than what is reported within the reviewed studies.

2.4.2 Implications

The current crop of research presents the image that domestic violence is a low SES problem involving male perpetrators. Clearly, this is inaccurate however, due to the nature of sampling and author's measurement of domestic violence we are left with research focussing on these demographics. It is evident that researchers need to continue to investigate childhood exposure to domestic violence. Currently, it appears as though

the 'direct' victim of domestic violence (the partner) has been prioritised in terms of research. The review authors suggest future research should considered the following recommendations; (1) more complex methodologies (case-control and longitudinal studies), (2) the increased utilisation of community based samples, (3) the conducting of research in the United Kingdom and in other European countries, (4) the targeting of other socio-economic groups, (5) the acknowledgement and adjustment of confounding variables (i.e. community violence and other non-familial traumatic events), (6) the focus on bi-directional IPV, (7) authors opting to have more individuals reporting on levels of IPV and trauma symptomatology (i.e. mothers, fathers, partners and children, and (8) including participants who are in same-sex relationships.

2.4.3 Conclusion

In summary, this systematic review highlights that children exposed to IPV present with elevated trauma symptomatology. Frequency and severity of childhood exposure are linked to greater trauma symptomatology. However, the presence of trauma symptomatology is likely to be higher due methodological issues noted within the review. The effects relating to the child's age of exposure to IPV remains unclear. This emphasises the need for further research to clarify this issue. The review authors request that additional research is conducted in this area given that the post-1990 studies have not made drastic improvements to the methodological biases present with the pre-1990 research.

Linking Paragraph 1

In the previous chapter we have answered research question one; '*What is the quality of the literature regarding the association between exposure to inter-parental violence and trauma symptomatology amongst children?'* The systematic review highlighted a number of methodological concerns within the existing literature (e.g. high risk of selection bias). This review focussed on the elevated trauma symptomatology present within children (0-18 years) who were exposed to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict (primarily violence between their parents). The most common method used by researchers to identify inter-parental conflict was the Conflict Tactics Scales-2 (CTS-2; Straus *et al.*, 1996). Therefore, in the following chapter we will attempt to answer the following research question; *How valid and reliable is the CTS-2 (Straus et al., 1996) in measuring inter-parental conflict tactics in both clinical and research settings?* The reason for critically evaluating the CTS-2 was to determine whether the measure was a robust psychometric that could be utilised in the chapter four quantitative empirical research.

Chapter Three:

A Critique of the Revised Conflict Tactics Scales-2 (CTS-2)

A version of this chapter was published in Aggression and Violent Behavior:

Jones, R.T., Chou, S., & Browne, K. (2017). A critique of the revised conflict tactics scales-2 (CTS-2). *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 37, 83-90.*

Abstract

The purpose of this review is to critically evaluate the Conflict Tactics Scales-2, a measure used worldwide for research and clinical practices. The reliability, validity and normative samples of the CTS-2 are considered and compared with similar psychometric measures. Limitations of the original CTS has been discussed alongside the CTS-2. Reliability is considered to be good to excellent by alpha coefficient and the variance explained by differing samples or methods of administration. Caution is recommended when interpreting the CTS-2 in clinical settings. Researchers point toward a five-factor structure to the CTS-2. The importance of appropriate norms is discussed and considered crucial when using the tool in settings where reporting patterns may differ. Difficulties in comparing CTS-2 scores across samples, cultures and countries are highlighted. Overall, the CTS-2 is a robust psychometric measure, although it holds limited clinical utility if it is used separately from other sources of information gathering (i.e. psychometric measures or interview). In order to enhance its clinical utility, it should be administered alongside measures or clinical interviews that can provide added context regarding partner violence. More research is required in diverse population samples, cultures/countries and languages.

Keywords:

CTS-2, CRITIQUE, FAMILY CONFLICT, VALIDITY, RELIABILITY

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Measuring Family Conflict

The 'dark figure' of violence within the family home is an issue for victimisation surveys and police recorded data (Sinha, February 2013). It leads to an underestimation of the extent of the problem and its cost to services. Therefore, measures of family conflict that enhance accuracy and encourage self-report are essential to those working in clinical and research settings. Although accuracy is desired, it is seldom achieved as there is often conflict of interest or social desirability bias associated with self-reported family conflict. However, through researchers offering complete confidentiality and anonymity, this can help encourage full disclosure (Hamby, 2014).

Measuring conflict in the family poses a multitude of problems to researchers and clinicians. The following can impact the usefulness of the data collected; a lack of disclosure from the involved couple, a lack of therapist investigation, confusion over terminologies used and only one partner being consulted (Straus, Hamby & Warren, 2003). Thus, tools are required to provide a universal and consistent approach to measuring family conflict. In particular, identifying the frequency and severity of family conflict can help determine the provision of appropriate services for the perpetrators and victims.

The Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS-2; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy & Sugarman, 1996) is the most widely applied research and clinical tool in measuring family conflict. Other well-known tools include Partner Abuse Scale (PAS; Hudson, 1990), Composite Abuse Scale (CAS; Hegarty, Sheehan & Schonfeld, 1999) and the Index of Spouse Abuse (ISA; Hudson & McIntosh, 1981).

3.1.2 Review Aims

Given the prevalence use of the CTS-2, this paper provides a critical review of the psychometric properties and practical utility of this tool. Furthermore, the paper attempts to evaluate whether the CTS-2 has improved upon the limitations of the CTS and compares the CTS-2 with similar measures.

3.1.3 The Original CTS

The Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS) were initially developed by Straus (1979) in response to a growing demand to quantify the extent of conflict in the family. This tool was intended to measure the use of reasoning/negotiation, verbal and physical aggression within the family household between partners in dating, cohabiting or martial relationships (Straus *et al.*, 1996). Straus, Hamby and Warren (2003) argue this focus on explicit actions yielded one of the many strengths of the CTS. The CTS were theoretically driven by conflict theory (Straus, 1979). This theory stipulates that human existence goes hand in hand with conflict, yet violence is not always an inevitable method adopted by an individual in order to quell conflict (Straus,

Hamby & Warren, 2003). Straus (1979) envisioned the CTS to be one aspect of a battery of other psychometric measures which could assess more subtle facets of family violence i.e. fear or controlling behavior.

The CTS measure consisted of 19 items with three scales; (1) Reasoning (3 items), (2) Verbal Aggression (6 items) and, (3) Physical Assault (9 items) and one item which was not scored "cried". The measure was most frequently used to obtain information regarding physical assaults against both partners (Straus *et al.*, 1996). Therefore, the 19 items were asked twice giving a total of 38 items administered to each respondent. Its intended use was to measure the extent to which specific conflict tactics had been used in the family home (*ibid*). It was developed to be used by clinicians as an interview schedule as opposed to a self-administered questionnaire. The CTS schedule had two columns with the response categories (0-6), one for the number of times the respondent had carried out an act and one for the partner's acts over the past year. These response categories were coded 0 for never, '1' for once, '2' for twice, '3' for 3-5 times, '4' for 6-10 times, '5' for 11-20 times, '6' for more than 20 times and 'X' for don't know. There was also a section to record whether the conflict tactic had ever happened (i.e. not in the past year). The item order began with items of low coerciveness (e.g. reasoning items) with gradually more coercive conflict tactics towards the end of the measure (Straus, 1979).

Since its creation, the CTS have been utilised worldwide in culturally diverse clinical and normative population samples (Giles-Sims, 1983; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000; Straus *et al.*, 2003). The measure has been implemented within family therapy to help detect domestic violence (Aldorando & Straus, 1994; Boughner, Hayes, Bubenzer & West, 1994; Straus *et al.*, 2003; Sherman & Fredman, 2013). Some authors have also adapted the CTS in order to measure different aspects of family violence, demonstrating its flexibility and utility for research purposes, specifically criminal justice related research (Browne, 1987; Gondolf, 1988; Straus, 1993).

The CTS was considered innovative due to the measure's focus on behavioral descriptions of conflict (e.g. punched) and avoidance of the words 'abuse' and 'rape' which could be interpreted differently by respondents (Hamby, 2014). However, since its inception the CTS measure has become the centre of controversy related to the perpetration of partner violence. Research that has utilised the CTS has found support for partner violence being perpetrated by both genders to significant levels (Archer, 2000; Straus, 2010), a pattern termed 'gender symmetry' (Winstok, 2015). Such findings contradicted the data from other types of surveys (e.g. victim surveys, police recorded data and national surveys) that show gender 'asymmetry' where men predominantly perpetrate partner violence in their intimate relationships (Winstok, 2015).

This controversy has spawned many 'first generation' critiques of CTS and symmetrical gender patterns in partner violence (e.g. Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Tolman, 1989; Saunders, 1992; Campbell, 1995; cited in Hamby, 2015). There have also been a number of current critiques on gender patterns in partner violence and we are no closer to a definitive answer (Kimmel, 2002; Hamby, 2014, Winstok, 2015, Hamby 2015, Winstok & Straus 2016).

Dobash and Dobash (2004) highlighted concerns about the CTS' external validity with the meaning of certain behavioral acts being open to interpretation (e.g. thrown an object at your partner) and the context behind the act (e.g. retaliation or self-defence). Additionally, the same authors argued that if a partner committed one act they are equally defined as 'violent' as the other partner who may have committed several acts. Overall, the authors argued that the measure,

"…distorts the reality of intimate partner violence…" (Dobash & Dobash, 2004; pp. 330).

Further definitional problems were noted by Dobash and Dobash (2004) such as the measure defining acts on the psychological/emotional abuse subscale 'abusive' without knowing the context in which the behavior occurs (e.g. threatening to leave). Another problem of the CTS is it's merging of violent acts (e.g. physical and sexual acts) with non-violent acts of abuse (e.g. name calling and shouting) and referring to it interchangeably as either violence or abuse (Dobash & Dobash, 2004). This can lead to

misleading findings and confusion over what actually constitutes as violent acts. Dobash and Dobash (2004) argued these violent and abusive acts should be appropriately separated, studied and described. Overall, Dobash and Dobash (2004) concluded the CTS' act based approach to measuring partner violence was too narrow and more likely to find gender symmetry because it does not include the context, consequences, motivations and intentions behind the partner violence.

Further limitations of the CTS had also been noted by critics. Firstly, the measure had received criticism regarding the number of violent acts that were included in forms (Straus, 1987). Critics have argued that this restriction misrepresents the extent of violence in the family home as they are a multitude of conflict tactics not accounted for. Secondly, expecting an accurate recall from respondents from the past year had been highlighted as a problem, if conflict tactics experienced, are common. Calls for a shorter recall period have been made (Straus, 1987). Thirdly, the measure did not distinguish the severity of violent acts in the scoring and interpretation (e.g. a slap was considered in the same category of seriousness as using a knife). Fourthly, the measure did not account for injury or sexual coercion. Fifthly, Straus (1987) criticised the measure for having an inadequate number of items to measure verbal aggression and reasoning tactics. Finally, critics have emphasised that the measure was created on the assumption that violence is family-based and not male orientated (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998).

3.1.4 CTS-2 Development

The CTS-2 was developed by Straus et al. (1996) to address some of the limitations of the CTS. In particular, a greater distinction between minor and severe conflict tactics, increasing the number of acts measured (incl. verbal aggression and reasoning/negotiation), measuring injury and sexual coercion, and clarifying terms used in the measure were improvements that were targeted by the authors tasked with revising the CTS. The revision of the CTS involved reformatting the design of the measure to improve the presentation and intersperse items to minimise demand characteristics (Straus *et al.*, 2003). The CTS was initially developed as an interview schedule rather than a self-administered measurement tool, therefore, the presentation was simplified in the CTS-2 (Straus *et al.*, 2003). Therefore, the criticisms the original measure received regarding the clarity of the presentation may have been unfair. Straus et al. (1996) focussed on item wording in the revision of the CTS and the ambiguity of items such as 'threw something at him/her' and changing it to 'threw something at my partner that could hurt'. Developing clarity of item wording was thought to help to prevent false-positive results as consensual acts such as pillow fights could fit with the original item wording and they are clearly not related to rates of partner violence (Hamby, 2015). Further, the item wording was also revised to provide gender neutral terms such as 'my partner' so that the measure was applicable for use to explore conflict tactics used in same-sex relationships (Hamby, 2015). Items were also removed or combined to

improve distinction between each item (Straus *et al.*, 1996). This process was guided by the critiques of the CTS, clinical experience of the authors and existing research (Straus *et al.*, 2003). The CTS-2 authors used a specific set of criteria to determine the selection items for the measure. For example, specific behaviors such as animal cruelty or child abuse were excluded as these behaviors could only occur if the couple have children or pets (*ibid*). Overall, the items were designed to be inclusive, specific to acts or events, cover a range of severities and be understandable in terms of reading ability (*ibid*).

In the revisions by Straus et al. (1996). The Reasoning scale was renamed Negotiation as the authors believed this term better described the construct measured by the items (Straus *et al.*, 2003). Further, the Verbal Aggression scale was changed to Psychological Aggression as some of the items related to non-verbal acts of aggression (*ibid*). The items in these original scales were added to in the revised version of the CTS. This was to increase the scope and to respond to criticisms relating to the brevity of the measure (Straus, *et al.,* 2003).

The CTS-2 incorporated two new scales, Injury and Sexual Coercion. The CTS-2 authors chose these additional scales due to their fundamental importance in relation to partner violence (Straus *et al.*, 1996). Sexual coercion is another form of partner abuse that was not covered by the original CTS and therefore, added to the scope of the measurement tool.

Although, critics would argue that the scope of sexual coercion could have been increased if items specified more non-penetrative acts (Hamby, 2014). The injury scale was also added to increase the scope of the measure as it highlighted the consequences on the partner (Straus *et al.*, 2003). Both scales fitted well into the framework and design of the CTS-2 as they focussed on 'act based' behavior and had similar response categories to the other scales (e.g. how often did this happen in the past year?). However, it could be argued that these scales were included in response to 'gender symmetry' criticisms made regarding the original measure (Hamby, 2015). Since, its development these new scales have provided evidence of 'gender asymmetry' with higher levels of sexual coercion and more severe injuries against female partners (*ibid*). Items in each scale were grouped due to content covered in those items (Straus *et al.*, 2003). For example, negotiation items covered emotional and cognitive tactics and the other scales of items distinguished between minor and severe levels. Again, it can be argued that these revisions were thought to shift gender patterns found by the original CTS (Hamby, 2015).

Overall, it was hoped that the newer version would extend the scope of the tool in clinical settings (Straus *et al.*, 2003). Each version of the measure required the item to be answered once by the respondent and once regarding the respondent's perception of their partner's behavior. Therefore, the number of items is doubled. The original CTS had a total of 38 (19) items and the revised CTS-2 had 78 (39) items.

Despite its revision, the CTS-2 measure had attracted further criticism, some of which relate to the original measure. Hamby (2014) who was tasked with the redevelopment of the original CTS, highlighted that the measure in one form or another had been used for over forty years with limited changes made to the instrument. The author uses this point to argue that the 'technology' has now become outdated and researchers must develop new technologies to improve the measurement of violence (Hamby, 2014). However, this argument has been countered on the notion at the age of the technology should not be the determining factor on whether it is outdated (Winstok, 2015). Additionally, Winstok (2015) argued that a valid and reliable alternative to the CTS-2 measure had not been presented by Hamby (2014).

Hamby (2014) uses conservatism in academia as an argument against the CTS-2 measure. Specifically, Hamby (2014) argued that journal and grant reviewers have preferred research articles that confirm their own pre-conceptions about partner violence and are more likely to accept research that adopts frequently used measures (e.g. CTS-2). Similarly, Hamby (2014) suggested that some authors look to publish many articles from a single project and are incentivised to publish quantity over quality. According to Hamby (2014), these issues have created a 'systematic drag' on science and thus our knowledge on partner violence. In contrast, Winstok (2015) argued that it is those who have critiqued the CTS have

been favoured by journal reviewers and that authors studying violence against women have received more funding. These issues may reflect the biases amongst most research areas and not just that of partner violence and the CTS-2 measure. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise these wider perspectives to remain critical of the literature.

3.1.5 CTS-2 Overview

The CTS-2 is a 78 item measure which assesses the amount of conflict between partners in a dating, co-habiting or martial relationship (Straus *et al.*, 1996). Since its revision the CTS-2 has been one of the most widely used psychometric measures of Intimate Partner Violence (Yun, 2011). The CTS-2 can be adapted to suit different time frames, situations, relationships and response categories (Straus *et al.*, 1996). The scales on this measure are; Negotiation (six items), Psychological Aggression (eight items), Physical Assault (twelve items) – which were already incorporated into the CTS – with the addition of two new scales Injury (seven items) and Sexual Coercion (six items). Subscales were introduced for the Negotiation scale to differentiate between cognitive and emotional forms of reasoning tactics. Furthermore, the other scales provide minor and severe subscales.

The CTS-2 is scored by adding the midpoints of the response categories (e.g. for the 3-5 category this would be 4). The measure requests respondents to approximate the number of times an event occurred in the last twelve months either once, twice, 3-5 times (scored as 4), 6-10 times

(scored as 8), 11-20 times (scored as 15) or more than 20 times (scored as 25). Further, there is an option to endorse whether the conflict tactic had ever occurred (never or not in the past year). This option is scored, tallied and interpreted separately (e.g. 0 if it has never occurred or 1 if it has occurred). Responses are then transferred onto the scoring worksheet with odd numbered responses for 'self' and even numbered responses for 'my partner' (self and partner are scored separately). The researcher or clinician then tallies the item scores according to the scale the item belongs to (e.g. psychological aggression). Once the raw scores (past year) for each scale and partner are tallied they are transferred to the CTS-2 summary sheet. Total possible scores for each scale (past year items) are as follows; Negotiation 150, Psychological Aggression 200, Physical Assault 300, Injury 150 and, Sexual Coercion 175. Each of the scales raw scores are considered standalone and are not added together to provide a total score. These raw scores are considered an estimate of frequency of conflict tactics in the respondents' relationship in the past year.

Straus et al. (2003) emphasize that for clinical purposes, the measure should be used as behaviour checklist where any non-zero response on negative conflict tactics would result in follow-up inquiries to determine problem areas. However, Straus et al. (2003) also note caution as response will need to be verified following a robust clinical assessment using a range of sources (e.g. medical records, clinical interview etc.).

In Interpreting the CTS-2 scores clinically, Straus et al. (2003) suggest that for raw scores on the physical assault, injury and sexual coercion scales would warrant further investigation and appropriate steps would need to be taken to safeguard the victim. However, for the Negotiation scale the authors suggest that higher scores indicate a greater use of positive conflict tactics by the respondent. Conversely, lower scores indicate an absence of these alternatives to aggressive tactics which would mean respondents would need to develop and practice these skills. Regarding the Psychological Aggression scale, Straus et al. (2003) suggest that respondents that endorse higher frequencies may require therapeutic work to increase their awareness of the impact psychological aggression can have on their relationship.

However, for research purposes the CTS-2 tends to be interpreted differently. Straus et al. (2003) report that researchers would be most interested in using the CTS-2 to estimate prevalence and chronicity rates in specific samples. The prevalence rate would refer to the percentage of the sample that reports at least one instance of each behaviour occurring (Straus *et al.*, 2003). Chronicity refers to the average amount the behaviour has occurred within the sample who endorse that they have used a particular conflict tactic type (e.g. psychological aggression) or specific behaviour (e.g. hitting) (*ibid*).

In comparison to the published research papers on the CTS, the CTS-2 has considerably less journal articles regarding its applicability and psychometric properties. Moreover, it has been nineteen years since the CTS-2 was developed. However, in this time, twelve papers have been published evaluating or critiquing aspects of the psychometric measure. These reviews focus on the following issues; factor structure (Connelly, Newton & Aarons, 2005; Calvete *et al.*, 2007; Yun, 2011), validity (Jones *et al.*, 2002; Straus, 2004; Relva, Fernandes & Costa, 2013) and reliability (Lucente *et al.*, 2001; Newton, Donaldson, Connelly & Landsverk, 2001; Dietz & Jasinski, 2007; Ro & Lawrence, 2007; Vega & O'Leary, 2007) in a variety of settings. Each paper has tended focus on one particular issue rather than taking an eclectic approach. An aim of this review is to build upon the previous researchers views on the CTS-2. The authors of CTS-2 have also published the psychometric properties of the measure in research articles (Straus *et al.*, 1996; Straus, 2004).

For research purposes the CTS-2 provides an estimation of Partner Violence (PV). However, if this measure was used in criminal justice proceedings it should not be the only psychometric administered as it has no validity scale built into the measure. Straus (1993) noted that researchers need to examine the CTS-2 under different population samples given its potential to provide changeable psychometric properties. Furthermore, amongst the research literature the CTS has been used controversially to investigate asymmetry or symmetry of prevalence amongst male and female

perpetrators. This outlines one of the potential misuses of the tool (Dobash *et al.*, 1992; Dietz & Jasinski, 2007).

3.2 Reliability

The CTS-2 poses a number of caveats to estimating reliability. Firstly, the assessment does not measure stable characteristics like a relatively stable personality construct, instead, it measures behavior which can change over time (Vega & O'Leary, 2007). Secondly, by assessing actual behavior, the level of occurrence may not be normally distributed *(ibid)*. Therefore, creating a statistical problem, as the base rates for the behavior could be either high or low *(ibid)*. Finally, differences in inter-rater correlations may be an inaccurate portrayal of reliability *(ibid)* for the reasons set out below.

The inter-rater reliability of the CTS-2 has been found to range between low and medium (O'Leary & Williams, 2006). This issue is highlighted within court based assessments, although it would be recommended that both partners should complete the psychometric to assess consistency of reporting. Socially desirable responses or a desire to avoid negative consequences are more probable within this clinical setting.

Few studies have measured the CTS-2 on the grounds of test-retest reliability. Researchers focus has largely been on the factor structure, internal consistency and the validity of the measure (Vega & O'Leary, 2007). In Vega and O'Leary's (2007) study they measured incarcerated

males' responses on the CTS-2 on two occasions regarding the same time period analysing the stability of self-reported aggression. The authors reported strong test-retest reliability across four of the aggression subscales for both the participants own behavior and their partner's (Vega & O'Leary, 2007). The test retest period was over two months which is relatively long compared to similar studies testing test-retest reliability (Birchler & Fals-Stewart, 1994; Mills, Kroner & Forth, 1998). However, this period may still have not taken into account the propensity for someone to report less aggression tactics over longer time frames, particularly as the participants in Vega and O'Leary's (2007) study showed signs of underreporting at both test periods. Furthermore, the authors of the paper did not analyse the other partner's responses.

Lucente, Fals-Stewart, Richards and Goscha (2001) measured the internal reliability of the CTS-2 using the alpha coefficients for the individual subscales and the test overall on a population of incarcerated females. Each subscale was measured to have high levels of consistency (>.74) apart from the perpetration sexual coercion subscale *(ibid)*. In contrast, Newton et al. (2001) found a low reliability score for the physical assault scale. Overall, these results provided a strong case for the internal consistency of the CTS-2 scales. However, the authors suggested further research could analyse the minor and severe items of the CTS-2 (Lucente *et al.*, 2001).

Yun (2011) analysed the minor and severe items, noting adequate internal consistency of .68-85 for perpetration and .68-84 for victimization. However, Yun (2011) found the minor sexual coercion alpha coefficient to vary from .18 (perpetration) - .37 (victimisation). Furthermore, due to its clinical use, Yun (2011) argued that the CTS-2 alpha coefficients should be cautiously accepted. Otherwise, influential decisions could be based upon reliability scores which have not reached the desired standards of .9. The overall quality of Yun's (2011) findings are limited due to a self-selection bias and a sampling pool from south-eastern US states only. Furthermore, the following subscales; Physical Assault, Sexual Coercion and Injury subscales were heavily skewed and kurtotic (Yun, 2011).

Like all the studies mentioned above, each used data from one partner and did not compare these with data from their partners. Therefore, there were potential response biases. Additionally, the majority of these papers had collected data on specific populations, such as female prisoners and high risk postnatal females, which lack generalisability across other samples (Dietz & Jasinski, 2007). Despite this, alpha coefficients have been found to range between .79 and .95 (Straus *et al.*, 1996). In a larger cross-cultural study conducted in 33 countries with 6,000 students these coefficients ranged between .74 and .89 for each subscale (Straus, 2004). These coefficients demonstrate good to excellent internal reliability.

In comparison to the original CT scales, Straus et al. (1996) reports similar or higher internal consistency in the CTS-2. This suggests that along with making aesthetical improvements the changes made by the authors have not effected its good reliability. Comparatively speaking, other measures such as the CAS have demonstrated similar levels of internal reliability, yet more consistently over each dimension >0.85 (severe combined abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse and harassment) (Hegarty, Bush, Sheehan, 2005). Moreover, the ISA has been found to have alpha coefficients over .90 within a sample of African-Americans (Campbell, Campbell, King, Parker & Ryan, 1994).

Ro and Lawrence (2007) compared the psychological aggression subscale of the CTS-2 to two other measures of psychological aggression, the Multidimensional Measure of Emotional Abuse (MMEA; Murphy & Hoover, 1999) and the Test of Negative Social Exchange (TENSE; Ruehlman & Karoly, 1991). The authors found that despite its wide use in the literature, the CTS-2 subscale had lower internal consistency than the other measures. Ro and Lawrence (2007) opined that the MMEA included a wider array of behaviors than the CTS-2 subscale and considered that the CTS-2 subscale should not be used in studies where psychological aggression would be the sole focus.

Reichenheim, Klien and Moraes (2007) argued that the CTS-2 evaluative literature has focussed on the classic test theory item analysis compared to

the robust item response theory approach. An item response theory approach focusses on the item by evaluating the questionnaire responses rather than the whole test itself. It is considered by researchers to be a more in-depth analysis (Reichenheim *et al.*, 2007). Further, the authors noted that no researchers had used this approach with CTS-2 data regarding heterosexual couples. Reichenheim et al. (2007) focussed on the Physical Assault scale and found support for a single factor solution. This confirmed the measure's good to excellent internal consistency and highlights that the items discriminated well from each other. However, the authors also found that items on the scale may not indicate the same levels of violence for males and females. This discrepancy was noted to

"…detract from the scale's universality" (Reichenheim et al., 2007; pp 58.).

Researchers have investigated the influence item order may have on IPV rates (Ramirez & Straus, 2006; Dietz & Jasinski, 2007). Ramirez and Straus (2006) indicated that modifying the item order can elicit greater disclosure rates for males and females, yet switching the pair order of questions had no effect. However, the order of the items was not randomised and they used a small sample size (Diet & Jasinski, 2007). Logistic regression analyses did not indicate any significant concerns with the four versions of the CTS-2 examined in Dietz and Jasinski's (2007) study. Therefore, the question format may not be critical if the researcher's aim is to measure physical aggression and IPV. Conversely, if the researcher's goal is to measure the concepts of psychological aggression or sexual aggression

they may wish to place the negotiation scaled items first as this item order seemed to enhance the reporting of these concepts *(ibid)*. Regardless, the item order differences may be minor statistically, though clinically these differences are meaningful especially when some concepts relate to lower base rates such as sexual coercion *(ibid)*. This research lacked generalisability to other populations based on the use of an opportunistic sample of students. Despite this, it allowed for a larger sample size from which multiple comparisons could have been made. Overall, the researchers highlight that the unpaired (where the respondent answers based on his/her behavior and then their partner's on the following item) version of revised CTS-2 is able to more accurately determine the prevalence of IPV *(ibid)*.

3.3 Validity

Jones, Ji, Beck and Beck (2002) found an inverse correlation between the CTS-2 negotiation subscale and the Abusive Behavior Checklist (ABC; Beck & Beck, 1998, cited in, Jones et al., 2002). Somewhat unexpected, the authors found that the more negotiation tactics a victim used was associated with increased abusive behavior towards them from their partner (*ibid*). This suggests the measure can compare and correlate with similar measures of partner violence to provide additional understanding or context. In this case, incarcerated females coped with their abusive environments by employing more negotiation tactics (Jones *et al.*, 2002). However, the ABC was found not to significantly correlate with the Injury

scale. Jones et al. (2002) argued that the reason behind this was that the ABC is a measure of physical assault behaviors whereas the Injury subscale measures the effects of the physical assault. Conversely, the General Assault construct (consisting of the Psychological Aggression and Physical Assault) positively correlated with the ABC suggesting concurrent validity *(ibid)*. A methodological limitation in this study related to the researchers asking the incarcerated females to recall conflict tactics from an average of four years prior *(ibid)*. This calls into question the validity of their results and whether it is appropriate to test offenders who have been serving a prison sentence for longer than a year. Furthermore, Straus and Douglas (2004) compared the CTS-2 to a short form version of the CTS-2. In their study they were able to determine the concurrent validity of the measures. For perpetration the correlations ranged from .77 to .89 and for victimization .65 to .94 indicating strong positive relationships between the measures. However, due to the short form using the highest correlated items from the CTS-2 it is likely that these concurrent validity coefficients are inflated.

Researchers employing different versions of the CTS such as the sibling version have found evidence for construct validity. The CTS-2 was found to positively correlate with the sibling and parent-child versions (Relva, Fernandes & Costa, 2013). However, the sample was not representative of the Portuguese general population and retrospective reporting was used (Relva *et al.*, 2013). Tiwari, Fong, Chan, Leung, Parker and Ho (2007) found

only fair kappa coefficients between the Abusive Assessment Screen and the Chinese version of the CTS-2 suggesting discrepancies in participant responding across similar measures. However, this could be attributed to cultural differences.

There are limitations to the CTS-2 relating to content validity. These are issues that were identified as areas that the CT scales could have improved upon. As a construct which measures levels of partner violence, the CTS-2 does not include the motives of the violence, this would inevitably add context to the calculation of frequency. Furthermore, definitions of partner violence often involve the use controlling behavior or coercive tactics (i.e. financial power/isolation). This is another avenue not covered by the current CTS-2 or improved on from the original CT scales. These are areas which other measures may be able to explore when used with the CTS-2. Therefore, the CTS-2 should not be recommended as the solitary questionnaire to explore partners' conflict tactics. If so, there would be a danger of losing key information relating to the intensity of the partner violence or more covert aspects of domestic violence tactics.

A five factor model underpinning the CTS-2 has been established through confirmatory factor analyses (Newton, Connelly & Landsverk, 2001; Straus, 2004; Connelly, Newton & Aarons, 2005; Calvete, Corral & Estevez, 2007). The goodness of fit index used by Newton et al. (2001) indicated that the five factor model was an acceptable fit (>.9). Furthermore, Calvete et al.'s

(2007) goodness of fit indices suggested a good model. This indicated that Straus et al.'s (1996) understanding of the nature of conflict tactics is consistent with the measures of the construct. Additionally, the distinctions between minor and severe forms of violence were supported by confirmatory factor analyses (Calvete *et al.*, 2007). This corresponds with previous research (Hamby & Sugarman, 1999; Newton *et al.*, 2001). Furthermore, the original CT scales was found to support a two factor model (psychological and physical aggression), the CTS-2 demonstrates an improvement on this, due to the increased scope of the measure (Cascardi, Avery-Leaf, O'Leary & Slep, 1999).

However, Calvete et al. (2007) were the only researchers to focus on the victimisation form and not the perpetration form. Further, the authors included all scales in the analyses. Connelly, Newton and Aarons (2005) examined the factorial validity of the CTS-2 using different languages. They noted caution when comparing results of English and Spanish language groups because of the potential nuances in patterns of responding owing to cultural, educational and economical differences (*ibid*). These studies all used female samples, therefore more research is needed to confirm the factor structure of the CTS-2 using male samples.

The studies investigating the factor structure of the CTS-2 were all administered to specific populations and only included some of the total items (Yun, 2011). Yun (2011) investigated the factor structure using a ten

factor model because of the minor and severe item groupings on the CTS-2 scales and the sub-constructs on the Negotiation construct (Straus *et al.*, 1996). Yun (2011) demonstrated that violence scales were all significantly correlated with one another. However, the factor loadings did not load exclusively on minor or severe item groups. The complex factor loadings found support for an eight factor model instead as the Negotiation subconstructs were found to be independent (*ibid*). Overall, this suggests that the CTS-2 factor structure does not support the minor and severe item groupings hypothesized by Straus et al. (1996), though Yun (2011) suggested that additional confirmatory analyses are needed to investigate this further.

3.4. Norms

It is crucial for a psychometric measure to provide a wide range of normative samples, particularly if the measure is used in a clinical context. For example, incarcerated women were found to report higher rates of chronicity and severity of abuse compared to Straus et al.'s (1996) sample of college women. In a sample of Latina adolescents, Newman and Campbell (2011) found that the sample had a tendency to match or exceed the level and frequency of the violent behaviors against their partners.

Archer (1999) found in a meta-analysis of 43 studies that participants underreported aggression on the CTS regardless of gender, demonstrating the issue of social desirability. This is an area where more research is

required so that the tools can be compared effectively. As it stands, issues with respondent disclosure remains a limitation with the CTS-2. One of Straus et al's (1996) aims was to improve spousal agreement of the CTS with the CTS-2. However, this has not been found in Simpson and Christensen's (2005) research where partner agreement was noted to be between poor to moderate for individual violent tactics and scales. The authors considered that this was either a limitation of the CTS-2 scale or an inevitable problem faced by those measuring partner violence (*ibid*). Either way, the revised CTS-2 does not seem to have improved from its predecessor in this aspect.

Hamby (2014) argued that research using the CTS-2 had used non-representative samples such as small convenience samples of college students. Further, Hamby (2014) noted that those taking the gender symmetry perspective favoured research with small samples as opposed to nationally representative and population based surveys that had highlighted asymmetric gender patterns (e.g. Archer, 2000). However, gender symmetry in perpetration was also noted in national and international samples countering this argument (Gelles & Straus, 1988; Straus *et al.*, 2006; Straus, 2008; cited in, Winstok, 2015).

The CTS-2 has been utilised in a variety of countries with the form having been translated into different languages (see Yan & Tang, 2001; Straus, 1999). This may pose a number of issues relating to external validity as the

psychometric properties of the CTS-2 might not be comparable in other countries especially where there are cultural and ethnic differences. Although there are a number of published studies which focus on the psychometric properties of the English version of the CTS-2, there is a lack of published studies investigating the psychometric properties of the CTS-2 in non-English speaking populations (Connelly, Newton & Aarons, 2005). This outlines the importance of investigating the scientific properties of the CTS-2 scales in ethnically diverse and non-English speaking populations, especially, in this case, with a widely used measure such as the CTS-2. Straus (2004) found the CTS-2 could be used cross culturally to measure violence in dating relationships in university students. However, it was acknowledged that this could not be extended to other applications of the measure or for use amongst different sample populations as of yet (*ibid*). Connelly et al. (2005) were one of this first to do this and have called for additional research particularly as the internal consistency and factor structure model were weaker in the Spanish CTS-2. Additionally, the authors noted that most of the published research focussing on the factor structure of the CTS-2 were conducted with female samples (*ibid*). Nevertheless, Connelly et al. (2005) argued in support of using the CTS-2 in countries with differing languages and diverse populations.

The Spanish version of the tool was found to be valid amongst a sample of women who completed the victimization form (Calvete *et al.*, 2007). The authors noted that there were significant differences in the prevalence

rates, chronicity and level of frequency for all scales except the minor psychological aggression and sexual coercion scales when comparing the results from different samples. This highlights the importance of obtaining appropriate norms and selecting the 'best fit' sample to match the participant's age, setting and other demographic variables. Relating to discriminant validity, the authors were able to identify a subset in their sample of 1296 Spanish women who were accessing victim service compared to the rest of the sample as they were reporting higher rates of victimisation (Calvete *et al.*, 2007; Newman & Campbell, 2011). Wider research is needed in non-westernised countries to draw comparisons with and to investigate the CTS-2's validity further.

3.5 Encoding

Initially, the handbook and CTS-2 summary sheets provided an average CTS-2 scores (chronicity) and prevalence rates by gender and whether or not the respondent was reporting their own perpetration or victimization. These norms were based on a college student sample of 113 men and 204 women (Straus *et al.*, 2003). If these figures are to be judged as typical, the prevalence rates are likely to be in the range of: 98-100% for Negotiation; 74-83% for Psychological Aggression; 31-49% for Physical Assault; 9-16% for Injury and; 18-38% for Sexual Coercion. For chronicity, the range of averages reported per year were: 57.4 – 69.7 for Negotiation; 15.1 – 17.2 for Psychological Aggression; 9.3 – 15.9 for Physical Assault; 3.6 – 25.1 for Injury and; 11.8 – 19.9 for Sexual Coercion.

Since its development, the CTS-2 has been used to determine prevalence rates of partner violence in a number of countries and samples. Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Selwyn and Rohling (2012) conducted a review of partner violence prevalence rates across samples, sexual orientations and ethnicities. 54% of the included studies used the CTS-2 or a version of the CTS-2 to assess violence rates. Langhinrichsen et al. (2012) found the samples identified significantly different prevalence rates of violence. Large population based samples indicated the lowest rates of violence with 22%. However, these studies used less questions derived from the CTS-2. In comparison, the following samples demonstrated higher partner violence prevalence rates; gay lesbian and bisexual samples 32%, school samples 33%, community 42%, predominantly-female treatment-seeking samples 77%, and approximately 100% of predominantly-male legal/justice samples (*ibid*). These findings were comparable with Straus' (2008) large international student sample from 32 nations who completed the CTS-2 with a prevalence rate of 31.2%. Furthermore, both Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al. (2012) and Straus' (2008) findings appear consistent across time with a prevalence study from 34 years ago indicating partner violence rates of 30% (Bernard & Bernard, 1983; cited in Langhinrichsen-Rohling *et al.*, 2012). Furthermore, the CTS-2 measure has identified the prevalence of bidirectional and unidirectional violence. Across the samples identified in Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al. (2012), the average amount of bidirectional violence was 57.5%. This indicates that partner violence is predominantly

bidirectional (i.e. both partners have used partner violence to a certain degree within the relationship).

In addition to this research on prevalence rates, Straus (2015) used the CTS-2 to classify family dyads into the following categories; (1) both aggressed partner violence; (2) one partner aggressed only and; (3) the other partner aggressed only. Researchers refer to these categories as Dyadic Concordance Types (DCTs). In relation to heterosexual intimate relationships the dyads are; *Male-Only*, *Female-Only*, *Both-Aggressed* and *Neither-Aggressed* categories. Straus (2015) reported the DCTs prevalence rates using Miller et al's (2011) World Mental Health Survey data from eleven nations. This highlighted the following prevalence rates; male-only 36-39%, the female-only 19-21% and, both 42-43% of the 3,642 couples that reported physical assaults had occurred. The above figures were in relation to physical assaults only and not the other forms of partner violence measured by the CTS-2 such as sexual coercion. However, Straus' (2008) study of international dating violence in 32 nations highlighted that the male-only DCT was not the most prevalent category (even in the minor and severe violence categories). For the prevalence of psychological aggression and sexual coercion, similar findings have been identified (Straus & Michel-Smith, 2014; Straus & Michel-Smith, 2015). Overall, the predominant pattern found was that both partners were violent.

3.6 Conclusion

Overall, the CTS-2 has an extensive literature outlining its psychometric properties. However, this literature is not as extensive as the previous version of the tool (Straus *et al.*, 1996). The CTS-2 has good scientific properties, though this is largely because of research conducted in the US. Generally, its alpha coefficient on all subscales range between good to excellent, suggesting that the tool is internally valid. Furthermore, there is strong support for a five factor model for the CTS-2 suggesting good construct validity supporting Straus et al.'s (1996) theoretical hypotheses. Elements of the CTS-2 have been found to correlate well with other measures used for exploring abusive behaviors and psychological aggression indicating good convergent validity (Jones *et al.*, 2001; Ro & Lawrence, 2007). No other measure of conflict tactics incorporating an array of conflict tactics have been developed with the similar levels of research papers. The CTS-2 is a robust measure for measuring frequency and chronicity of partner violence despite clear difficulties regarding patterns of responding (i.e. social desirability and partner agreement).

However, the CTS-2 is not without its criticisms. The focus of CTS and CTS-2 research has been largely on proving or disapproving gender symmetry of partner violence, specifically, physical assault. This has had unfortunate consequences on our knowledge of the CTS-2 measure. For example, this has stunted investigation into the following scales; negotiation, psychological aggression, sexual coercion and injury. Research involving

more specific populations provide more variance regarding the internal consistency of the CTS-2 scales (Yun, 2011). This suggests an unacceptable level of reliability if the measure is to be used to make important decisions in a clinical setting. Furthermore, other measures such as the ISA and CAS have been found to be at least similar, if not higher and more consistent in reliability, than the CTS-2 (Campbell *et al.*, 1994; Hegarty, Bush, Sheehan, 2005). In particular, the content validity could be improved upon otherwise the tool lacks context when exploring IPV. If the tool is used for clinical purposes other psychometric measures or clinical interviews should be considered to provide information on the motivations behind abusive behaviors or investigate the more covert conflict tactics such as financial control. This is a limitation that has not been improved upon from the original CT scales. Additionally, confirmatory factor analyses should be conducted to explore a ten factor model proposed by Straus et al. (1996). Further research is required to enhance the external validity and applicability of the CTS-2 across diverse populations, cultures, languages and countries. This is an area which needs addressing especially when the CTS-2 scales are used in other countries and translated in many languages. Therefore, additional clinical sample populations are required for more normative comparisons to be made.

Linking Paragraph 2

Within chapter two (the systematic review) the need for additional research relating to the child's experience was highlighted. In particular, the need for community based samples (e.g. university samples) in countries other than the United States was noted. Furthermore, research investigating bi-directional inter-parental conflict and violence using a structured measure of severity/frequency was recommended, taking into account the child's report. The systematic review focussed on the impact of inter-parental violence on children between 0-18 years. The following chapter investigates the longer-term impact of destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and divorce on the exposed child's journey into adulthood. In chapter three (critique of a psychometric measure) it was concluded that the CTS-2 is a robust psychometric for measuring the severity and frequency of inter-parental conflict in both clinical and research settings. However, there is a need for other measures or methods to examine the context in which the conflict is taking place. Bearing these findings in mind, an attempt will be made to address the above within the following chapter (quantitative empirical research). Therefore, within chapter four, the following research question will be addressed; *How do university students appraise their experiences of inter-parental conflict? And how did their appraisals impact on their academic performance and social relationships?*

Chapter Four:

Student appraisals of inter-parental conflict (witnessed in childhood) and parental separation.

Abstract

This study explored perceptions of destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and parental separation/divorce. The research aimed to explore participant appraisals of these adverse life experiences and their impact. 548 university students (*M* = 24yrs, *SD* = 7.3, Range 18 to 72) participated in an online survey incorporating three measures. The first measure included three subscales from the CTS-2; negotiation, psychological aggression and physical assault (to measure the chronicity of parental conflict tactics during childhood). The second measure included, five subscales from the CPIC; self-blame, perceived threat, content, coping efficacy and triangulation (to measure negative appraisals of inter-parental conflict). Both of these measures required the participant to answer retrospectively based on their experiences during childhood. The final measure involved asking participants to complete a 22-item questionnaire (to measure experiences of parental divorce, allegations and the impact on their social, emotional and academic lives). Descriptive statistics highlighted, negotiation tactics to be the most witnessed type of parental conflict tactic, during their childhood. A correlational matrix presented significant correlations between the CTS-2 and CPIC measures. Generally, negotiation tactics were associated with positive appraisals of parental conflict. Whereas, psychological aggression and physical assault tactics were associated with negative appraisals of parental conflict. For those participants who had experienced parental separation or divorce, Mann-Whitney U tests indicated that the perception of threat was significantly

different between participants whose academic studies had suffered and those who had not suffered. Furthermore, significant differences were found in relation to perceived threat and negative appraisals between who reported that their social relationships had suffered and those who had not suffered. The researchers provide suggestions for professionals working in divorce proceedings and for academics to develop measures, taking into account the views of the exposed child. In summary, the research findings provide evidence of harmful effects of parental conflict experienced by the child during childhood and early adulthood.

Keywords:

Marital Conflict, Childhood Exposure, Perceptions, Divorce, Inter-parental conflict, Negative Appraisals

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Background

Inter-parental conflict is considered an ordinary part of family existence (Reynolds, Houlston, Coleman & Harold, 2014). Cummings and Davies (2011) argue that the impact of this phenomenon may be under-estimated. This conflict can be handled in two ways constructively or destructively (Reynolds *et al.*, 2014). If conflict is dealt with destructively it can impact negatively on the child. Children are particularly powerless to the consequences of conflict regardless of whether the parents are together, divorced or in divorce proceedings (Lawick & Visser, 2015).

Destructive forms of inter-parental conflict can include; (1) physical and verbal aggression (Kitzmann, Gaylord, Holt & Kenny, 2003; Cummings & Davies, 2011), (2) non-communication between parents (Ablow & Measelle, 2009; cited in, Reynolds *et al.*, 2014), and (3) arguments involving high expressed emotion (Cumming & Davies, 2011). Often children themselves are subjects to these conflicts which can cause their levels of distress to increase (Reynolds *et al.*, 2014).

4.1.2 Marital Breakdown

There were 118,140 divorces in the UK in 2012, an increase from previous years. Of these, 48% of the couples had children (Office for National Statistics, February 2014) and 21% of these couples had children aged under five and 64% under 11. It is estimated that the percentage of

marriages ending in divorce is 42%. This suggests that many children have and probably will experience divorce, the majority before they are eleven. Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) can continue following the separation of parents. Furthermore, the violence may increase in severity once separation or divorce has occurred (Jaffe, Crooks & Poisson, 2003). The separation of spouses through family courts can be a long and arduous journey. For families embroiled in these situations, allegations of IPV are commonplace (Johnston, Lee, Olesen & Walters, 2005).

There are a number of welfare concerns about the impact of divorce on children. Researchers have found that children from divorced families have considerably more adjustment and achievement problems than those children from never-divorced families (Kelly, 2000). Further research suggests that these types of problems persist through to adulthood (Amato, 2010). On the other hand, children in high conflict but intact families have been found to display lower levels of well-being than children from divorced families (Amato & Keith, 1991). Conversely, children from divorced families who experienced post-separation conflict fared worse.

In the context of divorce, Watson and Ancis (2013) argue that power and control tactics in abusive relationships continue throughout legal proceedings. These tactics vary from conflicts over child-custody/support and vindictive revenge for ending the relationship. It is posited that children are often embroiled in the middle of these exchanges. For example, the

child may witness destructive forms of inter-parental conflict. Additionally, the parents may use the child for the fulfilment of their psychological needs (e.g. to offer emotional support and reassurance). Therefore, the child may find themselves in a position which blurs the boundaries between parent and child. Although this may seem innocuous, the child may inadvertently form negative appraisals about the other parent (e.g. taking sides during divorce) (Grych & Fincham, 1990).

4.1.3 Witnessing Parental Violence (WPV)

Acknowledgment is mounting that Witnessing Parental Violence (WPV) disrupts a child's development. WPV can lead to the child suffering from similar consequences to those children who are subjected to physical abuse (Jaffe, Wolfe, Wilson & Zak, 1986). The child's emotional development and intelligence can be affected from witnessing parental conflict (Dutton, 2000; Maughan & Cicchetti, 2002; Nicodimos, Gelaye, Williams & Berhane, 2009; Choi, Jeong, Polcari, Rohan & Teicher, 2012). It is possible that this occurs in an indirect way through mental health issues developing in the maternal carer or the quality of home life (Huth-Bocks, Levendosky & Semel, 2001). However this is not always the case as there is evidence to suggest the mother may compensate for the violence by becoming more effective at parenting (Levendosky, Huth-Bocks, Shapiro & Semel, 2003).

Parents often under-estimate the amount of exposure to IPV the child has been subject to (Jaffe, Wolfe & Wilson, 1990; Rivett, Howarth & Harold,

2006). Furthermore, in the past, children exposed to IPV were considered secondary to the adult victim. This lack of focus may have contributed to the underreporting of this phenomenon (Jaffe, Wolfe & Wilson, 1990). Additionally it could explain why some children perhaps do not disclose WPV. Regardless, researchers and clinicians heavily rely on the child or adult disclosing that they witnessed inter-parental violence. Therefore, it is prudent, in some cases, to collect retrospective data from adults about their childhood experiences. Despite reporting issues, at least 750,000 children are estimated to have witnessed domestic violence each year (Department of Health, 2002). Furthermore, it is estimated that a fifth of children have been exposed to domestic abuse between adults in their family home (Radford *et al.*, 2011).

Researchers began to investigate the effects of WPV in the 1970's (Davies, Evans & DiLillo, 2008). Systematic and meta-analytic reviews have reached consensus about the link between WPV and the child being at increased risk of developing emotional and behavioural problems during childhood (Fantuzzo & Lindquist, 1989; Kitzmann *et al.*, 2003; Wolfe *et al.*, 2003; Evans, Davies & DiLillo, 2008; Yap, Pilkington, Ryan & Jorm, 2013). These emotional problems included the presence of internalising (e.g. symptoms of depression and anxiety) and externalising problems (e.g. conduct problems at school or in the community). Despite these links, researchers have tended to measure childhood exposure using dichotomous variables (e.g. it either has happened or it has not) (Evan, Davies & DiLillo, 2008).

This limits our understanding of the effects of WPV as the severity or chronicity of the parental violence can lead to specific negative and long-lasting outcomes on the exposed child.

A number of theories can explain why destructive forms of inter-parental conflict affect the child's emotions, thoughts and behaviour. According to Emotional Security Theory (EST; Davies & Cummings, 1994), the child's main goal within the family environment is to feel safe and secure. The presence of destructive forms of inter-parental conflict threaten this aim and as a result the child can become emotionally distressed (McCoy, Cummings & Davies, 2009). Grych and Fincham's (1990) Cognitive-Contextual Framework (CCF) highlights that the child's emotional stress may be exacerbated by their own negative appraisals of the inter-parental conflict. Therefore, it is their appraisals that influence their adjustment following exposure to inter-parental conflict (Grych & Fincham, 1993). Family Systems Theory (FST; Grych, Raynor & Fosco, 2004) posits that the relationships in the family as a whole can affect the child's adjustment. For example, a triangulation may occur between the child and their parents whereby the child may willingly (e.g. in an attempt to prevent further conflict) or unwillingly (e.g. being the subject of the conflict) participate in the inter-parental conflict (Fosco & Grych, 2008). Ultimately, each theory offers a complimentary but differing explanation as to why parental behaviour during conflict and separation/divorce may impact negatively on the child.

4.1.4 Measurement

Research on IPV screening tools remains limited, a recent systematic review found IPV tools had not gathered deep-rooted psychometric properties and had small numbers of evaluating studies (Rabin, Jennings, Campbell & Bair-Merritt, 2009). Waltermaurer (2005) notes that between the timeframe 1979-2003 over 33 measurement tools have been developed for IPV. This highlights the changing nature of IPV definitions, research and the subsequent adaptation of measurement tools.

Straus' Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; 1979) has been described as 'revolutionary' since its creation (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2005). Researchers were able to quantify levels of violence occurring 'behind closed doors'. Hence the CTS measure has been widely used in IPV research since (Straus, 1987). This tool generates violence levels which are then comparable across studies (Holtzworth-Munroe 2011). Despite this, the measure is not without its criticisms. Caveats relate to the lack of context provided by the CTS, emphasis on violent acts and ignoring who initiates violence (Straus, 1987). This measure is seen as flexible and has an extensive research base in the field of IPV. This measure was revised in 1996 to help address some of its criticisms (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy & Sugarman, 1996).

Many assessments of inter-parental conflict neglect children's perceptions and fail to assess various aspects of the child's experience (Grych, Seid & Fincham, 2008). However, Grych, Seid and Fincham (1992) devised a multifaceted tool called Children's Perception of Inter-parental Conflict (CPIC) which investigates the interpretation the children assign to the conflict. This tool has been utilised for respondents in later adolescence (17-21 year olds) showing good reliability and external validity (Bickham & Fiese, 1997). Currently, there are no measures available which investigate adolescents' perceptions of divorce proceedings or allegations made between their parents. Therefore, there is a research gap which needs to be filled.

4.1.5 Perceptions

Grych and Fincham (1990) developed a cognitive contextual framework describing how children's judgments of inter-parental conflict may predict their own adjustment in terms of internalising symptoms (e.g. self-blame). Fosco, DeBoard and Grych (2007) revised this framework to apply it to children's externalising problems (e.g. conduct problems). Therefore it is important to consider children's perceptions of the inter-parental conflict as this may affect the severity of the child's internalising and externalising problems (Jouriles, Vu, MacDonald & Rosenfield, 2014). Additionally, it serves to increase our understanding of the development of child-specific adjustment problems (Fosco, DeBoard & Grych, 2007). Moreover, Lacinova, Michalcakova and Bousa (2013) found a positive relationship

between inter-parental conflict appraisals and adolescences general fearfulness.

There is little knowledge regarding how child's perceptions of inter-parental conflict and emotional security may affect their social competence (Hungerford, Wait, Fritz & Clements, 2012). Howell, Miller and Graham-Bermann (2012) argue that too few studies have investigated children's perceptions of inter-parental conflict and violence.

Academic performance and inter-parental conflict has been seldom researched in early adulthood. Hunt, Krueger and Limberg (2017) was one such study that investigated college student perceptions on inter-parental conflict. The authors found that students with lower levels of perceived inter-parental conflict fared better in their academic success. In particular, for students living away from home, negative appraisals regarding perceived threat to themselves and others had a medium effect on their academic performance (*ibid*). Hunt, Krueger and Limberg (2017) called for additional research to examine the validity and reliability of the CPIC (Grych *et al.*, 1992). Overall, there is scope for further research into student populations given the links between inter-parental conflict and academic performance in children and adolescents.

4.1.6 Aims

- To explore a student population's appraisals of inter-parental conflict.

- To explore a student population's experience of parental divorce, marital conflict and allegations of IPV

4.1.7 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are proposed based on the research above:

- Hypothesis 1: There will be a relationship between participants' negative appraisals of inter-parental conflict and the extent to which conflict tactics are used between their parents.
- Hypothesis 2: There will be differences between those who report their academic studies were affected by parental conflict and divorce/separation than those who report being unaffected.
- Hypothesis 3: There will be differences between those who report their social relationships have suffered as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation than those who report being unaffected.

4.2 Method

4.2.1 Participants

548 university students (Median = 21yrs, SD = 7.3, Range 18 to 72) were recruited through university department gatekeepers. The sample was a voluntary and convenience sample. Gatekeepers of university faculties or departments were emailed to ask permission to circulate a recruitment email to the students. After granting permission, the gatekeepers were sent a recruitment email (Appendix 7) to then distribute. The following Universities were targeted; University of Nottingham, University of

Birmingham and Keele University. The inclusion criteria for this study were students undertaking either an undergraduate, postgraduate, doctorate or PhD course/research. Students had to be aged 18 or older to participate in the study. Participants were recruited between February and September 2015. Sample size calculations indicated that a sample of 134 was required for hypothesis 1 (when selecting a medium effect size and an error probability of 0.95). The research gained a favourable opinion from the University of Nottingham's School of Medicine Ethics Committee (Appendix 6).

4.2.2 Measures

An online survey was created and piloted (Appendix 8). The survey consists of five sections; (1) Section A requested demographic information of the participant (e.g. age and gender); (2) Section B incorporated measure I; (3) Section C included measure II; (4) Section D comprised of measure III; and (5) Section E included the debrief form.

Measure I was an adapted version of the Conflict Tactics Scale-2 (CTS-2; Straus *et al.,* 1996). This measure has been widely used amongst domestic violence literature. The CTS-2 comprises of five scales (39 items); Negotiation (six items), Psychological Aggression (eight items), Physical Assault (twelve items), Sexual Coercion (six items) and Injury (seven items). However, for the purposes of this study only three scales were

used; Negotiation (six items), Psychological Aggression (eight items) and Physical Assault (twelve items).

The Negotiation scale items refer to conflict tactics used by an individual to settle a disagreement through discussion (Straus *et al.*, 1996). Example items in the Negotiation scale included; '*showing respect for the other's feelings about an issue*', and '*saying they are sure they could work out a problem*'. Therefore, higher scores on this scale may indicate a greater extent of using more desirable strategies to alleviate conflict. The Psychological Aggression scale items refer to verbal and non-physical forms of aggression used as tactics to solve conflict in a relationship. For example; '*calling him/her fat or ugly*', and '*stomping out of the room, house, or yard during a disagreement*'. Higher scores on this scale may indicate a greater use of psychological aggression strategies to manage conflict. The Physical Assault scale items comprise of physically violent acts used to quell conflict in a relationship. Example items include; '*punched or hit him/her with something that could hurt*', and '*slammed him/her against a wall*'. Higher scores on this scale may indicate a greater extent of physically aggressive behaviours used to alleviate conflict.

One of the Psychological Aggression subscale items was removed (i.e. *accusing him or her of being a lousy lover*). This particular item in the Psychological Aggression subscale was removed in order to improve the subscale internal consistency. This decision prior to data collection was

made due to Straus *et al.*, (1996) finding that the Psychological Aggression subscale had only acceptable internal consistency (α = .79). Therefore, a 25-item questionnaire was used to determine the extent of conflict tactics witnessed by the participant during their childhood. Further adaptations were based on the author's suggestions to measure inter-parental conflict tactics. For example, changing the wording of the questions from "I" and "my partner" to "him/her". Further, the participant was asked to answer based on the conflict tactics of both their parents (rather than each parent separately). This reduced the size of the questionnaire in order to keep it at a reasonable length.

Participants were asked to rate the amount of times the behaviour occurred during their childhood on an seven point ordinal scale; zero (scored as 0), once (scored as 1), twice (scored as 2), three to five times (scored as 4), six to ten times (scored as 8), eleven to twenty (scored as 15), or more than twenty times (scored as 25). These item raw scores are totalled to make a total raw score for each subscale. The maximum scores on each subscale are as follows; Negotiation 150, Psychological Aggression 175 (due to one omitted item otherwise the maximum score would be 200), and Physical Assault 300. These subscale raw scores are considered standalone and are not combined to provide a total raw score (Jones, Browne & Chou, 2017). Instead, using this 'averaging method' each subscale total provides a chronicity score. The chronicity score is an estimation of the extent to which those types of conflict tactics have

occurred. Higher chronicity scores indicate a greater extent to which the conflict tactics have been used in the specified time period. Usually, these raw scores provide a chronicity score for the past year. However, for this study, these total subscale raw scores provide a chronicity score of the participants' childhood. Typical chronicity score are provided by Straus *et al.*, 2003) in the CTS-2 handbook. These chronicity scores are as follows for a university student sample; Negotiation 57.4-69.7, Psychological Aggression 15.1-17.2, and Physical Assault 9.3-15.9 (*ibid*). However these typical scores were obtained using the year time frame. Therefore, scores were likely to be greater in the current study given that the participants were asked to recall conflict tactics across their own childhood. Reliability analyses of the subscales of the CTS-2 demonstrated good to excellent internal consistency (Negotiation α = .89, Psychological Aggression α = .83 & Physical Assault α = .92).

Measure II was an adapted version of revised 48-item measure looking at the child's perceptions of inter-parental conflict. Five subscales (24-items) from the initial nine subscales of the Children's Perception of Inter-parental Conflict scale (CPIC; Grych, Seid & Fincham, 1992) have been used to ascertain how the participant perceives inter-parental conflict measured through the following dimensions; (a) Self-Blame (4 items), (b) Coping Efficacy (6 items), (c) Content (4 items), (d) Perceived Threat (6 items) and (e) Triangulation (4 items). These items are measured on a three point Likert scale; True (scored as 2), Sort of True (scored as 1) and False (scored

as 0). Therefore the maximum scores for each subscale were as follows; Self-Blame = 8, Coping Efficacy = 12, Content = 8, Perceived Threat = 12, and Triangulation = 8. The questions for measure II were altered slightly from the original CPIC. Instead of asking participants in present tense, the questions were written in past tense. Additionally, the introduction to measure II was rewritten to ensure participants were in fact answering questions about their childhood.

The Self-Blame subscale refers to appraisals in which the child blames themselves for their parents' arguments. An example Self-Blame item includes, '*It was usually my fault when my parents argued*'. The Coping Efficacy subscale refers to appraisals relating to the child's ability to cope well with the parents' arguments. For example, '*When my parents argued I could do something to make myself feel better*'. The Content subscale refers to appraisals about the content of the parents' arguments. For example, '*My parents' arguments were usually about something I did*'. The Perceived Threat subscale refers to appraisals about the threat towards the child, parents and worries about the future. Example items include; '*I got scared when my parents argued*', and '*When my parents argued I worried that they might get divorced*'. The Triangulation subscale refers to appraisals about the child feeling involved in the parents' arguments. For example, '*I felt caught in the middle when my parents argued*'. Self-Blame and Content subscales are combined to make the Self-Blame scale with a maximum score of 16 (eight items). Further, another scale Threat (twelve

items) comprises of the Perceived Threat and Coping Efficacy subscales with a maximum score of 24. On all subscales and scales of the CPIC, higher scores are indicative of more negative inter-parental conflict appraisals. Moura et al. (2010) provides mean scores on each of these subscales, these mean scores can provide a good comparison to the current study as the participants were 677 adolescents and emerging adults (14-25 years old). Moura et al. (2010) found the following mean scores; 3.12 (*SD* .83) for the Threat scale, 3.10 (*SD* 1.16) for the Perceived Threat subscale, and 3.15 (*SD* .86) for the Coping Efficacy subscale. For the Self-Blame scale, Moura et al. (2010) found the mean score of 2.18 (*SD* .75) and for the subscales of this scale, Content 2.10 (*SD* .87) and Self-Blame 2.26 (*SD* .81). Finally, the Triangulation subscale mean score was 2.29 (*SD* .85).

Reliability analysis of the CPIC subscales indicated questionable to good internal consistency (self-blame α = .61, coping efficacy α = .74, content α = .78, perceived threat α = .82 & triangulation α = .75). However, in order to improve Cronbach's alpha variables one item from the coping efficacy and content subscales were removed from the analysis. Reliability analysis of the CPIC scales; Self-Blame (α = .81) and Threat (α = .81) indicated good internal consistency. However, the removal of one item from the Self-Blame scale was required to improve the internal consistency from poor.

In section D, measure III was a 22-item questionnaire created by the authors to investigate whether the participants having experienced parental

divorce, knew of any allegations of IPV made by their parents and the impact of conflict/divorce on their current university studies.

4.2.3 Procedure

The online survey was created on a password protected website (Bristol Online Surveys) where only the investigators had access to. The online survey hyperlink was emailed to department gatekeepers at three UK universities to gain permission for distribution amongst students within their respective departments. Once participants clicked on the link, they were taken to the information sheet (Appendix 8). Afterwards, each participant was taken to the demographic information section asking for their age, gender, and their parents' profession. This was for screening purposes to ensure under age students (<18) could not participate in the research. Additionally, this provided an opportunity to investigate response bias. Following the completion of these demographical fields the participants were taken to the consent form. Participants then could proceed to the online survey. All participants received the same online survey. However, if the participants had experienced parental divorce they were asked additional questions (i.e. Measure III). Participants who had not experienced parental divorce were taken to the debrief sheet. Participants who endorsed that they had experienced parental divorce continued the questionnaire (*n* = 129*)*. Once they had reached a question regarding whether allegations of domestic violence had been made, those who answered 'no' were taken to the debrief sheet. Participants who either

responded ‘not sure’ or ‘yes’ continued the questionnaire regarding the impact of their exposure to inter-parental conflict and divorce/separation (*n* = 28). Once the survey was completed the participants were taken to the debrief sheet. Data was kept confidential and no participant identifiers were collected.

4.2.4 Data Analysis

Reliability analyses (Cronbach’s alpha) were performed to determine the internal consistency of the scales used in the research (see measures section). Sample demographics were explored. Descriptive statistics and Spearman’s rank correlations (hypothesis 1) were performed. Data were not normally distributed therefore for hypothesis 2 and 3 Mann-Whitney U tests were performed to determine differences between groups.

4.3 Results

Survey data was compiled into a statistical database (IBM SPSS v.22), coded and then analysed. The data compiled were anonymous and confidential therefore no identifiers were recorded on the database at any time. Relevant items were reversed scored before data analysis commenced. Items were recoded into subscales and scale totals, where appropriate. Missing data were excluded altogether from the analysis by coding them as missing.

Figure 2: ***Survey Drop-out Flowchart***

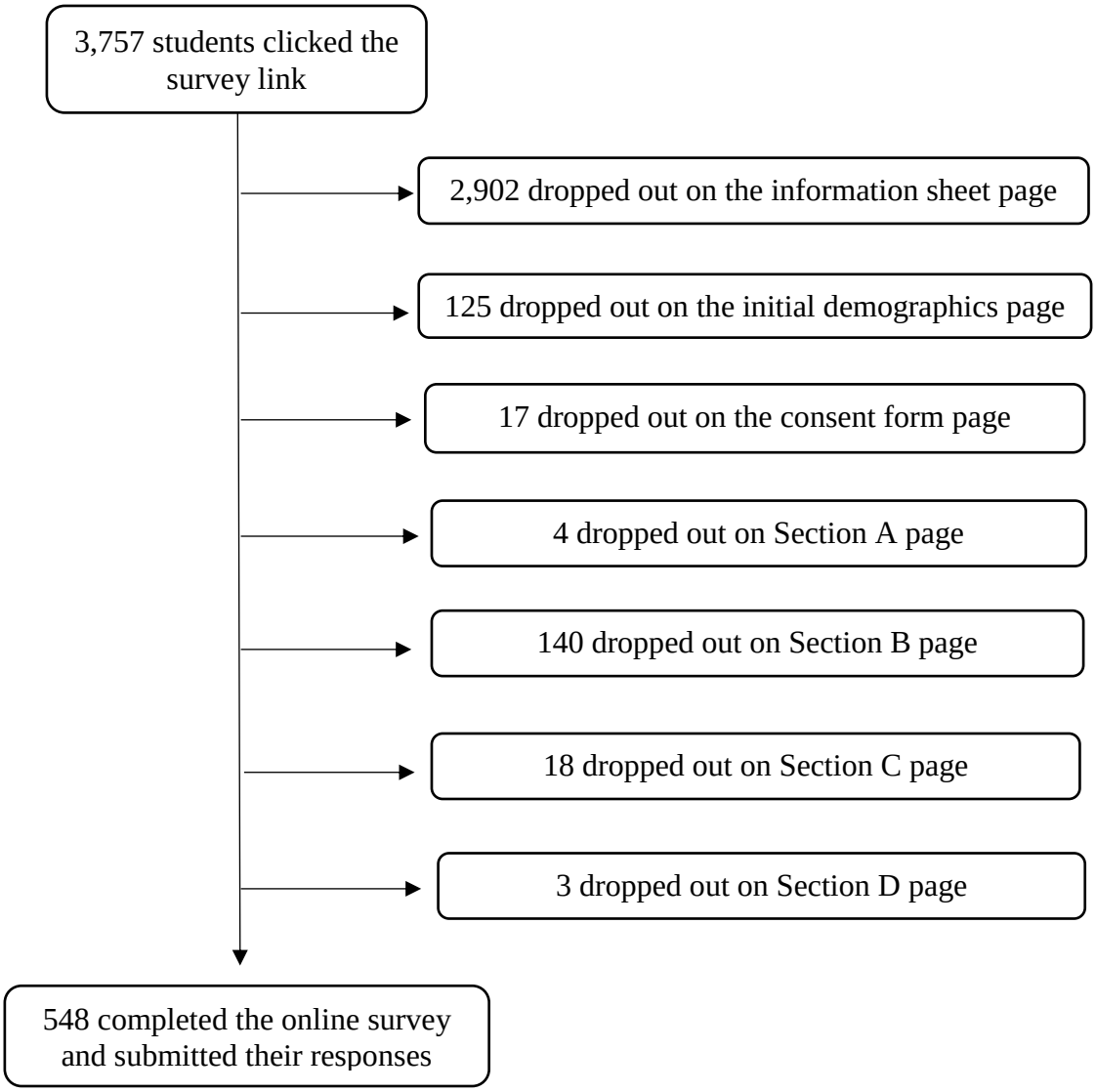


Figure 2 above highlights the number of students who clicked on the survey link to the number of students who completed the online survey. The majority of students dropped out on the information sheet page. This may indicate that they decided not to take part in the study following reading the information sheet. The second largest dropout number was the CTS-2 section of the survey. This could relate to the participants being reluctant to answer questions about their parents' conflict tactics in childhood. Overall, the drop-out rate was relatively high at 85.4% (*n* = 3,209). This

drop-out could have been influenced by the sensitive nature of the research topic.

Table 8: ***Demographic Characteristics (n = 548)***

Demographic Variable		*n* (%)
Gender	Female	398 (72.6%)
	Male	150 (27.4%)
SES	Low	136 (25.7%)
	Middle	393 (71.7%)
Birth Order	Only Child	70 (12.8%)
	First Child	236 (43.1%)
	Second Child	155 (28.3%)
	Third Child	59 (10.8%)
	Fourth Child	19 (3.5%)
	Fifth Child or Other	9 (1.6%)
Parental Marital Status	Intact Relationship	419 (76.5%)
	Divorced or Separated	129 (23.5%)

Table 8 above highlights the demographic characteristics of the university student sample. The sample was predominantly female of middle Socio-Economic Status (based on the professions of their parents). In relation to birth order, the sample were mainly the first born children of their sibling group. The second largest birth order group were participants who were the second born siblings. Nearly a quarter of participants (*n* = 129, 23.5%) had parents who had either separated or divorced.

Table 9: ***Frequency Table of Impact of Divorce/Separation (n = 129)***

Variable		*n* (%)
Divorced/separated parents	Yes	129 (23.5%)
	No	419 (76.5%)*
Age at the time of divorce/separation	0-4yrs	14 (10.9%)
	5-9yrs	28 (21.7%)
	10-14yrs	41 (31.8%)
	15-19yrs	31 (24%)
	20-24yrs	9 (7%)
	25yrs +	6 (4.7%)
Social service involvement	Yes	9 (7%)
	Not sure	22 (17.1%)
	No	98 (76%)
Social worker home visit	Yes	8 (6.2%)
	Not sure	14 (10.9%)
	No	107 (82.9%)
Solicitors used to take divorce proceedings to court or mediation	Yes	62 (48.1%)
	Not sure	25 (19.4%)
	No	42 (32.6%)
Police involvement	Yes	11 (8.5%)
	Not sure	14 (10.9%)
	No	104 (80.6%)
Police home visit	Yes	15 (11.6%)
	Not sure	15 (11.6%)
	No	99 (76.7%)
Relationship counselling sought prior to the divorce/separation	Yes	22 (17.1%)
	Not sure	28 (21.7%)
	No	79 (61.2%)
Allegations made of DV	Yes	16 (12.4%)
	Not sure	12 (9.3%)
	No	101 (78.3%)*
Both parents making allegations of DV	Yes	1 (3.6%)
	Just Mother	21 (75%)
	Just Father	0 (0%)
	No	6 (21.4%)
Participant knew about the allegations of DV at the time	Yes	13 (46.4%)
	Not sure	6 (21.4%)
	No	9 (32.1%)
Participant believed the allegations of DV were correct at the time	Yes	16 (57.1%)
	Not sure	4 (14.3%)

	No	3 (10.7%)
	N/A	5 (17.9%)
Participant believed the allegations of DV are correct now	Yes	16 (57.1%)
	Not sure	9 (32.1%)
	No	3 (10.7%)
Participant contact with both parents	Yes	16 (57.1%)
	Just mother	8 (28.6%)
	Just father	2 (7.1%)
	Neither	2 (7.1%)
Parents contact with each other	Frequent	1 (3.6%)
	Sometimes	2 (7.1%)
	Occasionally	3 (10.7%)
	Rarely	11 (39.3%)
	Never	11 (39.3%)
Level of contact with mother	Frequent	19 (67.9%)
	Sometimes	1 (3.6%)
	Occasionally	4 (14.3%)
	Rarely	3 (10.7%)
	Never	1 (3.6%)
Level of contact with father	Frequent	7 (25%)
	Sometimes	7 (25%)
	Occasionally	2 (7.1%)
	Rarely	4 (14.3%)
	Never	8 (28.6%)
Rating parent's relationship currently	No contact	14 (50%)
	Conflicting	10 (35.7%)
	Civil	3 (10.7%)
	Friends	1 (3.6%)
Ongoing conflict between parents	Yes	15 (53.6%)
	Not sure	4 (14.3%)
	No	9 (32.1%)
Feeling required to travel home to support their parents due to conflict and divorce/separation.	Yes	7 (25%)
	Not sure	5 (17.9%)
	No	16 (57.1%)
Academic studies have suffered as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation	Yes	11 (39.3%)
	Not sure	6 (21.4%)
	No	11 (39.3%)
Social relationships have suffered as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation	Yes	21 (75%)
	Not sure	2 (7.1%)
	No	5 (17.9%)

*Indicates participants who completed the questionnaire and were taken to the debrief sheet, therefore not answering the other questions.

Table 9 above highlights characteristics for the 129 (23.5%) participants who endorsed that their parents were either divorced or separated. Participants were predominantly aged between 10-14 when their parents divorced or separated. Participants recalled that social service involvement were not often involved in their parents' divorce or separation. However, the majority of cases had solicitor involvement in some form, either for divorce proceedings or mediation. Police were often not involved in the divorce or separation as only 11 participants (8.5%) had endorsed this item. Furthermore, 15 participants (11.6%) recalled a home visit by the police. 22 participants (17.1%) recalled that their parents sought relationship counselling prior to the divorce or separation.

Table 9 also highlights characteristics for the 28 participants who either fully endorsed (*n* = 16, 12.4%), or partly endorsed (*n* = 12, 9.3%), the presence of allegations being made of DV during their parents' divorce or separation. The majority of these participants recalled that their mother had made the allegation of DV (*n* = 21, 75%). Predominantly, participants knew about the allegations of DV at the time (*n* = 13, 46.4%), and believed the allegations of DV to be correct at the time (*n* = 16, 57.1%). Similarly, 16 participants (57.1%) believed the allegation of DV to be correct currently. The majority of participants have contact with both of their parents (*n* = 16, 57.1%). However, participants' parents had little (*n* = 11, 39.3%) or no (*n* = 11, 39.3%) contact with each other. 19 participants endorsed having frequent contact with their mothers (67.9%). In

comparison, participants endorsed various levels of contact with their fathers. For example the most endorsed items were; 'Frequent' (*n* = 7, 25%), 'Sometimes' (*n* = 7, 25%), and 'Never' (*n* = 8, 28.6%). Participants were asked to rate their parents' current relationship with each other. Half of the participants reported that their parents had no contact with each other (*n* = 14, 50%) and 10 (35.7%) reported that their parents relationships were conflicting. Relatedly, the majority of participants reported that there was ongoing conflict between their parents (*n* = 15, 53.6%). A quarter of participants (*n* = 7, 25%) felt required to travel home to support their parents due to their parents' conflict, divorce or separation. 11 (39.3%) participants felt that their academic studies had suffered as a result of their parents' conflict and separation/divorce. Moreover, the majority of participants (*n* = 21, 75%) felt that their social relationships had suffered because of their parents' conflict and separation/divorce.

Table 10: ***Conflict Tactics Scales-2 (CTS-2) and Child's Perceptions of Inter-parental Conflict (CPIC) descriptive statistics (n = 548)***

	Mean	*SD*
CTS-2 Negotiation	73.54	48.08
CTS-2 Psychological Aggression	42.69	40.83
CTS-2 Physical Assault	6.87	25.06
CPIC Self-Blame Scale	1.54	2.38
CPIC Self-Blame	0.85	1.35
CPIC Content	0.68	1.24
CPIC Threat Scale	10.64	5.33
CPIC Perceived Threat	4.26	3.45
CPIC Coping Efficacy	5.49	2.63
CPIC Triangulation	2.49	2.37

Table 10 presents the CTS-2 chronicity scores for CTS-2 Negotiation, Psychological Aggression, and Physical Assault conflict tactics between parents and witnessed by the university students during their childhood. These chronicity scores highlight that negotiation conflict tactics were used to a greater extent than the psychological aggression and physical assault conflict tactics. As expected, negotiation (e.g. showing respect for each other) and psychological aggression (e.g. verbal abuse) conflict tactics were used to a greater extent than the typical scores provided in Straus et al. (2003). This was likely to be due to Straus et al. (2003) using the time frame of a year for the CTS-2 questions. In comparison, this sample used the participants' whole childhood as a time-frame. However, the physical assault (e.g. hitting or kicking) conflict tactics were used to a lesser extent, in this sample, compared to Straus et al. (2003). Furthermore, it was

expected that the average negotiation tactics chronicity scores would still have been higher than 73.54.

Table 10 also presents the CPIC scale and subscale mean scores. These mean scores relate to the perceptions of the university students regarding the arguments they witnessed between their parents. Participants endorsed more negative appraisals relating to the threat (CPIC – Threat scale) they felt at the time of the parental conflict. Specifically, participants endorsed more negative appraisals about their ability to cope (CPIC – Coping Efficacy subscale) with the arguments between their parents than other dimensions of negative appraisals. Furthermore, participants had more negative appraisals relating to perceived threat towards themselves and others (CPIC – Perceived Threat subscale), than the Self-Blame, Content and Triangulation subscales. The results indicate that the extent to which the participants; (1) blame themselves for their parents arguing (CPIC – Self-Blame subscale), and (2) felt the content of their parents arguing was about them (CPIC – Content subscale), were the least endorsed constructs of the CPIC questionnaire. In comparison to Moura et al. (2010), this sample has higher Threat scale, Perceived Threat subscale and Coping Efficacy subscale mean scores. Triangulation subscale scores were relatively similar indicating that the adolescents/emerging adults from Moura's et al. (2010) sample, felt similar levels of being drawn into the parental conflict. However, the Self-Blame scale, Self-Blame subscale and Content subscale mean scores were lower than that of Moura et al. (2010).

Table 11: ***Correlation matrix highlighting associations between measure subscales (n = 548)***

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. CTS-2 Negotiation	1									
2. CTS-2 Psychological Aggression	-.13*	1								
3. CTS-2 Physical Assault	-.25**	.54**	1							
4. CPIC Threat	-.35**	.54**	.45**	1						
5. CPIC Poor Coping Efficacy	-.36**	.46**	.31**	.86**	1					
6. CPIC Perceived Threat	-.32**	.50**	.46**	.93**	.66**	1				
7. CPIC Self-Blame	-.10	.21**	.25**	.26**	.20**	.25**	1			
8. CPIC Self-Blame	-.12**	.14**	.21**	.23**	.18**	.22**	.91**	1		
9. CPIC Content	-.08	.25**	.24**	.27**	.19**	.25**	.83**	.59**	1	
10. CPIC Triangulation	-.21**	.41**	.37**	.42**	.29**	.44**	.24**	.22**	.21**	1

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 11 presents the Spearman's rank ρ correlation coefficients of the CTS-2 and CPIC scales and subscales. Each of the CTS-2 subscales (i.e. Negotiation, Psychological Aggression and Physical Assault) were associated with each other. Specifically, Psychological Aggression and Physical Assault were positively related to one another. This indicates that participants who witnessed one form of domestic abuse were also more likely to experience the other. However, if participants experienced greater levels of negotiation tactics (a constructive form of resolving conflict) they were less likely to be exposed to more destructive forms of conflict tactics (e.g. psychological aggression and physical assault) between their parents during childhood.

CPIC scales (Threat and Self-Blame), and subscales (Triangulation, Coping Efficacy, Self-Blame, Content and Perceived Threat) were all positively associated with each other. This indicated that if participants endorsed higher scores on one of the subscales there were also likely to have endorsed higher scores on the other subscales measuring negative appraisals of inter-parental conflict in childhood. Therefore, participants who may have experienced one of the following; blaming oneself for the argument/conflict (Self-Blame), being the topic of the argument/conflict (Content), feeling the need to take sides (Triangulation), feeling unable to cope (Coping Efficacy), and feeling threatened by the conflict (Perceived Threat) were more likely to have experienced the other negative appraisals of inter-parental conflict.

Table 11 also highlights the relationships between CTS-2 and CPIC measures. In particular, higher negotiation conflict tactics were indicative of more positive appraisals of inter-parental conflict. Whereas, higher physical assault and psychological aggression tactics witnessed indicated higher endorsement of negative appraisals related to childhood inter-parental conflict. Overall, the majority of CTS-2 subscale scores were strongly associated with CPIC scores (e.g. $p < 0.01$). Therefore, hypothesis 1 can be accepted and the null hypothesis rejected.

4.3.1 Impact on Academic Studies

Mann-Whitney tests were performed to ascertain whether there were differences between participants whose academic studies had and had not suffered as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation. Variables selected were; (1) Current Age, (2) Birth Order, (3) Age at Divorce/Separation, (4) Negotiation, (5) Psychological Aggression, (6) Physical Assault, (7) Threat Scale, (8) Perceived Threat, (9) Coping, (10) Self-Blame Scale, (11) Self-Blame, (12) Content, and (13) Triangulation. Please see table 12 below for details.

Table 12: ***Differences between participants whose academic studies did and did not suffer as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation.***

Variable	Academic Studies Suffered (*Mdn*)	Academic Studies Did Not Suffer (*Mdn*)	Mann-Whitney *U*	*z*	*p*	*r*
Current Age	24	21	35	-1.68	*ns*	-.36
Birth Order	2	2	54.5	-.42	*ns*	-.09
Age at Divorce/Separation	2	2	54.5	-.41	*ns*	-.09
CTS-2 Negotiation	7	35.5	39	-.49	*ns*	-.11
CTS-2 Psychological Aggression	71	113	37	-.98	*ns*	-.22
CTS-2 Physical Assault	18	46	37.5	-.91	*ns*	-.20
CPIC Threat Scale	20	15	31.5	-1.92	*ns*	-.41
CPIC Perceived Threat	11	7	28.5	-2.12	*p < .05*	-.45
CPIC Coping	9	7	41.5	-1.27	*ns*	-.27
CPIC Self-Blame Scale	2	0	37.5	-1.62	*ns*	-.35
CPIC Self-Blame	2	0	37.5	-1.62	*ns*	-.35
CPIC Content	0	0	45	-1.19	*ns*	-.25
CPIC Triangulation	6	5	47.5	-.87	*ns*	-.19

The Mann-Whitney test indicated that perceived threat was significantly greater for participants (n = 11) whose academic studies had suffered as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation (*Mdn* = 11), than participants (n = 11) whose academic studies had not suffered (*Mdn* = 7), U = 28.5, z = -2.12, $p < .05$, r = -.45. In other words, participants who perceived more threat to themselves and others during parental conflict in childhood were more likely to report that their academic studies had suffered.

Other Mann-Whitney tests highlighted non-significant differences between participants whose academic studies suffered vs. participants whose academic studies did not suffer. For example, the extent of negotiation conflict tactics had no significant bearing on whether a participant reported that their academic studies have suffered as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation or not.

Table 13: ***Gender differences between participants whose academic studies did and did not suffer as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation***

	Academic Studies Did Not Suffer	**Unsure if Academic Studies Suffered**	**Academic Studies Suffered**
Male	**3**	**0**	**1**
Female	**8**	**6**	**10**

A two-sided Fischer's exact test revealed no significant differences between male and female participants whose academic studies suffered as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation ($p > .5$).

4.3.2 Impact on Social Relationships

Mann-Whitney tests were performed to ascertain whether there were differences between participants whose social relationships had and had not suffered as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation. Variables selected were; (1) Current Age, (2) Birth Order, (3) Age at

Divorce/Separation, (4) Negotiation, (5) Psychological Aggression, (6) Physical Assault, (7) Threat Scale, (8) Perceived Threat, (9) Coping, (10) Self-Blame Scale, (11) Self-Blame, (12) Content, and (13) Triangulation. Please see table 14 below for details.

Table 14: ***Differences between participants whose social relationships did and did not suffer as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation.***

Variable	Social Relationships Suffered (*Mdn*)	Social Relationships Did Not Suffer (*Mdn*)	Mann-Whitney *U*	*Z*	*p*	*r*
Current Age	22	20	46.5	-.39	*ns*	-.08
Birth Order	2	2	38	-1.01	*ns*	-.20
Age at Divorce/Separation	2	2	44	-.57	*ns*	-.11
CTS-2 Negotiation	30.5	13.5	19	-1.45	*ns*	-.31
CTS-2 Psychological Aggression	92	46	18.5	-.96	*ns*	-.20
CTS-2 Physical Assault	21	18	26.5	-.32	*ns*	-.07
CPIC Threat Scale	20	15	17.5	-2.29	*p < .05*	-.45
CPIC Perceived Threat	10	6	16	-2.39	*p < .05*	-.47
CPIC Coping	8	7	38	-.96	*ns*	-.19
CPIC Self-Blame Scale	1	0	37	-.1.08	*ns*	-.21
CPIC Self-Blame	1	0	40.5	-.84	*ns*	-.16
CPIC Content	0	0	27.5	-1.87	*ns*	-.37
CPIC Triangulation	6	4	20.5	-2.12	*p < .05*	-.42

One Mann-Whitney test indicated that threat was significantly greater for participants (n = 21) whose social relationships had suffered as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation (Mdn = 20), than participants (n = 21) whose social relationships had not suffered (Mdn = 15), U = 17.5, z = -2.29, $p < .05$, r = -.45. In other words, participants who perceived greater

threat and did not know how to cope during parental conflict in childhood were more likely to report that their social relationships had suffered.

Another Mann-Whitney test indicated that perceived threat was significantly greater for participants (n = 21) whose social relationships had suffered as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation (Mdn = 10), than participants (n = 5) whose social relationships had not suffered (Mdn = 6), U = 16, z = -2.39, p < .05, r = -.47. Therefore, participants who perceived more threat to themselves and others during parental conflict in childhood were more likely to report that their social relationships had suffered.

Triangulation was found to be significantly greater for participants (n = 21) whose social relationships had suffered as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation (Mdn = 6), than participants (n = 5) whose social relationship had not suffered (Mdn = 4), U = 20.5, z = -2.12, p < .05, r = -.42. Therefore, participants who felt caught between their parents during their conflict in childhood were more likely to report that their social relationships had suffered.

Table 14 also presents a number of non-significant differences between participants who reported their social relationships have suffered as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation than those who had not. For example, the participants' age at the time of the divorce had no significant

bearing on whether they reported that their social relationships had suffered or not.

Table 15: ***Gender differences between participants whose social relationships did and did not suffer as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation***

	Social Relationships Did Not Suffer	Unsure if Social Relationships Suffered	Social Relationships Suffered
Male	**2**	**1**	**1**
Female	**3**	**1**	**20**

A two-sided Fischer's exact test revealed significant differences between male and female participants whose social relationships suffered as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation ($p < .05$).

4.4 Discussion

Overall, the findings highlight the presence of both constructive and destructive forms of marital conflict. Marital conflict has been considered an ordinary part of family existence (Reynolds *et al.*, 2014) and constructive forms are more prevalent than destructive forms in this particular sample. In particular, the negotiation conflict tactics were associated with more positive appraisals of parental conflict during childhood. Thus, supporting the theory that constructive forms of marital

conflict are pro-social and provide a good modelling opportunity for the child witnessing the behaviour (Reynolds e*t al.*, 2014).

This sample experienced a lesser extent of physical assault tactics than the typical scores of Straus et al. (2003). Both samples utilised convenience student samples. As expected, a greater extent of psychological aggression conflict tactics were found in this sample compared to Straus et al. (2003). This is likely due to the participants being asked to recall conflict tactics over the whole of their childhood, as opposed to the last 12 months. Destructive forms of inter-parental conflict (e.g. psychological aggression and physical assault) were associated with more negative appraisals of parental conflict during childhood. This was the case for all aspects of negative appraisals including: (1) perceived threat – the extent to which the child felt threatened themselves or worried about threat towards others and their future, (2) coping efficacy – the extent to which the child felt able to cope with parental conflict, (3) self-blame – the extent to which the child blames themselves for the parental conflict, (4) content – the extent to which the child felt the topic of the parental conflict was about them, and (5) triangulation – the extent to which the child felt caught between their parents and forced to choose sides.

Therefore, the impact of destructive forms of marital conflict should not be under-estimated (Cummings & Davies, 2014). These findings highlight the impact of being exposed to childhood inter-parental conflict and supports

researchers noting its link to levels of distress (Reynolds *et al.*, 2014), perceived powerlessness, internalising trauma symptoms (Bogat *et al.*, 2006; Holt, Buckley & Whelan, 2008) and lower levels of well-being (Amato & Keith, 1991). Additionally, the research provides support for the Cognitive Contextual Framework proposed by Grych and Fincham (1990).

Significant differences were found between participants who felt their academic studies had suffered as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation and again perceived threat was associated with those whose academic studies were affected. Participants who reported that their academic studies were affected also reported more negative appraisals relating to perceived threat. Therefore, participants who reported higher levels of feeling threatened by the inter-parental conflict were more likely to experience difficulties in their academic studies at university. This finding provides support for Hunt, Krueger and Limberg (2017) who found that negative appraisals of inter-parental conflict were linked to poorer academic performance in a college sample. Furthermore, this finding adds to the relative dearth in studies investigating academic performance and inter-parental conflict for young adults enrolled at university (Hunt, Krueger and Limberg, 2017). Moreover, no gender differences were found in relation to participants who reported that their academic studies suffered as a result of parental conflict and of divorce/separation. This appears to mirror the findings of previous authors, where no significant differences in outcomes

for males and females were found (Kitzmann *et al.*, 2003; Wolfe *et al.*, 2003; Evans *et al.*, 2008)

Significant differences were found between participants who felt their social relationships had suffered as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation and those whose social relationships were unaffected. Participants who reported that their social relationships were affected also reported more negative appraisals. Specifically, participants from divorced/separated families who felt caught in between their parents and felt that they needed to choose sides (e.g. triangulation) were more likely to report that their social relationships had suffered (see table 14). This finding can be explained by the Family Systems Theory (FST; Grych & Fosco, 2008) whereby the family dynamics are affected by the conflict tactics displayed by the parents, leading to separation or divorce. Additionally, the finding highlighted how inter-parental conflict and divorce/separation still continues to impact on them as they progress through adulthood (Amato, 2010). Furthermore, gender differences were found indicating that females were more likely to report that their social relationships had suffered as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation. An alternative explanation could be that the female participants were more aware of their social relationships suffering as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation than male participants. Either way, this finding should be interpreted with caution given the small sample size. Previous authors found no significant gender differences,

which suggests that a child's gender does not moderate the relationship between exposure and outcome (Kitzmann *et al.*, 2003; Wolfe *et al.*, 2003; Evans *et al.*, 2008). Nevertheless, gender differences require further investigation in studies with larger sample size.

Participants who felt more threatened and unable to cope with the parental-conflict (e.g. threat) also reported difficulties in their social relationships as a result of the parental conflict and divorce/separation. Similarly to academic difficulties, participants who perceived more threat to themselves, others and their future were more likely to report difficulties in their social relationships as a result of the parental conflict and divorce/separation. These findings add to the dearth of studies investigating how exposure to inter-parental conflict may affect a child's social competence (Hungerford, Wait, Fritz & Clements, 2012).

Perceived threat appears a key negative appraisal construct that may lead the exposed child to experience both social and academic difficulties later on in early adulthood. This supports the finding from Grych, Harold and Miles (2003) who found perceived threat had a mediating role between exposure to inter-parental conflict and childhood adjustment problems. However, the findings of the current study extend their research by investigating difficulties faced by children who were from divorced/separated families and the impact this has had on their early adulthood. Overall, these findings also provide an explanation as to why

some children from divorced or separated families may experience more adjustment and achievement problems than others (Kelly, 2000).

4.4.1 Limitations

The researchers note a number of caveats with the research presented in this article. Firstly, the data was reliant upon the participants' retrospective accounts of inter-parental conflict during childhood. This may have impacted on the accuracy of the data provided, specifically, the chronicity of inter-parental conflict. However, it is likely their reports represent an under-estimation of chronicity of the conflict, given that conflict may have occurred during infancy and that they may have not been present at the time of the conflict. The CTS-2 and the CPIC measures were completed by the same person, and at the same time. Therefore, a relationship between the measures was to be expected. It is likely that the participants' responses were subject recall bias whereby they were more likely to recall negative events in their past and therefore appraise inter-parental conflict negatively. Secondly, there are generalisability issues with the opportunistic sample population. This limits the ecological validity because the sample were taken from three central UK universities and the gender of the sample were predominantly female from a higher SES background. Furthermore, it is possible that those who participate in voluntary surveys have certain characteristics that are not present in those who do not participate, thus biasing the results. Relatedly, the drop-out rate was high (85.4%) indicating that there may have been individuals who did not wish

to take part in a study about perceptions inter-parental conflict. This is because the majority of the drop-out occurred on the information sheet page of the online survey. Thirdly, only a subset of the sample completed the impact questionnaire. These were 28 participants who endorsed that their parents were either divorced or separated and recalled allegations of IPV. Therefore, the impact of experiencing inter-parental conflict alone was not explored. This oversight limits the scope of the research findings and thus only tentative conclusions the impact on academic and social relationships difficulties can be drawn. Fourthly, reliability analyses of the CPIC subscales highlighted variable internal consistency (questionable to good alpha variables) across the measure subscales. Therefore, questioning the reliability of some of the measures subscales and subsequently impacting the reliability of the results. This limitation is consistent with other authors have found similar problems with the internal consistency of the subscales of the CPIC (Moura et al., 2010). Finally, confounding variables may have influenced the participants' perceptions of inter-parental conflict (e.g. being the victim of physical abuse), as previous researchers have identified a co-occurrence between domestic violence and child maltreatment (Appel & Holden, 1998). Such confounds were not measured or accounted for in this research.

4.4.2 Implications

The authors posit the following considerations to be addressed by future researchers investigating perceptions of inter-parental conflict. Additional

measures investigating childhood perceptions of inter-parental conflict, divorce and allegations of IPV need to be developed to meet the relative paucity of questionnaires available in this area. The CTS-2 would be recommended for future use in a research context given its good to excellent internal consistency. However, the CPIC subscales had questionable to good internal consistency. These findings are similar to other authors (Moura *et al.*, 2010) who have used the CPIC including the creators of the measure (Grych *et al.*, 1992). However, using the scales of the CPIC produced good internal consistency. Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers use the CPIC threat and self-blame scales as opposed to the subscales. The current research provides a snapshot of some appraisals of inter-parental conflict and divorce/separation. As discussed in the limitations section, research is needed to investigate the impact of inter-parental conflict separate from divorce/separation. A worthy research direction would be to compare the impact of inter-parental conflict from participants from intact families and those from divorce/separation families. Overall, further quantitative and qualitative research is required to add and develop our knowledge. Specifically, additional research is required to explore the emotional, social and academic impact of parental conflict, divorce/separation and allegations of IPV on children. Again, childhood exposure to domestic violence requires further research to meet the level of research available on adult victims of domestic violence.

In relation to practice implications, this research highlights the importance for child custody evaluators and others involved in divorce proceedings to use domestic violence questionnaires and risk assessments to inform their decision making (Bow & Bower, 2003). In particular, taking into account the thoughts and feelings of the child should be paramount during divorce proceedings. Professionals need to be aware of the difficult position the child may be placed under and how this may impact on their emotional wellbeing, social relationships and academic performance. Additionally, the research findings demonstrate the need for universities to provide additional support for their students who have experienced inter-parental conflict, parental divorce/separation and IPV allegations made during divorce proceedings. This is because negative appraisals of the inter-parental conflict appears linked to difficulties with social relationships and academic performance whilst at university.

4.4.3 Conclusions

Overall, the study results add to the limited research on child perceptions of inter-parental conflict through retrospective accounts made by university students (Hungerford *et al.*, 2012; Howell, Miller & Graham-Bermann, 2012). The study provides evidence that negotiation conflict tactics are strongly associated with more positive appraisals of inter-parental conflict. Additionally, psychological aggression and physical assault conflict tactics were strongly associated with more negative appraisals of inter-parental conflict. Significant differences between participants whose academic

studies did and did not suffer as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation were found associated with perceived threat. Significant differences between participants whose social relationships did and did not suffer as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation were found again associated with perceived threat and negative appraisals. These differences are in need for further exploration and these findings could be compared to students from intact families who have witnessed destructive forms of inter-parental conflict. Furthermore, the continuation of parental conflict post-divorce/separation poses a niche research area where the groundwork has been explored in this research paper.

Linking Paragraph 3

The previous chapter (quantitative empirical research) highlighted that students who are exposed to a greater extent of destructive forms of inter-parental conflict are likely to hold more negative appraisals regarding the conflict. However, the context of these experiences can be explored further in the next chapter. The aim within the next chapter (qualitative empirical research) was to answer the following research question; *how do individuals exposed to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and divorce recollect, make sense of and cope with their experiences?* In order to provide a more in depth exploration of childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict, a qualitative approach was taken. Recommendations discussed in chapter one (introduction), two (systematic review) and four (quantitative empirical research) highlighted the need to explore the individuals' experiences of childhood exposure to inter-parental conflict. Furthermore, the previous chapters have highlighted risk factors for poor childhood adjustment. The following research provides scope to explore protective factors present within those who have been exposed to the phenomenon.

Chapter Five:

The experience of being exposed to inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce in childhood.

Abstract

The authors of this paper explored the experiences of individuals who have been exposed to inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce during childhood. This is a relatively underdeveloped research area where additional research is needed to advocate the voice of the child (Kimball, 2016). The aim of the research was to explore how these individuals recollect, make sense of and cope with the experience. Six female university students of white Caucasian ethnicity between the ages of 18 and 40 participated in a semi-structured interview. An inductive thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. Six themes were identified based on the research questions; (1) *ongoing experiences*, (2) *a traumatic internal world*, (3) 'parentified', (4*) a long-lasting social impact, (5) repairing the damage caused*, and (6) *post-divorce reflections and outlook*. Their narratives confirmed the presence of vulnerability and protective factors amongst exposed individuals that researchers and clinicians alike can use to understand how the phenomenon can impact the psycho-social development of the child. The researchers provide research implications that may improve our understanding of this adverse life experience. Further, practice implications have been provided to promote the accessibility of the support available to those who need it the most. Ultimately, inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce is not restricted by time and can continue to negatively impact the individual long after the divorce had been made.

5.1 Introduction

The Office for National Statistics (November, 2015) report that 94,864 children under the age of 16 experienced parental divorce in 2013, a 38% decrease on the number of children in 2003. This reduction in divorce could reflect the move towards co-habiting partnerships as opposed to marriage. Therefore, it can be argued that these figures portray a skewed view of divorce and one that does not account for the children who have experienced separation from parents who are not married.

In comparison to children of continuously married parents, children of divorce have more difficulties associated with academic performance (Bernardi & Radl, 2014), behavioural conduct, psychological adjustment, self-concept and social relationships (Amato & Keith, 1991; Amato, 2001). Relatedly, these difficulties have been found to persist into adulthood (Amato, 2010), which is at odds with the perception that divorce is a time-limited adverse life experience (Wallerstein, Lewis & Rosenthal, 2013).

In relation to young adulthood, researchers have investigated the impact of divorce on university students. First year students have been found to be more likely to discontinue and under-perform if they were from divorced families, despite controlling for confounds (Soria & Linder, 2014). Moreover, not only is academic performance affected, students from divorced families are likely to experience significantly more anxiety, depression and life stressors than their peers (Short, 2002). Therefore, the

provision of support services and willingness to engage in these services may well buffer against these issues.

Childhood environments involving parental divorce and separation have been linked with the following issues in adulthood; frequent partner changes (Mustonen, Huurre, Kiviruusu & Haukkala, 2011), negative appraisals of partner relationships (Sassler, Cunningham & Lichter, 2009), and increased intimate partner violence (Roberts, McLaughlin, Conron & Koenen, 2011). Furthermore, Fergusson, McLeod and Horwood (2014) found that childhood exposure to divorce and separation was not a risk factor for adulthood partnership difficulties unless inter-parental conflict and violence were also present.

5.1.1 Exposure to Inter-Parental Conflict and Parental Violence

Inter-parental conflict may well be considered an inevitable part of family life (Reynolds, Houlston, Coleman & Harold, 2014). However, destructive forms such as; physical aggression (Holt, Buckley & Whelan, 2008), verbal aggression (Vissing, Straus, Gelles & Harrop, 1991), the absence of negotiation tactics (Straus, 1979), and arguments typified by the expression of extreme emotions can negatively impact the child (Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers & Robinson, 2007; Cummings & Davies, 2011).

Researchers have found that children who are exposed to parental violence develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), internalising and

externalising symptomatology (Kitzmann, Gaylord, Holt & Kenny, 2003; Evans, Davies & DiLillo, 2008). Furthermore, the negative outcomes of witnessing this type violence has been found to be similar to those children who were either physically abused or experienced both during childhood (Kitzmann *et al.*, 2003). Highlighting children who have been exposed to parental violence as a high risk and vulnerable group, where the prevalence of psychiatric disorders and related difficulties continue to affect them in adulthood (Band-Winterstein, 2014; Schiff, Plotnikova, Dingle, Williams, Najman & Clavarino, 2014). However, researchers argue the need to continue to explore long-term outcomes to gain more descriptive accounts of past or ongoing inter-parental conflict and violence (Herrenkohl, Sousa, Tajima, Herrenkohl & Moylan, 2008; Band-Winterstein, 2014).

Despite clear short-term and long-term negative consequences of inter-parental conflict and violence on children and young people (Buckley, Holt & Whelan, 2007; Slopen, Fitzmaurice, Williams & Gilman, 2012; Menard, Weiss, Franzese & Covey, 2014), the existing research is relatively lacking in comparison to research relating to the individuals who are often referred to as the 'direct victims' (i.e. the partners of the perpetrators). This may, in part, be due to previous researchers considering children to be passive observers to their parent's behaviour (Band-Winterstein, 2014). On the contrary, recent research suggests children are more involved in the parental conflict through trying to protect a parent, being the subject of the conflict or being target of the violence (Goldblatt & Eisikovits, 2005).

Parents under-estimating the frequency and severity of exposure their children have been subjected to may have also contributed to paucity of research (Jaffe, Wolfe & Wilson, 1990).

The existing literature on childhood exposure to inter-parental violence have a number of methodological issues (Edleson, 1999; Kitzmann *et al.*, 2003; Evans *et al.*, 2008). Particular issues relate to; an over-reliance of maternal reporting (Edleson, 1999), and the over-utilisation of participants from clinical, criminal justice and shelter settings (O'Brien, Cohen, Pooley & Taylor, 2012). The latter, in particular, highlights that our knowledge of childhood exposure to inter-parental violence is that of children 'in crisis' who are most likely to receive support and intervention (Kimball, 2016). Overall, empirical studies utilising more representative samples and children as the respondents are necessary to further our understanding of this phenomenon.

5.1.2 The Child's Perceptions

Kimball (2016) conducted a systematic review to determine the improvements made to the children witnessing of domestic violence literature base since Edleson's review in 1999. Kimball (2016) concluded that the research articles within this time period have expanded our knowledge, in so far as to increase the identification of childhood exposure to violence. Despite these documented improvements, advancement in the literature concerning children's experiences of inter-paternal violence and

the child's voice have been underdeveloped (Kimball, 2016). Kimball (2016) argued that by focusing on the child's behaviour alone, researchers are missing an opportunity to inform policy and programs that can help cater for their short and long term needs. This is considered possible from exploring the nuances of the children's experiences of witnessing inter-parental violence.

There are a number of difficulties in obtaining childhood perceptions of inter-parental violence such as; gaining consent, lack of disclosure, communicating with younger children, and difficulties in getting in depth narrative data about their childhood. This may also explain the lack of studies investigating the child's views and the dominance of literature that is quantitative (Øverlien, 2010). Therefore, researchers rely on data that are collected through adults who have experienced childhood inter-parental violence. Herein lies potential biases relating to the accuracy of recall. Therefore, obtaining data from young adults becomes the most logical option as they are likely to still require emotional and financial support from their parents. Thus, they may still feel involved in inter-parental conflict if it has continued into their adulthood.

Jouriles, Spiller, Stephens, McDonald and Swank (2000) have found that as age increases in those exposed to inter-parental conflict and violence, the more negative appraisals and maladjustment appears to increase. This may indicate that older children are more likely to understand the conflict

and therefore, blame themselves for their parent's behaviour (Cusimano & Riggs, 2013). Relatedly, Howell, Cater, Miller-Graff and Graham-Bermann (2015) found that young adults were likely to have higher levels of depression if they had not disclosed experiencing inter-parental violence during childhood. This may suggest that there is a cathartic effect to disclosing this childhood adverse life experience. Ultimately, Howell et al. (2015) concluded that formal methods of reporting were seldom used and that the participants may have not seen reporting to child protection or police agencies as a viable option.

Recently, researchers have adopted qualitative methods to explore the child's perceptions of inter-parental violence (Swanston, Bowyer & Vetere, 2014). This may be partly due to the richness of information qualitative research can uncover and the many unanswered questions left from quantitative research. For example, there is a need to gain a more robust understanding of the mechanisms behind which a child makes sense of, recollects and copes with the experience of inter-parental violence (Swanston, Bowyer & Vetere, 2014).

5.1.3 The Current Study

To our knowledge no previous researchers have explored the individuals' experiences of inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce. Building upon Swanston, Bowyer and Vetere (2014) this study explores the child's experience in young adulthood as opposed to school-aged children. This

can provide rich data on the long-term impact of exposure to inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce. The aim of the current study was to explore individuals' perceptions of their parental conflict, divorce, violence and allegation experiences through the process of inductive thematic analysis. Further, an objective of the research was to discover how these experiences have shaped their psychological and social development.

5.2 Method

5.2.1 Participants and Recruitment

Six Caucasian female English speaking students between the ages of 18-40 participated in this study. Three of the participants experienced their parents divorcing between the ages of 5-9 and the remaining participants between the ages of 10-14. Regarding their birth order, the majority of participants were second born siblings, two were first born and one was third born. Morse (1994) indicated that this is an appropriate sample size when the goal of the research is to understand people's experiences of a phenomenon. Furthermore, six participants are considered to be required for the emergence of meta-themes and data saturation (i.e. where no new information or themes emerge) (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). These participants were invited to participate in this study following completion of a larger quantitative online survey study on perceptions of inter-parental conflict by the same authors. The participants attended university in the midlands region of the United Kingdom. In order to be selected these participants had to meet the following criteria; (1) their parents were

divorced or separated, (2) they were exposed to childhood inter-parental violence and, (3) at least one of their parents made allegations of domestic violence during divorce proceedings. This set of inclusion criteria was chosen in order to explore the adverse childhood experiences that may occur in the context of inter-parental conflict. The combination of these experiences have, to our knowledge, not been investigated qualitatively before. A total of 28 students (4 males and 14 females) met the criteria of this study (out of a possible 548), of this number 10 (females) opted in to the study however, only 6 of those attended the interview phase of the study indicating a dropout rate of 40%.

5.2.2 Design

A retrospective case study approach was taken to this qualitative research in order to develop our understanding of childhood exposure to inter-parental violence. This design was considered appropriate for the exploratory nature of this phenomenon. Open ended and semi-structured interview questions were used (see Appendix 12). A total of 10 standardised questions and potential follow-up questions were devised. Interviews were set up to take approximately an hour to complete in an office setting to ensure the presence of staff members to safeguard the interviewer and interviewee. All the interviews were conducted in small office rooms without distraction from non-participants who were working within the block of offices. The same room was used for five of the six interviewees, however a separate room was used for one interviewee. The

interviews were all conducted by the primary author who holds a BSc (hons) in Psychology and Criminology studying for his professional Doctorate in Forensic Psychology (final year). At the time of the interviews he was working in his third doctoral placement in a private psychological court report firm assessing families involved in care proceedings. No relationships were established between interviewer and interviewee prior to the interview. Participants were generally aware of the interviewer's research project having previously completed an online survey regarding inter-parental conflict, divorce and allegations made during divorce. The interviewer has a research interest in the topic of inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce as he has previously worked with a United Kingdom based charity supporting adult victims of domestic violence. The interview schedule was pilot tested by colleagues of the authors.

5.2.3 Procedure

Ethical approval was granted for the study by the School of Medicine Ethics Committee at the University of Nottingham (see Appendix 10). Participants were recruited through participation of a larger quantitative study for which ethical approval was granted by the same means. Participants were sought through opting in to attend a semi-structured interview once they had reached a certain point in the online survey. Participants who had experienced inter-parental conflict, parental divorce and allegations made during their parent's divorce proceedings were given the opportunity to supply their email address in order to be contacted about participation in a

semi-structured interview. Once the potential participant supplied their email address they were contacted in order to arrange an interview (see Appendix 11). Upon arrival at the interviewing room, participants were asked to read an information sheet detailing information regarding the research. This included their right to withdraw and permission to audio record the interview. Following the information sheet participants were given a consent form to read and initial by seven statements relating to the research. Participants were also asked to sign their name on the consent form and they were assigned a participant number in order to protect anonymity. A brief 10 minute introduction was given to ensure the participant had read and understood the information sheet and consent form. This also provided time to discuss the digital recording of the interview, confidentiality and remind the participant of their right to withdraw without given a reason with the audio recording being deleted straightaway. Following this part of the interview the participant was given a copy of the consent form and the digital recording commenced. Ten standardised questions were asked to the participant with follow up questions needed if required. The approximate time of each interview was one hour in length. The interview was paused if the participant became distressed, disruptive or aggressive. The interviewer made field notes as the interview was conducted as a prompt to ask for further information. Following completion of the interview participants were given a short debrief explaining the research and thanking them for their participation. The option of a further in depth debrief was given and should they decline

and change their minds later one can be arranged. The interviewer signposted the participants to support services within the university. Finally, participants were given a debrief form consolidating what was discussed in the short debrief (see Appendix 12). Transcripts were not returned to participants for comment or correction after the interviews were conducted.

5.2.4 Analysis

The six interviews were audio transcribed into a word processor in order to be analysed using Inductive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). An inductive approach was taken as there was no specific research question investigated. Themes were identified from the data and not developed through a coding framework (*ibid*). This approach does not mean that the investigator was devoid of a theoretical perspective. Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phased guide to conducting a Thematic Analysis, the transcripts were reread several times and complete coding was utilised before identifying candidate themes. During the reading process, handwritten notes were made in the margins and text were highlighted in order to ensure emerging codes and patterns across the transcriptions were being identified and recorded. Codes and candidate themes were devised, ordered and reviewed by the authors. A second colleague was used to review the codes, sub-themes and themes and to provide their opinion on the devised themes. A comprehensive list of codes relevant to the research questions is provided in Appendix 14.

5.3 Results

5.3.1 Overview

Twenty-one sub-themes and six themes were identified using an inductive thematic analytic approach. These themes have been ordered to provide a logical story of individuals' experiences of parental conflict, violence and divorce (see Table 16). For a more complete picture, a thematic map is provided in Appendix 13 highlighting the sub-themes attached to each theme. For data analysis purposes participant numbers were changed into pseudonyms (Appendix 15).

Table 16: ***A summary table of identified themes.***

Theme	Description and Subthemes	Interviewees who discussed these themes
1. Ongoing Experiences	1.1 High expressed emotion	001, 002, 003, 004, 005, 006
	1.2 Feeling stuck	002, 003, 004, 005
	1.3 "Strung out" conflict	001, 002, 003, 004, 006
	1.4 Getting drawn into the conflict	001, 002, 003, 004, 006
	1.5 Feeling unsafe in their environment	001, 002, 003, 004, 005, 006
2. A Traumatic Internal World	2.1 Coping through avoidance	001, 002, 003, 005, 006
	2.2 Internalised feelings	001, 002, 003, 004, 005, 006
	2.3 Vivid memories	001, 002, 003, 004, 005, 006
	2.4 Externalised feelings	004, 005, 006
3. 'Parentified'	3.1 Sense of "responsibility" towards parents	001, 002, 003, 004, 005, 006
	3.2 "Peacekeeper"	001, 002, 003, 004, 006
	3.3 Awareness of financial pressure	001, 005, 006
4. A Long-lasting Social Impact	4.1 For self	001, 002, 003, 004, 005, 006
	4.2 For family	001, 002, 004, 005, 006
5. Repairing The Damage Caused	5.1 Intra-familial support	001, 002, 003, 004, 005, 006
	5.2 Extra-familial support	001, 002, 003, 004, 005
	5.3 Time can heal	001, 002, 003, 004, 005, 006
	5.4 Breathing space	002, 003, 005, 006
6. Post-Divorce Outlook and Reflections	6.1 Marital values	001, 002, 003, 004, 005, 006
	6.2 Beliefs about the "male role"	001, 004, 006
	6.3 They had good intentions…	002, 003, 004, 005

5.3.2 *Ongoing Experiences*

Ongoing experiences captures the participants' recollection of inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce in and around the family home. It encapsulates the living environment before and after the divorce/separation was made as one being epitomised by high expressed emotion. The following excerpts highlight emotional conflict before divorce and in the years afterwards;

> Sarah: That's how we knew that dad had come home coz they'd start screaming at each other. (lines 48-49).

> Amy: There were so many arguments about who got what weekends. (line 78).

These extracts indicate that arguments were a normal day to day occurrence for the participants. Additionally, these destructive forms of conflict appear to be tit-for-tat with Amy highlighting that;

> They would…send each other nasty text messages. (line 259).

Furthermore, Amy's description above suggests that she was made aware of such messages by her parents. For instance, talking about everyday life in childhood, Charlotte commented;

> I would see them argue constantly…it was very very turbulent. (lines 75-76).

This gives the impression that neither partner were willing to back down causing intense battles of emotions to occur. For Emily the parental conflict and divorce had seen another side to her mother as someone who was "quite volatile" (line 167), likewise Rebecca noted that her mother had "handled it really badly" (line 578). These excerpts suggest that the participants clearly picked up on the intense emotional feedback provided by their mothers after the separation/divorce. This highlights that both

during and after the divorce the participants were well aware of the emotional impact the conflict was having on their parents.

Furthermore, the conflict created by their parents led to participant feeling unsafe in their living environment. For example, Laura commented;

> I was never protected, from any of the kind of discord that was going on, I was always very much aware as a child. (lines 155-157).

Even after separation the environment participants were developing in felt unsafe, for example Sarah noted that her father;

> Broke into our house once, stole the furniture to freak us out and he kept trying to kidnap us from school. (lines 161-162).

This experience of unsafety after the separation was also observed by Charlotte who, whilst living with her mother, noted "I didn't feel she could keep me safe" (lines 336-337). Again, these excerpts describe an unsettled environment long after their parents' separation.

Relatedly, participants have described a rather long drawn out process of divorce and separation where the parents seemed unwilling to let go. Amy emphasised this point by stating her father "held onto the past for a very long time" (line 172). Similarly, Rebecca commented that "it's been ongoing since, and the abuse has stopped now…but they still haven't

divorced" (622-625). This further adds to the sense that their experiences are ongoing or taken many years to end the psychological process of closure.

Interestingly, within the strung out process participants have seemed fairly stuck, along with their parents. For example, Emily remarked;

> If they're both treating you badly, basically you don't have anyone to turn to. (lines 808-809).

Furthermore, as part of the process of feeling stuck one participant describes a barrier to seeking support from one of her parents;

> Amy: He still hasn't dealt with his own problems so kind of explaining ours to him, I don't think, would be of any use. (lines 429-430).

Alongside feeling of being stuck, a notion of being drawn into the conflict by parents was constructed. This notion highlighted the participants' struggles in remaining neutral throughout the conflict and the parent's using the children as pawns to score points against one another. This is epitomised by the following excerpt;

> Sarah: They kinda like hint things to me…about like the terrible things the other person had done. (lines 74-75).

This excerpt may highlight that the child in a precarious position both during and after the divorce. Furthermore, the father of one of the participants appeared to speak to his daughter without a filter and perhaps overlooked the potential impact that would have;

> Emily: He's told me my mum's y'know…err sociopath and her brother's a psycho and my mum too, she wouldn't miss an opportunity to tell me how he used to knock her about and stuff. (lines 298-303).

This suggests that parents may prioritise their own psychological needs over those of their children. Alternatively, these comments provide examples of where parents are blinded by their own negative feelings that they cannot see the impact of their behaviour. Thus, the conflict continues where the children feel powerless to remain out of it.

5.3.3 *A Traumatic Internal World*

A traumatic internal world encapsulates participants' conscious and unconscious processing of the experiences they have been subjected to in the family home. In comparison to the previous theme identified, this theme specifically unravels how the traumatic events have been interpreted, made sense of and dealt with by the observer. Each participant had vividly remembered some aspect of the divorce or conflict regardless of the age in which the life event was experienced. For example;

> Rebecca: I remember seeing the blood on the steps that particular incident…almost instinctively knowing that's my mum's blood on the stairs. (lines 160-166).

Memories of events that occurred have not been solely related to incidents of parental conflict and violence. The following extracts capture this view;

> Amy: What I remember from the actual time of the divorce was my parents sitting me down in a room and saying "okay well you know we've not been in the same bedroom for quite a while and you know what's going to happen is you guys… are gonna move out with mum". (lines 45-47).

Furthermore, one participant highlights a vivid memory related to the moment her father left home;

> Laura: I remember my dad leaving one day and he was a builder and he came home in all his kind of dirty builders clothes and saying he'd got his bags packed and his eyes all welled up and he said that "I'm going, can I have a hug?" (lines 26-29).

Such comments provide examples of how these adverse life events are kept relatively intact in long-term memory. In both these excerpts the participant seems to clearly remember the way in which the conversation was vocalised and what words were used indicating that the event was replayed afterwards and made sense of years later.

Internalised feelings is a central feature of the exposed individual's traumatic internal world. These feelings are either a reaction to or a defence against the emotional or physical traumatic experiences they witnessed in childhood. In Sarah's case she describes being desensitized by the whole experience in the following excerpt;

> It scared me a bit and sometimes it made me upset but a lot of the time I was just used to it. (lines 90-91).

Participants spoke of holding onto emotions about their past experiences of parental conflict which can have a negative impact on the person. Some participants implied that these emotions had not been dealt with. For example, Amy discussed how the exposure to inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce affected her sibling and how that might affect his emotional responses to situations;

> Yeah my brother has an incredible amount of anger… he has a fear of becoming… having a temper like my dad or doing anything that would resemble him. (lines 410-415).

Amy concluded that an individuals' childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict;

> …is something that they will carry with them until they choose to deal with it themselves. (lines 1127-1128).

Participants discussed how their childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and divorce could manifest itself in a number of emotional and social difficulties such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, being withdrawn and shy. For example, Charlotte highlights some internalising feelings that have not been dealt with and are interfering with her life trajectory;

> I have quite acute anxiety and depression… I just kind of suffered from self-esteem issues for years and years and years and just haven't been able to overcome them for some reason. (lines 633-649).

Alongside internalised feelings, externalised feelings were constructed as an emotional response to the parental conflict and violence. In relation to her older brothers who had witnessed more of the conflict, Rebecca commented;

> They both have got emotional problems, both have difficulties with mood swings…the eldest one himself can be quite violent. (lines 282-283).

This may suggest that her brothers have learned from the environment around them how to behave interpersonally with others. However, it may also relate to unresolved anger or resentment regarding their early life experiences. Conversely, Laura highlighted externalising her anger as a form of expression during her teenage years by stating;

> I became really kind of rebellious as a teen…I just acted up big time. (lines 319-324).

Alongside internalising and externalising symptoms participants also constructed avoidance as a form of coping with their traumatic experiences. Emily epitomised this view when discussing her social relationships;

> I think I'm quite agreeable so I'll just "yeah alright then whatever you like." (line 727)

This implies that she may avoid conflict with others and that her social relationships are centred on her pleasing others. Therefore, individuals who are exposed to parental conflict may experience assertiveness difficulties. This could be perceived as a safety seeking strategy and a way in which they learnt to survive in a traumatic childhood environment filled with conflict.

5.3.4 *'Parentified'*

'Parentified' embodies the participants' experiences of becoming the adult in their parents' relationship during conflict, violence and post-divorce or separation. This role may be developmentally inappropriate as well as taxing on the participants' own emotional wellbeing. In some circumstances this may have interfered with their childhood memories and forced them to mature quicker than usual. Particular difficulties were highlighted by all participants which may be considered hidden to others or not as obvious following parental conflict and divorce such as; a sense of "responsibility" towards one's parents, awareness of financial pressure, and being a "peacekeeper".

Participants highlighted that they were well aware of the financial pressures facing their family during childhood after the divorce or separation. For one participant this financial pressure exacerbated by ongoing conflict between her parents after separation;

> Sarah: He'd pay a lot less child support than he was meant to…he has always begrudged having to pay it because he sees it as money going into my mums pocket, not going towards us. (lines 284-290).

This excerpt suggests that the father was using finances as a way of continuing to spite Sarah's mother. The following excerpts highlight similar experiences and also describe how children inadvertently become aware of the financial pressure facing their families both in the short and long term;

> Laura: My dad wasn't paying maintenance…so myself and my sister kind of got embroiled in all of that. (lines 66-67).
>
> Charlotte: Mum had no money, we left everything there…been financially crippled ever since, we've had nothing pretty much. (lines 398-410).

A sense of "responsibility" was identified with participants describing feeling a heightened sense of responsibility towards their parents both after the separation and into adulthood. This responsibility for ones parents may be considered rather natural, however in some circumstances it has caused the participants to mature sooner than expected because of the situations they have been placed in. The following excerpts encapsulate this sense of responsibility towards one's parents and highlight that the participants empathize with their parent's situations;

> Amy: I just always felt like I should feel more sorry for him…I took responsibility for some situations where I should never have done. (lines 339-342).
>
> Laura: I always take responsibility now, I'm always the one to kind of step up and sort things out. (lines 172-173).
>
> Emily: I feel really compelled to be a good daughter and do the right thing. (lines 312-313).

Related to this sense of "responsibility" towards one's parents, a concept of "peacekeeper" was identified whereby the participants felt the need to keep both their parents happy and not create any issues for them. This view is emphasised in the extracts from two participants who felt required to in act this role;

> Amy: I spent a large part of my teenage years and my younger years tiptoeing on eggshells and trying to protect my mum from my dad and my dad from my mum. (lines 287-288).

> Emily: I did play this role as the peacekeeper…and I'm not really willing to do that anymore…not even trying to make the peace, trying just to not rock the boat, not mention my mum in front of my dad…I think it is exhausting…protect my kids from their crap y'know all of that stuff. (lines 395-414).

Such comments provide examples where the participant felt required to step in and diffuse the conflict as well demonstrating a conscious effort not to cause an argument between their parents. The latter extract highlights that it was necessary to protect her children from her parent's conflict and how she had reached a point where she felt she could not continue to maintain this role. Overall, this "peacekeeper" role is almost forced upon them at a young age and continues into adulthood.

5.3.5 *A Long-Lasting Social Impact*

Participants conveyed the sense that their experiences of inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce had a long-lasting social impact on themselves and others (e.g. family). Regarding the social impact on self, participants described secondary victimisation following their experience of inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce. The following extract supports this notion;

> Rebecca: I was bullied because I lacked confidence…y'know almost like might have been quite fearful as a child and that might have been quite obvious to others. (lines 542-544).

Participants had identified difficulties within their social relationships and attributed this to their early life experiences of inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce. Participants highlighted some unhealthy attachments towards others and discussed their general approach towards social and intimate relationships;

> Charlotte: My relationship with those people has been incredibly unhealthy and I have no idea why I haven't let it go yet, like they tend to be very self-absorbed…just like they never really looked out for me. (lines 804-808).

> Emily: I think I have rushed into relationships because I have not wanted to be on my own…the sort of lack of security I felt as a child…I definitely look for that…I think I've got quite anxious attachment in relationships so I need a lot of reassurance. (lines 518-524).

> Laura: I just don't trust people straight away…I kind of have always hung back a little bit. (lines 659-660).

Furthermore, these social difficulties had been exacerbated through moving away and resettling following divorce. This in some cases has affected participants' school and social lives. Laura highlighted this within the following excerpt;

> I went to three primary schools and three different high schools…when my mum remarried we moved to a different part of the country…so we were really isolated. (lines 418-432).

Additionally, the experiences of inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce has impacted how the exposed individual relates to other people in their lives and how their primary attachments may have influenced their internal working model. For example one participants described her first day at University;

> Sarah: When my mum was leaving I was in flood of tears I literally did not want her to leave me at all…and it's still like that now…I just don't want to leave my mum. (lines 570-573).

Another construction was how the inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce had impacted on the social lives of the exposed individuals' families. Participants discussed how the inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce

had caused rifts between her parents' families. The following extracts illustrate this viewpoint;

> Sarah: They were very much on my dad's side and say my mum as like this demon women that had destroyed their family. (lines 323-324).

> Rebecca: My mum became involved in another relationship quite soon after the end of that relationship…and we had sort of a step-father in our lives…there were a lot of animosity between the two families…so much so that my biological father made a false allegation and telephoned social services saying that my step-father was hitting us and this that and the other. (lines 107-116).

Not only did the experience of inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce effect the relationships within the family. The experiences appeared to affect the future relationships of the family members, for example one participant reflected on the intimate relationships of her mother following divorce;

> Charlotte: She just seems to have this type…which is crazy like there's just usually something wrong with them, I think she thinks she can fix it … I don't know whether it's just an inclination she has but she always seems to go for guys who have quite toxic qualities…maybe they always behaved nicely on the face of it but she would just look past all these really wrong crippling flaws like deep depression or drug addiction. (lines 356:371).

Participants also discussed how their siblings were affected in the long-term regarding their social relationships. The following extracts highlight this construction;

> Amy: I know my sister my brother both talk about trust, like my sister says she had a lot of kind of trust issues now because I think she feels like maybe my dad let her down. (lines 739-741).

> Charlotte: Well he's never really left, he's living in a barracks but like, he comes back every weekend without fail, he drives home, that's what I always found funny about him…he doesn't really have many friends up here. (lines 749-757).

5.3.6 *Repairing The Damage Caused*

Repairing the damaged caused is a theme that relates to the protective factors in the lives of the participants that have helped them cope and come to terms with their experience of inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce. Furthermore, it describes the way in which others have provided support at crucial times during their childhood and adulthood. Inter-familial support was considered a key factor behind coping with the ongoing parental conflict and helped to buffer their childhood with pleasant experiences. The following excerpts highlight the varying intra-familial support networks available to the participants during inter-parental conflict and after divorce;

> Charlotte: We used to go to my grandparents a lot who my mum was very close to. (line 432).
>
> Sarah: Then we moved in with…my nan and I felt much better then…I felt a lot happier when we moved in there. (lines 171-172).
>
> Rebecca: Stepfather was on the scene pretty quickly and he was always really supportive, and I just sort of had a bond with him from very early on…he's still a massive part of my life, for me he's my dad. (lines 339-400).

The latter extract highlights that the presence of a pro-social step-father had provided the participant with consistent parenting and had modelled a secure attachment. Other providers of intra-familial support described were, mothers, fathers and siblings. What appears to be key is the consistent presence of one or more supportive family members in providing a secure base and healthy attachments.

Moreover, extra-familial support was considered a buffer to the conflict that was ongoing. One participant discussed how the presence of a neutral family (specifically the mother) had helped her through the events following divorce;

> Amy: That family was the only family that stayed neutral…that family meant so much to me because...I didn't feel like I had other people around that I could talk to… she opened my eyes to the fact that what

> we had been through was essentially emotional abuse" (lines 599-640).

Considering the emotional impact inter-parental conflict can have on an individual, the following excerpts highlight how the presence of supportive networks (e.g. family friends; friends) can help to encourage the individual to goal set, believe in oneself and progress through education;

> Emily: They supported me in that way, I don't think I would have ever thought to do that otherwise. (lines 470-471).

> Charlotte: I met my friend and she kind of brought me out of it…I think a lot of the reason why I kind of could talk more and be more of a person than I was…she kind of made me realise it's okay to be weird and okay to be yourself and not have to worry about what everyone thinks of you all the time…she's been through a similar thing herself. (lines 523-546).

Such comments emphasise how close social friendships can help to counteract the internalising symptoms caused by inter-parental conflict and violence. Additionally, if the friends have shared similar experiences this provides a relatable forum in which the individual can make sense of their childhood experiences of inter-parental conflict.

Participants' captured the element that time can heal/repair some of the damage caused by the inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce. The

concept that time can heal relates to how over time the individual has reflected on their past experiences and made sense of them, perhaps finding clarity or forgiving their parents for the inter-parental conflict. The following extracts epitomise this view;

> Amy: They made mistakes, I mean they're human and that's kind of one of the things that I have realised this year. (lines 84-85).

> Emily: I think turning forty, I've had a bit of a revelation really, that I don't want to put up with this anymore. (lines 333-334).

> Laura: I have gone through quite a long process of personal development to get to the point where I'm at now…I think I have kind of overcome so much of it. (lines 493-495).

These excerpts imply that over time individuals can learn to accept the traumatic experiences of the past and consider a more balanced or compassionate viewpoints. The latter excerpt adds to the concept of time can heal as it suggests the need to work at developing in order to experience the healing process over time. In this instance, the participant as well as others had utilised the support of religion and talking therapies;

> Laura: Meditation for years…Buddhism….learnt to talk actually rather than being told…through counselling. (lines 528-534).

Alongside time to heal, taking breathing space was identified as another method in which participants could repair the damage caused by inter-

parental conflict, violence and divorce. The following excerpts highlight how having time away is both desirable and seen as a positive coping strategy to gain perspective;

> Amy: I needed to leave home when I came to university…it was only at university that I started to look back on my teenage years" (lines 899-901).

> Emily: If I could, I think I would emigrate…somewhere even just for a year or two justto get away from it all I think I probably would. (lines 652-654).

5.3.7 *Post-divorce reflections and outlook*

Post-divorce reflections and outlook relates to how the individuals sense made of inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce. Participants have learnt from the experiences of parental divorce and conflict as this has shaped how they view their world and the beliefs systems they hold. One reflection of the parental conflict was that parents set out with good intentions. The following excerpts encapsulate this view;

> Sarah: No matter how well-intentioned the parents might be in trying to kind of work things out without the children getting involved…effects them whether they like it or not really. (lines 19-24).

> Rebecca: I remember my mum wearing sunglasses a lot…to cover up any bruising from when he had been hitting her. (lines 92-97).

> Amy: While I understand it was a good intention, he just wanted to find out about myday, it became, if I am honest, a bit of a chore. (lines 467-468).

These extracts demonstrate a perceived naivety in respect of the parents on the impact of the conflict and about the prioritisation of needs. For example, in the latter extract it appears that the parent is meeting his own needs rather that of the child's. Overall, these excerpts convey that although well intended, the parents are not necessarily acting in the best interests of the child.

Beliefs about the "male role" was a concept identified, whereby the individuals' views had developed - post conflict and divorce - towards patriarchal hegemony. This following extract highlights the differing viewpoints from the perspective of the participant;

> Rebecca: They actually idolise him…I've never understood that…I just think they've got a different outlook…on the relations and who takes responsibility for the violence…so yeah I think that they were probably affected in terms of how they view the male role…the masculine stereotype. (lines 231-296).

This extract suggests that family members can split their viewpoints and make sense of past experiences differently. Additionally, it appears that

their viewpoints were influenced by their gender. The following excerpt supports the notion of a change in belief regarding the male role;

> Sarah: Well my mum does say I'm a bit of a man hater, I'm not, just a little bit of one, I think it's just because I am quite a raging feminist. (lines 623-624).

Sarah's comment may also highlight how a matriarchal family environment could influence or shape the formation of feminist discourse post conflict and divorce.

Another outlook and reflection following inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce is the change in the participants' views on marital values. The following extracts portray a more reserved, cautious or pragmatic approach towards marriage;

> Amy: It hasn't put be off, the idea of being married just kind of clarified that it's not something to be taken light heartedly. (lines 1102-1103).

> Rebecca: If there was even a sign that somebody might be physically abusive, I would immediately end the relationship…if the relationships over, then you need to make that break and you need to get divorced. (lines 760-781).

Charlotte: I don't know if I would be able to commit that much. (line 939).

5.4 Discussion

The identification of six overall themes highlighted what it means to be exposed inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce in childhood and how it continues to impact the individuals presently. These themes cover the way in which the child; (1) recollects the inter-parental conflict – *ongoing experiences* (2) makes sense of it – *a traumatic internal world, post-divorce reflections and outlook*, (3) judges the impact – *'parentified', a long-lasting social impact* and, (4) copes with the experience – *repairing the damage caused*. The research has achieved its aim of providing a descriptive account of past and ongoing inter-parental conflict and violence, adding to the relative dearth of qualitative exploration of these experiences (Herrenkohl *et al.*, 2008; Øverlien, 2010; Band-Winterstein, 2014; Swanston, Bowyer & Vetere, 2014). Furthermore, it has increased knowledge on comparatively underdeveloped research topics in relation to inter-parental conflict such as; childhood exposure to inter-parental conflict and violence (Band-Winterstein, 2014), voice of the exposed child (Kimball, 2016), non-clinical community based samples (O'Brien *et al.*, 2012; Haj-Yahia & Bargal, 2015).

Ultimately, the narratives of the individuals exposed to inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce convey that it is not a time-limited adverse

life experience (Wallerstein, Lewis & Rosenthal, 2013; Menard *et al.*, 2014). Instead, there was consensus that their experiences of inter-parental conflict and divorce had a long lasting effect on their sense of self, interpersonal relationships and psychological adjustment (Amato & Keith, 1991; Short, 2002; Amato, 2010; Band-Winterstein, 2014; Schiff *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, their beliefs and values were shaped by their childhood environments and experiences of parental divorce (Mustonen *et al.*, 2011; Sassler *et al.*, 2009). Contrary to previous researchers considering the children to be passive observers, this research highlights that the child is very much in the middle of the conflict (Band-Winterstein, 2014; Goldblatt & Eisikovits, 2005). For example, the narratives highlighted that the individuals felt drawn into the conflict and used as pawns for the parents to spite one another. In support of Jouriles et al. (2000) there is evidence to suggest that as the exposed child's age increases, there are increases in negative appraisals of their experiences. According to Cusimano and Riggs (2013) this may be due to the individual developing a greater understanding of what had happened to them. However, an alternative view would be that as the child develops they are more likely to be fed conscious and unconscious cues from their parents about the parental conflict and violence. This process may be exacerbated by continuing conflict.

The narratives confirmed the presence of destructive forms of inter-parental conflict as opposed to constructive negotiation tactics to resolving

conflict (Reynold *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, the presence of extreme emotional expression was emphasised by their accounts of the divorce and ongoing conflict (Morris *et al.*, 2007). It is clear, through the identification of themes, that these adverse life experiences have had a negative impact on individual, their siblings and the wider family network (Cummings & Davies, 2011). The findings support previous researchers' conclusions that children who are exposed to inter-parental violence develop post-traumatic stress symptomatology such as internalising (e.g. depression, anxiety) and externalising (e.g. mood swings, anti-social behaviour) symptomatology (Kitzmann *et al.*, 2003; Buckley, Holt & Whelan, 2007; Evans *et al.*, 2008).

5.4.1 Limitations

The current research poses some methodological issues that can be improved upon by further research. Firstly, the sample size was relatively small, although enough for emergence of meta-themes and data saturation (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). However, due to the homogeneity of the sample, Interpretative Phenonemological Analysis (IPA; Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006) would have been a more appropriate method of analysis. Secondly, the sample had all experienced parental separation or divorce as well as inter-parental conflict and violence. Therefore, the effect of being exposed and not divorced/separated and vice versa was not tested. Further research can be conducted to determine whether divorce/separation or the continuation of the parents' marriage/relationship is preferable when there is inter-parental conflict and violence. Thirdly, this was an entirely female

sample and there was a drop-out rate of 40% who did not respond to the interview invitation. Furthermore, no male participants opted in to attend an interview suggesting a potential difficulty in obtaining male's experiences of inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce. Finally, the sample were all from westernised cultures and were of White Caucasian ethnicity. It is possible that individuals from collectivistic cultures experience inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce differently to those individuals from westernised cultures. Overall, these issues limit the external validity of the data. However, they also suggest a wider issue of there being many children, adolescents and adults without a voice and suffering in silence (Kimball, 2016). This highlights the difficulty services have in supporting victims of inter-parental violence and researchers in exploring their experiences to better influence policy and practice.

5.4.2 Implications

There are a number of research and practice implications that warrant consideration. Further research is needed in relation to how individuals from collectivistic cultures experience inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce. Additionally, the experiences of males and individuals with different ethnicities warrant exploration to determine whether experiences are similar and whether alternative risk/vulnerability or protective factors are present. Given the narratives of these inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce experiences, the following would be worth further qualitative investigation; whether school-aged children have received support from

external agencies and what their experiences were of this. This is because the participants in the current study did not identify any therapeutic or independent support during the time of the divorce or in the years shortly afterwards. Furthermore, an exploration of why the individuals felt they could not access external support or the identification of the barriers to receiving that support would be valuable research directions to take. However, interview questions did not specifically enquire whether the participant had accessed therapeutic, counselling or independent support. Therefore, further research could focus on what support was provided for children who have been exposed to inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce.

In relation to practice implications the research has identified a number of risk and vulnerability factors present within those who have experienced childhood inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce. These factors can be utilised to inform risk assessments or to predict their psychological adjustment in later childhood and adulthood. For example, the presence of inter and extra familial support, space away from the family home and self-discovery through time can help to reduce the impact their experiences have had on their psycho-social development. This is useful information to clinicians in order for them to determine treatment needs and to allocate appropriate resources. Moreover, the participants highlighted how the presence of a neutral individual would have been beneficial to them. In this respect, services can and should be provided to individuals who have

experienced inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce. Counselling services are available within school and university settings but it appears that more can be done to signpost individuals towards their services. Such institutions have a moral responsibility to promote students' disclosures and this can be achieved through education and staff training in safeguarding practices and procedures. This is particularly necessary given the cathartic effect of discussing one's experiences of inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce discussed by the participants (Howell *et al.*, 2015).

5.4.3 Conclusion

In summary, this research has given a voice to participants who have experienced childhood inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce. Their experiences convey that the phenomenon is not restricted by time and that they are still enduring the effects on their psychological adjustment and social relationships. The narratives confirm the presence of vulnerability factors and protective factors that may influence an exposed individual's psycho-social development. Research and practice implications have been considered in light of the research findings. This leaves the impression that there is more researchers and clinicians can embark on to understand and support people who have developed in similar experiences.

Chapter Six: Discussion

6.1 Thesis Overview

Childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and divorce can impact the exposed child both in the short and long term (Breslend *et al.*, 2016; Timmons & Margolin, 2015; Davies *et al.*, 2013; McCoy *et al.*, 2013; Bernardo & Radl, 2014; Yap *et al.*, 2013). Researchers have theorised mechanisms to explain why some children are more affected by their childhood experiences than others (Davies & Cummings, 1994; Grych & Fincham, 1990; Grych, Raynor & Fosco, 2004) and have conducted empirical research primarily in clinical settings involving the adult victims or perpetrators of partner violence (Edleson, 1999; Buckley, Holt & Whelan, 2007; Kimball, 2016). This thesis aimed to build upon the limited research on the exposed child compared to other forms of family violence; sexual abuse, domestic violence and physical abuse (Kitzmann *et al.*, 2003; Evans *et al.*, 2008; Slopen *et al.*, 2012). Specifically, the short and long-term impact of childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and divorce was explored within this thesis. Overall two main aims proposed in the preface were answered through the following chapters;

(1) *To explore the negative outcomes following childhood exposure to inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce*. This aim was explored in chapter two (review), chapter four (quantitative empirical research), chapter five (qualitative empirical research).

(2) *To explore the mechanisms behind childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and what makes it harmful to the child's psycho-social development.* This aim was explored in chapter two (review), chapter four (quantitative empirical research), and chapter five (qualitative empirical research).

6.2 Summary of Key Findings

The systematic review presented in chapter two examines empirical research from 1990 onwards regarding the association between childhood exposure to inter-parental violence and trauma symptomatology. Firstly, this chapter contributes to the overall thesis by identifying that childhood exposure to inter-parental violence leads to elevated trauma symptomatology for children of all ages. This confirmed the exploratory findings from Evans et al. (2008). Relatedly, the studies included within the review suggest that both the severity and frequency of the childhood exposure may increase the presence of trauma symptomatology. However, the strength of the association between childhood exposure to inter-parental violence and trauma symptomatology amongst children was ambiguous due to the methodological concerns of the existing literature. The existing research (post-1990) demonstrated high risk of sampling bias (i.e. over-reliance on clinical and shelter based participants from low SES backgrounds in the United States) and confounding variables (i.e. not statistically adjusting for physical abuse). These concerns were presented within Kitzmann et al's (2003) meta-analysis and remain relatively

unaddressed over a decade later (this review). The review identified that 80% of the researchers focussed on uni-directional male-on-female inter-parental violence. Again, this is a key finding that has not been improved upon since those reviewed by Edleson (1999). Furthermore, authors relied on rather arbitrary definitions of frequency and severity within their studies causing difficulties in comparing data across studies. Another caveat highlighted within the included studies was the reliance of maternal reporting for childhood exposure to inter-parental violence (84%) and trauma symptomatology (56%). These methodological concerns were considered in relation to the research presented in chapters four and five.

Chapter two (systematic review) identified the Conflict Tactics Scales-2 (CTS-2; Straus *et al.*, 1996) as the most widely used psychometric measure to assess childhood exposure to inter-parental violence within the existing literature. Chapter three presented a critique of the CTS-2 in order to determine its utility within the quantitative empirical research in chapter four. The primary findings of this critique was that the CTS-2 is a robust measure for measuring frequency and chronicity of partner violence. However, the psychometric does not provide context behind the use of conflict tactics. Therefore, if CTS-2 is used for clinical and research purposes that necessitates context, other assessment methods should be used alongside this measure. This chapter highlighted that more research is needed measuring conflict tactics in more diverse populations, countries and cultures. In light of these findings, chapter four utilised the CTS-2 given

its good validity and reliability. Additionally, chapter four presented quantitative empirical research using other measures (Children's Perception of Inter-parental Conflict, (CPIC; Grych, Seid & Fincham, 1992) to provide context to the inter-parental conflict tactics.

Chapter four presented the quantitative empirical research that aimed to determine the links between inter-parental conflict tactics and negative appraisals of conflict in a student population. Furthermore, the impact of these experiences and divorce/separation were investigated. This chapter contributes to the overall thesis because the research identified that participants reporting a greater extent of destructive conflict tactics in childhood also reported more negative appraisals of the conflict. Constructive forms of conflict tactics (e.g. negotiation tactics) were witnessed to a greater extent in the sample than destructive forms. Higher levels of negotiation tactics were strongly associated with more positive appraisals of the inter-parental conflict. These findings support Reynold's et al. (2014) assertions that inter-parental conflict is a common occurrence within the family home, with children being exposed to both constructive and destructive forms. Furthermore, participants who reported that their academic studies had suffered as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation held more negative appraisals about feeling themselves, others or their future threatened because of the conflict. This finding was significantly different to participants who reported that their academic studies had not suffered. This finding supports previous research

investigating the effects of exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict on academic performance in a college sample (Hunt, Krueger & Limberg, 2017). Furthermore, the finding compliments research that have found poorer outcomes for children and adolescents relating to academic problems (e.g. behaviour problems at school) (Fantuzzo & Lindquist, 1989; Kitzmann *et al.*, 2003).

Participants who reported that their social relationships had suffered as a result of parental conflict and divorce/separation held more negative appraisals relating to triangulation, threat and perceived threat than those who reported that their social relationships were unaffected. Participants who felt more threatened and concerned for the safety of others during parental conflict in childhood were more likely to experience difficulties in their social relationships in adulthood. Again, this finding highlights another long-lasting impact of parental divorce/separation and exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict during childhood (Kelly, 2000; Amato, 2010; Vu, Jouriles, McDonald & Rosenfield, 2016)

Interestingly, participants who felt that they had to take sides during the parental conflict (triangulation) were also likely experience difficulties in their social relationships. Additionally, triangulation was found to be strongly associated with higher chronicity scores for psychological aggression and physical assault conflict tactics. This highlights that exposed children are more actively involved in destructive forms of inter-parental

conflict and divorce (Band-Winterstein, 2014). Both of these findings provide support for the Family Systems Theory proposed by Grych, Raynor and Fosco (2004).

Overall, the findings presented in chapter four support the Cognitive-Contextual Framework proposed by Grych and Fincham (1990). In conclusion, the quantitative empirical research provides evidence that exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict can have a harmful effect on the child lasting into early adulthood.

The quantitative empirical research presented in chapter four improves the existing literature in the following ways; (1) focussing on the report of the exposed child compared to the parents (Edleson, 1999), (2) requiring the participants to report on both their parents' conflict tactics (bi-directional) (Kimball, 2016), (3) using a community student sample from a higher SES background based in the United Kingdom (Kimball, 2016), (4) using the CTS-2 to measure the chronicity of inter-parental conflict within the family home (Evans *et al.*, 2008), (5) investigating different forms of conflict tactics (e.g. negotiation and psychological aggression tactics) rather than just physical assault, (6) utilising additional questionnaires to explore the context in which the inter-parental conflict was occurring (Kimball, 2016), and (7) exploring how individuals make sense of their experiences (Kimball, 2016). However, the quantitative research did not explore the individual's experiences of destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and

divorce/separation in depth. Further, chapter four did not explore potential protective factors relating to the child's psycho-social development. Exploration of the mechanisms behind what makes destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and violence harmful to the exposed child could be investigated further. This provided scope for chapter five.

Chapter five presented the qualitative empirical research with the aim of exploring what it means to be exposed to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and divorce. This chapter contributed to the overall thesis by identifying six themes detailing how exposed individuals; (1) recollect - *ongoing experiences*, (2) make sense of – *a traumatic internal world*, *post-conflict reflections and outlook*, (3) judge – *'parentified'*, *a long-lasting social impact*, and (4) cope – *repairing the damage caused*, with their childhood experiences of destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and divorce. The descriptive accounts given by participants lead to the conclusion that exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and divorce are not time-limited adverse life experiences (Wallerstein, Lewis & Rosenthal, 2013; Menard *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, the research findings provide evidence of the long-term impact of childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and divorce. For example the results highlight that it can impact the exposed child's sense of self, interpersonal relationships and psychological adjustment (Amato, 2010; Band-Winterstein, 2014; Schiff *et al.*, 2014). Overall, the narrative

accounts constructed the presence of risk and vulnerability factors linked to the exposed individual's psycho-social development.

In relation to the existing literature, the qualitative empirical research in chapter five adds to the dearth of qualitative explorations of childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict (Band-Winterstein, 2014; Swanston, Bowyer & Vetere, 2014). Additionally, the chapter focusses on the voice of the exposed child (Kimball, 2016) which is another area that is comparatively lacking in the existing literature. Chapter five provides evidence for all three theories of inter-parental conflict presented within chapter one's introduction; (1) Emotional Security Theory (Cummings and Davies, 1994), (2) Cognitive-Contextual Framework (Grych & Fincham, 1990), and (3) Family Systems Theory (Grych, Raynor & Fosco, 2004).

6.3 The Development of a Theoretical Model

A theoretical model explaining the impact of childhood exposure to inter-parental conflict on a child's psycho-social development was developed following the results of chapter two, four and five. This model also compliments pre-existing theories regarding childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict (e.g. Emotional Security Theory, Cognitive-Contextual Framework & Family Systems Theory). Figure Three highlights that an individual who is exposed to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict in childhood may experience a number of short-term and

long-term negative outcomes. However, this association is mediated by the presence of a number of risk and vulnerability factors. These factors include; (1) increased severity and frequency of exposure (the chapter two review), (2) the extent to which the child negatively appraises the conflict (chapter four and five research), (3) the extent to which the child is drawn into the conflict (chapter four and five research), (4) the extent to which the child takes responsibility before maturity (chapter five research). The presence of one or more of these mediating factors may lead to an increased likelihood of difficulties in relation to the exposed individual's psycho-social development (e.g. perceived threat).

The presence of co-occurring family adverse events may exacerbate the short and long-term effects of childhood exposure to inter-parental conflict and violence. These events may include the child being subjected to; (1) physical abuse, (2) sexual abuse, (3) neglect (4) maltreatment, and (5) emotional abuse (e.g. bullying).

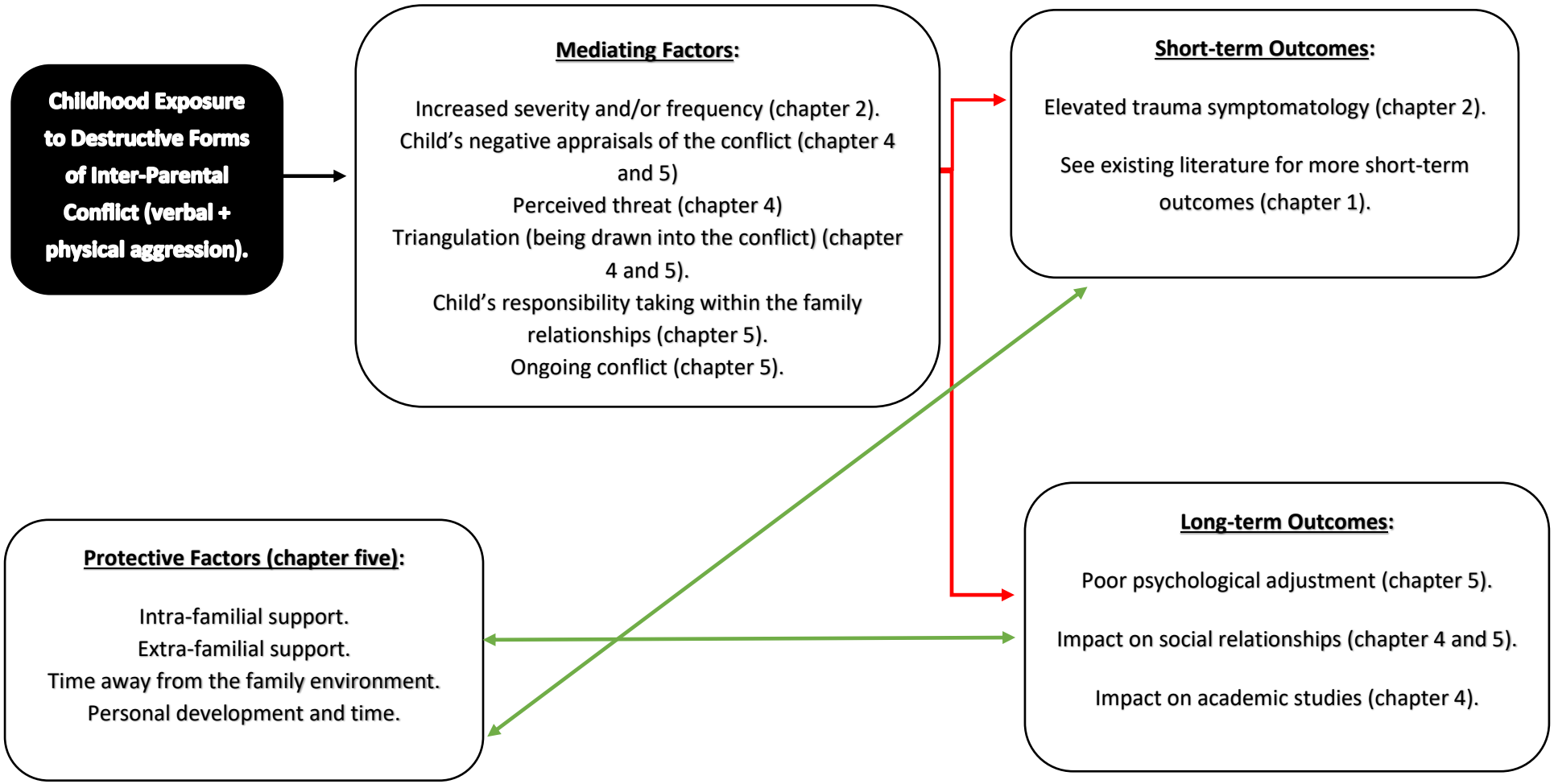
The following short-term outcomes were identified within the research conducted as part of this thesis and are also supported within the existing literature; (1) elevated trauma symptomatology (chapter two systematic review), and (2) academic difficulties (chapter four research).

With regard to the long-term effects of childhood exposure to inter-parental conflict and violence, a number of outcomes were noted within this thesis;

(1) poor psychological adjustment (chapter five research), (2) impact on social relationships (chapter four and five research), and (3) impact on academic studies (chapter four research).

Both the short-term and long-term effects of childhood exposure to inter-parental conflict and violence can be mitigated by the presence of protective factors. The following protective factors have been proposed from the results of the chapter five research; (1) intra-familial support, (2) extra-familial support (e.g. religion or counselling), (3) time away/outside of the family environment (e.g. going to university), (4) time for personal development (e.g. time to come to terms with the experience).

Figure 3: A Theoretical Model Showing the Harmful Effects of Destructive Forms of Inter-Parental Conflict on a Child's Psycho-Social Adjustment



6.4 Research Implications

Each thesis chapter offers specific recommendations for future research directions to be taken by researchers (please see relevant sections within the thesis). In regards to general research implications the following areas were not addressed in this thesis and are avenues for future researchers to explore. Firstly, this thesis did not explore how collectivist cultures differ to westernised cultures regarding experiences of inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce. It is posited, due to the dynamics within the family home, that additional mediating factors and protective factors may be present for the exposed individuals' psycho-social adjustment. Therefore, the research in this thesis may lack generalisability between populations, cultures and countries. Secondly, although the research presented within this thesis offers improvements to the existing research (as highlighted within this discussion), the thesis does not address the high risk of confounding variable bias documented within chapter one and chapter two (review). For example, the presence of other adverse life experiences may explain some of an exposed individual's psycho-social adjustment (Edleson, 1999; Kitzmann *et al.*, 2003). Researchers utilising complex methodologies such as case control and longitudinal designs may help improve these concerns with the research presented both in the existing literature and this thesis. Furthermore, researchers should statistically adjust and account for the possibility of confounding variables within their data analyses. Thirdly, the thesis highlights scope for additional research in investigating the impact of childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental

conflict. In particular, researchers are recommended to investigate psychological aggression/abuse/non-physical forms of inter-parental conflict in addition to physical violence. The findings of this thesis highlight some of the harmful effects of children witnessing psychological aggression (e.g. increased negative appraisals of inter-parental conflict). Furthermore, there have been changes made to the definition of domestic abuse as it now can incorporate psychological abuse (Home Office, 2013; Iqbal & Doran, 2014). This emphasises the need for further research on psychological abuse as the existing research literature predominantly focuses on physical violence. Caveats with existing literature regarding the high risk of selection bias will need to be addressed further. For example, utilising national surveys through the Census may prove a viable option to obtaining participants from differing social backgrounds and areas. Fourthly, it is recommended that researchers continue to utilise qualitative methods to investigate the phenomenon of childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict. This study design has proven useful in providing a voice to exposed individuals (Øverlien, 2010). However, qualitative research is still an undeveloped research area within this topic. For example, the experiences of males who have been exposed to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and divorce was not explored within this thesis. Finally, the majority of the thesis has focussed on risk/vulnerability factors associated with the negative short and long-term effects of exposure. Further research should be conducted taking into

consideration resilience and protective factors. This was broadly explored in chapter five and needs to be explored in more depth.

Overall, researchers need conduct studies focussing on childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict to develop this relatively undeveloped research area in comparison to other researched adverse life experiences (e.g. intimate partner violence). This thesis adds to the existing body of literature but also highlights that researchers need to develop broad questionnaires to measure children's perceptions of inter-parental conflict. Incorporating the exposed child's views is paramount to this endeavour.

6.5 Practice Implications

Specific practice implications have been considered regarding each thesis chapter (please see relevant sections within the thesis). However, general practice implications will be considered within this section. Firstly, the research findings presented within this thesis highlight the importance of professionals utilising questionnaires and risk assessments to inform their decision making (Bow & Boxer, 2003). Such tools can help professionals to identify risk/vulnerability factors for children exposed to inter-parental conflict, violence and divorce. This could improve the early identification of childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict. The theoretical model presented within the thesis discussion provides evidence to suggest the development of structured professional judgement risk

assessments would be beneficial. This would help professionals to allocate the appropriate level of resources to intervene and help improve outcomes for exposed individuals who are displaying signs of poor psycho-social adjustment in later childhood/early adulthood. Secondly, this thesis highlights the importance of taking the child's wishes and feelings into account during divorce. Professionals need to be aware of the difficult positions children are placed under during inter-parental conflict, divorce and in future interactions with their parents following separation. Increased awareness may improve signposting to independent support for children going through these adverse life experiences currently or in the past. Thirdly, this thesis emphasises the importance of using a breath of assessment measures to explore the child's experience of inter-parental conflict and not rely on the report of the parents. Fourthly, the findings of this study highlight that there are students whose experiences of destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and divorce are currently affecting their academic studies and social relationships. It is likely that there are many more students who are experiencing similar difficulties. Counselling services are available within school and university settings, however it appears more can be done to signpost individuals towards their services. Fifthly, the findings of the thesis point to the significance of needing to recognise exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict. The research findings indicate that not only physical assault conflict tactics are harmful to the child. Given the recent changes in the definition of Domestic Abuse (which now incorporates psychological abuse),

practitioners must also look for signs of psychological aggression in parental relationships (Home Office, 2013). Education and staff training in safeguarding practice and procedures may help early-identification of children exposed to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict. These experiences are harmful and likely to affect the child's psycho-social development in the long-term, without intervention. Finally, the findings of this thesis could help inform governmental initiatives or organisations' understanding of the harmful effects of witnessing destructive forms of inter-parental conflict. Consequently, improving funding allocations to help support those who are suffering in silence.

6.6 Conclusion

This thesis emphasised the harmful effects childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and divorce can have on an individual's psycho-social adjustment. A multi-faceted approach to the thesis was taken with each chapter focussing different aspects of childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and divorce including; (1) exploring its association with trauma symptomatology, (2) evaluating a heavily utilised measure of inter-parental conflict tactics, (3) exploring the phenomenon in a student population, and (4) exploring in greater depth how individuals recollect, make sense of and cope with their experiences of the phenomenon. This thesis explores the child's exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict from its inception through into their adulthood.

It was concluded that there is sufficient evidence to argue that childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict is harmful to the child. Mediating factors that may exacerbate a child's psycho-social adjustment in the short and long-term were discussed. Additionally, factors that may mitigate the impact of childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict were discussed. An overall theoretical model was proposed encompassing pre-existing theoretical models and findings within the thesis. The thesis contributes to the relative paucity of research surrounding childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and improves on some of the methodological issues identified within the existing literature. However further research is needed to improve our understanding of childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict. Specifically, investigating childhood exposure in collectivist cultures and in diverse populations was discussed. Practice implications were emphasised with suggestions which may lead to increased awareness of the harmful effects of childhood exposure to destructive forms of inter-parental conflict and prompt allocation of resources to those who need it most.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Search Syntax

a) Bibliographical Databases

PsycINFO was searched using the Ovid interface on 09/08/15 for the period 1806 to August Week 1 2015.

1 child*.mp. (616217)
2 pre-school.mp. (2859)
3 adolescen*.mp. (211642)
4 1 or 2 or 3 (720148)
5 exp Witnesses/ (4274)
6 witness*.mp. (16659)
7 expos*.mp. (141427)
8 exp Exposure/ or exp Exposure to Violence/ (8850)
9 observ*.mp. (356697)
10 5 or 6 or 7 or 8 or 9 (492221)
11 domestic violence/ or exp intimate partner violence/ or exp marital conflict/ or exp partner abuse/ (18157)
12 domestic violence.mp. (12241)
13 spouse abuse.mp. (605)
14 spouse violence.mp. (15)
15 marital conflict.mp. (3503)
16 intimate partner violence.mp. (5895)
17 interparental violence.mp. (185)
18 11 or 12 or 13 or 14 or 15 or 16 or 17 (21738)
19 exp Emotional Trauma/ or exp Posttraumatic Stress Disorder/ (34640)
20 trauma symptoms.mp. (1005)
21 emotional trauma.mp. (14621)
22 trauma symptomatology.mp. (113)
23 post traumatic stress symptoms.mp. (411)
24 19 or 20 or 21 or 22 or 23 (35448)
25 4 and 10 and 18 and 24 (341)

EMBASE was searched using the Ovid interface on 09/08/15 for the period 1980 to 2015 Week 32.

1 child*.mp. (2122995)
2 pre-school.mp. (4566)
3 adolescen*.mp. (1367155)
4 1 or 2 or 3 (2751316)
5 exp witness/ (3002)
6 witness*.mp. (31233)
7 expos*.mp. (1173889)
8 exp exposure/ (472337)

9 exposure to violence.mp. (906)
10 observ*.mp. (3116028)
11 5 or 6 or 7 or 8 or 9 or 10 (4113512)
12 exp domestic violence/ or exp partner violence/ (44606)
13 intimate partner violence.mp. (4258)
14 marital conflict.mp. (559)
15 partner abuse.mp. (497)
16 domestic violence.mp. (9102)
17 spous* abuse.mp. (493)
18 spous* violence.mp. (116)
19 interparental violence.mp. (103)
20 12 or 13 or 14 or 15 or 16 or 17 or 18 or 19 (46145)
21 exp posttraumatic stress disorder/ (39066)
22 trauma symptoms.mp. (534)
23 emotional trauma.mp. (457)
24 trauma symptomatology.mp. (56)
25 post traumatic stress symptoms.mp. (496)
26 21 or 22 or 23 or 24 or 25 (39734)
27 4 and 11 and 20 and 26 (885)

MEDLINE (R) was searched using the Ovid interface on 09/08/14 for the period 1946 to August Week 5 2015.

1 child*.mp. (1932573)
2 pre-school.mp. (3422)
3 adolescen*.mp. (1719936)
4 1 or 2 or 3 (2807764)
5 witness*.mp. (15505)
6 expos*.mp. (862020)
7 observ*.mp. (2416362)
8 5 or 6 or 7 (3106715)
9 exp domestic violence/ or exp spouse abuse/ (37181)
10 intimate partner violence.mp. (3321)
11 marital conflict.mp. (433)
12 partner abuse.mp. (346)
13 domestic violence.mp. (7206)
14 spous* abuse.mp. (6717)
15 spous* violence.mp. (84)
16 interparental violence.mp. (76)
17 9 or 10 or 11 or 12 or 13 or 14 or 15 or 16 (38776)
18 exp Stress Disorders, Post-Traumatic/ (23179)
19 emotional trauma.mp. (298)
20 trauma symptoms.mp. (356)
21 trauma symptomatology.mp. (46)

22 post traumatic stress symptoms.mp. (314)
23 18 or 19 or 20 or 21 or 22 (23630)
24 4 and 8 and 17 and 23 (608)

ASSIA was search using the interface PROQUEST on 09/08/15 for the period after 1990 to August Week 1 2015

1. child* OR pre-school OR adolescen* (143309)
2. witness* OR observ* OR expos* (55671)
3. intimate partner violence OR partner abuse OR spous* abuse OR marital violence OR interparental violence OR spous* violence (3212)
4. trauma symptoms OR emotional trauma OR post traumatic stress symptoms OR trauma symptomatology (3232)
5. 1 AND 2 AND 3 AND 4 (27)

Web of Knowledge was searched using the interface Web of Science Core Collection (Thomson Reuters) on 09/08/15 for the period 1990 to 2014.
Web of Science Core Collection: Citation Indexes
Science Citation Index Expanded (SCI-EXPANDED) --1900-present
Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) --1956-present
Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI) --1975-present
Conference Proceedings Citation Index- Science (CPCI-S) --1990-present
Conference Proceedings Citation Index- Social Science & Humanities (CPCI-SSH) --1990-present

1. TOPIC: (child* or pre-school or adolescen*) Timespan: 1990-2014. Indexes: SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, CPCI-S, CPCI-SSH. (1,226,610)
2. TOPIC: (witness* or expos* or observ*) Timespan: 1990-2014. Indexes: SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, CPCI-S, CPCI-SSH. (4,894,983)
3. TOPIC: (domestic abuse or domestic violence or intimate partner violence or spous* abuse or spous* violence or partner abuse or marital violence or interparental violence) Timespan: 1990-2014. Indexes: SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, CPCI-S, CPCI-SSH. (19,601)
4. TOPIC: (trauma symptoms or emotional trauma or trauma symptomatology or post traumatic stress symptoms) Timespan: 1990-2014. Indexes: SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, CPCI-S, CPCI-SSH. (22,584)
5. #1 AND #2 AND #3 AND #4 Timespan: 1990-2014. Indexes: SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, CPCI-S, CPCI-SSH. (278)

b) Review Reference List Searched
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2 from Kitzmann, K.M., Gaylord, N.K., Holt, A.R., & Kenny, E.D. (2003). Child witnesses to domestic violence: a meta-analytic review. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 71, 2, 339-352.

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c) Expert Contact

Professor Kevin Browne provided two grey literature sources:

Hanmer, J., Griffiths, S., & Jerwood, D. (1999). *Arresting evidence: domestic violence and repeat victimisation* (No. 104). Home Office, Policing and Reducing Crime Unit.
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d) Website Search

NSPCC 09/08/15

The NSPCC website (www.nspcc.org.uk) was searched on 09/08/15 using the on-site search engine using the following search phrase: 'The effects of witnessing domestic violence' results were capped at the first page and the search results were sorted by relevance.

Sorted by relevance capped at first page, Showing 1 to 20 of 958 results for "the effects of witnessing domestic violence".
Yielded three results:
Radford, L., Aitken, R., Miller, P., Ellis, J., Roberts & Firkic, A. (November, 2011). Meeting the needs of children living with domestic violence in London. Refuge/NSPCC.
Stanley, N., Miller, P., Richardson-Foster, H., & Thomson, G. (January, 2010). Children and families experiencing domestic violence: Police and children's social services' responses. UCLAN: NSPCC.
Thiara, R.K., & Gill, A.K. (2012). Domestic violence, child contact and post-separation violence issues for south asian and african-caribbean women and children a report of findings. *London: NSPCC*.

Save the Children 09/08/15
Save the children website (www.savethechildren.org.uk) was searched on 09/08/15 using the on-site search engine with the following search terms: 'Children witnessing domestic violence', 'The effects of witnessing domestic violence', 'domestic violence'. Results were sorted by relevance and capped at the first page.
Yielded two results:
Newell, P. (2008). Challenging Violence against Children: A handbook for NGOs working on follow-up to the UN Study. Save the Children: London.
Stalford, H., Baker, H., Beveridge, F. (August, 2003). Children and Domestic Violence in Rural Areas: A child-focused assessment of service provision. Save the Children: London.

Learning to End Abuse (09/08/2015)
The learning to end abuse website (www.learningtoendabuse.ca) was searched on 09/08/2015 using the on-site search engine with single search terms: 'Children', 'Exposed', 'Domestic Violence'. The publications section of the website was scanned in detail.
Yielding four results:
Baker, L., Campbell, M., Straatman, A., Barreto, E. (2013). Children Exposed to Domestic Violence. The Learning Network. Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children. London: Ontario. http://vawlearningnetwork.ca/issue-3-children-exposed-domestic-violence. See more at: http://www.learningtoendabuse.ca/our-work/publications/children-exposed-domesticviolence#sthash.M9ceA9iT.dpuf
Baker, L.L., & Jaffe, P.G., (2006). A teacher's handbook: Understanding woman abuse and its effects on children. Strategies for responding to students. London, Canada: Centre for Children & Families in the Justice System. - See more at: http://www.learningtoendabuse.ca/publications#sthash.R5oOABef.dpuf
Crooks, C. V., Jaffe, P. G., & Bala, N., (2010). Factoring in the effects of children's exposure to domestic violence in determining appropriate postseparation parenting plans. In M. T Hannah, B. Goldstein (Eds.), *Domestic Violence, abuse, and child*

custody: Legal strategies and policy issues. (22.1 - 22.52). Kingston, New Jersey: Civic Research Institute Inc.. - See more at: http://www.learningtoendabuse.ca/publications#sthash.R5oOABef.dpuf
Marshall, L., Miller, N., Miller-Hewitt, S., Sudermann, M., & Watson, L, (1995). *Evaluation of groups for children who have witnessed violence.* London, Canada: Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women and Children. - See more at: http://www.learningtoendabuse.ca/publications#sthash.R5oOABef.dpuf

Appendix 2: Inclusion/Exclusion Template

First author, date, country: .....

Inclusion Criteria	Y/N/?	Comment
Was the study published after 1990?		
Was the study written in English?		
DESIGN Is the study empirical in design (cross sectional or longitudinal)		
POPULATION Does the population consist of children/young people under the age of 18?		
INTERVENTION Were the children/young people exposed (witness or observe) to physical violence by parents/caregivers? (Spouse Abuse OR Partner Abuse OR Intimate Partner Violence OR Interparental Violence OR Marital Violence)		
Was the severity of exposure stated within the study?		
OUTCOME Trauma symptomatology OR emotional trauma OR PTSD symptoms were measured via a standardised assessment tool.		

Appendix 3: Relevant Excluded Studies

Study	Reason for Exclusion
Ahlfs-Dunn & Huth-Bocks (2014)	No standardised trauma measure used
Anderson & Bang (2012)	Population
Ariga, Uehara, Takeuchi, Ishige, Nakano & Mikuni (2008)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Babcock & DePrince (2012)	Population
Backos (2009)	Missing data, authors not contactable
Becker (2001)	No standardised trauma measure used
Bekaert, Caron & Masclet (2012)	No standardised trauma measure used
Bergthold (2010)	Severity not specified
Blumenthal (1999)	Population
Blumenthal, Neemann & Murphy (1998)	Population
Briere, Kaltman & Green (2008)	Population
Briggs et al. (2013)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Briggs-Gowan, Carter & Ford (2012)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Burnett (2010)	Severity not specified
Burton, Foy, Bwanausi, Johnson & Moore (1994)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Calitz, Jongh, Horn, Nel & Joubert (2014)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Card (2005)	Severity not specified
Christenson (2010)	Severity not specified
Collings (2011)	Population
Crusto et al. (2010)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Davies, DiLillo & Martinez (2004)	Population
DeJonghe, von Eye, Bogat & Levendosky (2011)	No standardised trauma measure used
Delaney-Black et al. (2002)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Deters, Movins, Fickenscher & Beals (2006)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Dixon, Howie & Starling (2005)	Population
Drotar et al. (2003)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Durand, Schraiber, Franca-Junior & Barros (2011)	Population
Elze, Stiffman & Dore (1999)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Enlow, Blood & Egeland (2013)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Fitzpatrick & Boldizar (1993)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Flannery & Singer (1998)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Georgsson, Almqvist & Broberg (2011)	Population
Ghosh-Ippen, Harris, Van Horn & Lieberman (2011)	Severity not specified
Graham-Bermann, Gruber, Howell & Girz (2009)	No standardised trauma measure used
Graham-Berrman et al. (2008)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Hagan, Hulette & Lieberman (2015)	Severity not specified
Haj-Yahia (2001)	No standardised trauma measure used
Haj-Yahia, Tishby & de Zoysa (2008)	Population
Horowitz, Weine & Jekel (1995)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Hunt, Martens & Belcher (2011)	Severity not specified
Huth-Bocks, Schettini & Shebroe (2001)	Severity not specified
Israel (2010)	Severity not specified
Jarvis & Novaco (2006)	No standardised trauma measure used
Johnson & Lieberman (2007)	No standardised trauma measure used
Kaminer (2013)	Population
Kaplow, Saxe, Putnam, Pynoos & Lieberman (2006)	Severity not specified

Kashersky (2005)	Severity not specified
Kilpatrick & Williams (1998)	Duplicate sample used to Kilpatrick & Williams (1997) and study data not appropriate for meta-analysis.
Krause, Kaltman, Goodman & Dutton (2006)	Population
Kugler, Bloom, Kaercher, Truax & Storch (2012)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Kulkarni, Graham-Bermann, Rauch & Seng (2011)	Population
Leonard (2001)	No standardised trauma measure used
Lewis et al. (2012)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Lieberman, Van Horn & Ippen (2005)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Luthra et al. (2008)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
McCloskey & Walker (2000)	Severity not specified
McLaughlin et al. (2013)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Vela & Massa (1999)	Unavailable and authors uncontactable
Moretti, Obsuth, Odgers & Reebye (2006)	No standardised trauma measure used
Nugent et al. (2009)	Severity not specified
Overbeek, de Schipper, Lamers-Winkelman & Schuengel (2014)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Pelcvitz, Kaplan, DeRosa, Mandel & Salzinger (2000)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Phillips & Zhao (2010)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Post et al. (2014)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Punamaki, Quotam, Le Sarraj & Montgomery (2006)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Rathus, Wetzler & Asnis (1995)	No standardised trauma measure used
Rigterink (2013)	No standardised trauma measure used
Salazar, Keller, Gowen & Courtney (2013)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Scheeringa, Myers, Putnam & Zeanah (2015)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Schramer (1994)	Population
Schultz et al. (2013)	Severity not specified
Self-Brown et al. (2012)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Shen (2009)	Population
Silva et al. (2014)	No standardised trauma measure used
Silvern & Kaersvang (1989)	Study was published in 1989
Smith & Holford (1993)	No standardised trauma measure used
Soler, Paretilla, Kirchner & Forns (2012)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Stein et al. (2001)	Severity not specified
Struthoff (2001)	No standardised trauma measure used
Thakar, Coffino & Lieberman (2013)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Thompson Jr & Massat (2005)	Not specifying inter-parental violence
Tonelli (2002)	Severity not specified
Underwood (2002)	Severity not specified
Yoshinaga, Kasdomoto, Otani, Sasaki & Kato (2004)	Population
Zahradnik et al. (2010)	Population
Zerk et al. (2009)	No standardised trauma measure used
Zinzow et al. (2009)	Severity not specified

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Appendix 4: Quality Assessment Form

	Y 2	P 1	N 0	Comment
Sampling and Selection Bias				
The sample size was large enough (based on power)				
Exposure/Cases were randomly selected				
Non-Exposure/Controls were randomly selected				
Exposure/Cases were recruited from more than one source				
Non-Exposure/Controls were recruited from more than one source				
Comparison groups (if any) are related to outcome of interest				
Exposure/Cases and Non-Exposure/Controls are comparable (using techniques such as matching or stats adjustment)				
Considered potential confounding variables related to the participants' background				
Risk of selection bias?	*L*	*U*	*H*	
Measurement Bias for Exposure/Cases				
At least one standardised assessment tool used, all are measured by this tool				
The measure is reliable and valid				
Data were collected in an consistent setting				
Data were collected using the same measures				
The assessor collected the data in a consistent manner (inter-rater reliability)				
Assessors were qualified to carry out the assessment				
Risk of measurement bias for exposure/cases?	*L*	*U*	*H*	
Measurement Bias for Non-Exposure/Controls				
One standardised assessment tool used, all are measured by this tool				
The measure is reliable and valid				
Data were collected in an consistent setting				
Data were collected using the same measures				
The assessor collected the data in a consistent manner (inter-rater reliability)				
Assessors were qualified to carry out the assessment				
Risk of measurement bias for non-exposure/controls?	*L*	*U*	*H*	
Measurement Bias for Outcome				

One standardised assessment tool used, all are measured by this tool				
The measure is reliable and valid				
Data were collected in an consistent setting				
Data were collected using the same measures				
The assessor collected the data in a consistent manner (inter-rater reliability)				
Assessors were qualified to carry out the assessment				
Risk of measurement bias for outcome?	*L*	*U*	*H*	
Attrition Bias				
Missing data was dealt with				
Were those who completed the study and those who didn't similar?				
At least 80% of the participants were followed up				
The follow up methods were rigorous enough				
Was the follow up of participants long enough?				
Risk of attrition bias?	*L*	*U*	*H*	
Confounding Variable Bias				
Co-intervention/Co-exposure of the participants experiences were accounted for (i.e. community violence, child abuse and neglect).				
Risk of confounding variable bias?	*L*	*U*	*H*	
Other Issues				
The data analysis was appropriate, assumptions were tested				
Overall Quality **Risk of Bias in different domains**				

Appendix 5: Data Extraction Form

General Information	
Study ID	
Date of data extraction	
Reviewer Identification	
First Author	
Year of Study	
Citation	
Country of study	
Type of publication	
Funding source/ conflicting interests	
Study Characteristics	
Type of study	
Meets PICO?	
Target population	
Inclusion criteria	
Exclusion criteria	
Recruitment procedures	
Participant Characteristics	
Age	
Ethnicity	
Family SES	
Gender	
Geographical region	
Other information	
Number of participants	
Exposure	
Type of exposure	

Severity of exposure	
Frequency of exposure	
Focus of exposure (e.g. bi-directional, male on female or female on male)	
Number of conditions (including controls)	
Content of each condition (if applicable) **A** **B** **C** **D**	
What mediating or moderating variables were investigated (if any)?	
Outcome measured	
Outcomes and outcome measures	
What was measured after exposure or at follow-up? **A** **B** **C** **D**	
Who carried out the measurement?	
What was the measurement tool?	
Was/were the tool(s) validated?	
How was the validity of self-reported behaviour maximised?	
Time interval between measurements?	
Time interval between exposure and measurement?	
Drop-out rates?	

Analysis	
Stats used	
Do the stats adjust for confounding? And how?	
How was missing data dealt with?	
Key Findings	
Primary Findings	
Secondary Findings	
Other Notable Findings	

Appendix 6: Ethical Approval Letter

Appendix 7: Recruitment Email

Dear Student,

Please could you help a Forensic Psychology doctorate student completing his research thesis. The survey relates to students perceptions of inter-parental conflict and the effect it has. It gained a favourable opinion by the School of Medicine Ethics Committee. Questions are largely multiple-choice in format. As soon as the link is clicked it will take you to the information sheet which explains the survey in more detail. The survey will take no longer than 20 minutes.

Here is the link to the survey: https://nottingham.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/perceptions-of-inter-parental-conflict

Your help and time is very much appreciated.

Many thanks,

Richard

Appendix 8: The Online Survey

Information Sheet



Centre for Forensic and Family Psychology

School of Medicine

Email: lwxrtjo@nottingham.ac.uk

(Version 5.0: 02/02/15)

Perceptions of inter-parental conflict.

Purpose

We are interested in understanding perceptions of inter-parental conflict. If you agree to being involved in the study you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire.

Why have I been invited?

You have been recruited for the study as you meet the entry criteria; a student over the age of sixteen.

Confidentiality

All information that you provide will be dealt with and reported anonymously. Your participation will be treated in confidence to comply with UK Data Protection Laws. Your identification will only be in the form of a number. In the event that the results of the study are published, your identity will remain anonymous and confidential. Members of the research team may look at the information that you have provided to check that the study is being carried out correctly. These members will have a duty of confidentiality to you as a research participant. Only members of the research team will have access to your personal responses (by number) and study data.

How long is the online survey?

You may take as long as you require completing the survey, but the study should not take any longer than 20 minutes.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. If you agree you will be required to check and agree to a consent form at the beginning of the online survey. You are also free to withdraw from the study during the online survey without giving

a reason. However your online survey responses may still be used in the analysis. If you submit a completed questionnaire withdrawal at this point will not be possible. This is because once the data has been entered onto the secure computer system because it has been made anonymous and the data analyses draws together information provided by all participants it becomes impractical to extract and remove individual data from the system.

Who do I contact should I need to speak to someone about the research?

If you have any questions, queries or concerns regarding the study, please contact the researchers using the contact details below. If you experience any emotional distress that you would like to discuss with someone, please contact the counselling services using the contact details below.

How will the results be used?

The results of the study will contribute towards a doctorate thesis in Forensic Psychology. It is possible that the anonymous results will be published in psychological journals and presented at conferences.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been reviewed and given a favourable opinion by Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Ethics Committee.

Contact details:

Richard Jones

Email: lwxrtjo@nottingham.ac.uk

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Yang Fujia Building

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Nightline:

Tel: +44 (0)1159514985

Email: nightlineanon@nottingham.ac.uk

Skype Username: nottingham.nightline

Instant Messaging: http://www.nottinghamnightline.co.uk/#/instant-messaging/4578067716

Please tick the appropriate check box according to your gender. You may only select one option to continue.

Gender:

Male ☐

Female ☐

Please type in the text bow below your age in years:

Age: [ ]

What are your parents' profession?

Father: [ ]

Mother: [ ]

Please click on the next button to proceed to the consent form

Next

Consent Form

The University of Nottingham

UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

Centre for Forensic and Family Psychology

School of Medicine

Title: Perceptions of inter-parental conflict.

(Version 5.0: 02/02/15)

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study.

2. I understand my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without given any reason.

3. I understand that should I withdraw then the information collected so far cannot be erased and can be used in the research analysis.

4. I understand that my personal details will be kept confidential and anonymous in any write-up.

5. I understand that my anonymised data and personal details from this study will be accessed by the research team only.

By ticking the box and clicking next I give informed consent and wish to proceed and complete the survey ☐

Next

Section A – Demographic Information

Please tick the appropriate check box according to your birth order. You may only select one option to continue.

I am an:

Only child ☐

First child ☐

Second child ☐

Third child ☐

Fourth child ☐

Fifth child or other ☐

Please click on the next button below to proceed to the questionnaire

Next

Section B – Questionnaire

Parental Relationship Behaviours

No matter how well one's parents get along, there are times when they disagree, get annoyed with the other person, want different things from each other, or just have spats or fights because they are in a bad mood, are tired, or for some other reason. Couples also have many different ways of trying to settle their differences. Please indicate how many times you witnessed your parents do each of the following things during your childhood.

If you did not witness either parent do one of these things during your childhood, but you have witnessed this since the age of 18 choose "7".

Please respond using the following key:

1 = once during childhood

2 = twice during childhood

3 = 3-5 times during childhood

4 = 6-10 times during childhood

5 = 11-20 times during childhood

6 = more than 20 times during childhood

7 = this has not happened during childhood, but has happened since

0 = this has never happened

Parental Relationship Behaviours	Response
1. Him/her showing that they care even though they disagree	12345670
2. Him/her explaining their side of a disagreement to the other	12345670
3. Insulted or swore at him/her	12345670
4. Threw something at him/her that could hurt	12345670
5. Him/her twisted the other's arm or hair	12345670
6. Him/her showing respect for the other's feelings about an issue	12345670
7. Pushed or shoved him/her	12345670
8. Used a knife or gun on him/her	12345670
9. Called him/her fat or ugly	12345670
10. Punched or hit him/her with something that could hurt	12345670

11. Destroyed something belonging to him/her	12345670
12. Choked him/her	12345670
13. Shouted or yelled at him/her	12345670
14. Slammed him/her against a wall	12345670
15. Him/her saying they are sure they could work out a problem	12345670
16. Beat up him/her	12345670
17. Grabbed him/her	12345670
18. Him/her stomping out of the room or house or yard during a disagreement	12345670
19. Slapped him/her	12345670
20. Him/her suggesting a compromise to a disagreement	12345670
21. Burned or scalded him/her on purpose	12345670
22. Said something to spite him/her	12345670
23. Threatened to hit or throw something at him/her	12345670
24. Kicked him/her	12345670
25. Him/her agreeing to try a solution to a disagreement that the other suggested	12345670

Section C – Family Disagreements Questionnaire

In every family there are times when the parents don't get along. When they argue or disagree, children can feel a lot of different ways. We would like to know what kind of feelings you had when your parents had arguments or disagreements.

If your parents didn't live together in the same house with you growing up think about the times that they are together when they don't agree or about the times when both of your parents lived in the same house, when you answer these questions.

1. My parents often got into arguments about things I did

True Sort of True False

2. When my parents argued I could do something to make myself feel better

True Sort of True False

3. I got scared when my parents argued

True Sort of True False

4. I didn't know what to do when my parents had arguments

True Sort of True False

5. When my parents argued I worried about what will happen to me

True Sort of True False

6. I didn't feel like I had to take sides when my parents had a disagreement

True Sort of True False

7. It was usually my fault when my parents argued

True Sort of True False

8. My parents' arguments were usually about something I did

True Sort of True False

9. When my parents argued or disagreed I could usually help make things better

True Sort of True False

10. When my parents argued I was afraid that something bad will happen

True Sort of True False

11. My mother wanted me to be on her side when she and my father argued

True Sort of True False

12. Even if they didn't say it, I know I was to blame when my parents argued

True Sort of True False

13. My parents usually argued or disagreed about the things that I did

True Sort of True False

14. When my parents argued there was nothing I could do to stop them

True Sort of True False

15. When my parents argued I worried that one of them will get hurt

True Sort of True False

16. I felt like I had to take sides when my parents had a disagreement

True Sort of True False

17. My parents often got into arguments when I did something wrong

True Sort of True False

18. When my parents argued I was afraid that they would yell at me too

True Sort of True False

19. My parents blamed me when they had arguments

True Sort of True False

20. My father wanted me to be on his side when he and my mother argued

True Sort of True False

21. When my parents argued or disagreed there was nothing I could do to make myself feel better

True Sort of True False

22. When my parents argued I worried that they might get divorced

True Sort of True False

23. Usually it was not my fault when my parents had arguments

True Sort of True False

24. When my parents argued they didn't listen to anything I said

True Sort of True False

Section D – Questionnaire

1. Are your parents divorced/separated?

   Yes No

   If Yes continue to question 2. If No go to next section Debrief

2. Which age category were you when your parents divorced/separated?

0-4 5-9 10-14 15-19 20-24 Other

3. Were social services (i.e. social workers) involved in your parents' divorce/separation?

Yes Not sure No

3a) Did a social worker visit your home?

Yes Not sure No

4. Did your parents use solicitors to take divorce proceedings to court or mediation?
   Yes Not sure No

5. Were the police involved in your parents' divorce/separation?
   Yes Not sure No

   5a) Did the police visit your home?

   Yes Not sure No

6. Did your parents seek relationship counselling prior to their divorce/separation?
   Yes Not sure No

Allegations

7. To your knowledge were your parents making allegations of domestic violence?

   Yes Maybe No

If Yes or Maybe go to question 8. If No go to question 12.

8. Were both your parents making allegations of domestic violence?

   Yes Just father Just mother Not sure

9. Did you know about these allegations at the time?
   Yes Not sure No

10. Did you believe these allegations were correct at the time?
    Yes Not sure No N/A

11. Do you believe these allegations are correct now - at the present moment?
    Yes Not sure No

Impact at present

12. Do you have contact with both of your parents?
    Yes Just father Just mother Neither

13. Do your parents have contact with each other?
    Never Rarely Occasionally Sometimes Frequently

14. How often would you say you have contact with your mother?
    Never Rarely Occasionally Sometimes Frequently

15. How often would you say you have contact with your father?
    Never Rarely Occasionally Sometimes Frequently

16. How do you rate your parent's relationship now?
    No contact Conflicting Civil They are friends

17. Is there ongoing conflict between your parents despite their divorce/separation?
    Yes Not sure No

18. Do you feel you are required to travel home to support your parents because of conflict and divorce or separation?
    Yes Not sure No

19. Do you feel that your academic studies have suffered at all following your parents' conflict and divorce or separation?
    Yes Not sure No

20. Do you feel that your social relationships have suffered at all following your parents' conflict and divorce or separation?
    Yes Not sure No

Optional Request

Would you be willing to be contacted regarding participating in a semi structured interview?

Yes No

If so please can you provide your email address below:

Thank you for taking time to complete this online survey. Your participation is very much appreciated. Please click Finish below to be taken to the debrief form.

FINISH

Section E – Debrief Form

Thank you for completing this online survey. Your participation is very much appreciated. The aim of the online survey was to explore students' experiences of inter-parental conflict. You have answered questions relating to Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, 1972) and Children's Perception Interparental Conflict scale (CPIC; Grych, Seid & Fincham, 1992). It is hypothesized that prevalence of parental divorce and allegations are collated with higher scores on CTS and CPIC questionnaires. Your participation in the study can contribute to the lack of research available in this area. Furthermore, if you agreed to take part in the semi-structured interview this will help improve our understanding of the impact of inter-parental conflict and divorce.

The information you have provided will be kept entirely anonymous and confidential and the research team only will have access to the data. As you may have noticed you were not asked for your name at the beginning of the survey, which grants you anonymity. Should you agree to an interview email addresses will be kept confidential and student numbers will be assigned to create anonymity.

If you have been affected by any of the material in the online survey, or participating in the study has caused any emotional distress, please do not hesitate to contact the counselling services or nightline via the details provided below:

University of Nottingham Counselling Service:

Telephone: +44 (0)115 951 3695, internal extension 13695

Email: counselling.service@nottingham.ac.uk

Nightline:

Tel: +44 (0)1159514985

Email: nightlineanon@nottingham.ac.uk

Skype Username: nottingham.nightline

Instant Messaging: http://www.nottinghamnightline.co.uk/#/instant-messaging/4578067716

If you have any additional questions about the survey you are more than welcome to contact me via email:

lwxrtjo@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix 9: SPSS Outputs

Please see CD provided with the Thesis

Appendix 10: Ethical Approval Letter

Appendix 11: Example Email Invitation

Dear

Thank you for participating in my online survey and expressing a willingness to be contacted regarding a semi-structured interview. This interview is designed to explore your experience of inter-parental conflict. The interview will be audio recorded but the details you provide will be anonymised. If you agree to participate in the interview, an information sheet and consent form will be given to you to read and sign before the interview will take place. The interview is not expected to last longer than 60 minutes.

I am based at the XXXXXX on the University of XXXXX Campus. The interview will need to take place in a research room within this building.

Could you inform me of your availability for the next few weeks? (if you choose to participate).

If you could get back to me as soon as possible that would be much appreciated. This will also allow me to book the room in a timely fashion.

Many thanks,

Appendix 12: Interview Framework

Interview Information Sheet



Centre for Forensic and Family Psychology

School of Medicine

Email: lwxrtjo@nottingham.ac.uk

(Version 5.0: 02/02/15)

Perceptions of inter-parental conflict.

Purpose

We are interested in understanding perceptions of inter-parental conflict. You have agreed to being involved in a semi-structured interview

Why have I been invited?

You have been recruited for the study interviews as you opted in via the online survey and agreed to a semi-structured interview.

Confidentiality

All information that you provide will be treated anonymously and in confidence to comply with UK Data Protection Laws. Your identification will only be in the form of a number. In the event that the results of the study are published, your identity will remain anonymous and confidential. Members of the research team may look at the information that you have provided to check that the interview was carried out correctly. These members will have a duty of confidentiality to you as a research participant. Only members of the research team will have access to your personal and study data.

What does the interview involve?

You may take as long as you require answering the questions, but the interview should not take any longer than 60 minutes. The interview will be recorded using a digital audio recorder and that once the interview process has been completed, the recordings will be transcribed into print where all identifying information is either removed or made anonymous. You will not be identifiable from the transcriptions of the interview.

Where will the interviews take place?

The interviews will take place at the Centre of Forensic and Family Psychology to ensure other staff members are nearby. All interviews will take place during office hours.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. If you agree you will be required to check and agree to a consent form before we commence the interview. You are free to withdraw the interview without giving a reason. You can ask the researcher to stop recording at any point during the interview and if you wish to withdraw then the recording will be deleted immediately. However if you change your mind after the interview has happened then it is not possible to erase the data collected and it may still be used in the project analysis. This is because once the data has been anonymised and entered into the secure databases it becomes impractical to extract and remove individual data.

Who do I contact should I need to speak to someone about the research?

If you have any questions before the start of the interview you may ask the researcher in the room. However, if you have any questions, queries or concerns regarding the study, please contact the researchers using the contact details below (if questions arise after the interview has been completed). If you experience any emotional distress that you would like to discuss with someone, please contact the counselling services using the contact details below.

How will the results be used?

The results of the study will contribute towards a doctorate thesis in Forensic Psychology. It is possible that the results will be anonymously published in psychological journals and presented at conferences.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been reviewed and given a favourable opinion by Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Ethics Committee.

Contact details:

Richard Jones

Email: lwxrtjo@nottingham.ac.uk

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Nottingham, NG8 1BB

Project Supervisors:

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Instant Messaging: http://www.nottinghamnightline.co.uk/#/instant-messaging/4578067716

Interview Consent Form



Centre for Forensic and Family Psychology

School of Medicine

Title: Perceptions of inter-parental conflict.

(Version 5.0: 02/02/15)

Please Initial Box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study interview. ☐
2. I understand my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any point during the interview, without given any reason. ☐
3. I understand that should I withdraw then the information collected so far cannot be erased and can be used in the research analysis. ☐
4. I understand that my personal details will be kept confidential and anonymous in any write up. ☐
5. I understand that my anonymised data and personal details from this study will be accessed by the research team only. ☐
6. I give permission to have my interview recorded by audio device ☐
7. I give permission for quotations from my interview transcript to be used in the analysis. ☐

By signing this sheet I give informed consent and wish to proceed and complete the interview

☐

Researcher Use Only: Participant Number ☐

Semi Structured Interview Schedule

Introduction:

- Introduce interviewer
- Explain the aims and purpose of the study and give a brief description of the interview structure.
- Ensure Participants have read the information sheet
- Discuss digital recording of the interview and confidentiality
- Remind that they can stop the interview and recording at any time without giving a reason. The recording can be deleted straightaway if they decide to withdraw.
- Opportunity for participant to ask any questions.
- Complete the consent form and give a copy to participant

Questions and Topics:

- Tell me about your experience of parental divorce?

  How did it happen?

  How did you find out?

  What can you remember about the divorce?

- What do you think the reasons behind the divorce were?

  Why do you think that was a reason behind the divorce?

  Did this come as a surprise? Or was this expected?

  Were the reasons behind the divorce clear to you?

- How did this make you feel?

  How did you feel about yourself?

  How did you feel about your mother?

  How did you feel about your father?

  How did you feel about your brothers/sisters?

- How challenging or difficult was this period of time for you growing up?

  How was life at home?

How was life at school?

Did you move away?

Have you contact with both of your parents?

- How were you supported?

  How did your parents or relatives support you during this period?

  How did your school support you during this period?

  How did your friends support you during this period?

- How does this impact on you now?

  Would you say it has affected how you see intimate relationships?

  Would you say their divorce has caused issues for you now?

- How are your relationships with your parents now?

  How do you keep in touch with your parents?

  How often would you see both of your parents?

  Would you seek relationship advice from them?

- Student life can be difficult to adapt to, how have your previous experiences of parental divorce or conflict affected this process?

  Would you say it has made it difficult to leave home?

  Would you say it has impacted on how you make friends?

  Would you say you are more wary around others?

- How has the parental divorce/separation affected your own social relationships?

  How has it affected your relationships with relatives?

  How has it affected your intimate relationships?

  How has it affected your close relationships?

- How might this affect your future relationships with others?

  How might you seek potential partners?

  How would trust come into this?

  Would you say you worry about getting divorced?

  Why might this be?

Potential Scenarios:

In the event of someone becoming very distressed, disruptive or aggressive during the interview. The interview will be stopped and the participant allowed to leave. The interviewer will sit nearest the door in case the participant becomes aggressive. Information will be passed to the participant should they require ongoing support regarding their distress and time will be allowed for the participant to aid them in distress reduction.

If something of concern that needs reporting is revealed. The confidentiality agreement outlined to the participants before the interview commences will highlight the following; if they disclose an intent to harm themselves, others or know of any intent to harm, then these instances will have to be reported to relevant professionals by the researcher and supervisors. Should the participants report historical allegations of abuse they would be encouraged to seek professional advice or counselling by signposting the contact details on the information sheet.

Short Debrief:

The interviewer will now explain the interview is now officially over and there are no more questions. They will state when the project will be ending and that if after this date, it gets published that we will let them know. The volunteers will be thanked for their participation, and asked if they would like to have a more in depth debrief, for example if what has been discussed has made them feel particularly emotional. Even if they decline the debrief at the time, it will be reinforced that we can arrange for one if on reflection they feel they would like to talk to someone. The interviewer will ensure that participants are not left distressed, and we can signpost them to individuals with expertise in this topic area if they require extra support.

Debrief Form

Thank you for completing this semi-structured interview. Your participation is very much appreciated. The aim of the research is to explore students' experiences of inter-parental conflict. This research is exploratory in nature and your participation in the study can contribute to the lack of research available in this area. It is hoped your participation will help improve our understanding of the impact of inter-parental conflict and divorce. It is thought that students may be impacted by inter-parental conflict whilst progressing through school, college and university, this may affect academic performance amongst other things. Yours and other people's experiences of this phenomenon may help inform organisational bodies to provide appropriate support for students who have gone through similar experiences.

The information you have provided will be kept entirely anonymous and confidential and the research team will have access to the data. Participant identifiers will be assigned to create anonymity.

If you have been affected by any of the material in semi-structured interview, or participating in the study has caused any emotional distress, please do not hesitate to contact the counselling services or nightline via the details provided below:

University of Nottingham Counselling Service:

Telephone: +44 (0)115 951 3695, internal extension 13695

Email: counselling.service@nottingham.ac.uk

Nightline:

Telephone: +44 (0)1159514985

Email: nightlineanon@nottingham.ac.uk

Skype Username: nottingham.nightline

Instant Messaging: http://www.nottinghamnightline.co.uk/#/instant-messaging/4578067716

If you have any additional questions about the survey you are more than welcome to contact me via email:

lwxrtjo@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix 13: Thematic Map



Appendix 14: Codes List

1. Ongoing Experiences
1.1 High Expressed Emotion
…they don't really err (participant laughs) they don't really get along so they argued all the time… (001; line 20) …then it was quite a (.) messy divorce and it got strung out for a long time because my dad would like refuse to sign the papers and then he accused her of lying of all the things she had put in it… (001; lines 30:32) …it was obvious they weren't happy coz they argued like literally every single day, that, me and my brother used to say that's how we knew that dad had come home coz they'd start screaming at each other as soon as he came home. (001; lines 46:49) Everything, literally everything it could be like (001; line 52) …it was mainly that they just hated each other (participant laughs) (001; line 76) …they just always fought and som and they get quite violent sometimes as well it wasn't just verbal so it was kinda like you knew they weren't happy together (001; lines 85:86) …it wasn't like a good environment (.) for us to grow up in and she wanted to get us away from it all erm (.) but yeah I think (.) she I think it was she was just relieved to finally be away from him as well (001; lines 123:125) …he has always kinda saw it as me mum refusing to like to let us see him um and he he does always just want he did always just want to see us all the time… (001; lines 146:148) …my mum always used to ring him up and be like I'm gonna take you to court if you don't (.) start paying it again but he has always begrudged having to pay it because he sees it as like money going into my mums pocket not going towards us… (001; lines 288:290) Yeah, he made me cry all the time (.) I used to go home and cry to my mum and then my mum would usually ring him up and yell at him and he would be very apologetic but the fact still remained that he made me cry (.) (001; lines 666:668) Yeah one of them was terrible me dad just went up to me mum and poured an entire pint down her so she punched him in the face with this massive ring on her hand and like cut up all his cheek open (.) so he called the police on her and then they came around and interviewed (.) apparently like erm when they inter when the police came round to like coz he charged assault he'd like gone to the police and like said he'd been assaulted… (001; lines 727:731) …there were so many arguments about who got what weekends and what time we were coming over on Christmas eve and all of those kind of things and err yeah (.) that was a big issue like I suppose the feeling that you being carted around that definitely was a feeling at the time (.) (002; lines 78:81) …actually my dad had done some things that just were so not (.) not right like put me my sister and my brother in very emotional situations (.) (002; lines 87:88)

(.) um and having spoken to my sister about it recently she said "oh ((PARTICIPANT NAME)) hav haven't you thought about it he tried to turn us against her for years" and I (.) I hadn't really thought about it like that he'd always kind of spouted kind of abuse at her and horrible things about her but you'd just kinda like aw (.) like now I see it as that that was a screen at his own pain (.) (002; lines 233:236)

…he should have never of said those things but I think he couldn't see the effect he was having on me me brother and sister because of what he was going through himself (.) um (.) soo … um he would specifically say "your mother" rather than mummy or mum or something like that (.) made it sound like a a kind of fly off word (.) your mother and ((step-dad's name)) stepdad… (002; lines 240:249)

…they would for example send each other nasty text messages (.) um they would they would ring the phone for example my dad would ring my mum's home phone and then not put down the phone so then she couldn't use it and vice versa and do things like that to each other so that there'd be (.) couldn't kind of put down the call and things like that (.) um they would (.) just be spiteful like I dunno (.) like (.) my stepdad stopped picking up the phone (.) there was a big there was a lot of stuff to are to do with phones because my dad rang every single day (.) at half six (.) to speak to me and my brother and sister and so (.) that call meant that my step-dad wouldn't answer um (.) and (.) y'know if it did answer there was a chance they they would all get into an argument ((deep in breath)).. (002; lines 259:267)

…we are kind of all agreed that if we were to speak to my dad about some of the emotional trauma ((participant laughs)) I guess (.) (002; lines 425:426)

(.) I remember one particular parents evening um (.) it was around 2009 I think, maybe 2008 because my mum was engaged um (.) she lived with my step-dad for like yeah maybe eight or nine years before they got married (.) um and so (.) y'know it was at that point where and my dad was there and was like "let me see your ring" and like obviously (.) that was a very tense situation I remember sitting in front of one of my teachers and like she was saying all these great things it was like English and I was like yeah I love it but I was just crying because I had these (.) I couldn't explain why (.) and I didn't have to explain it to her but I was just (.) I had so much tension and so much worry that they were going to kick off at each other but I um (.) yeah it was just really really distressing… (002; lines 502:510)

(.) I mentioned in the morning on the bus I would have a call from my dad and um (.) yeah like afterwards I would be really upset and I wouldn't be able to explain necessarily to my friends why and they'd they'd seen I was really upset (.) god there was one day I went (.) I went into school and that particular morning I think I'd had a (.) my dad had upset me or (.) I dunno I just ended up crying and sitting in my form form room with my headphones in (.) and my form tutor just kinda left me to it and was just like (.) y'know she just let me get on with it coz obviously it was something I couldn't talk about at the time and I suppose you have to balance that with yeah I was a teenager so maybe I was just moody ((participant laughs)) but at the same time I had all of this stuff going on so (.) yeah there was a lot of anxiety there (.) um (.) (002; lines 510:518)

(.) like if I had gone home for example for a holiday and I spent three days with my mum and one with my dad he'd be like "ohh you spent three days with her how dare you" kind of thing am and instead of appreciating that one day that we had I mentioned about pushing for more he'd be like "but she got three days why don't you spend three days with me?" and almost expected it rather than appreciating the time that we did have … and so (.) and sometimes that expectation I guess felt (.) or I feel now translated into a kind of abuse because it was almost like "you should you should

feel like you love me the same way as your mum or that we get exactly the same amount of time" (002; lines 659:669)

…it's painful for everybody involved… (002; lines 1134:1135)

…it had always been quite rocky… (003; line 11)

…they don't speak to each other and my dad absolutely hates me mum and I would say that it's ruined his life and completely close to ruining mine and my brothers (.) (003; 64:65)

…it was kind of off and on for a few years and it was a bit messy (.) in my mind I can't quite work out the sequence of events but it was never very (.) I suppose we weren't protected from the messiness of it (003; lines 118:120)

(.) yeah I mean and my mum (.) my mum was I would say looking back quite unstable when we were growing up and she could be quite vicious.. (003; lines 152:153)

…and my mum was really difficult to live with she was quite volatile (.) I wouldn't say she was violent but she was quite (.) um what's the word um (.) yeah quite coz she could be very very nasty and and she went out a lot y'know so (.) (003; lines 167:169)

…she went completely bonkers… (003; line 175)

…so I was really annoyed with him because I had spent loads of time chasing it up and I just didn't understand why you wouldn't just get it sorted (.) so um (.) yeah we had a huge argument and the strange thing was all this anger came flying out of me and I have only seen him once since then which is quite unusual coz before that I had him over for a meal and to do shopping for him every week um but and (.) yeah I just said "all my life you slagged my mum off and made me life really difficult for me and I am stick of it" and I just started swearing at him fuck you fuck you (.) and put the phone down and I felt so (.) I felt so really kind of deranged and I don't think I have ever felt that much anger or expressed that much anger in my life (.) and I said to my partner I was really scared coz I felt like smashing the room up (.) and I still think that was just a combination of all those years of (.) and actually considering it all maybe that was quite a mild response because actually (.) every possible opportunity my dad has ever had (.) he's told me my mum's y'know … errr (.) err sociopath and her brother's a psycho and umm my mum too she wouldn't miss an opportunity to to tell me how he used to knock her about and stuff so basically yeah (003; lines 288:298)

…and its very difficult to be honest with my parents without them (.) really being quite aggressive back and its quite hard to find a way of speaking to them (.) so I I think I am better at it now than I have ever been (.) (003; lines 330:332)

(.) I think I have picked up on some of the all that vitriol and hatred that … uhh has always been around… (003; lines 340:345)

I think I do have a habit of being (.) being nice and then just (.) like blowing my top ((participant laughs)) (003; lines 748-749)

um well I say divorced that are not actually divorced yet but they the breakup of the relationship (.) she handled it really badly … oh massively so (.) um massively um me and me mum fell out over it actually over the separ not the separation per se (.) but the way she dragged it on and on (.) um they'd been separated years and she would still phone him all the time and expecting him to do

things for her (.) um been abusive towards him being verbally abusive towards him coz he had an affair that's why they separated (.) um and she would actually relate it back to the previous marriage and she would say well y'know "yes he was physically abusive but at least I knew where I stood with him" (.) y'know "your mentally abusive you've tortured me" an (.) um "made me think you weren't having an affair when you were having an affair" n' think "making us think I were paranoid" and all this kind of stuff (004; lines 577:594)

(.) they had a very turbulent and violent relationship (.) we ended up having to leaving the country because my dad was dangerous (005; lines 16:17)

(.) I kind of started being subjected to the violence I I I would see them argue constantly very very it was very very turbulent (.) (005; lines 75:76)

(.) and it kind of affected me for a long time and that's kind of (.) the lot that was thrown at the that broke the camel's back and mum was terrified of him (005; lines 101:103)

… I remember one particular argument I was like sat there in the kitchen playing with toys and (.) and I don't know what they were arguing about but I remember mum just kinda like walking away and going "nah nah nah" and him just following her screaming at her just through the house (.) …. they are pretty vivid (.) as in I don't remember what was being said but I remember it happening very clearly … yeah and I remember sitting in there and watching it (.) and wondering what was going on (.) I just didn't move I just sat an (.) (005; lines 202:215)

yeah I kind of knew my dad was dangerous but I didn't know how dangerous he was like (.) cuz obviously I still loved him and he'd never been that way towards me but he was always treated me in a very gentle way (.) I didn't really realise kind of like (.) first hand what kind of monster he was until later on (.) (005; lines 220:223)

t-turbulent as in she loves him very much but he's (.) a very very hurtful to her we obviously I wasn't a perfect kid growing up like I did my fair share (.) but not really the same thing as ((brother's name)) just he's just constantly selfish (.) he was just constantly selfish growing up gotten better now (.) he joined the army and kind of I think (.) even though he's not perfect it's it's kind of made him grow up and stabilised him a lot (.) yeah he done that (005; lines 567:571)

…they kind of argued on and off for years and then (.) I think obviously they came to the decision that (.) it was never going to get any better so it wasn't going to change (006; lines 20:22)

um and my my mum would my mum was quite emotional unstable (.) and she would drink quite a bit sometimes and went through different phases of drinking quite a lot and she could be quite aggressive … when she'd have a drink so (.) um and I think he strayed a couple of times ((participant laughs)) … so ((participant laughs)) all in all it was just a disaster ((participant laughs)) … no I knew about it all the time (006; lines 106:125)

how did it happen um we literally flee'd through domestic violence (.) um got help through women's aid … yeah um (.) and got put in to um a (.) a hostel for a little while (.) um and we were rehoused from there (.) yeah … ((deep out breath)) it was just awful I remember a lot of it (.) because I was a bit older and that kind of thing (.) (006; lines 229:240)

…he he would create um horrible situations um and be really kind of horrible to everybody and then go missing for a few days um and my mum found out that he'd missing for a few days to this other woman that he'd been (.) who was pregnant to him … and so he essentially had another family ((participant laughs)) um so yeah that was (.) I think that was the top the the straw that broke the camel's back for my mum (006; lines 272:279)

…he he would create um horrible situations um and be really kind of horrible to everybody and then go missing for a few days um and my mum found out that he'd missing for a few days to this other woman that he'd been (.) who was pregnant to him … and so he essentially had another family ((participant laughs)) um so yeah that was (.) I think that was the top the the straw that broke the camel's back for my mum (006; lines 272:279)

(.) I think I a lot of it was a bit (.) quite tense because (.) because my mum was quite emotional and quite um well she would say she lived off her nerves ya know she's just kind of quite quite nervy person (006; lines 406:408)

1.4 Getting Drawn into the Conflict

…they kinda like hint things to me to, well they used to, they don't do it anymore, about like the terrible things the other person had done so, I'm pretty certain that both had affairs at some point as well… (001; lines 74:76)

…I was very much on my mum's side because we were very close erm but my brother didn't really want to pick a side and they kind of like (.) it was kinda like he was caught in between them and he didn't really know what to do so (.) he kind of (.) I think it affected him more because of that he he's lived with, coz I have only ever lived with my mum, erm he lived he's lived with both them (001; lines 106:109)

… he has always been more like caught between (.) the two of them (001; line 116)

…to him it felt like they were like playing … him against each other and that they were trying to use him to spite each other and you just I think he just struggled a lot with that (001; lines 243:248)
I think (.) I've always, I'm a bit biased against like my dad and for my mum obviously so I don't really see that my mum did that I did just like see my mum as the victim in everything but um, I did feel a lot like my dad was (.) like I can remember he told me lots of things that like I don't think you should tell to your ten year old daughter (.) um in an attempt to like get me to like not (.) be as much on my mum's side so I think my dad definitely was (.) um I don't really think my mum was though but my brother disagrees with me (001; lines 253:258)

…I think our ((brother's name)) mainly went and moved in with him to like to spite my mum um but they didn't really get along though (001; lines 270:271)

Definitely coz (.) because he was like played off against them both for so long he doesn't really feel like he can talk to either of them about anything (.) um so when he does like have money troubles or like any other kind of trouble he doesn't talk to either of them, he used to talk to me quite a lot about it but when, coz I have been at uni for a year and a half now and like moved away he doesn't really see me that often and when I go home he doesn't he just doesn't coz he's not there he just doesn't talk to me anymore (001; lines 449:454)

…started taking advantage of like how nice she was being and then their relationship turned sour again and they didn't speak for like (.) quite a while they used to just speak through me and me brother, like I'd have to like relay a message to him next time I saw him (.) (001; lines 487:490)

…he does just says spiteful comments all the time and whenever I see him if she even vaguely gets vaguely gets brought up he'll say something spiteful and usually I just (.) I ignore it and don't say out as I am used to it (.) every now and again I would tell him off (.) because it's me mum and she doesn't deserve to be spoken like that (.) um but he still does it (.) me mum does it as well though (.) to be honest (001; lines 762:766)

…I am quite bad because he says out I think to meself (.) I'll tell me mother that when I get home (.) so yeah I tell her as soon as I get home… it doesn't really phase her that much more (.) she doesn't really care about what he think of her as long as me and me brother (.) aren't believing him (001; lines 770:780)

… when sometimes like my dad will call me (.) and it's like I have not spoken to (.) spoken to him in quite a while and I'm quite far away I'd expect him to be like asking how I am and stuff and having a nice chat and then he'll like (.) throw in a horrible comment like about my mum and I always think it's not why'd you think you have to ruin a perfectly nice conversation with someone with something like that … nn I just (.) I just really hate him when he does that coz like (.) you've not seen me in months I live really far away why are you doing this? (001; lines 795:804)

well when my mum says things I don't really tell my dad so I don't (.) I have sometimes said to her "mum you can't say stuff like that" but she'll usually just laugh but I never really (.) talk to my dad about it erm nn but (.) but pretty much every time I see them my dad says something about my mum so I just tell her and then she always like "for god's sake" (.) but she only really cares if he's said something horrible to me (.) in which case she gets really angry (001; lines 812:816)

…there were so many arguments about who got what weekends and what time we were coming over on Christmas eve and all of those kind of things and err yeah (.) that was a big issue like I suppose the feeling that you being carted around that definitely was a feeling at the time (.) (002; lines 78:81)

yeah and I got different pieces of information from both my dad and from my mum so your I was put in a very difficult position because I was like well (.) who is telling me the truth here … y'know I have (.) I have my dad going off on a rant about "your mother did this this and this this" and my mum saying "we didn't" ((participant laughs)) y'know so um it was it was a very difficult situation not knowing who to believe (.) like the two people you are meant to trust the most in the world didn't agree (.) um so yeah (002; lines 209:221)

(.) what else did they do? Just (.) hmmm (…) I can't really think right now (.) ahh like my dad would turn up up places he knew we were going to be I mean he knew it would be (.) ... (.) he could not see what he he did (.) infringed upon that life and that he he so so jealous of not being part of that and he felt (.) I think again that's why he kept in contact with us so much was because he was so sure we were having such a great time with my mum (.) (002; lines 267:275)

(.) um I (.) I had an incredible amount of worry and anxiety people would call me the worrier and I had no idea why (.) … and I think it was because of (.) the situations I was put in (.) so y'know like when the home phone rang I would jump (.) if I saw a blue bmw I would jump (.) like that being my dad's car not because it was him it wasn't (.) it wasn't so much him it was potential (.) because of

the potential for something to go wrong (.) for there to be an argument (.) umm (.) (002; lines 288: 296)

(.) like (.) err if if my mum insulted my dad I'd try n defend him and if my dad insulted my mum I'd try to defend (.) her and um (.) just constantly trying to put myself in a situation where I could fix it (.) and I couldn't (.) um didn't know that at the time ((general laughter)) because I was a child and um (.) I think my immediate response was y'know keep the peace keep the peace (.) (002; lines 296:300)

um so I generally took my dad side because he didn't have another partner (002; line 332)

…we used to go back home if we'd been spending a weekend with my dad on the Sunday we would go back home for six thirty (.) we would never be there at six thirty and I would be like "oh it's fine we can text mum and ring mum it's fine" and my dad would never kind of step up and honour his agreement n (.) (002; lines 342:345)

(.) I remember one particular parents evening um (.) it was around 2009 I think, maybe 2008 because my mum was engaged um (.) she lived with my step-dad for like yeah maybe eight or nine years before they got married (.) um and so (.) y'know it was at that point where and my dad was there and was like "let me see your ring" and like obviously (.) that was a very tense situation I remember sitting in front of one of my teachers and like she was saying all these great things it was like English and I was like yeah I love it but I was just crying because I had these (.) I couldn't explain why (.) and I didn't have to explain it to her but I was just (.) I had so much tension and so much worry that they were going to kick off at each other but I um (.) yeah it was just really really distressing… (002; lines 502:510)

(.) I mentioned in the morning on the bus I would have a call from my dad and um (.) yeah like afterwards I would be really upset and I wouldn't be able to explain necessarily to my friends why and they'd they'd seen I was really upset (.) god there was one day I went (.) I went into school and that particular morning I think I'd had a (.) my dad had upset me or (.) I dunno I just ended up crying and sitting in my form form room with my headphones in (.) and my form tutor just kinda left me to it and was just like (.) y'know she just let me get on with it coz obviously it was something I couldn't talk about at the time and I suppose you have to balance that with yeah I was a teenager so maybe I was just moody ((participant laughs)) but at the same time I had all of this stuff going on so (.) yeah there was a lot of anxiety there (.) um (.) (002; lines 510:518)

…I dunno (.) like trying to make us choose between him and mum and always wanted it to be (.) like if I had gone home for example for a holiday and I spent three days with my mum and one with my dad he'd be like "ohh you spent three days with her how dare you" kind of thing am and instead of appreciating that one day that we had I mentioned about pushing for more he'd be like "but she got three days why don't you spend three days with me?" and almost expected it rather than appreciating the time that we did have (002; lines 658:663)

(.) um I I've been able to ask her direct questions about how she felt my dad was before the divorce and after and um (.) and like her kind of situation again I said that she she's quite private and she doesn't like to dwell on it as for her its very much she's left it and doesn't want to think about it anymore (.) um but yeah we have much better relationship I think much more honest relationship now than we did (.) and yeah with my step-dad I'd include him here because for about err ten years I didn't really accept him and didn't really appreciate him and I think for (.) for the most part that was because of my my dad didn't say very nice things about him and I did see as on my mum's side so while he would say that he was neutral he wanted to be there for me my brother and my sister

(.) I always knew kind of in the back of my head well it can't really be true because you're with my mum (.) um but now we have a much much better relationship and I appreciate him (.) a lot more for (.) I guess supporting me my brother and sister financially and emotional and just being there as well an for everything that he has done for my mum so yeah (.) we've come a long way ((general laughter)) (002; lines 787:799)

…as a result of what I went through with my family because um (.) just like I mentioned the nasty little text messages to each other … and things behind closed doors very much (.) on both sides there my mum very much wanted to keep us out of (.) the conflict but that didn't mean she didn't fight for a side um her side as it were whereas my dad was very much more vocal (.) if he had a problem he was gonna say something about it … and so I suppose for me I just I just didn't want anything to kind of be underlying (.) um within the house and I guess within my friends err but yeah its interesting because I when there is a conflict that rises (.) um I don't actually want to go and speak to the person directly ((participant laughs)) and tell them to (.) go and do their flipping washing up but um (.) (002; lines 871:886)

I mentioned to my brother I was like (.) "did you" (.) "I've just been thinking that I um that I used to always um defend mum against dad and dad against mum when I used to always kind of try to be the peacemaker and it never worked and I always tried to fix it" and he was like "yeah you did (.) didn't you know that" no (.) like I hadn't realised it at all until that point (.) and then last year I went on a year abroad (002; lines 902:906)

…there was a huge like years of custody (.) fights … and fights over the house basically that went on for ages so me and my brother were totally caught up in it and I don't know whether that was (.) when were a bit It must actually it must have started more like when I was eight or nine… (003; lines 42:48)

(.) I think he kind of decided he was gonna try and make sense of it all so he'd like he did an evening class in psychology um (.) and I can remember this really clearly he used to when he had us at the weekends he used to take us for walks and he used to tr tell us all this stuff "I've been studying and I think your mothers a sociopath and her family are all mad" (.) um you know so he told us all this stuff and it took me a long time to unravel all that and understand it all and understand the impact that it's had on me um (.) (003; lines 66:71)

…like my mum will say "ah your dad was having an affair" an affair in Scotland and (.) I know that my mum had lots of (.) boyfriends when they were still married … even though they were living apart because she introduced us to them she didn't sort of hide the fact (.) because it was kind of off and on for a few years and it was a bit messy (.) in my mind I can't quite work out the sequence of events but it was never very (.) I suppose we weren't protected from the messiness of it (003; lines 108:120)

…we never had that sort of (.) um childhood where both parents were there or even where y'know they weren't there but it was kind of organised and there was any stability so (.) when the divorce happened and they were (.) um there was this custody battle basically what was happening was my dad was telling us "your mum y'know your mum's a psycho all of her family are mad do you know what don't trust them" blah blah blah (.) um and obviously we couldn't tell our mum he was saying all of this stuff ((deep in breath)) (003; lines 154:159)

…she was trying to get as much money as possible so from the divorce settlements so she was trying to get the house and stuff (.) um and that and that so what happened with that is me and my brother became (.) the deciding factors basically if we said um (.) and we very nearly went to court as

witnesses so if we said we don't wanna live with my mum (.) um my dad would have got most of the house um (.) and vice versa and as it was we were just about at that point where we were going to say we are gonna go live with our dad because we actually did get on better with with him (.) um (.) and my mum was really difficult to live with she was quite volatile (.) I wouldn't say she was violent but she was quite (.) um what's the word um (.) yeah quite coz she could be very very nasty and and she went out a lot y'know so (.) um just at the I think it was like a couple days before my mum got a solicitors letter confirming that me and my brother had agreed that we wanted to go live with my dad and she went absolutely ballistic and I me and my brother (.) changed our minds (003; lines 161:171)

(.) and just feeling abandoned like just feeling dropped off and not really having anybody who I could really trust with with (.) err with what was going because my my mum would say one thing my dad would say another thing and I couldn't talk to either of them about it and I couldn't trust either of them about it (.) I wasn't really old enough to vocalise any of that so I suppose I just (.) (003; lines 248:251)

…so I was really annoyed with him because I had spent loads of time chasing it up and I just didn't understand why you wouldn't just get it sorted (.) so um (.) yeah we had a huge argument and the strange thing was all this anger came flying out of me and I have only seen him once since then which is quite unusual coz before that I had him over for a meal and to do shopping for him every week um but and (.) yeah I just said "all my life you slagged my mum off and made me life really difficult for me and I am stick of it" and I just started swearing at him fuck you fuck you (.) and put the phone down and I felt so (.) I felt so really kind of deranged and I don't think I have ever felt that much anger or expressed that much anger in my life (.) and I said to my partner I was really scared coz I felt like smashing the room up (.) and I still think that was just a combination of all those years of (.) and actually considering it all maybe that was quite a mild response because actually (.) every possible opportunity my dad has ever had (.) he's told me my mum's y'know … errr (.) err sociopath and her brother's a psycho and umm my mum too she wouldn't miss an opportunity to to tell me how he used to knock her about and stuff so basically yeah (003; lines 288:298)

… I do think (.) that it is overlooked the impact (.) that it has on kids and it can be very scary as a child because you do (.) you feel this sense of loyalty to both of your parents and you want to please them (.) … and if there both treating you badly basically you don't have anyone to turn to (.) (003; lines 803:809)

… my mum became involved in another relationship quite soon after the end of that relationship (.) … um and we had sort of a step-father in our lives (.) they were a lot of animosity between the two families (.) I mean he had he had another woman and she had children as well and (.) but there was a lot of animosity between the two of them (.) um so much so that my biological father made a false allegation and telephoned social services saying that my step-father was hitting us and this that and the other (.) um (.) n ((deep out breath)) I think it probably lasted that long (.) because they were childhood sweethearts and I think they found it difficult to for all there was violence in the relationship I think they found it difficult to make that break away from one another (004; lines 107:118)

um no I was never concerned about him being violence (.) but I suppose in me teenage years (.) they argued quite a lot um (.) and so when they were arguing I'd feel like I needed to step in and protect her then (004; lines 211:213)

they were massively affected by the second break-up … um because they were quite young at the time (.) so my youngest brother would have been ten or eleven … um and they were very much in the middle of (.) the conflict (.) um I say conflict (.) it was one sided conflict (004; lines 658:663)

(.) um well I I did and I actually asked myself that question "I wonder if she's always been like this and I just didn't see it" … potentially yeah (.) um coz I have always (.) up until the past ten year or so (.) I have always been close with her (.) we have a really strong relationship and then the way she has behaved over the past ten years (.) I'm like has has you always been like this then? I just was oblivious to it (.) um I dunno I still don't know the answer to that (.) (004; lines 689:697)

(.) kind of the way she dealt with the second relationship breakdown impacted on a former relationship I had (.) um in that every time we had a disagreement he would say "you are just like your mother" um (.) I that used to cut deep ((general laughter)) … so yeah so I think um (.) that hurt (.) that felt y'know I'm nothing like her I don't say nuffin' stuff like that but yeah (004; lines 726:734)

(.) I had to stop speaking to me mum when I came home on the phone (.) because I wasn't getting any student work done (.) because she would be on the phone every night complaining about my dad and it's like this has been over for years and um it yer still going on about it and I haven't got time for it and that's why I only speak to her every couple of months … y'know coz I just don't have the time or the inclination to sit there and listen to it (.) … when it first came out that he had an affair … um the first thing I did was got to the end of the week I jumped on the train and went back to Newcastle um (.) I don't know what that was about actually (.) I don't know whether I was going back into protective mode with my mam or what (004; lines 807:825)

I think my mum must have said something (.) yeah I don't remember particular conversations but I do think that she would have said something (006; lines 51:52)

but I think my mum was having a really hard time (.) um and my dad wasn't paying maintenance and that kind of thing and so as my myself and my sister kind of got embroiled in all of that and used as pawns in the whole um access um rights and pay maintenance and things like that and that was really horrible (006; lines 66:69)

um and my my mum would my mum was quite emotional unstable (.) and she would drink quite a bit sometimes and went through different phases of drinking quite a lot and she could be quite aggressive … when she'd have a drink so (.) um and I think he strayed a couple of times ((participant laughs)) … so ((participant laughs)) all in all it was just a disaster ((participant laughs)) … no I knew about it all the time (006; lines 106:125)

no I think it was pretty clear at the time I think that's something that um (.) I kind of carried with me is that I was never protected (.) from any of the kind of (.) discord that was going on (.) I was always very much aware as a child of y'know what there difficulties were I was never protected from any of that so that something that I carried with me … yeah or my mum would come and tell me afterwards what he'd said or what he'd done or how she was feeling so I was (.) took on a kind of a (.) um responsibility (.) in the home … I always take responsibility now (.) whenever y'know I'm always the one to kind of step up and sort things out (.) um yeah … my mum remarried soon after that divorce and that was a really horribly abusive marriage from both sides but mainly from him (.) (006; lines 155:180)

…my mum told me that ((participant laughs)) um and (.) um and I think y'know as a result there was kind of bar put on us (.) y'know she wouldn't let us see him and I remember there was a phone call once where y'know my mum was pressuring my sister and I to kind of phone him and say we didn't want to see him anymore and those kind of things (006; lines 304:307)

…my mum did have a pregnancy (.) um but she miscarried and I was blamed for that because of my acting up ((participant laughs)) (006; lines 396:397)

with my mum it's always been really up and down um lately she's fallen out with me (.) um and we haven't spoken for probably about three months (.) so that's the latest … no this last fallout was specifically related to something um my sister (.) um is a single parent (.) lives right next to me and my mum (.) um she's very heavily dependent on my mum and vice versa that y'know they don't have much independent of each other and I think it gets to them both sometimes that they're not quite grown up to to do that um and one Saturday night I got a text (.) through from my sister and I knew as soon as I started reading it who'd ya know who it was sent by and it was sent by from my mum to her and she forwarded it onto me and it was just vile (.) just vile (.) you just wouldn't send it to anybody (.) she was really upset and that's why she told me about it and I am so glad she told me and I really wanted her to (.) to say to say to mum that ya know this is just not acceptable I'm not having this at all y'know you can't treat me this way but she doesn't have the inner resources to be able to do that … um and so I said I am really sorry (.) but I'm going to have to I can't let that slide you can't y'know she called her a "fat bitch" and everything it was just horrible (.) um and so I made I told my mum I was disgusted in her behaviour and that you go get professional help because you really need it and you're gonna screw up your grandchild's life as well as you know your own kids (.) so she told me to mind my own business and hasn't spoken to me since ((participant laughs) (006; lines 554:584)

1.3 Strung Out Conflict

…it was definitely strung out for quite a while because (.) and not just like the divorce like aspect either but like trying to move out of the house that we lived in because it was both in my mum and my dad's name we couldn't move out without my dad like signing it as well (.) and he just refused to do that for a long time (.) erm but because when they lived together all my mums ma, all my mums money had, all her wage had gone on bills and stuff and then my dad had paid for like all the food and everything else we bought day to day (.) erm so like everything was in my mum's name in the house and stuff so she had to just pay all the bills by herself so my dad tried to force her there as long as possible to get her into loads of debt and erm (.) and then I think he just, he just refused to sign the divorce papers for quite (.) I think she actually tried to take him to court to get him to do it (001; lines 381:390)

but it went on for quite a number of months and my dad did his best to be as frustrating as possible to like, I think he just wanted her to, to just like put a, frustrate her until she just stopped (001; lines 411:413)

…started taking advantage of like how nice she was being and then their relationship turned sour again and they didn't speak for like (.) quite a while they used to just speak through me and me brother, like I'd have to like relay a message to him next time I saw him (.) (001; lines 487:490)

…it's often taken as a um kind of a distressing period at the time (.) but I feel like people don't tend to think about the effects of what happens afterwards … so for me (.) the experience of my parents

divorce was started when I was six but really um (.) has affected me (.) for all the time up until now really (.) and I am 21 years old (002; lines 6:12)

…yeah it is a continuous process and um (.) that divorce has a yeah long lasting effect (.) is what I'd say (002; lines 24:25)

(.) I guess reflections of what happened over that time um (.) have been uh how do I explain this (.) it was more to do with what happened afterwards than what happened at the time (.) (002; lines 50:51)

…my dad won't let it go (.) like he he's very much like she left me she she was the one ((inaudible speech)) I I think that has caused a lot of problems in his life I think that if he could face the fact that he probably did some things wrong (.) within the marriage he would be able to forgive himself and move on from that but he's actually (.) held onto the past for a very long time I mean I have told you that it has taken me fifteen years ((participant laughs)) to be able to deal with some of the problems I had (.) so you can imagine for him (002; lines 169:174)

my mum just maintained that she had fallen out of love from my dad and that she hadn't had had an affair and my my dad insisting that she had and that one day when we're old enough he would show all of the files that prove this on his computer and all of the wherever she had been and whatever she had done (.) and it would not surprise me if he had (.) um gone and looked up where she had been if she'd been in a hotel if she's been somewhere else um (.) (002; lines 226:230)

(.) um I think my dad quit he kind of pushed he always pushed like for more so even if my mum said hello he'd probably be like "oh we'll she didn't ask how I was" or somethi something like that ((participant sighs)) (002; lines 537:539)

(…) I think the main thing is what I said at right at the very beginning that it's something that goes on for a very long time (.) (002; lines 1112:1113)

…there was a huge like years of custody (.) fights … and fights over the house basically that went on for ages so me and my brother were totally caught up in it and I don't know whether that was (.) when were a bit It must actually it must have started more like when I was eight or nine… (003; lines 42:48)

…when we were still y'know nine ten eleven twelve (.) those years (.) and he wouldn't go to the house so if we went to see him he would drop us off at the bottom of the hill and we'd have to walk up the hill home and he wouldn't communicate with my mum at all (.) um and that's never changed um so he's not been to any events that y'know graduation birthdays anything like that (003; lines 75:78)

…so I was really annoyed with him because I had spent loads of time chasing it up and I just didn't understand why you wouldn't just get it sorted (.) so um (.) yeah we had a huge argument and the strange thing was all this anger came flying out of me and I have only seen him once since then which is quite unusual coz before that I had him over for a meal and to do shopping for him every week um but and (.) yeah I just said "all my life you slagged my mum off and made me life really difficult for me and I am stick of it" and I just started swearing at him fuck you fuck you (.) and put the phone down and I felt so (.) I felt so really kind of deranged and I don't think I have ever felt that much anger or expressed that much anger in my life (.) and I said to my partner I was really scared coz I felt like smashing the room up (.) and I still think that was just a combination of all those years of (.) and actually considering it all maybe that was quite a mild response because actually (.) every

possible opportunity my dad has ever had (.) he's told me my mum's y'know … errr (.) err sociopath and her brother's a psycho and umm my mum too she wouldn't miss an opportunity to to tell me how he used to knock her about and stuff so basically yeah (003; lines 288:298)

…my first son was born with a heart condition and he died and my dad refused to come to the funeral because my mum was going to be there and my best friend (.) basically had to talk him into it and I think that's when things changed a little bit I was just like y'know "you're such a selfish bastard" you can't put it sorry for swearing … you can't you wouldn't put it aside to to come to my son's funeral (003; lines 359:366)

…I don't know whether it's whether this sort of thing goes on for as long with other people but … but it's a long time ((general laughter)) (003; lines 449:450)

…um so I remember as the cream on his eye I remember that coming through and I think that I was probably was around (.) I don't know maybe ten so they have been separated for a lot a lot of years before they actually got divorce (004; lines 55:58)

for few years there was … um well the only thing I can really remember is him making this false allegation about our stepdad hitting us (004; lines 377:382)

um well I say divorced that are not actually divorced yet but they the breakup of the relationship (.) she handled it really badly … oh massively so (.) um massively um me and me mum fell out over it actually over the separ not the separation per se (.) but the way she dragged it on and on (.) um they'd been separated years and she would still phone him all the time and expecting him to do things for her (.) um been abusive towards him being verbally abusive towards him coz he had an affair that's why they separated (.) um and she would actually relate it back to the previous marriage and she would say well y'know "yes he was physically abusive but at least I knew where I stood with him" (.) y'know "your mentally abusive you've tortured me" an (.) um "made me think you weren't having an affair when you were having an affair" n' think "making us think I were paranoid" and all this kind of stuff (004; lines 577:594)

and it's been ongoing since (.) and the abuse has stopped now (.) um she's stopped verbally abusing him now (.) um but they still haven't divorced (.) (004; lines 622:625)

um (.) got to the point where my dad had to turn his telephone off and he'd wake up in the morning and he'd have thirty missed calls from her and um answer phone messages being abusive and all kind of stuff (.) um and me my two younger brothers were actually living with me mum at that time (.) um and so they (.) yeah I think that probably had a massive impact on them (.) um in fact at one point I was gonna try and get me youngest brother to come and live with me (.) I knew me next one up wouldn't coz like he had lots of friends in the area and um (.) he could he was sort of had a routine so he could remove himself from the situation whereas the younger one was only like ten or eleven (.) um so I was gonna I was gonna try and get him to come live with me (.) um (004; lines 672:679)

um they're not divorced yet (.) she actually commented that um I'll never divorce him um (.) but y'know he's got a new partner he he it's not that he's thinking of remarrying (.) but it's about making that break from me mam (004; lines 786:788)

um the first thing I did was got to the end of the week I jumped on the train and went back to Newcastle um (.) I don't know what that was about actually (.) I don't know whether I was going back into protective mode with my mam or what … but I felt like I needed to be there um (.) but I

think (.) I think I was always going to forgive him (.) but I think probably (.) not understood more but I think probably the way me mam dealt with it (.) was like "yes well he did wrong he had an affair but you dragged it out for however many years" ja know what I mean? (004; 823:832)

…they kind of argued on and off for years and then (.) I think obviously they came to the decision that (.) it was never going to get any better so it wasn't going to change (006; lines 20:22)

(.) it was very tit for tat really (.) he what I was told at the time by my mum actually (.) was that he had said (.) through the solicitor that he would pay maintenance for ((sister's name)) my sister but not for me cuz I wasn't biologically his (.) (006; lines 297:300)

1.2 Feeling Stuck

…my dad won't let it go (.) like he he's very much like she left me she she was the one ((inaudible speech)) I I think that has caused a lot of problems in his life I think that if he could face the fact that he probably did some things wrong (.) within the marriage he would be able to forgive himself and move on from that but he's actually (.) held onto the past for a very long time I mean I have told you that it has taken me fifteen years ((participant laughs)) to be able to deal with some of the problems I had (.) so you can imagine for him (002; lines 169:174)

…right now in his current where he's at right now my dad would not be able to handle it he I feel like it would break him it wouldn't um (.) help him and he wouldn't be able to see it anyway and he still hasn't dealt with his own problems so kind of explaining ours to him I don't think would be of any use so for now I think my brothers kind of put it on hold (.) (002; lines 427:430)

(.) I remember one particular parents evening um (.) it was around 2009 I think, maybe 2008 because my mum was engaged um (.) she lived with my step-dad for like yeah maybe eight or nine years before they got married (.) um and so (.) y'know it was at that point where and my dad was there and was like "let me see your ring" and like obviously (.) that was a very tense situation I remember sitting in front of one of my teachers and like she was saying all these great things it was like English and I was like yeah I love it but I was just crying because I had these (.) I couldn't explain why (.) and I didn't have to explain it to her but I was just (.) I had so much tension and so much worry that they were going to kick off at each other but I um (.) yeah it was just really really distressing… (002; lines 502:510)

I think he was kind of in denial at that in that way (.) but he expected us to have the same kind of relationship then if he you know if he's talked to us on the phone then it would be the same as as if he had walked through the door and been like "hey kids (.) how are you?" as it's like not the same um (.) and it was never going to be… (002; lines 1157:1160)

… I do think (.) that it is overlooked the impact (.) that it has on kids and it can be very scary as a child because you do (.) you feel this sense of loyalty to both of your parents and you want to please them (.) … and if there both treating you badly basically you don't have anyone to turn to (.) (003; lines 803:809)

… my mum became involved in another relationship quite soon after the end of that relationship (.) … um and we had sort of a step-father in our lives (.) they were a lot of animosity between the two families (.) I mean he had he had another woman and she had children as well and (.) but there was a lot of animosity between the two of them (.) um so much so that my biological father made a false allegation and telephoned social services saying that my step-father was hitting us and this that and the other (.) um (.) n ((deep out breath)) I think it probably lasted that long (.) because they were

childhood sweethearts and I think they found it difficult to for all there was violence in the relationship I think they found it difficult to make that break away from one another (004; lines 107:118)

about six (.) I was six (.) moved here and I think my mum divorced a couple of years later as like they were separated for a long time but they were trying to get through all the legalities (005; lines 25:27)

(.) just she didn't learn from my dad and I just continually don't think she'll ever learn and she doesn't tend to listen to me (005; lines 387:388)

1.5 Feeling Unsafe in their Environment

…I think it was more that I was just horrified at some of the things he did coz like he broke into our house once and stole the furniture to freak us out and he kept trying to kidnap us from school as well so he was it was less the fact that they were splitting up that affected me and more just the way my dad was acting than anything else (001; lines 161:164)

Erm (.) Well (.) I didn't feel that safe to be honest because my dad obviously still had a key and could get in and after the other things he had done it was a bit scary um but we moved out of the house that we lived in very quickly… (001; lines 168:170)

…it got to the point where my mum told us we had to like wait inside until she like came out from the car and came and got us instead she told the teachers that she was going to do that so that he couldn't just drive up and get us (001; lines 181:183)

…I think the first couple of months after when they like split up and once he his behaviour had started getting more and more erratic mum didn't really kind of trust him with us (.) (001; lines 216:218)

…they would for example send each other nasty text messages (.) um they would they would ring the phone for example my dad would ring my mum's home phone and then not put down the phone so then she couldn't use it and vice versa and do things like that to each other so that there'd be (.) couldn't kind of put down the call and things like that (.) um they would (.) just be spiteful like I dunno (.) like (.) my stepdad stopped picking up the phone (.) there was a big there was a lot of stuff to are to do with phones because my dad rang every single day (.) at half six (.) to speak to me and my brother and sister and so (.) that call meant that my step-dad wouldn't answer um (.) and (.) y'know if it did answer there was a chance they they would all get into an argument ((deep in breath)).. (002; lines 259:267)

(.) um I (.) I had an incredible amount of worry and anxiety people would call me the worrier and I had no idea why (.) … and I think it was because of (.) the situations I was put in (.) so y'know like when the home phone rang I would jump (.) if I saw a blue bmw I would jump (.) like that being my dad's car not because it was him it wasn't (.) it wasn't so much him it was potential (.) because of the potential for something to go wrong (.) for there to be an argument (.) umm (.) (002; lines 288: 296)

…yeah it was absolutely exhausting (.) err yeah (.) and I (.) it was so strange because for me that was normal … and so only now (.) um (.) reflecting on it as an adult and realising that that wasn't okay and wasn't what everybody else was going through at home (.) um (.) yeah it's it's been a real revelation to me and to realise that also those things um had become so part of my daily routine (.) (002; lines 306:313)

… there used to err um throw stuff at each other so I remember vases smashed up against the wall … and physical fights as well I don't remember my mum ever uh um kind of looking like they'd been fighting or my y'know and and I think it was both of them y'know what it was just that my dad was stronger I suppose but um yeah they were definitely quite (.) violent with each other uh (003; lines 129:136)

…we never had that sort of (.) um childhood where both parents were there or even where y'know they weren't there but it was kind of organised and there was any stability so (.) when the divorce happened and they were (.) um there was this custody battle basically what was happening was my dad was telling us "your mum y'know your mum's a psycho all of her family are mad do you know what don't trust them" blah blah blah (.) um and obviously we couldn't tell our mum he was saying all of this stuff ((deep in breath)) (003; lines 154:159)

(.) so you see my dad he he he he (.) I supposed he still is a little bit like this he does he stigmatised my mum's mental health and I think because he did that (.) um I became very scared of it and scared of her and scared of becoming unwell myself and just generally very scared and anxious so I've I've felt like life was a very frightening thing and the best thing was to do was just be quiet and read a book (.) um so (.) yeah I think it made me very anxious… (003; lines 252:256)

(.) sometimes sometimes I talk to my mum about stuff and then other times I'll or she'll then she'll say something and I realise that it's not really safe to to um ((deep in breath)) to be that close to her I think and with my (.) yeah and this I was (.) closer to my dad but actually I have also realised you it's very difficult to be close to somebody but (.) I think for a long time I just ignored the side this element of him (003; lines 349:354)

umm yeah I think she just got to the end of her tether and thought y'know he's cheating he's violent he's (.) she's decided that she wasn't going to put up with it any more (004; lines 140:141)

(.) I didn't think of it too much but I remember seeing the blood on the steps that particular incident … I remember seeing that um (.) almost instinctively knowing that's my mum's blood (.) on the stairs (.) because I knew something had gone on (.) the previous evening but (.) and I could hear screaming and I was shielded from me aunt um (.) but I remember looking and thinking that's (.) that's me mam's blood (.) but like I say I don't know whether that's a constructed memory or that's a real memory mm … yeah it does it does and it's been there like (.) it's not been something that has come to me in adulthood (004; lines 160:174)

um (.) got to the point where my dad had to turn his telephone off and he'd wake up in the morning and he'd have thirty missed calls from her and um answer phone messages being abusive and all kind of stuff (.) um and me my two younger brothers were actually living with me mum at that time (.) um and so they (.) yeah I think that probably had a massive impact on them (.) um in fact at one point I was gonna try and get me youngest brother to come and live with me (.) I knew me next one up wouldn't coz like he had lots of friends in the area and um (.) he could he was sort of had a routine so he could remove himself from the situation whereas the younger one was only like ten or eleven (.) um so I was gonna I was gonna try and get him to come live with me (.) um (004; lines 672:679)

(.) they had a very turbulent and violent relationship (.) we ended up having to leaving the country because my dad was dangerous (005; lines 16:17)

(.) I kind of started being subjected to the violence I I I would see them argue constantly very very it was very very turbulent (.) (005; lines 75:76)

…they got to the point where my my dad pulled out a knife on my mum … and like in front of me and my brother when I was I was very young so it kind of (.) I don't really understand what I was seeing at first … but it it affected me directly as in mum managed to get out of it and it was okay and we were all fine nothing happened of that (.)but it caused (.) to behave and do the same thing in front of other kids for a while (005; lines 85:96)

(.) I think dad kind of went and then mum made plans to basically escape if you like (.) and we moved to a um some house in the suburbs but I think (.) but which was we were all a lot worse off … and then she kind of figured that she would never really be rid of him and was very very kind of nervous about that (.) so she decided to come back to the UK where she is originally from (005; lines 111:118)

I love my mum and like I didn't feel any different about her like just I don't really think I understood I I knew she was scared (.) (005; lines 282:283).

…when we first moved there it was very very violent (.) as we had our windows put in by a golf club and bikes nicked out the back (.) … lots of problems (.) and obviously (.) as awful as it sounds kind of the kids at the primary school weren't quite as (.) nice as the kids I went y'know from the other previous previous one I was at (.) so I basically (.) I kind of suffered a lot there cuz I was very very isolated and couldn't talk to anybody (005; lines 482:490)

um and my my mum would my mum was quite emotional unstable (.) and she would drink quite a bit sometimes and went through different phases of drinking quite a lot and she could be quite aggressive … when she'd have a drink so (.) um and I think he strayed a couple of times ((participant laughs)) … so ((participant laughs)) all in all it was just a disaster ((participant laughs)) … no I knew about it all the time (006; lines 106:125)

no I think it was pretty clear at the time I think that's something that um (.) I kind of carried with me is that I was never protected (.) from any of the kind of (.) discord that was going on (.) I was always very much aware as a child of y'know what there difficulties were I was never protected from any of that so that something that I carried with me … yeah or my mum would come and tell me afterwards what he'd said or what he'd done or how she was feeling so I was (.) took on a kind of a (.) um responsibility (.) in the home … I always take responsibility now (.) whenever y'know I'm always the one to kind of step up and sort things out (.) um yeah … my mum remarried soon after that divorce and that was a really horribly abusive marriage from both sides but mainly from him (.) (006; lines 155:180)

how did it happen um we literally flee'd through domestic violence (.) um got help through women's aid … yeah um (.) and got put in to um a (.) a hostel for a little while (.) um and we were rehoused from there (.) yeah … ((deep out breath)) it was just awful I remember a lot of it (.) because I was a bit older and that kind of thing (.) (006; lines 229:240)

it's a love hate thing really … in a yeah it was love hate (.) I loved her and see loved me and I knew she loved me … but (.) I didn't feel like I could trust her (.) didn't feel like (.) I don't know I didn't feel she could keep me safe (006; lines 328:337)

(.) I think I a lot of it was a bit (.) quite tense because (.) because my mum was quite emotional and quite um well she would say she lived off her nerves ya know she's just kind of quite quite nervy person (006; lines 406:408)

2. A traumatic internal world

2.3 Vivid Memories

…when he actually came home the day he came home and tried to get back in the house erm my mum, I was with my mum and she was drying my hair in her bedroom (.) I can remember it really vividly she was drying my hair in the in the in her bedroom and her bedroom was at the front of the house erm so I could hear my dad like yelling from outside trying to get in and I can remember saying to her are you going to let him in mum? And she was like no, look no stop talking to me and then she didn't let him back in… (001; lines 41:46)

…he used to erm come and climb up onto the like, coz we like had a, erm out, above my mum's (.) erm in the house where my mum's bedroom window was, underneath her bedroom window was, like a little bit of slanty roof, he always used to climb up onto that and bang at the windows and bang some and try and get her to let him in and stuff and erm he was always trying to get erm and get her to take him back and stuff and he did go a bit off the deep end and kept disappearing in the middle of the night and stuff… (001; lines 133:138)

… I think coz there was one incident where he went he proper started screaming at me and was building a fire and he like proper threw it and smashed it on the ground at it really scared me so I ran away from him (.) … I ran away and a and we had a friend down the road so I ran to their house and they called my mum to come and get me (.)

(.) remember how my parents having an argument within the house, six years old happened but I don't remember it (.) what I remember from the actual time of the divroce was my parents sitting me down in a room and saying "okay well you know we've not been in the same bedroom for quite a while and you know what's going to happen is you guys" like me my brother and my sister um (.) "are gonna move out with mum and" um (.) we went to a different house (.) and I vaguely remember having to sort stuff toys into different bags and try to decide what to keep and what to take to mum's house (.) but apart from that I can't remember much at the time (.) (002; lines 43:49)

(.) okay let's start with primary school (.) primary school I think I already had err some of that anxiety (.) I remember sitting on a (.) on the field on the school field and my teacher or the teaching assistant who was also a close friend to my mum (.) kind of telling me that they were worried about me (.) (002; lines 447:450)

(.) I remember one particular parents evening um (.) it was around 2009 I think, maybe 2008 because my mum was engaged um (.) she lived with my step-dad for like yeah maybe eight or nine years before they got married (.) um and so (.) y'know it was at that point where and my dad was there and was like "let me see your ring" and like obviously (.) that was a very tense situation I remember sitting in front of one of my teachers and like she was saying all these great things it was like English and I was like yeah I love it but I was just crying because I had these (.) I couldn't explain why (.) and I didn't have to explain it to her but I was just (.) I had so much tension and so much worry that they were going to kick off at each other but I um (.) yeah it was just really really distressing… (002; lines 502:510)

(.) the only time it would have affected it is if I am trying to work and (.) I end of kind of daydreaming and thinking about something that happened with like my dad or whatever (002; lines 979:980)

…I can remember quite clearly there was a lot of arguing but I also remember the the meatloaf album bat out of hell was … was in the charts at the time and I remember them playing it quite loudly and and y'know arguing and stuff … (.) um then I remember us leaving and um driving back down from Scotland in the car with my mum and my mum saying that they were going to get divorced (.) I can remember that quite clearly um… (003; line 23:35)

(.) I think he kind of decided he was gonna try and make sense of it all so he'd like he did an evening class in psychology um (.) and I can remember this really clearly he used to when he had us at the weekends he used to take us for walks and he used to tr tell us all this stuff "I've been studying and I think your mothers a sociopath and her family are all mad" (.) um you know so he told us all this stuff and it took me a long time to unravel all that and understand it all and understand the impact that it's had on me um (.) (003; lines 66:71)

…um so I remember as the cream on his eye I remember that coming through and I think that I was probably was around (.) I don't know maybe ten so they have been separated for a lot a lot of years before they actually got divorce (004; lines 55:58)

… for me it feels like a real memory I remember when I was when I would have been like three and I remember (.) lying on the sofa with my aunt and she had me cuddled up and she had a blanket over my head and it was because my dad was hitting my mum … um (.) and she was trying to protect me from that we lived in a flat (.) so I was heard that there was something going on and I could hear screaming but I didn't really couldn't see anything (.) um (.) but what I remember very clearly is waking up the next morning and we were going down the stairs (.) and the flat and there was blood there on the concrete steps and there was blood all the way down the steps (004; lines 74:84)

(.) I didn't think of it too much but I remember seeing the blood on the steps that particular incident … I remember seeing that um (.) almost instinctively knowing that's my mum's blood (.) on the stairs (.) because I knew something had gone on (.) the previous evening but (.) and I could hear screaming and I was shielded from me aunt um (.) but I remember looking and thinking that's (.) that's me mam's blood (.) but like I say I don't know whether that's a constructed memory or that's a real memory mm … yeah it does it does and it's been there like (.) it's not been something that has come to me in adulthood (004; lines 160:174)

…they got to the point where my my dad pulled out a knife on my mum … and like in front of me and my brother when I was I was very young so it kind of (.) I don't really understand what I was seeing at first … but it it affected me directly as in mum managed to get out of it and it was okay and we were all fine nothing happened of that (.)but it caused (.) to behave and do the same thing in front of other kids for a while (005; lines 85:96)

… I remember one particular argument I was like sat there in the kitchen playing with toys and (.) and I don't know what they were arguing about but I remember mum just kinda like walking away and going "nah nah nah" and him just following her screaming at her just through the house (.) …. they are pretty vivid (.) as in I don't remember what was being said but I remember it happening very clearly … yeah and I remember sitting in there and watching it (.) and wondering what was going on (.) I just didn't move I just sat an (.) (005; lines 202:215)

I remember my dad leaving one day and he was a builder and he came home in all his kind of dirty builders clothes and saying (.) he'd got his bags packed (.) um and his eyes all welled up and he said that "I'm going can I have a hug" and I was just saying "no you're all dirty I can't" y'know (006; lines 26:29)

2.2 Internalised Feelings

…just erm sometimes (.) sometimes it scared me a bit and sometimes it made me upset but a lot of the time (.) I was just used to it so (.) it didn't really cause much of a reaction from me… (001; lines 90: 91)

…my brother erm (.) it did seem to affect him quite a lot more than me erm it was when, it happened when he was in his first year of secondary school and he always blames it on there that he is at the cusp of like adolescence when it all happened… (001; lines 103:106)

I've just always had like anxiety problems and as a kid I just used to freak me out having to leave me mum and go to school… (001; lines 343:344)

…I'd have very very low self-esteem and insecure as a teenager… (001; lines 659:660)

…err for 15 years that have been things I've been um (.) keeping quiet and shutting down about that divorce which have only really um (.) been let go of this year... (002; lines 16:18)

(.) um I (.) I had an incredible amount of worry and anxiety people would call me the worrier and I had no idea why (.) … and I think it was because of (.) the situations I was put in (.) so y'know like when the home phone rang I would jump (.) if I saw a blue bmw I would jump (.) like that being my dad's car not because it was him it wasn't (.) it wasn't so much him it was potential (.) because of the potential for something to go wrong (.) for there to be an argument (.) umm (.) (002; lines 288: 296)

(.) um don't let anyone see your emotions (.) um like this is upsetting you clearly but don't show your brother and sister that your upset like grow up on your own and you deal with your own emotions and not in front of everybody else err (.) (002; lines 300:302)

…um so when people said "oh you worry too much" it's because they hadn't gone through that situation … precisely (.) so my instant reaction sometimes to situations which didn't have anything to do with y'know my parents would have been worry but (.) um yeah I now realise that actually I don't have to hold onto that (.) cuz it was an emotional response to a situation as opposed to a factor in my identity (002; lines 314:321)

…yeah my brother has an incredible amount of anger about it and he (.) um (.) y'know like he's a he's a student and he um (.) is err studying medicine and he is incredibly err (.) clever and focussed and driven (.) um I think more so he would say it's not because he's like naturally clever but just because he works hard and he err knows what he wants to do (.) he has a fear of (.) becoming (.) err having a temper like my dad or um (.) doing anything that would resemble him (.) kind of emotionally in in a bad in a kind of negative sense (002; lines 410:415)

(.) err he has panic attacks unfortunately and um (.) yeah its (.) its something which he (.) I don't think is ready to deal with yet (.) he feels like he has got so much anger and he doesn't really know how to channel it (002; lines 419:421)

(.) my sister err err I think the youngest (.) I think she feels very similarly to me in that there was an incredible amount of anxiety (.) she actually when she was a child she did um (.) suffer from stomach aches and stuff and anxiety and I think partly that due to a lot of stress around her like eleven plus (.) but also um I think stress to do with our family and she kind of that expressed itself I think with her in a physical way and she um (.) she she's on a journey (.) (002; lines 430:435)

(.) I mentioned in the morning on the bus I would have a call from my dad and um (.) yeah like afterwards I would be really upset and I wouldn't be able to explain necessarily to my friends why and they'd they'd seen I was really upset (.) god there was one day I went (.) I went into school and that particular morning I think I'd had a (.) my dad had upset me or (.) I dunno I just ended up crying and sitting in my form form room with my headphones in (.) and my form tutor just kinda left me to it and was just like (.) y'know she just let me get on with it coz obviously it was something I couldn't talk about at the time and I suppose you have to balance that with yeah I was a teenager so maybe I was just moody ((participant laughs)) but at the same time I had all of this stuff going on so (.) yeah there was a lot of anxiety there (.) um (.) (002; lines 510:518)

…suppose I mentioned before about realising some of my instance reactions to situations were would have been a worry tension or anxiety … um like cuz I seem like quite okay on the outside and I guess all of that worry and anxiety I had err were kind of just symptoms of what I was going through (002; lines 718:730)

I think I've learnt that um divorce wounds people (.) um for (.) an it can last for a really long and you actually have to choose to deal with that (.) um particularly in observing my dad because I feel like the many problems he has err with his health and kind of just in his general life situation (.) I think a lot of them are result of not dealing with that (.) pain and that um kind of rejection and all of those things (.) um so I think it's important to realise that it's not just a (.) one off thing like I said at the beginning of the interview um (.) I think in terms of relating to other people (.) I feel like it's helped me to understand sometimes the pain that other people go through in their relationships because I have been through it myself (002; lines 745:753)

…incredible impact (.) and um what somebody might just think is words in th the he heat of anger (.) actually impacts that child (.) um and and it is something that (.) they will carry with them until they choose to deal with it themselves um (.) (002; lines 1126:1128)

(.) yeah I lived with friends and I just (.) ya'know I did all the things I shouldn't have done y'know (.) went out a lot took loads of drugs partied really hard like from sixteen to nineteen and then I went to university and I went to ((city name)) to deliberately get away really (003; lines 205:208)

…after my first year I had a breakdown and I'm sure that's why because of just because of how difficult my childhood had been and that and because I'd left my support in ((city name)) so I had some really good friends who (.) are still really good friends actually (.) (003; lines 216:219)

…at that time I didn't link (.) my depression to what had happened but now I looking back I think it must have been and I have had recurring depression on and off throughout I'm ((participant age)) now throughout my life and I think it's to do with (.) to do with that (003; lines 225:228)

…I just became a bit (.) withdrawn and shy and I my mum used to drop me off at my grandmother's house quite a lot who lived in ((area of city)) which is a really rough part of ((city name)) uh and my gran suffered from (.) quite severe depression and I think (.) like I y'know I had a quite really close relationship with my gran but I think y'know um (.) yeah I think that was that added to it though spending time with with with her somebody else who was in quite bad situation as well… (003; lines 243:248)

(.) so you see my dad he he he he (.) I supposed he still is a little bit like this he does he stigmatised my mum's mental health and I think because he did that (.) um I became very scared of it and scared of her and scared of becoming unwell myself and just generally very scared and anxious so I've I've

felt like life was a very frightening thing and the best thing was to do was just be quiet and read a book (.) um so (.) yeah I think it made me very anxious… (003; lines 252:256)

yeah yeah I do I see them both and (.) more to be honest with you (.) more than I would like to and I would quite like to move away from ((city name)) but I I still feel a big sense of responsibility (.) towards them and sort of guilt as well… (003; lines 280:282)

…so I was really annoyed with him because I had spent loads of time chasing it up and I just didn't understand why you wouldn't just get it sorted (.) so um (.) yeah we had a huge argument and the strange thing was all this anger came flying out of me and I have only seen him once since then which is quite unusual coz before that I had him over for a meal and to do shopping for him every week um but and (.) yeah I just said "all my life you slagged my mum off and made me life really difficult for me and I am stick of it" and I just started swearing at him fuck you fuck you (.) and put the phone down and I felt so (.) I felt so really kind of deranged and I don't think I have ever felt that much anger or expressed that much anger in my life (.) and I said to my partner I was really scared coz I felt like smashing the room up (.) and I still think that was just a combination of all those years of (.) and actually considering it all maybe that was quite a mild response because actually (.) every possible opportunity my dad has ever had (.) he's told me my mum's y'know … errr (.) err sociopath and her brother's a psycho and umm my mum too she wouldn't miss an opportunity to to tell me how he used to knock her about and stuff so basically yeah (003; lines 288:298)

…whereas I will take … take it to heart and "oh my god this is terrible" and catastrophize it (003; lines 549: 553)

um they both have got emotional problems (.) both have um have difficulties with er um mood swings I suppose… and actually the eldest one himself can be quite violent (004; lines 282:283)

(.) in my late teens I remember feeling really jealous even though he had never been in me life (.) um his step daughter was about the same age as me (.) um I hear because they live locally so I hear sort of through the grape vine that um (.) he was buying her a car (.) she didn't drive and he was buying her a car (.) I thought (.) I'm your daughter y'know I never even had a birthday card and you're buying her a car and feeling a bit jealous about it (004; lines 352:356)

(.) yeah probably it probably made me a little bit uncertain and wary as a young child (.) um and perhaps that was why I was bullied because I lacked confidence and it it may well have been that the violence and y'know almost like might have been quite fearful as a child and that might have been quite obvious to others and made us look a bit vulnerable (.) so um yeah might have impacted on my confidence (004; lines 541:545)

I was confused as first when you are five you only really get the consequences of what you see … and when you see your parents arguing you are sad about that but you still love your parents (005; lines 137:143)

(.) I got bullied (.) I I was very very anti-social (.) I liked to keep to myself I was very enclosed (.) I mean I don't know whether it was coz of my nature or but (.) I didn't understand why people didn't get it (.) so I would often talk about it and (.) I wouldn't get the reaction I expected (.) that sucks kind of (.) the kids didn't really get how I was feeling I think (.) cos I obviously didn't know (.) I hadn't (.) it was all I didn't really learn how to properly socialise until I hit secondary school I was very very enclosed … and I didn't really know how to handle that I don't think (005; lines 244:253)

…I was just (.) cuz I was so broken from that experience kind of just so unsure how to behave how to act around people anymore (005; lines 498:500)

um (.) but especially when we moved like he made some bad friends and for a while he he was on drugs and (.) had problems (.) he got into fights a lot (.) … two years (.) he's err twenty-one (.) so yeah he's (.) a bit younger than me (.) but yeah he used to get into trouble a lot (005; lines 557:563)

I have I think it's been a problem since I was young I have quite acute anxiety problems and depression … (.) like I've been on medication for it this year because literally (.) spiral out of control and I started (.) because I'd been under a lot of pressure from work … in ((subject area)) and even though I knew my grades were good just never been able to believe it I just kind of suffered from self self-esteem issues for years and years and years and just haven't been able to overcome them for some reason or another (.) and (.) yeah that's been a problem I basically kind of had a breakdown in early October and (.) ended up on this medication and stuff like that (.) but things have gotten better ever since and it's sort of all calmed down in a bit more (005; lines 633:651)

like the self-esteem issues kind of I think stand from being constantly terrified and what people think (.) even though I always pretend I don't (.) and I hate myself for it … I always get very very nervous when meeting someone for the first time and I kind of (.) play off that nervousness by just talking endlessly ((general laughter)) … it's the only way I can do it like I've tried y'know (.) coming to decide what to say but I but but there was no getting over it just talk and try not to think about what what they're think of you (.) hopefully you will make a friend out of it (005; lines 777:790)

(.) so I would break further further and further away and maybe I think that's probably a lot of the reason my behaviour became volatile because I just felt so alone and that no one was listening to me (.) (005; lines 814:817)

no I think it was pretty clear at the time I think that's something that um (.) I kind of carried with me is that I was never protected (.) from any of the kind of (.) discord that was going on (.) I was always very much aware as a child of y'know what there difficulties were I was never protected from any of that so that something that I carried with me … yeah or my mum would come and tell me afterwards what he'd said or what he'd done or how she was feeling so I was (.) took on a kind of a (.) um responsibility (.) in the home … I always take responsibility now (.) whenever y'know I'm always the one to kind of step up and sort things out (.) um yeah … my mum remarried soon after that divorce and that was a really horribly abusive marriage from both sides but mainly from him (.) (006; lines 155:180)

(.) yeah I think there's been self self-esteem sometimes yeah (006; line 512)

…I was painfully shy in school and I'd like every morning when I went to school I would like freak out and wouldn't want to leave the car so I think they were quite involved with me anyway… (001; lines 335:337)

um (.) and I did not want to talk to anybody about it at that point (.) I was still very much if I talk to you this teaching assistant who was more friends with my mum and I knew didn't really like my dad (.) if I talk to her about it I felt like I was picking a side um (.) and there was very much a sense of I can't talk to anyone about this because anybody that I know that I trust is either close to my dad or close to my mum so that was really hard yeah (.) (002; lines 454:458)

(.) I mentioned in the morning on the bus I would have a call from my dad and um (.) yeah like afterwards I would be really upset and I wouldn't be able to explain necessarily to my friends why and they'd they'd seen I was really upset (.) god there was one day I went (.) I went into school and that particular morning I think I'd had a (.) my dad had upset me or (.) I dunno I just ended up crying and sitting in my form form room with my headphones in (.) and my form tutor just kinda left me to it and was just like (.) y'know she just let me get on with it coz obviously it was something I couldn't talk about at the time and I suppose you have to balance that with yeah I was a teenager so maybe I was just moody ((participant laughs)) but at the same time I had all of this stuff going on so (.) yeah there was a lot of anxiety there (.) um (.) (002; lines 510:518)

(.) I became incredibly shy and I just read books all the time I didn't I I had one friend at school but she didn't really become a good friend until I was about fourteen fifteen um up until then I was quite a loner at school I was bullied quite a lot um and I just read books all the time at the library and I think that the librarian said to me "you've read nearly read every book in the library" ((participant laughs)) so I just I just became a bit (.) withdrawn and shy (003; lines 239:243)

…if try and talk to my brother about it and he just clams up and my brother is very (.) uh withdrawn y'know and quiet and so I think he … I think that is my brother's response to to any sort of emotional stuff around family is just to withdraw (003; lines 264:270)

…I have never really talked maybe as much as I have just now about it all because (.) I suppose it's quite hard just to ((sharp breath out)) to tell a whole story (003; lines 390:391)

(.) I got bullied (.) I I was very very anti-social (.) I liked to keep to myself I was very enclosed (.) I mean I don't know whether it was coz of my nature or but (.) I didn't understand why people didn't get it (.) so I would often talk about it and (.) I wouldn't get the reaction I expected (.) that sucks kind of (.) the kids didn't really get how I was feeling I think (.) cos I obviously didn't know (.) I hadn't (.) it was all I didn't really learn how to properly socialise until I hit secondary school I was very very enclosed … and I didn't really know how to handle that I don't think (005; lines 244:253)

…I was shy and didn't make friends easily… (005; line 460)

(.) I kind of suffered a lot there cuz I was very very isolated and couldn't talk to anybody (005; lines 489:490)

… It meant that I didn't really come out of my shell until year nine (.) didn't really understand social norms nothing like that I was weird I was really weird … I am not going to say I didn't really help myself because that is not really fair to say but (.) I didn't try and come out of my shell I just didn't I just enclose myself I would stay alone I would just read books just sit alone sit on the bench opposite the wall by the building just watching the shadows on the lunchtime (.) just being alone (005; lines 504:519)

…um and she was a very timid child and just kind of withdrew into herself really (006; lines 382:883)

2.4 Externalised Feelings

um they both have got emotional problems (.) both have um have difficulties with er um mood swings I suppose… and actually the eldest one himself can be quite violent (004; lines 282:283)

…they got to the point where my my dad pulled out a knife on my mum … and like in front of me and my brother when I was I was very young so it kind of (.) I don't really understand what I was seeing at first … but it it affected me directly as in mum managed to get out of it and it was okay

and we were all fine nothing happened of that (.)but it caused (.) to behave and do the same thing in front of other kids for a while (005; lines 85:96)

um (.) but especially when we moved like he made some bad friends and for a while he he was on drugs and (.) had problems (.) he got into fights a lot (.) … two years (.) he's err twenty-one (.) so yeah he's (.) a bit younger than me (.) but yeah he used to get into trouble a lot (005; lines 557:563)

…I was younger not so much now as I've kinda grown out of it I used to act out a lot … (…) not exactly sleep around but similar but I mean like I I kind of didn't really (.) I wasn't very sensible (.) put it that way … and I put a lot of feelings in jeopardy basically (.) … for my you know in terms of myself and people I was with I think a (.) I caused a lot of emotional damage to my ex because of the way I behaved (.) I mean I am not excusing it at all like I was younger but and I realised it's something I have got to live with but I think it's (.) I just couldn't really (.) its it's just been a problem I think (005; lines (005; lines 595:612)

… for me right from the get go I was just not having any of it really and so y'know ((participant laughs)) I was only a kid but I still went out and bought my own clothes for the wedding and wore top to toe black … yeah completely ((participant laughs)) completely yeah um (.) and that rebellious streak carried on actually yeah (006; lines 253:260)

((deep in breath)) I was really angry (.) um and I became really (.) kind of rebellious as a teen (.) um and a pre-teen even … um n and yeah I just acted up big time (.) (006; lines 319:324)

…my mum did have a pregnancy (.) um but she miscarried and I was blamed for that because of my acting up ((participant laughs)) (006; lines 396:397)

I kept getting suspended ((participant laughs)) no no one knew what was going on and no one knew it was um we were always told that what goes on in this house stays in this house (006; lines 453:454)

(.) I've gone through in my adulthood (.) well in my adolescence and teen years I became really promiscuous and then in my adulthood years I've through really long periods of celibacy (.) where I'd just rather be on my own than with anybody for the sake of it (.) um and I think like I said I think it's just made me quite (.) picky I would rather be on my own than with someone who wasn't the right person at the time for me (.) so (006; lines 729:733)

2.1 Coping through Avoidance

…he kind of just ignores them both a lot of the time now, he's had a lot of troubles the last couple of years with money and things he kept getting like payday loan things and they had pay off all of his debts with him so now every time he makes a lot of dumb decisions, every time he makes one he just avoids them and lies to them and doesn't really want to talk to them and doesn't want to face what he has done so he just ignores them a lot and he makes them quite annoyed (001; lines 275:279)

Definitely coz (.) because he was like played off against them both for so long he doesn't really feel like he can talk to either of them about anything (.) um so when he does like have money troubles or like any other kind of trouble he doesn't talk to either of them, he used to talk to me quite a lot about it but when, coz I have been at uni for a year and a half now and like moved away he doesn't

really see me that often and when I go home he doesn't he just doesn't coz he's not there he just doesn't talk to me anymore (001; lines 449:454)

um (.) and I did not want to talk to anybody about it at that point (.) I was still very much if I talk to you this teaching assistant who was more friends with my mum and I knew didn't really like my dad (.) if I talk to her about it I felt like I was picking a side um (.) and there was very much a sense of I can't talk to anyone about this because anybody that I know that I trust is either close to my dad or close to my mum so that was really hard yeah (.) (002; lines 454:458)

(.) I tend to not to speak to him as frequently because um ((participant laughs)) I still find it very difficult to not want to give me two cents in his on his life and I feel like there's many things he could be doing differently but I'm trying to learn to let him just live his life and that actually he is the grown adult and he can he can make his own decisions and so in that sense like I suppose that it quite difficult… (002; lines 772:775)

…but I think the truth is that I am (.) maybe I'm more like my mum and actually I need to kind of wait and talk about something when I am being reasonable as opposed to in anger or in emotion ((deep in breath)) um so I suppose that (.) I only say that in terms of student life because when things have annoyed me this year in terms of um (.) in terms of like housemates and stuff like that I I've just let it go (.) usually usually I haven't said anything about it (.) (002; lines 859:863)

…as a result of what I went through with my family because um (.) just like I mentioned the nasty little text messages to each other … and things behind closed doors very much (.) on both sides there my mum very much wanted to keep us out of (.) the conflict but that didn't mean she didn't fight for a side um her side as it were whereas my dad was very much more vocal (.) if he had a problem he was gonna say something about it … and so I suppose for me I just I just didn't want anything to kind of be underlying (.) um within the house and I guess within my friends err but yeah its interesting because I when there is a conflict that rises (.) um I don't actually want to go and speak to the person directly ((participant laughs)) and tell them to (.) go and do their flipping washing up but um (.) (002; lines 871:886)

…if try and talk to my brother about it and he just clams up and my brother is very (.) uh withdrawn y'know and quiet and so I think he … I think that is my brother's response to to any sort of emotional stuff around family is just to withdraw (003; lines 264:270)

((deep in breath)) well I think what I did was I I I um (.) I got together with ((son and daughter's)) dad um and um I think I was just looking for a family really … so I moved in with him after a couple of years and to be honest he didn't treat me very well (.) he slapped me around but I just (.) put up with it and I think y'know again I think that's probably it's probably all related because I was just desperate to feel (.) ya know like I belonged somewhere (.) (003; lines 477:483)

(.) I think I've quite agreeable so I'll just "yeah alright then whatever you like" I think maybe on my friendships some of my friendships aren't that healthy … I do sometimes wonder whether my friend ((friend's name)) if I disagreed with him or said no whether it would all fall apart ((participant laughs)) (003; lines 727:733)

(.) recently I was saying I feel like if I don't (.) if I'm not good (.) if I don't do the whole mother's day thing or the whole Christmas y'know be the whole daughter that actually nobody wants to have a relationship with me because my relationship with people is so built on (.) kind of me doing what I am supposed to do ((voice wavers)) (003; lines 734:737)

… I think if I just did wanted she wanted because she was my only friend at school really um and she was quite bossy ((participant laughs)) and the other one (.) I used to do loads of stuff for her like give her money lend her my car babysit for her … (003; lines 745:747)

(.) they had a very turbulent and violent relationship (.) we ended up having to leaving the country because my dad was dangerous (005; lines 16:17)

in ((subject area)) and even though I knew my grades were good just never been able to believe it I just kind of suffered from self self-esteem issues for years and years and years and just haven't been able to overcome them for some reason or another (.) and (.) yeah that's been a problem I basically kind of had a breakdown in early October and (.) ended up on this medication and stuff like that (.) but things have gotten better ever since and it's sort of all calmed down in a bit more … and that's been helpful I just it's kinda like a problem I put off for years and mum never really took it seriously (005; lines 647:656)

(.) I've had them on and off (.) I've had like these issues for a long time like (.) at least since the beginning of secondary school and I haven't really gotten help for them until several years later and even then it was kind of on an off on and off as I didn't really know what was helping or whatever (.) like I didn't really start taking any stuff for it until I began university really the the end of college (005; lines 672:676)

I got out quick um (.) I left home very young and lived on my own and as soon as that I took an opportunity to to go and work abroad and then went travelling (.) spent years working and living abroad and then visas and things caused me have to come back (006; lines 520:522)

6. Post-divorce reflections and outlook

6.1 Marital Values

…my dad is quite (.) erm (.) quite particular about how things should be so it was so it originally started coz he worked full time and my mum only worked part time (001; lines 52:54)

…erm he'd expect when he came home that like she'd cleaned the entire house from top to bottom and that there would be a meal waiting for him when he got home and if there wasn't any of these things he'd just start yelling at her but they argued about like pretty much everything (001; lines 58:61)

…I'm pretty certain that both had affairs at some point as well… (001; lines 75:76)

…I can remember for quite a lot time I thought it was normal that like I didn't think people people's parents loved each other and then I can remember when I discovered that out and I was just like oh my gosh erm so I just thought it was normal for the most of the time (001; lines 92:94)

…I think he felt that like your parents are meant to look after you… (001; line 242)

(.) well I guess like I said earlier that like I didn't think it was normal for two people that were married to love each other, I thought that was like (.) a weird thing that was only on like TV shows and stuff so like (.) (001; lines 428:430)

I can never recall, at all, ever hearing my parents tell each other that they loved each other … and I think I saw them kiss once in my life so I was like horrified at the notion that my parents had kissed

each other I was like what the hell is this (.) um (.) so I just yeah I just thought yeah married life was meant to be full of hatred and yelling ((participant laughs)) (001; lines 461:468)

…I don't particularly want to get married to be honest though … just ((participant sighs)) just doesn't appeal to me (.) just (.) I mean I like the idea of like (.) having a like having a wedding and it'd be in a church and in a really nice dress (.) um but everything else just like why (.) don't wanna like be shackled to one person forever ((general laughter)) I'd rather just be alone (001; lines 699:706)

(.) y'know as a child I very much had the idea of my parents as like superheroes (.) I guess or just y'know you think your parents are invincible (.) and what I discovered was (.) they weren't and that actually my dad had done some things that just were so not (.) not right like put me my sister and my brother in very emotional situations (.) (002; lines 85:88)

(.) I think that they both had very high pressure jobs like my dad used to like frequently to like when he got planes and like buses he kind of had a job where he went all over Europe (.) um my mum also had a high pressured job and they both like had their own careers and I was looked after for a lot of the time by a nanny when I was a child (.) um definitely my brother did for the first couple of years of this life (.) if not four or something like that and um (.) and so I would say that a lack of errr time together and actually being able to talk about their problems or whatever they were feeling was wrong with the relationship I would say that they (.) they it was too late (.) for my mum it was too late by the time my dad would realise that there was something wrong and I think that he was very kind of I have got this idea of what my life is like and I don't think he was really dealing with um (.) the um (.) I dunno the things that my mum was feeling I think that she probably felt (.) neglected and maybe taken for granted um (.) I feel like she's mentioned waiting for him a lot and he's kind of like that expects people to wait and so (.) from my perspective as an adult I see that they just grew apart and they um they didn't work at their marriage (.) in a way that was oh actually we need to put effort into this I think they just took it for granted a little bit (002; lines 132:146)

…my dad won't let it go (.) like he he's very much like she left me she she was the one ((inaudible speech)) I I think that has caused a lot of problems in his life I think that if he could face the fact that he probably did some things wrong (.) within the marriage he would be able to forgive himself and move on from that but he's actually (.) held onto the past for a very long time I mean I have told you that it has taken me fifteen years ((participant laughs)) to be able to deal with some of the problems I had (.) so you can imagine for him (002; lines 169:174)

…yeah it was absolutely exhausting (.) err yeah (.) and I (.) it was so strange because for me that was normal … and so only now (.) um (.) reflecting on it as an adult and realising that that wasn't okay and wasn't what everybody else was going through at home (.) um (.) yeah it's it's been a real revelation to me and to realise that also those things um had become so part of my daily routine (.) (002; lines 306:313)

(.) he expected our relationship he didn't necessarily work at it (.) (002; lines 640:641)

(.) mmm again I don't want to portray him as this really awful person but I just think that he err (.) he sometimes took it for granted our relationship and he expected it because y'know once you have children you expect to have a relationship with them and he didn't want the divorce to change that um (.) but (.) he err yeah I think he somewhat expected it and um (.) (002; lines 654:658)

(.) I think he's quite idealistic um and I don't think it's bad I don't think it's wrong to (.) to want to be in a relationship with someone you are completely in love with um y'know that's great um but I also just guess I am a bit I don't know if this is cynical but I just know relationships are hard especially

having seen what they have gone through (.) and I just I just would never as I know nobody ever does want to see themselves in that situation but I think we very much are fed this idea (.) through the media and from our society as a whole that (.) y'know you get married and its happily ever after like it's just not (.) like I think marriage is great (.) and like it hasn't stopped me wanting to get married but I just have an idea of it that is (.) just less idealistic and that is very much like no (.) if you are going to get married to someone you've got to commit to them for the rest of your life like that's a bit deal ((participant laughs)) y'know and it's not so kind of (.) I know fairtalely (.) (002; lines 818:828)

so it that sense I suppose I am more (.) wary with regards to marriage but like I said before it hasn't put me off (.) the idea of being married just kind of clarified that (.) it's not something to be taken light heartedly (002; lines 1101:1103)

(.) parents should know that they do have to invest in those relationships with their children um … um particularly … in terms of my dad (.) he needed to not expect that relationship to be there in the same way that it would have done if we were living under the same roof (002; lines 1145:1153)

I think they were (.) quite happy and I think that's probably why my dad's never really got over it I think he was (.) yeah I the thing is though they were very young (.) and they had the kind of kind of had to get married because my mum got pregnant… and then pretty soon after my brother (.) I came along nine months later sorry eleven months later so ((deep in-breath)) um and they were teenagers so I think they were always under a lot of pressure um but I think they grew up very differently my mum became quite materialistic very … I think they just grew apart … they used to argue about money and holidays and stuff like that (003; lines 87:103)

…some of it I think actually you're just not very nice people I thi I think that's quite hard to live with because you don't want to um (.) you don't want to think badly of your parents (003; lines 378:380)

… I crave a big romance I would love to get married and stuff but I always thought I didn't want to because because how could I have a wedding who would I invite y'know mum … yeah mum would never speak to me if I didn't invite her dad wouldn't come lalala (003; 763:769).

... I think most young women did grow up with that idea that one day they would have a big romance and get married and have kids and that hasn't really worked out for me (.) but I still think arr you know romantic stuff on the telly and even though in a way I see myself as an academic and an intellectual I haven't there is still that side of me that's a bit sort of Mills and Boon or whatever (.) just a little bit embarrassing (003; lines 779:783)

I think it probably lasted that long (.) because they were childhood sweethearts and I think they found it difficult to for all there was violence in the relationship I think they found it difficult to make that break away from one another … um they got married when they were sixteen … thinking about it my mum has subsequently said that he um cheated on her a lot as well … so there was lots of infidelity (004; lines 116:136)

um not necessarily the divorce (.) I don't think that has an impact on me but I think the violence had an impact on me massively urr in so far as I grew up (.) with a determined mind that if anybody ever lifted their hands to me (.) they'd be out of the door (.) um y'know no second chances no nothing like that so I think that impacted on me massively but yeah the other stuff I don't think it did the divorce … it makes me more determined to be in relationships that are equal um where there's y'know people considerate of the others feelings and and um (.) there is no control issues … so it's not something I would ever ever put up with (.) to be honest with ya … even before I started having

relationships (.) it was something that I was a mind set … I think it was well (.) it was quite easy for me it may have not have been for partners ((general laughter)) or exes or whatever (.) um (.) but yeah not something I would (.) would even contemplate (.) I mean I would (.) I have relationship where there has been arguments and it it's been verbal aggression and but (.) yeah not something I would even think about um I think I have been quite lucky (.) sort had relationships where um I have got involved with decent people (.) or at least they seemed it at the time ((general laughter)) (004; lines 490:527)

(.) I think it goes back to what I was saying earlier about having the determination that if there was even a sim y'know even a sign that somebody might be physically abusive (.) um I would immediately end the relationship … um I don't believe that my husband would be … um but y'know even him even him if he so much as (.) as raised a hand (.) it would be over … (.) um but it wouldn't worry me because it would have felt um if the relationships over (.) then you need to make that break and you need to (.) to get divorced like I said me mum and my dad have been separated ten years now (004; lines 759:782)

yeah oh yeah it would have to be quick (.) um but we'd have to be a clean break … um and I don't have children but if I did (.) it would be very much about (.) the relationships over but these are like your children (.) y'know and my children will need to do what we need to do to keep them safe and all the rest of it (004; lines 794:800)

… I think my dad felt that my mum was restricting him (.) I don't really know why and after they had kids it just coz they were married for eleven years before they had me … progressively got worse when they had kids (005; lines 52:58)

... I have one younger brother and he didn't treat him as well (.) he would be stood and make out that ((brother's name)) wasn't his because I just don't think he liked the idea of having these kids and they were taking up his time and it was difficult for him (.) so eventually kind of (.) he kind of (.) I think he kind of drifting away a bit (.) as in I remember like the first couple of years being ok then when I was around four or five it just (.) (005; lines 71:75)

… I think cuz she obviously expected him to look to after us (.) she didn't want to do it herself (.) and my dad (.) is he's he's quite sexist at heart I mean I think he he just thought mum would just stay there and do everything and not expect any help (.) like he certainly acted that way he used to drink like crazy (.) like I used to remember it as well he (.) constantly drank (.) … and then mum would try and make him do stuff and he'd just bat her away (.) (005; lines 190:198)

yeah she just seems to have this type (.) like that which is crazy like they there's just usually something wrong with them (.) I think she thinks she can fix it … I don't know whether it's just an inclination she has but she she always seems to go for guys who which have (.) quite toxic qualities … think maybe they always behaved nicely on the face of it but she would just look past all these really wrong crippling flaws like deep depression or drug addiction … (.) but like there was one of them that was just (.) I just thought she was mad looking back at it now (.) how she could possibly been in the situation she I mean she was with someone for eighteen months who got eight years for robbing a bank (005; lines 356:382)

(.) I dunno like I don't know if I would be able to commit commit that much … it's the only worry of getting married now like so my friends are (.) like they've got kids and everything on facebook it freaks me out … um (.) I can't imagine that life with myself (.) at the minute (.) it's like an ideal that I think (.) it's so normal and just society to get married that we don't really question why we do it … and I I don't know whether I would or not … at least for now (.) as in not like the entire idea of it but

just (.) the notion of (.) it happening anytime soon and just I can't imagine it (.) I don't know the reason for that maybe I just I'm not emotionally ready for it (005; lines 939:959)

so during that time being a single mother was a very shameful thing (.) um it was not as common as it is now (.) and um so I think she was looking for a bit of a sugar daddy someone to you know look after and take her and her baby on (.) (006; lines 92:94)

I kept getting suspended ((participant laughs)) no no one knew what was going on and no one knew it was um we were always told that what goes on in this house stays in this house … kind of thing so it was all very secretive (006; lines 453:458)

((deep in breath)) we growing up as a kid we were always very a very kind of close matriarchal family my nan being the matriarch and she had y'know five kids and we all kind of (.) grew up as with cousins and that kind of thing and there the good memories that I have actually (006; lines 704:706)

… they were very different people I think, I think literally the only reason they got married was because my mum was pregnant that was the only reason why coz they were only like 20 when it happened and it's like they were very different people ten years later (001; lines 66:69)

I think they were (.) quite happy and I think that's probably why my dad's never really got over it I think he was (.) yeah I the thing is though they were very young (.) and they had the kind of kind of had to get married because my mum got pregnant… and then pretty soon after my brother (.) I came along nine months later sorry eleven months later so ((deep in-breath)) um and they were teenagers so I think they were always under a lot of pressure um but I think they grew up very differently my mum became quite materialistic very … I think they just grew apart … they used to argue about money and holidays and stuff like that (003; lines 87:103)

I don't know um I think that they were just too young a y'know too young when they got married (003; lines 142:143)

(.) I don't blame either of them and I think (.) I truly think a lot of what happened (.) a lot of what's happened since to both of them is to do with their own childhoods and their own backgrounds so they're both from very poor backgrounds y'know both one of seven (.) (003; 370:372)

um but I think the age gap played a big part throughout their marriage and and y'know they wanted different things (.) there was always money worries they (.) y'know they never felt like they earned enough money to be able to do the things they that they wanted (006; lines 100:102)

6.2 Beliefs About The Male Role

(.) well my mum does say "I'm a bit of a man hater" (general laughter) (.) I'm not (.) just a little bit of one … I think its I think it is just because because I am quite like a raging feminist (.) she just sees that as me being a man hater and my nanna as well who I am very close to (.) she is she is a legitimate man hater erm I do really look up to my nanna as well so … yeah yeah so I dunno I do like immediately if I see a man I'm always like hmmph not too sure about you (general laughter) … well I just (.) not all men but some they like (.) just if they have usually if they have mannerisms that remind me of my dad … yeah I can remember in secondary school actually there was this boy who really really liked me he always wanted (.) me to be his girlfriend (.) um and like when he was nice (.) we got along great and I did really like him I did used to just think used to think should I should I actually like be like his girlfriend but then like we when he got like when he got angry like he really reminded me of me dad and that just completely (.) just put me off I was just like no way I am going

anywhere near that … I think (.) like that yeah if they like have mannerisms that remind me of like my dad that's usually when (001; lines 623:653)

never liked him (.) um I say that now (.) um probably as a child I probably did want to be with him (.) but yeah no (.) I remember we had those two visits um (.) with him and I remember looking forward to the visits but then when I got there (.) felt like he wasn't really interested in us anyway and he had a couple of step-children and he was paying them more attention n … and I stood (.) it felt like a disappointment (004; lines 198:205)

I have got two older brothers … um who were around (.) biologically biological father's children as well so there was three of us growing up (.) and then in later life my mum and step-dad had two children so I have also got younger two brothers … um they actually idolise him … yeah and I've never understood that um (.) at all um and they just say well y'know (.) that was their relationship and it doesn't matter what happened with them two (004; lines 221:236)

well (.) no I don't think they have got different memories (.) I just think they've just got a different outlook … on the relations n y'know who takes responsibility for the violence (004; lines 259:264)

um so yeah I think that they were probably affected in terms how they view the male role … the masculine stereotype so (004; lines 291:296)

…maybe because he idolised his biological father but may also have been that (.) um for a short while he was probably the man of the house (004; lines 330:331)

I think they probably did but I think my I was so mixed up (.) that I didn't treat people particularly well either and so friendships kind of were quite volatile or y'know I would end up getting them into trouble or (.) so yeah … (.) now as a parent myself with y'know my own children and a husband I think (.) well the the there's just there's no way that any of that I would ever invite any of that kind of thing into my own home and I've been really careful at pains to y'know to do everything in (.) within my own power to overcome the trauma really um so yeah I supposed I'm probably a a stronger person through it in some ways (.) yeah … I think it just made me really picky ((participant laughs)) you know I think I would pick upon the slightest little warning signs of a person who you know had the potential to be nasty or aggressive or um anything like that and would rather just be on my own than with someone who would mistreat me (006; lines 462:464)

6.3 They had good intentions…

…no matter how well-intentioned um (.) the parents might be in trying to kind of work things out without the children getting involved … err it effects them whether they like it or not really… (002; lines 19:24)

(.) to all intents and purposes like there were both very very loving parents but just on looking back at it like (.) they really did some things that they (.) err they made some mistakes I mean their human and that's kind of one of the things that I have realised this year (.) (002; lines 82:85)

(.) he stuck by me and my brother and sister he always kind of (.) paid (.) um my mum money to like support us … took us on incredible holidays and we had an amazing time with him (.) but it's um and I wouldn't change that (.) um but (.) yeah it's just it is just in (.) um kind of thinking about it a lot more I realise our relationship were or relationship was a lot more (.) errm I guess difficult a bit toxic like just a little bit like it should have been really (002; lines 384:392)

…as a result of what I went through with my family because um (.) just like I mentioned the nasty little text messages to each other … and things behind closed doors very much (.) on both sides there my mum very much wanted to keep us out of (.) the conflict but that didn't mean she didn't fight for a side um her side… (002; lines 871:877)

umm that as well meaning as the parents might might be with regards to their children um you cannot shield them from it (.) I don't think (.) you can try but you cannot protect them from it (.) um I don't think not really and yet I think if there's any advice (.) that I could give to somebody who had had children and was going through the same circumstance I think I would try and ask them how they were and like honestly (.) I would try and encourage them both parents never to talk badly about the other in front of their children (002; lines 1117:1122)

…I lived with my mum for a short while and she was really supportive and she helped me put down a deposit on a house and this sort of thing but she's always (.) given us loads of stuff bought us loads of stuff … I think she thinks if she does of that then y'know (.) it makes everything more right (.) um and obviously it doesn't really ((participant laughs)) and strangely enough also again a few weeks ago I have a daughter now with a different partner um (.) she came round and when she comes around she brings loads of stuff for the kids… (003; lines 315:328)

…it was incredibly important to my dad that err (.) didn't lose touch with him um so in that respect I have different um (.) experience to many people because my both my parents always wants to be involved in in our lives (002; lines 58:60)

(.) secondary school (.) was difficult because um my dad he he wanted a lot of contact with us (.) um so he would ring my mobile phone when I was on the bus and that was kind of embarrassing cuz I'll be like "morning dad" and like talk to him in front of all my friends and stuff (.) um and while I understand it is was a good intention he just wanted to find out about my day (.) it became if I am honest (.) it became a um bit of a chore (002; lines 464:468)

(.) recently I was saying I feel like if I don't (.) if I'm not good (.) if I don't do the whole mother's day thing or the whole Christmas y'know be the whole daughter that actually nobody wants to have a relationship with me because my relationship with people is so built on (.) kind of me doing what I am supposed to do ((voice wavers)) (003; lines 734:737)

…I mean for one I was quite young but the other thing is like I say he wasn't really in our lives anyway (.) was never around (004; lines 146:147)

… last time I saw him was (.) probably six years ago my next up brother got married (004; lines 413:414)

…I remember my mum wearing sunglasses a lot (.) … when the sun wasn't shining (.) yeah to cover up any bruising from when he had been hitting her (.) (004; lines 92:97)

(.) I didn't think of it too much but I remember seeing the blood on the steps that particular incident … I remember seeing that um (.) almost instinctively knowing that's my mum's blood (.) on the stairs (.) because I knew something had gone on (.) the previous evening but (.) and I could hear screaming and I was shielded from me aunt um (.) but I remember looking and thinking that's (.) that's me mam's blood (.) but like I say I don't know whether that's a constructed memory or that's a real memory mm … yeah it does it does and it's been there like (.) it's not been something that has come to me in adulthood (004; lines 160:174)

…I think my mum tried to keep it away from us ... actually it was probably my stepdad that tried to keep it away from us (.) rather than me mother (004; lines 386:390)

I mean I found out a lot of this stuff later on like … as in mum kind of like kept a lot of stuff quiet until I was older … like I did didn't find out my dad was adopted until (.) like two years ago pretty much … so my paternal grandmother isn't my paternal grandmother ((participant laughs)) I mean she's my grandmother but like it was just weird to hear that it's like (.) why would you not tell me that? … so she she's (.) I am gonna admit that she probably not handled it (.) the best she could have done she's not been as open with me and my brother as she could have done (005; lines 161:180)

3. 'Parentified'

3.3 Awareness of financial pressure

…my dad was meant to pay like child support but he's self-employed so it was quite easy for him to fiddle his (.) his incomes so he um he'd pay a lot less child support than he was meant to and then he always used to like ring me mum up and be like arr I can't pay that much this week and I think there was a year or so where he didn't pay any as well for some reason (.) but erm every time he would go a period of time without either paying it or pay a lot less than he should my mum always used to ring him up and be like I'm gonna take you to court if you don't (.) start paying it again but he has always begrudged having to pay it because he sees it as like money going into my mums pocket not going towards us… (001; lines 283:290)

yeah really difficult coz my mum doesn't have like she just works all the time, as she just has like a normal job so it was really really difficult we were definitely like sometimes very much on the bread line (.) it was very difficult (001; lines 294:296)

(.) erm so like everything was in my mum's name in the house and stuff so she had to just pay all the bills by herself so my dad tried to force her there as long as possible to get her into loads of debt and erm (.) (001; lines 384:388)

um mum had no money we all we left everything there as in she basically just a suitcase with all the clothes in there and two kids … um all our finance was over in Canada which my dad got hold of in the divorce coz mum just didn't want to fight him for em (.) she just wanted to be away from it all let it go (.) didn't want to think about it … um basically we just we always been financially crippled ever since we've had nothing (.) pretty much … as in mum went without she she's on income benefits for year and years and years (.) coz there is two of us and wanted to make sure we were old enough before she actually started in work she really she just couldn't really afford childcare … she's like been the only financial income for the family (.) my brothers got a job which he just he just kind of spends on himself and doesn't support us (005; lines 398:423)

but I think my mum was having a really hard time (.) um and my dad wasn't paying maintenance and that kind of thing and so as my myself and my sister kind of got embroiled in all of that and used as pawns in the whole um access um rights and pay maintenance and things like that and that was really horrible (006; lines 66:69)

3.1 Sense of responsibility towards parents

…um err and um when I go home for like easter holidays and Christmas holidays I will maybe see him like twice (.) but that's more like I feel like I feel like I'm obliged to see him um I see him a lot more now like that I have come to university… (001; lines 533:535)

(.) like (.) err if if my mum insulted my dad I'd try n defend him and if my dad insulted my mum I'd try to defend (.) her and um (.) just constantly trying to put myself in a situation where I could fix it (.) and I couldn't (.) um didn't know that at the time ((general laughter)) because I was a child and um (.) I think my immediate response was y'know keep the peace keep the peace (.) (002; lines 296:300)

he didn't have somebody he could full back on and explain everything to and cry about to (.) um so I was like even if was (.) oh wow (.) about (.) even if (.) my mum got hurt (.) my attitude was (.) she's got ((step-dad)) (.) its fine (.) she'll be alright and so (.) y'know she would say she would be like "oh you think the sun shines out of your dad's arse" ((participant laughs)) and like I didn't but I just always felt like I should feel more sorry for him and whether he knew that or not (.) um (.) that meant the (.) that meant that I took responsibility for some situations where I should never have done he should have been an adult about it y'know (.) (002; lines 336:342)

(.) the role that I had been playing in his life was not necessarily that of a daughter it was (.) of maybe just a little bit too much like a like a confidant or something like that (002; lines 371:373)

…yeah my brother has an incredible amount of anger about it and he (.) um (.) y'know like he's a he's a student and he um (.) is err studying medicine and he is incredibly err (.) clever and focussed and driven (.) um I think more so he would say it's not because he's like naturally clever but just because he works hard and he err knows what he wants to do (.) he has a fear of (.) becoming (.) err having a temper like my dad or um (.) doing anything that would resemble him (.) kind of emotionally in in a bad in a kind of negative sense (002; lines 410:415)

(.) um (.) since I realised that I had taken too much a role within his life I realised that I had to step back quite a bit and that means that I have to let him make his own decisions even if I disagree with them um that means that when I speak to him I (.) (002; lines 768:770)

(.) I tend to not to speak to him as frequently because um ((participant laughs)) I still find it very difficult to not want to give me two cents in his on his life and I feel like there's many things he could be doing differently but I'm trying to learn to let him just live his life and that actually he is the grown adult and he can he can make his own decisions and so in that sense like I suppose that it quite difficult… (002; lines 772:775)

…she was trying to get as much money as possible so from the divorce settlements so she was trying to get the house and stuff (.) um and that and that so what happened with that is me and my brother became (.) the deciding factors basically if we said um (.) and we very nearly went to court as witnesses so if we said we don't wanna live with my mum (.) um my dad would have got most of the house um (.) and vice versa and as it was we were just about at that point where we were going to say we are gonna go live with our dad because we actually did get on better with with him (.) um (.) and my mum was really difficult to live with she was quite volatile (.) I wouldn't say she was violent but she was quite (.) um what's the word um (.) yeah quite coz she could be very very nasty and and she went out a lot y'know so (.) um just at the I think it was like a couple days before my mum got a solicitors letter confirming that me and my brother had agreed that we wanted to go live with my dad and she went absolutely ballistic and I me and my brother (.) changed our minds (003; lines 161:171)

umm so for months I had this (.) like worry that my brother was living on his own and something could happen to him (.) my brother is he's quite scatty ((participant laughs)) (003; lines 193:194)

yeah yeah I do I see them both and (.) more to be honest with you (.) more than I would like to and I would quite like to move away from ((city name)) but I I still feel a big sense of responsibility (.) towards them and sort of guilt as well… (003; lines 280:282)

…I feel really compelled to be a good daughter and do the right thing (.) (003; lines 312:313)

… I think I shouldn't of probably shouldn't of come back because (.) um but I kept thinking that's what you do you always (.) y'know (003; lines 419:421)

(.) very in terms of relationships and like how my kids are doing and stuff I am quite protective towards them when it comes to my mum and dad and I think I worked extremely hard to have a really good relationship with my ex-partner because I didn't want to put … through the same thing yeah (003; lines 598:603)

…I don't remember at the time but as a child I was always very protective of her (004; line 182)

um no I was never concerned about him being violence (.) but I suppose in me teenage years (.) they argued quite a lot um (.) and so when they were arguing I'd feel like I needed to step in and protect her then (004; lines 211:213)

um (.) got to the point where my dad had to turn his telephone off and he'd wake up in the morning and he'd have thirty missed calls from her and um answer phone messages being abusive and all kind of stuff (.) um and me my two younger brothers were actually living with me mum at that time (.) um and so they (.) yeah I think that probably had a massive impact on them (.) um in fact at one point I was gonna try and get me youngest brother to come and live with me (.) I knew me next one up wouldn't coz like he had lots of friends in the area and um (.) he could he was sort of had a routine so he could remove himself from the situation whereas the younger one was only like ten or eleven (.) um so I was gonna I was gonna try and get him to come live with me (.) um (004; lines 672:679)

um the first thing I did was got to the end of the week I jumped on the train and went back to Newcastle um (.) I don't know what that was about actually (.) I don't know whether I was going back into protective mode with my mam or what … but I felt like I needed to be there um (.) but I think (.) I think I was always going to forgive him (.) but I think probably (.) not understood more but I think probably the way me mam dealt with it (.) was like "yes well he did wrong he had an affair but you dragged it out for however many years" ja know what I mean? (004; 823:832)

well he's never really left (.) he's living in a barracks but like he comes back every weekend (.) without fail he drives home (.) that's what I always found funny about him (.) just rather moving on (.) rather kind of making friends in his barracks and hanging out with the army lads which he does of a week day I guess … he's never really ever stayed for a weekend up there unless he's had to (.) he's always driven home (.) and the funny thing is he (.) he doesn't really have many friends up here he's got a girlfriend which who who he really likes but (.) I don't know why he wouldn't bring them up there and why'd they come visit him (.) he always came back here (.) coz it's not it's certainly not cheaper for him coz he's spending (.) about eighty quid a weekend on petrol (.) but for some reason he comes home … I don't know coz he could get the train but he doesn't he drives all the time and he'll leave really late (.) but he always comes back (.) I think mum would be (.) she doesn't really admit it coz she always says "oh yeah y'know you two you two you're always you know you two

should always go live your dream fly the nest whatever you want to do" but I think she would be genuinely really lonely if ((brother's name)) didn't come back (005; lines 749:761)

no I think it was pretty clear at the time I think that's something that um (.) I kind of carried with me is that I was never protected (.) from any of the kind of (.) discord that was going on (.) I was always very much aware as a child of y'know what there difficulties were I was never protected from any of that so that something that I carried with me … yeah or my mum would come and tell me afterwards what he'd said or what he'd done or how she was feeling so I was (.) took on a kind of a (.) um responsibility (.) in the home … I always take responsibility now (.) whenever y'know I'm always the one to kind of step up and sort things out (.) um yeah … my mum remarried soon after that divorce and that was a really horribly abusive marriage from both sides but mainly from him (.) (006; lines 155:180)

3.2 Keeping the peace

…he does just says spiteful comments all the time and whenever I see him if she even vaguely gets vaguely gets brought up he'll say something spiteful and usually I just (.) I ignore it and don't say out as I am used to it (.) every now and again I would tell him off (.) because it's me mum and she doesn't deserve to be spoken like that (.) um but he still does it (.) me mum does it as well though (.) to be honest (001; lines 762:766)

(.) I spent a large part of my teenage years and to my younger years (.) err tiptoeing on eggshells and trying to (.) um protect my mum from my dad and my dad from my mum (.) (002; lines 287:288)

(.) like (.) err if if my mum insulted my dad I'd try n defend him and if my dad insulted my mum I'd try to defend (.) her and um (.) just constantly trying to put myself in a situation where I could fix it (.) and I couldn't (.) um didn't know that at the time ((general laughter)) because I was a child and um (.) I think my immediate response was y'know keep the peace keep the peace (.) (002; lines 296:300)

…we used to go back home if we'd been spending a weekend with my dad on the Sunday we would go back home for six thirty (.) we would never be there at six thirty and I would be like "oh it's fine we can text mum and ring mum it's fine" and my dad would never kind of step up and honour his agreement n (.) (002; lines 342:345)

…you have to have to be careful and um I know that with him there are certain buttons you can push if I were to start talking about my mum or my step-dad or just in a certain way I'm sure I can get him going off in a rant in a second y'know (002; lines 777:780)

…as a result of what I went through with my family because um (.) just like I mentioned the nasty little text messages to each other … and things behind closed doors very much (.) on both sides there my mum very much wanted to keep us out of (.) the conflict but that didn't mean she didn't fight for a side um her side as it were whereas my dad was very much more vocal (.) if he had a problem he was gonna say something about it … and so I suppose for me I just I just didn't want anything to kind of be underlying (.) um within the house and I guess within my friends err but yeah its interesting because I when there is a conflict that rises (.) um I don't actually want to go and speak to the person directly ((participant laughs)) and tell them to (.) go and do their flipping washing up but um (.) (002; lines 871:886)

I mentioned to my brother I was like (.) "did you" (.) "I've just been thinking that I um that I used to always um defend mum against dad and dad against mum when I used to always kind of try to be the peacemaker and it never worked and I always tried to fix it" and he was like "yeah you did (.)

didn't you know that" no (.) like I hadn't realised it at all until that point (.) and then last year I went on a year abroad (002; lines 902:906)

…my dad was telling us "your mum y'know your mum's a psycho all of her family are mad do you know what don't trust them" blah blah blah (.) um and obviously we couldn't tell our mum he was saying all of this stuff ((deep in breath)) … (003; lines 157:159)

…she was trying to get as much money as possible so from the divorce settlements so she was trying to get the house and stuff (.) um and that and that so what happened with that is me and my brother became (.) the deciding factors basically if we said um (.) and we very nearly went to court as witnesses so if we said we don't wanna live with my mum (.) um my dad would have got most of the house um (.) and vice versa and as it was we were just about at that point where we were going to say we are gonna go live with our dad because we actually did get on better with with him (.) um (.) and my mum was really difficult to live with she was quite volatile (.) I wouldn't say she was violent but she was quite (.) um what's the word um (.) yeah quite coz she could be very very nasty and and she went out a lot y'know so (.) um just at the I think it was like a couple days before my mum got a solicitors letter confirming that me and my brother had agreed that we wanted to go live with my dad and she went absolutely ballistic and I me and my brother (.) changed our minds (003; lines 161:171)

(.) I did play this role as the peacekeeper … and I'm not really willing to do that anymore (.) and I'm just like well (.) … you'd think my whole life not even (.) n n your not even trying to make the peace just trying just not rock the boat not mention my mum in front of my dad not (.) y'know … it I think it is exhausting and not y'know always so (.) have two celebrations at Christmas at Birthdays at y'know protect my kids from their crap y'know all of that stuff and I think it is exhausting and I think (.) if I can I will move away from ((city name)) I don't I think my mistake was to come back here I think (003; lines 395:415)

(.) it's funny coz my dad's family didn't and I remember my dad's mum telling me off one day because I didn't go and see her (.) um but nobody contacted us and when I was at University in Glasgow I wrote to my dad's older sister and basically said you know (.) but again it was me doing it and me apologising and y'know ((sharp out breath)) they if if I would like to think that if I had a new son or nephew in that situation I would look out for them and not the other way round (.) (003; lines 426:431)

(.) I think up until very very recently I always gave my dad the benefit of the doubt and always kind of shelved or ignored this hatred he had for my mum and just I tried to talk to him about it a few times and ya'know ended up just sort of (.) (003; lines 722:724)

(.) recently I was saying I feel like if I don't (.) if I'm not good (.) if I don't do the whole mother's day thing or the whole Christmas y'know be the whole daughter that actually nobody wants to have a relationship with me because my relationship with people is so built on (.) kind of me doing what I am supposed to do ((voice wavers)) (003; lines 734:737)

um (.) got to the point where my dad had to turn his telephone off and he'd wake up in the morning and he'd have thirty missed calls from her and um answer phone messages being abusive and all kind of stuff (.) um and me my two younger brothers were actually living with me mum at that time (.) um and so they (.) yeah I think that probably had a massive impact on them (.) um in fact at one point I was gonna try and get me youngest brother to come and live with me (.) I knew me next one up wouldn't coz like he had lots of friends in the area and um (.) he could he was sort of had a routine so he could remove himself from the situation whereas the younger one was only like ten

or eleven (.) um so I was gonna I was gonna try and get him to come live with me (.) um (004; lines 672:679)

no I think it was pretty clear at the time I think that's something that um (.) I kind of carried with me is that I was never protected (.) from any of the kind of (.) discord that was going on (.) I was always very much aware as a child of y'know what there difficulties were I was never protected from any of that so that something that I carried with me … yeah or my mum would come and tell me afterwards what he'd said or what he'd done or how she was feeling so I was (.) took on a kind of a (.) um responsibility (.) in the home … I always take responsibility now (.) whenever y'know I'm always the one to kind of step up and sort things out (.) um yeah … my mum remarried soon after that divorce and that was a really horribly abusive marriage from both sides but mainly from him (.) (006; lines 155:180)

um and so I think there was always (.) I don't know a desire to please (.) a want to please her (.) (006; lines 412:413)

5. Repairing the damage caused

5.1 Intra-Familial Support

…then we moved in with my mum's mum, my nan and I felt much better then coz I have always been very close to me nan as well er so I felt a lot happier when we moved in there (001; lines 171:172)

…I still live with my mum when I go home and we're still really really close… (001; lines 200:201)

…well it was my mum who like (.) supported me and everything like that… (001; line 283)

um my nanna did help a lot we lived with her (.) (001; line 300)

…my mum has her sister who she's quite close with (.) who like helped us out but just… (001; line 313)

I've just always had like anxiety problems and as a kid I just used to freak me out having to leave me mum and go to school (.) I did actually see me grandma, me dad's mum a lot during that time because the village where I went to school was the village where my grandma and grandad lived because that's the village we used to live in (001; lines 343:346)

um so every morning to just calm me down I would stop at my grandmas for a bit and sometimes she'd be there and … so I'd see her just for like five minutes (.) practically every morning sometimes (001; lines 350:353)

Yeah just I ring my mum like (.) all the time (.) at least every I ring her like every week (.) round about and we'd like talk for like a really really long time and then obviously when I go home (.) I always stay at home with her (.) (001; lines 497:499)

…I think as well with my mum said of the family that mum was always really close to her like sister and her mum and I'd been really close to my nanna when I was younger because she used to look after me during the day (001; lines 602:604)

um it got to a point where my mum and dad were still together where my dad didn't let my mum or us see her side of the family (.) like at all so obviously as soon as they split up we started to see them a lot more … um so like I am really close to them now as well (.) (001; lines 608:614)

…I think its I think it is just because because I am quite like a raging feminist (.) she just sees that as me being a man hater and my nanna as well who I am very close to (.) she is she is a legitimate man hater erm I do really look up to my nanna as well so (001; lines 628:630)

um I'd say in living arrangements were alright because my dad lived fifteen minutes from my mum's house which on the hole (.) I guess was a positive thing in that if I needed him to take me into school cuz I missed the bus he could come do that (.) (002; lines 524:526)

(.) um I I've been able to ask her direct questions about how she felt my dad was before the divorce and after and um (.) and like her kind of situation again I said that she she's quite private and she doesn't like to dwell on it as for her its very much she's left it and doesn't want to think about it anymore (.) um but yeah we have much better relationship I think much more honest relationship now than we did (.) and yeah with my step-dad I'd include him here because for about err ten years I didn't really accept him and didn't really appreciate him and I think for (.) for the most part that was because of my my dad didn't say very nice things about him and I did see as on my mum's side so while he would say that he was neutral he wanted to be there for me my brother and my sister (.) I always knew kind of in the back of my head well it can't really be true because you're with my mum (.) um but now we have a much much better relationship and I appreciate him (.) a lot more for (.) I guess supporting me my brother and sister financially and emotional and just being there as well an for everything that he has done for my mum so yeah (.) we've come a long way ((general laughter)) (002; lines 787:799)

…I think she would she would have advice on (.) like (.) I dunno just how to make a relationship work and how to she's very good at kind of compromise and like knowing when to (.) when to just kind of let an argument slide and things like that so maybe my mum… (002; lines 811:813)

my sister and my brother most definitely um yeah (.) like (.) not so necessarily so much at the time (.) but we all went through it together and now looking back on it as we're all adults now my sisters um nineteen yeah ... um (.) we we definitely understand where each other's coming from and like sometimes my (.) if my sister freaks out because she had an argument with my dad the other day and she rings me because she knows (.) exactly (.) that I will I will understand it (.) (002; lines 1040:1048)

…I think I don't know whether my mum and my step-dad agreed this between themselves but he had nothing to do with the discipline of me my brother and sister so he was (.) almost like he was there to kind of help us (.) he helped us with maths and like he helped us (.) like in everyday life and he was great and he was a good influence on my life he's a very kind man (.) (002; lines 1070:1074)

…he's really good at talking to about stuff and he really gets it and um at the moment he's very um (.) he's very supportive of this fact that I've sort of been a bit angry and not just to towards my parents but in general sort of not putting up with (.) (003; lines 531:534)

…as soon as stepfather was on the seen pretty quickly and he was always really supportive and um (.) and just sort of had a bond with him from very early on (004; lines 339:341)

he's still a massive part of my life (.) for me he's my dad … he's not my stepdad he's me dad (004; lines 400:404)

I think by the time I went to school (.) there was ongoing animosity but I don't think it really affected the family life as such coz I had two supportive parents in my mum and my step-dad um so I don't think it was ever an issue (.) I just got on with it (004; lines 473:475)

um they both have good relationships with both parents (.) um and yeah they (.) for everything they went through (.) seeing that verbally aggression from me ma towards my dad (.) um you would have expected them to be really messed up but they've y'know they've got really good work ethics they've got um (.) good social relationships not the youngest the next one up he's um like I say he's just had a baby well last year whose just been christened (.) they both are doing really well so (.) yeah (004; lines 748:753)

my grandparents we we used to go to my grandparents a lot who my mum was very close to (.) but they both passed away now … and she's got a sister (.) which um (.) who she see every so often (.) mainly it's been it's been her friends who have been there for her like um (.) basically she has a lot of very very close friends from schools and the basically behave as my (.) aunties essentially (.) and then they have been here for us and they've been good (005; lines 432:440)

it's really good actually (.) um we're not really close um we don't live near I don't live near to any of my family um (.) but I speak to my dad probably once every two weeks and y'know he makes me laugh and I make him laugh and ya know we probably see each other only once a year but I know that he cares and and he knows I do (006; lines 547:550)

(.) see the thing is she sees my relationship now with my husband and um and she puts him on a pedestal she thinks he's wonderful and he is (.) um I put him on a pedestal too but she's never been able to that with any of her partners (.) um and so that's that's I think she looks at that at kind of being an ideal really because we've got the same kind of sense of humour and we enjoy the same things and um and so (.) yeah I've I've got a great relationship and I don't need to go to someone whose never had a great relationship to see how it should be (006; lines 620:626)

5.2 Extra-Familial Support

…but then when I went to secondary school and I made like new friends I got to know them better and they became like my best friends in secondary school I like told them a lot (.) a lot about it and like quite in depth as well (001; lines 367:369)

Yeah because they had gone through quite (.) well not like similar things but they both had issues with their parents as well because one of my friends was adopted and one of them her dad has had quite a lot of issues though they didn't have the exact same family issues but they still had issues with their parents and stuff (001; lines 373: 376)

(.) I have a boyfriend at uni now and er we have this other friend who is like really really close to us, we are like a trio who always hangs out and I've told those two quite, quite a lot of the stuff (.) (001; lines 418:420)

Well I think because I was really close to my friends anyway I always do like get very very close to my friends (.) um I do because like I said I do like similar experiences to like in different ways but still like things with their parents that did happen (.) I think it gave us like just like some that we had similar and made us a lot closer… (001; lines 599:602)

I had a lot of male friends but like we were kind of (.) we were like the emo mosher kids in secondary school so we were kind of (.) like be outsiders and we didn't have (.) we didn't like have a particularly large group of friends… (001; lines 674:676)

oh well that's been something that I have realised (.) um through counselling this year… (002; line 286)

(.) I'd say my friends a little bit but they couldn't really understand coz they don't really understand the situation (.) um (002; lines 565:566)

um (.) two big things (.) would be (.) um a family who (.) um are a really close family (.) family friends they went to the same church as (.) my (.) well basically we used to go (.) to a church with my mum and my dad and then when they divorced we didn't really go very much anymore like I occasionally went to the (.) the Sunday school thing … and then when some friends went to a different church up in um ((village)) err we my dad and my brother and sister and I started going and err we went along with another family who was also quite close to us and um (.) yeah so (.) I (.) err we got really close to that family I don't even though how it happened but occasionally they would take (.) um my sister and I or sister and my brother and I to church when my dad couldn't … and (.) that family was the only family that (.) stayed neutral that they like (.) I would say or they were the most neutral of them all like in terms of family friends … in terms of like (.) um I mean there are other family friends that tried to (.) to be there (.) err but they tended to be either on one side or another ... or they were too far away for it to kind of really make a difference (.) er whereas this family they lived right in that in that town which is in the middle of the two villages… (002; lines 577:603)

(.) um that family meant so much to me because (.) they like I said before (.) I didn't feel like I (.) had other people around that I could talk to (.) and um this family kind of (.) they would say on the way back from church they'd be like okay whose house and they just didn't care um whether that was my mum's or my dad's (.) they didn't question it and um as we got older um particularly for my sister and I the mother of that family she errr started to (.) be there for us in a way that she'd be like "you can ring me if you have a problem" errr (002; lines 620:625)

(.) um she turned to this woman who (.) who was there um (.) has actually around and stood up to my dad and told him that he can't treat me my brother and sister in the way that he has done because ((participant sniffs)) she opened my eyes to the fact that what we had been through was essentially emotional abuse… (002; lines 637:640)

…my faith… was a (.) like (.) yeah the big err big support that I had … I (.) chose to I guess (.) come to know God like when I was eleven years old in that I was brought up in a church environment and blah blah blah but I chose actually no this is something that I believe for myself when I was eleven and um (.) since then (.) I think its been a continual (.) journey I guess I guess I don't know how to explain it to you (.) but my (.) understanding of God's God's love for me and kind of his (.) um the fact that I can trust (.) I can trust in him um (.) helped me to surpass everything I went through (002; lines 679:693)

…after my first year I had a breakdown and I'm sure that's why because of just because of how difficult my childhood had been and that and because I'd left my support in ((city name)) so I had some really good friends who (.) are still really good friends actually (.) (003; lines 216:219)

he's my godfather (.) him and his partner have been really supportive and they have been since I was about eleven (.) so they've been (.) I can talk to them about my mum and my dad and they

understand (.) um (.) and after the big argument with my dad at Christmas I talked to ((‘uncle’s partner)) about it quite a lot and she was (.) she was really supportive actually… (003; lines 436:439)

…she was the person that said “don’t be daft y’know do you’re a levels and go to university” so um I suppose yeah (.) they supported me in that way I don’t think I would have ever (.) thought to do that otherwise um (003; lines 471:465)

(.) in like teenage years I probably talked with friends about it and (.) yeah but not when I was younger I don’t think (004; lines 484:485)

I met my friend ((friend’s name)) and she kind of brought out of it … she is I don’t see her as often (.) coz she’s um currently in Thailand travelling around with her boyfriend but (.) I think she’s a lot of the reason why I kind of could talk more and be more of a person than I was … she kind of like made me realise it’s okay to be weird and okay to (.) be yourself and not have to worry about everyone thinks of you all the time … she’s been through a similar thing herself her dad was (.) um (.) she had a very turbulent relationship with her dad and her parents in general she kind of was glad to get rid of them (005; lines 523:548)

5.3 Time Can Heal

…one of my friends said to me actually quite recently when I was talking about my dad, coz I’d had quite a phone conversation with him and he had really frustrated me, I was like telling him loads of stories about my dad and he was like saying that he was quite impressed that I have a good relationship with him, as I do, with all the terrible things I said about him (001; lines 420:423)

(.) to all intents and purposes like there were both very very loving parents but just on looking back at it like (.) they really did some things that they (.) err they made some mistakes I mean their human and that’s kind of one of the things that I have realised this year (.) (002; lines 82:85)

(.) I think the truth is I (.) came to accept the fact that even if it was true that my mum had had an affair (.) that would not change my relationship with her and I think my dad secretly hoped that it would (.) (002; lines 231:233)

…it’s interesting cuz since I have come to university and I have had this whole kind of learni learning curve I suppose in understanding really about the relationships that went on (.) um within my family I now get on a lot better with my mum than I ever did at home I think… (002; lines 366:368)

(.) I think now just like I have been um in learning to let go a lot of that and and to forgive but I think it’s gonna take a bit of time because it’s kind of like I explained to you y’know it’s been fifteen years there’s a lot of layers there (002; lines 435:437)

my (.) understanding of God’s God’s love for me and kind of his (.) um the fact that I can trust (.) I can trust in him um (.) helped me to surpass everything I went through … and has been particularly uhh what has helped me in the past six months kind of forgive and learn to heal from it (002; lines 692:698)

(.) um I I’ve been able to ask her direct questions about how she felt my dad was before the divorce and after and um (.) and like her kind of situation again I said that she she’s quite private and she doesn’t like to dwell on it as for her its very much she’s left it and doesn’t want to think about it anymore (.) um but yeah we have much better relationship I think much more honest relationship now than we did (.) and yeah with my step-dad I’d include him here because for about err ten years I didn’t really accept him and didn’t really appreciate him and I think for (.) for the most part that was because of my my dad didn’t say very nice things about him and I did see as on my mum’s side

so while he would say that he was neutral he wanted to be there for me my brother and my sister (.) I always knew kind of in the back of my head well it can't really be true because you're with my mum (.) um but now we have a much much better relationship and I appreciate him (.) a lot more for (.) I guess supporting me my brother and sister financially and emotional and just being there as well an for everything that he has done for my mum so yeah (.) we've come a long way ((general laughter)) (002; lines 787:799)

(.) I think he kind of decided he was gonna try and make sense of it all so he'd like he did an evening class in psychology um (.) and I can remember this really clearly he used to when he had us at the weekends he used to take us for walks and he used to tr tell us all this stuff "I've been studying and I think your mothers a sociopath and her family are all mad" (.) um you know so he told us all this stuff and it took me a long time to unravel all that and understand it all and understand the impact that it's had on me um (.) (003; lines 66:71)

… I think turning ((participant age)) I've have a bit of a (.) a revelation really that I don't want to put up with this anymore and I don't (.) it's just cuz part of me thinks that this is the time when they need me more than ever and they both are not really very well and another part of me I think (.) and I have to be really honest (.) is quite malicious just like do ya know what I don't care ((participant laughs)) … (003; lines 333:337)

I was so very much about (.) thinking that will never happen to me (.) … that was (.) almost learning from her mistakes if you like (.) (004; lines 186:190)

um the first thing I did was got to the end of the week I jumped on the train and went back to Newcastle um (.) I don't know what that was about actually (.) I don't know whether I was going back into protective mode with my mam or what … but I felt like I needed to be there um (.) but I think (.) I think I was always going to forgive him (.) but I think probably (.) not understood more but I think probably the way me mam dealt with it (.) was like "yes well he did wrong he had an affair but you dragged it out for however many years" ja know what I mean? (004; 823:832)

t-turbulent as in she loves him very much but he's (.) a very very hurtful to her we obviously I wasn't a perfect kid growing up like I did my fair share (.) but not really the same thing as ((brother's name)) just he's just constantly selfish (.) he was just constantly selfish growing up gotten better now (.) he joined the army and kind of I think (.) even though he's not perfect it's it's kind of made him grow up and stabilised him a lot (.) yeah he done that (005; lines 567:571)

yeah it has been I think coming to uni has helped a lot with that It's made me (.) kind of realise a lot that I wasn't behaving in a way that was (.) a good person (.) and to call myself a good person I y'know (.) I couldn't really claim that without actually living it (.) but I'm in a relationship now and I'm happy and we're okay (005; lines 620:623)

(.) see it's really hard because I have gone through quite a long process (.) of personal development to get to the point where I'm at now (.) and so I can't really say how it affects me now because I think I have kind of overcome so much of it (006; lines 493:495)

for a while I've got meditation for years um (.) I kind of dabble with Buddhism and that kind of thing and I learnt to talk actually (.) rather than being told y'know … what what what yeah but through counselling actually that was … and counselling training myself (006; lines 528:538)

5.4 Breathing Space

nope I needed to leave home when I came to university (.) I was (.) so ready (.) um yeah as I mentioned I kind of been doing through since coming to university (.) it it was only at university that I started to (.) look back on um my teenage years and um kind of growing up really (.) and it was some time in second year that I mentioned to my brother I was like (.) "did you" (.) "I've just been thinking that I um that I used to always um defend mum against dad and dad against mum when I used to always kind of try to be the peacemaker and it never worked and I always tried to fix it" and he was like "yeah you did (.) didn't you know that" no (.) like I hadn't realised it at all until that point (.) and then last year I went on a year abroad (002; lines 899:906)

…by the time by the time I left home I was I was definitely ready to leave (.) (002; line 921)

(.) yeah I lived with friends and I just (.) ya'know I did all the things I shouldn't have done y'know (.) went out a lot took loads of drugs partied really hard like from sixteen to nineteen and then I went to university and I went to ((city name)) to deliberately get away really (003; lines 205:208)

… I think I shouldn't of probably shouldn't of come back … (003; lines 419:420)

… if I could I think I would emigrate (.) like if I could move to Australia or somewhere even just for a year or two just to get away from it all (.) I think I probably would ((general laughter)) um (.) so yeah obviously it is having quite a big impact on me (003; lines 652:656)

I have of just wanting to run away because I feel like oppressed by it all I think … and I would like to (.) just go somewhere where I could just be myself (.) (003; lines 706:711)

(.) I think dad kind of went and then mum made plans to basically escape if you like (.) and we moved to a um some house in the suburbs but I think (.) but which was we were all a lot worse off … and then she kind of figured that she would never really be rid of him and was very very kind of nervous about that (.) so she decided to come back to the UK where she is originally from (005; lines 111:118)

coz I'd see it but again (.) because he behaved so kindly towards me I didn't really (.) register it like why wouldn't he do the same to mum who he was supposed to love as well (.) I didn't really get it at the time and (.) so I didn't feel much different towards him until I really left and could think about it (005; lines 296:299)

it was (.) undoubtedly it was difficult I I (.) I felt very very very alone having left (.) but I am going to say now four years later its probably the best things best thing I ever did (.) but I think from how how where I started to where I am now (.)… I think I need to break away (005; lines 729:736)

I got out quick um (.) I left home very young and lived on my own and as soon as that I took an opportunity to to go and work abroad and then went travelling (.) spent years working and living abroad and then visas and things caused me have to come back (006; lines 520:522)

well we moved away a couple of three years ago so (.) there's a geographical distance … um and so yeah my children have kind of got used to being more of a geographical distance and I've been really surprised actually that they haven't mentioned (.) phoning her or anything in the past couple of months we've not spoken (.) I think there just busy (.) (006; lines 594:602)

4. A long-lasting social impact

4.1 For Self

(.) it's funny coz my dad's family didn't and I remember my dad's mum telling me off one day because I didn't go and see her (.) um but nobody contacted us and when I was at University in Glasgow I wrote to my dad's older sister and basically said you know (.) but again it was me doing it and me apologising and y'know ((sharp out breath)) they if if I would like to think that if I had a new son or nephew in that situation I would look out for them and not the other way round (.) (003; lines 426:431)

… I crave a big romance I would love to get married and stuff but I always thought I didn't want to because because how could I have a wedding who would I invite y'know mum … yeah mum would never speak to me if I didn't invite her dad wouldn't come lalala (003; 763:769)

I don't really have with either of them the older brothers now um and haven't had a relationship with them for a few years (004; lines 301:302)

(.) in my late teens I remember feeling really jealous even though he had never been in me life (.) um his step daughter was about the same age as me (.) um I hear because they live locally so I hear sort of through the grape vine that um (.) he was buying her a car (.) she didn't drive and he was buying her a car (.) I thought (.) I'm your daughter y'know I never even had a birthday card and you're buying her a car and feeling a bit jealous about it (004; lines 352:356)

um well I say divorced that are not actually divorced yet but they the breakup of the relationship (.) she handled it really badly … oh massively so (.) um massively um me and me mum fell out over it actually over the separ not the separation per se (.) but the way she dragged it on and on (.) um they'd been separated years and she would still phone him all the time and expecting him to do things for her (.) um been abusive towards him being verbally abusive towards him coz he had an affair that's why they separated (.) um and she would actually relate it back to the previous marriage and she would say well y'know "yes he was physically abusive but at least I knew where I stood with him" (.) y'know "your mentally abusive you've tortured me" an (.) um "made me think you weren't having an affair when you were having an affair" n' think "making us think I were paranoid" and all this kind of stuff (004; lines 577:594)

…I think that that after my mum divorced and remarried (.) she (.) kind of broke away from the family a bit and they have been help they have helped and they have supported at different times (.) ya know when we were going through a difficult time (.) um (.) but now I don't know I kind of (.) it's it's all just really dysfunctional and I'd like to just stay away from it cuz I don't like it ((participant chuckles)) (006; lines 710:714)

(.) the role that I had been playing in his life was not necessarily that of a daughter it was (.) of maybe just a little bit too much like a like a confidant or something like that (002; lines 371:373)

(.) he stuck by me and my brother and sister he always kind of (.) paid (.) um my mum money to like support us … took us on incredible holidays and we had an amazing time with him (.) but it's um and I wouldn't change that (.) um but (.) yeah it's just it is just in (.) um kind of thinking about it a lot more I realise our relationship were or relationship was a lot more (.) errm I guess difficult a bit toxic like just a little bit like it should have been really (002; lines 384:392)

(.) like if I had gone home for example for a holiday and I spent three days with my mum and one with my dad he'd be like "ohh you spent three days with her how dare you" kind of thing am and instead of appreciating that one day that we had I mentioned about pushing for more he'd be like "but she got three days why don't you spend three days with me?" and almost expected it rather than appreciating the time that we did have … and so (.) and sometimes that expectation I guess

felt (.) or I feel now translated into a kind of abuse because it was almost like "you should you should feel like you love me the same way as your mum or that we get exactly the same amount of time" (002; lines 659:669)

((deep in breath)) well I think what I did was I I I um (.) I got together with ((son and daughter's)) dad um and um I think I was just looking for a family really … so I moved in with him after a couple of years and to be honest he didn't treat me very well (.) he slapped me around but I just (.) put up with it and I think y'know again I think that's probably it's probably all related because I was just desperate to feel (.) ya know like I belonged somewhere (.) (003; lines 477:483)

yeah I think it's definitely affected my friendships because I think I've probably ((deep in breath)) have quite intense friendships like have a few really close friends … and I find it hard just to have some sort of casual friendships the same thing I always look for is kind of meaningful connections with people um and (.) … and that and because of that two of my other female friends also stopped speaking to me and um it all just got really nasty and horrible and I know I handled it very badly cus I just took it very personally (003; lines 668:684)

(.) I think I've quite agreeable so I'll just "yeah alright then whatever you like" I think maybe on my friendships some of my friendships aren't that healthy … I do sometimes wonder whether my friend ((friend's name)) if I disagreed with him or said no whether it would all fall apart ((participant laughs)) (003; lines 727:733)

(.) recently I was saying I feel like if I don't (.) if I'm not good (.) if I don't do the whole mother's day thing or the whole Christmas y'know be the whole daughter that actually nobody wants to have a relationship with me because my relationship with people is so built on (.) kind of me doing what I am supposed to do ((voice wavers)) (003; lines 734:737)

I think I do have a habit of being (.) being nice and then just (.) like blowing my top ((participant laughs)) (003; lines 748-749)

…I have had turbulent friendships surely through throughout when I was younger anyway (.) like I'd go through secondary school (.) used to kind of drift between groups of friends for years and I had kind of a stable group for a while and that would kind of break apart (.) then I kind of hung on the edge of this big group of people (.) my friends in secondary school cuz we moved cuz me and one of my very close friends moved schools and she's like kind of acquaintances with some people there and we kind of (.) I spent like a year hanging out with other people and kind of drifted towards them (.) I I've said that and I dunno why I did it cuz like my relationship with those people has been incredibly unhealthy and I have no idea why I haven't let it go yet (.) um like (.) they tend to be very (.) quite self-absorbed I know that sounds really really generic and shallow and a bad thing to say (.) just like they never really looked out for me or came (.) they always behaved (.) very very childish in comparison I think (005; lines 798:808)

of (.) so even though it's been turbulent I think (.) it was kind of helpful that is was … because it helped my grow … in terms of how I view friends because it (.) I kind of It kind of was a knock on the head very early that you say you have be very very conscious about everything you say and take everything with a pinch of salt (.) you can't just be yourself immediately around everybody because they just don't accept you (.) and it's only when you kind of go past the skin you felt like a true person you could be around that you can start letting go … but again I kind of (.) I made the mistake of living with someone I couldn't stand for like three years and I don't know why I did (005; lines 827:853)

(.) I think she's she's she's probably what kind of culminated what happened this year I think (.) It was partially work and partially just her being her (.) she's very very very selfish very crude very (.) mean spirited in every way and like I felt very very alone and cuz my other friend wouldn't listen to me (.) but I didn't want to leave her alone with him either and it was all this complicated nonsense … and again that wasn't healthy I should have just backed off and like I don't do it don't trust in this person (.) but I did (.) so I I it's hard to say really I don't know (.) (005; lines 862:866)

it's a love hate thing really … in a yeah it was love hate (.) I loved her and see loved me and I knew she loved me … but (.) I didn't feel like I could trust her (.) didn't feel like (.) I don't know I didn't feel she could keep me safe (006; lines 328:337)

I'd say it causes issues because um my relationship with my mother isn't a good one … um and I don't have a close relationship to my sister (006; lines 504:508)

…I was painfully shy in school and I'd like every morning when I went to school I would like freak out and wouldn't want to leave the car so I think they were quite involved with me anyway… (001; lines 335:337)

I've just always had like anxiety problems and as a kid I just used to freak me out having to leave me mum and go to school… (001; lines 343:344)

(.) I know coz like I never really had like a proper boyfriend, I had a boyfriend in college but that was like was obviously like two years ago and I didn't really have a proper boyfriend in like secondary school when I was like (.) I think I was a lot more affected by it all then (.) (001; lines 430:433)

(.) me dad was so like (.) absent a lot of the time mainly because of my choice but absent because how close that means I got to my mum it was really really difficult to like leave my mum… (001; lines 562:564)

it was like when I've came down my first day last year my dad came down with me as well as I didn't want him to come down with me as well as my mum erm but like when I said bye to me dad I gave him a hug and let him go but then when my mum was leaving I was in floods of tears I literally did not want her to leave me at all (.) I just and it's still like that now (participant laughs) like when I came home from like Christmas or when I came back for like second year it would probably be like that when I come home for easter (.) and I just don't want to leave my mum (001; lines 568:573)

…I do like immediately if I see a man I'm always like hmmph not too sure about you ((general laughter)) (001; lines 634:635)

…maybe a bit to do with trust um like not su like not knowing if things will work out I suppose I don't have a very soul matey attitude towards relationships (.) (002; lines 757:758)

(.) um I I've been able to ask her direct questions about how she felt my dad was before the divorce and after and um (.) and like her kind of situation again I said that she she's quite private and she doesn't like to dwell on it as for her its very much she's left it and doesn't want to think about it anymore (.) um but yeah we have much better relationship I think much more honest relationship now than we did (.) and yeah with my step-dad I'd include him here because for about err ten years I didn't really accept him and didn't really appreciate him and I think for (.) for the most part that was because of my my dad didn't say very nice things about him and I did see as on my mum's side so while he would say that he was neutral he wanted to be there for me my brother and my sister (.) I always knew kind of in the back of my head well it can't really be true because you're with my

mum (.) um but now we have a much much better relationship and I appreciate him (.) a lot more for (.) I guess supporting me my brother and sister financially and emotional and just being there as well an for everything that he has done for my mum so yeah (.) we've come a long way ((general laughter)) (002; lines 787:799)

(.) it has made me shy in in other areas like in terms of like (.) romantic relationships I have a lot shyer than I would be if it was just like a friend … so (.) yeah I suppose um (.) yeah I can be very personable and very outgoing in when I feel like there um (.) I dunno I guess I guess there's no (.) sense of being vulnerable um I suppose (.) yeah …I don't know I think it's just like (.) just kind of a maybe I shouldn't go there kind of thing and just I dunno (.) I don't really know how to describe it um (.) except for it's really really strange because with everybody else I can I can have a conversation with you and I can ask you like anything … and that's fine and I don't know um and all of my and all my friends as well think its really strange … because I (.) am perfectly happy to talk to anyone as long as ((participant laughs)) I am not going to end up having a relationship with them and then (.) if as soon as that thought comes into my mind I am like woof … like I'm out of there yeah (.) it's really weird and I don't I don't know why that is um it's something that I have thought about recently actually and I just (.) ((participant laughs)) and it's a really strange part of my character that I just ((general laughter)) (002; lines 931:961)

…there could an element there of not knowing how err (.) how (.) a relationship works um (.) with regards I suppose to children and between a married couple (002; lines 1067:1068)

I think if anything (.) it's made me more (.) wary of committing to somebody who I wouldn't be sure that I would be able to go through everything with y'know go through life with… (002; lines 1096:1097)

(.) I became incredibly shy and I just read books all the time I didn't I I had one friend at school but she didn't really become a good friend until I was about fourteen fifteen um up until then I was quite a loner at school I was bullied quite a lot um and I just read books all the time at the library and I think that the librarian said to me "you've read nearly read every book in the library" ((participant laughs)) so I just I just became a bit (.) withdrawn and shy (003; lines 239:243)

(.) and just feeling abandoned like just feeling dropped off and not really having anybody who I could really trust with with (.) err with what was going because my my mum would say one thing my dad would say another thing and I couldn't talk to either of them about it and I couldn't trust either of them about it (.) I wasn't really old enough to vocalise any of that so I suppose I just (.) (003; lines 248:251)

…and its very difficult to be honest with my parents without them (.) really being quite aggressive back and its quite hard to find a way of speaking to them (.) so I I think I am better at it now than I have ever been (.) (003; lines 330:332)

(.) sometimes sometimes I talk to my mum about stuff and then other times I'll or she'll then she'll say something and I realise that it's not really safe to to um ((deep in breath)) to be that close to her I think and with my (.) yeah and this I was (.) closer to my dad but actually I have also realised you it's very difficult to be close to somebody but (.) I think for a long time I just ignored the side this element of him (003; lines 349:354)

um I didn't really have (.) many friends at school I had one friend (.) um (.) (003; line 459)

(.) I think it has it's affected my judgement I think it's made me quite um dependent I think I look for someone to be with whether it's right or wrong … so I think I have (.) rushed into relationships because I have not wanted to be on my own (.) um (.) rather than just being a bit relaxed about it and thinking oh y'know I'll meet the right person and the right time so yeah I think it's affected my judgement quite a lot and I think (.) I don't know whether it's their relationship and their divorce or whether it's (.) the sort of lack of security I felt as a child but I think I definitely look for that and I think I (.) I think I have (.) not wanting to kind of pathologize myself I think I've got quite anxious attachment in relationships so I need (.) to a lot of reassurance and I yeah I don't know whether it's to do with that (.) (003; lines 513:524)

…yeah we're having quite a (.) rocky time at the moment I'm not sure whether it's to do with my parents y'know I don't know how much impact that has it on it (.) I think to be honest it's more to do with his issues with intimacy (003; lines 558:561)

…to be honest I wouldn't talk to many people about what's happening um (.) in my relationship at the moment because it's it's quite a (.) sensitive issue isn't it (003: lines 592:594)

I wanted their um (.) friendship and their approval well I didn't want them all to think y'know um so yeah that's been quite hard and I think … (.) so it's odd I think particularly it's affected my relationships with women I don't think um I find it quite hard to have friendships with women I am not really sure why (.) umm yeah but most of my closest friends are … male yeah … maybe it's a trust thing because my mum was quite volatile and (.) I think so it's to do with my own sense of being a women I think I am quite shy about being an I suppose you look to your you look to your mum about how to be a woman and I don't think because at that time when I was growing my mum was quite volatile and my dad was telling me that she was y'know there was something in her wrong with her (.) I think I was almost scared to grow up (.) scared to become my mum and I think there's still an element of that around my now and I don't really know whether that would just go um and I think that is part of the feeling I have of just wanting to run away because I feel like oppressed by it all I think (003; lines 688:707)

(.) cor it's a bit difficult to talk about but (.) yeah he doesn't yeah I don't think he finds me very attractive and that's been going on for (.) probably three or fours years now um and we've got (.) (003; lines 756:757)

(.) ever since that day I kind of was sad for a while and I was confused was it wasn't happening why it wasn't happening (.) I would mistake men for dad I thought he'd come back and … it it was confusing like I was this was in flat like it was must have been about (.) a few months after we moved in there (.) and um one of mum's old friends whose married to a friend of hers came over for a while coz he's quite tall and built like my dad I came rushing over to him and I was confused why he wasn't there (.) just kind of difficult and then as I gradually got older I reckon I realised what had happened (005; lines 147:157)

like the self-esteem issues kind of I think stand from being constantly terrified and what people think (.) even though I always pretend I don't (.) and I hate myself for it … I always get very very nervous when meeting someone for the first time and I kind of (.) play off that nervousness by just talking endlessly ((general laughter)) … it's the only way I can do it like I've tried y'know (.) coming to decide what to say but I but but there was no getting over it just talk and try not to think about what what they're think of you (.) hopefully you will make a friend out of it (005; lines 777:790)

…I have had turbulent friendships surely through throughout when I was younger anyway (.) like I'd go through secondary school (.) used to kind of drift between groups of friends for years and I had

kind of a stable group for a while and that would kind of break apart (.) then I kind of hung on the edge of this big group of people (.) my friends in secondary school cuz we moved cuz me and one of my very close friends moved schools and she's like kind of acquaintances with some people there and we kind of (.) I spent like a year hanging out with other people and kind of drifted towards them (.) I I've said that and I dunno why I did it cuz like my relationship with those people has been incredibly unhealthy and I have no idea why I haven't let it go yet (.) um like (.) they tend to be very (.) quite self-absorbed I know that sounds really really generic and shallow and a bad thing to say (.) just like they never really looked out for me or came (.) they always behaved (.) very very childish in comparison I think (005; lines 798:808)

I think it's kind of (.) at least shaped the way I approach things now … and kinda the way I hold myself as a person (005; lines 875:879)

a little bit (.) I find myself becoming frustrated with him sometimes because he's very (.) he is very passive personality he's a good person and lovely guy and I get on really well with him … but like I get constantly frustrated why coz he is very very passive in every way and I think I need (.) someone whose more like me in that regard whose willing to take charge but at the same time (.) will also let the other person do what they want to do as well … like being the person who comes up with everything and makes all the decisions it it can become exhausting … I trust him (.) if anything because of what's happened in the past I've just not told him about … I would be terrified he won't trust me … he knows my experience of my parent's divorce yeah of course he does (.) I didn't tell him anything else about what's happened to me … I kept that very very very private … because partially I don't know whether it's necessary that he should know (.) but at the same time I feel like I've lied to him (005; lines 887:903)

(.) I dunno like I don't know if I would be able to commit commit that much … it's the only worry of getting married now like so my friends are (.) like they've got kids and everything on facebook it freaks me out … um (.) I can't imagine that life with myself (.) at the minute (.) it's like an ideal that I think (.) it's so normal and just society to get married that we don't really question why we do it … and I I don't know whether I would or not … at least for now (.) as in not like the entire idea of it but just (.) the notion of (.) it happening anytime soon and just I can't imagine it (.) I don't know the reason for that maybe I just I'm not emotionally ready for it (005; lines 939:959)

(.) I (.) I just don't trust people straight away (.) I don't have that immediate kind of (.) y'know welcoming warmth and trust towards I kind of have always hung back a little bit and sussed out who I feel I can trust and who I can't before y'know moving in or not … and I don't really get that close to people there's only a very select few people that (.) know me really closely (006 lines; 659:666)

…it meant moving (.) so that interrupted ya know relationships at quite important ages as well really in in kind of adolescence and early teens (.) um (.) so yeah I think I lost all of my school school friendships um at that time um yeah I don't I don't actually have any people in my life who have been there since before I was about twenty one (.) friends wise (.) so it's as if there's two different stages to my life almost (.) yeah (.) (006; lines 683:687)

(.) I've gone through in my adulthood (.) well in my adolescence and teen years I became really promiscuous and then in my adulthood years I've through really long periods of celibacy (.) where I'd just rather be on my own than with anybody for the sake of it (.) um and I think like I said I think

it's just made me quite (.) picky I would rather be on my own than with someone who wasn't the right person at the time for me (.) so (006; lines 729:733)

no (.) I think (.) well I think that probably most people would have a little niggle or something every now and then just because you know not feeling too brilliant about yourself or … but um but no um I do trust and I have to be able to trust otherwise the whole thing would just fall apart (.) so I do (006; lines 769:775)

yeah and I got different pieces of information from both my dad and from my mum so your I was put in a very difficult position because I was like well (.) who is telling me the truth here … y'know I have (.) I have my dad going off on a rant about "your mother did this this and this this" and my mum saying "we didn't" ((participant laughs)) y'know so um it was it was a very difficult situation not knowing who to believe (.) like the two people you are meant to trust the most in the world didn't agree (.) um so yeah (002; lines 209:221)

(.) sorry for dad been on his side always believing that he would kind of come through in the ways that he said he would and to some some extent he did but in other ways he just kind of didn't didn't honour his commitments and so (.) (002; lines 381:383)

um (.) and I did not want to talk to anybody about it at that point (.) I was still very much if I talk to you this teaching assistant who was more friends with my mum and I knew didn't really like my dad (.) if I talk to her about it I felt like I was picking a side um (.) and there was very much a sense of I can't talk to anyone about this because anybody that I know that I trust is either close to my dad or close to my mum so that was really hard yeah (.) (002; lines 454:458)

(.) erm (.) not really I gue I think I'd vent my problems to her but I don't think (.) I don't know whether I would listen to her advice which sounds horrible but (.) I don't think she'd she doesn't really (.) I just don't think she really understands (.) that sounds that sounds really really weird (.) It's like because she's been she's gone through all of this stuff herself like I've again it sounds awful (.) but I find it difficult to take what she says seriously … cuz it's just like "mum if you can't (.) put yourself in a stable position with somebody why would" and this this I hate myself for saying it because I love my mum but "why would I listen to your opinion on it" (005; lines 706:716)

(.) I mentioned in the morning on the bus I would have a call from my dad and um (.) yeah like afterwards I would be really upset and I wouldn't be able to explain necessarily to my friends why and they'd they'd seen I was really upset (.) god there was one day I went (.) I went into school and that particular morning I think I'd had a (.) my dad had upset me or (.) I dunno I just ended up crying and sitting in my form form room with my headphones in (.) and my form tutor just kinda left me to it and was just like (.) y'know she just let me get on with it coz obviously it was something I couldn't talk about at the time and I suppose you have to balance that with yeah I was a teenager so maybe I was just moody ((participant laughs)) but at the same time I had all of this stuff going on so (.) yeah there was a lot of anxiety there (.) um (.) (002; lines 510:518)

…yeah I think I just went I got to uni I just n I was surrounded by people that were very middle class that had had very settled idyllic childhoods they have plenty of money they didn't have to work their way through university and I think it just all hit me (003; lines 219:221)

(.) I think it has in the sense of (.) ummm like I have had episodes of depression during the last few years … so I think it has in that respect mm and a confidence thing I think it (.) I don't know whether that's to do with my parent's divorce but I or whether it's to do with like being aware of of my

background but I think part (.) sometimes I feel like I have that like imposter feeling that I shouldn't really do you know what I mean … Like I am really not supposed to be ((participant laughs)) yeah this is somebody else's world it's not for messed up individuals from y'know so yeah in a vague way it has I don't I have that ya know you get some people that have that supreme sort of confidence and sense of entitlement and … their very driven and I don't have that I wish I had coz I think I do have a bit of a sort of lazy streak to me (003; lines 620:638)

it was (.) undoubtedly it was difficult I I (.) I felt very very very alone having left (.) but I am going to say now four years later its probably the best things best thing I ever did (.) but I think from how how where I started to where I am now (.) like I was on a BSc thought I was gonna get a 2:2 or even fail my course and now doing a PhD I'm getting a first it's … blood sweat and tears as it always is for most people who do degrees (005; lines 729:741)

oh I went to loads of schools yeah I went to (.) like three primary schools and three different high schools (.) yeah my sister more because yeah when when my mum remarried we (.) moved to a different part of the country … so we were really isolated and y'know new home new environment new schools (.) so yeah (006; lines 418:433)

4.2 For Family and Others

…they never like helped out in that respect coz they were very much on my dad's side and saw my mum as like this demon woman that had destroyed their family (001; lines 323:324)

…every time coz like every time my dad's family has a get together because (.) like I'm not that close to my dad at least I can like talk to him (.) but then like when my my aunty's there er my dad's sister and just ow it's it's so awkward like (participant laughs) (001; lines 511:514)

…like told people a lot of stories about them but I just feel awkward telling them to that side of the family because like it's my mum's family members and just I always feel so awkward (.) ((general laughter)) (001; lines 522:524)

um it got to a point where my mum and dad were still together where my dad didn't let my mum or us see her side of the family (.) like at all so obviously as soon as they split up we started to see them a lot more (001; lines 608:610)

…the second one has influenced (.) not necessarily social relationships but family relationships … um and the way that (.) we mix at family events and stuff (.) so me um (.) me godson me nephew recently the christening was like in February or something (.) so we were all at the christening (.) n it was it felt really strange coz me mum was sat over there (.) with um me brothers' girlfriends family … and I was over there with my husband and his family and me dad and his new partner (.) but we all felt strange about it was obviously she's my biological mother and he's my stepfather and we were all sat over here and she was sat somewhere differently (.) so I mean I kept going over and sat with her and talked to her but we were based in different places in the reception … so and then she didn't stay for for the duration she left early (.) so felt a bit bit awkward to say the least (.) (004; lines 703:722)

my grandmother or my maternal grandmother yeah she um she doesn't really say much about my dad but she would she like ask if he was okay and I think she was very much like I'll be civil even if I think your horrible to my daughter (.) …(.) yeah my my grandmother on my dad's side I think she (.) out of all of like the family I suppose like further out family (.) she took the hardest hit she (.) doesn't understand it (.) she blames my step-dad very much I think she liked my mother and I think I don't know if it's because of my dad saying things to her … but she very much feels like he broke up our

family and he's the reason why there was a divorce and (.) I don't think that she can see (.) my dad clearly for the mistakes that he has made um himself um which I suppose is very hard when you've got a child um (.) I don't know what it's like to have a child and then and then realise that they've y'know done somethings wrong really um so (.) yeah it's quite hard to talk to her I think she (.) I don't think she really understands the full picture because (.) y'know she's blindsided to the fact that it's her son that has been hurt and she sees how much pain he has I think and so (.) yeah

… my mum became involved in another relationship quite soon after the end of that relationship (.) … um and we had sort of a step-father in our lives (.) they were a lot of animosity between the two families (.) I mean he had he had another woman and she had children as well and (.) but there was a lot of animosity between the two of them (.) um so much so that my biological father made a false allegation and telephoned social services saying that my step-father was hitting us and this that and the other (.) um (.) n ((deep out breath)) I think it probably lasted that long (.) because they were childhood sweethearts and I think they found it difficult to for all there was violence in the relationship I think they found it difficult to make that break away from one another (004; lines 107:118)

(.) he was at the wedding um and I didn't speak to him um and actually he didn't say for the full reception he left and um I joked with me older brother "where's ((bio dad's name))" and he said um "he's left now" "damn I was going to buy him a drink as well" and my older brother wasn't amused by that because like I say he idolised him and um he knew I hadn't spoken to him throughout the throughout the wedding so (004; 418:422)

as in it's obviously not been 100% smooth and there's things I wouldn't take her for advice for but (.) I love her very much and I think she's a very very strong lady despite everything that went down with my dad (.) despite the crummy decisions she's made around guys (005; lines 980:982)

I don't really want to (.) I don't think there's anything for me there and I think it would just hurt mum too much … as in I would like to ask him obviously why he did what he did but I don't think it's really necessary I just (.) he's just not a good person … and he's very very self-destructive and he's very accusatory of other people and places blame on what he does or what they do … and because of that I don't really feel that you can help a person like that until they learn (.) I don't think he's going to learn … I mean I think the only time I I will actually see him again (.) is if he turns up at my grandmother's funeral (005; lines 987:1008)

yeah she just seems to have this type (.) like that which is crazy like they there's just usually something wrong with them (.) I think she thinks she can fix it … I don't know whether it's just an inclination she has but she she always seems to go for guys who which have (.) quite toxic qualities … think maybe they always behaved nicely on the face of it but she would just look past all these really wrong crippling flaws like deep depression or drug addiction … (.) but like there was one of them that was just (.) I just thought she was mad looking back at it now (.) how she could possibly been in the situation she I mean she was with someone for eighteen months who got eight years for robbing a bank (005; lines 356:382)

um (.) but especially when we moved like he made some bad friends and for a while he he was on drugs and (.) had problems (.) he got into fights a lot (.) … two years (.) he's err twenty-one (.) so yeah he's (.) a bit younger than me (.) but yeah he used to get into trouble a lot (005; lines 557:563)

t-turbulent as in she loves him very much but he's (.) a very very hurtful to her we obviously I wasn't a perfect kid growing up like I did my fair share (.) but not really the same thing as ((brother's name)) just he's just constantly selfish (.) he was just constantly selfish growing up gotten better now (.) he

joined the army and kind of I think (.) even though he's not perfect it's it's kind of made him grow up and stabilised him a lot (.) yeah he done that (005; lines 567:571)

with my mum it's always been really up and down um lately she's fallen out with me (.) um and we haven't spoken for probably about three months (.) so that's the latest … no this last fallout was specifically related to something um my sister (.) um is a single parent (.) lives right next to me and my mum (.) um she's very heavily dependent on my mum and vice versa that y'know they don't have much independent of each other and I think it gets to them both sometimes that they're not quite grown up to to do that um and one Saturday night I got a text (.) through from my sister and I knew as soon as I started reading it who'd ya know who it was sent by and it was sent by from my mum to her and she forwarded it onto me and it was just vile (.) just vile (.) you just wouldn't send it to anybody (.) she was really upset and that's why she told me about it and I am so glad she told me and I really wanted her to (.) to say to say to mum that ya know this is just not acceptable I'm not having this at all y'know you can't treat me this way but she doesn't have the inner resources to be able to do that … um and so I said I am really sorry (.) but I'm going to have to I can't let that slide you can't y'know she called her a "fat bitch" and everything it was just horrible (.) um and so I made I told my mum I was disgusted in her behaviour and that you go get professional help because you really need it and you're gonna screw up your grandchild's life as well as you know your own kids (.) so she told me to mind my own business and hasn't spoken to me since ((participant laughs) (006; lines 554:584)

…my brother has always been a bit like, I don't know really how to describe it (.) um he's always like (.) had lots of friends but never had lots of really close friends and he has never had something he is really really good at he is kind of just okay at a lot of things he's kind of always felt like quite lost in himself (001; lines 234:237)

(.) I don't know that I know my sister my brother both talk about trust (.) like my sister says she had a lot of kind of trust issues now because I think she feels like maybe my dad let her down (.) (002; lines 739:741)

…again they were older so (.) particularly the oldest one was a bit more resistive to her getting involved with a new relationship (004; lines 325:326)

well he's never really left (.) he's living in a barracks but like he comes back every weekend (.) without fail he drives home (.) that's what I always found funny about him (.) just rather moving on (.) rather kind of making friends in his barracks and hanging out with the army lads which he does of a week day I guess … he's never really ever stayed for a weekend up there unless he's had to (.) he's always driven home (.) and the funny thing is he (.) he doesn't really have many friends up here he's got a girlfriend which who who he really likes but (.) I don't know why he wouldn't bring them up there and why'd they come visit him (.) he always came back here (.) coz it's not it's certainly not cheaper for him coz he's spending (.) about eighty quid a weekend on petrol (.) but for some reason he comes home (005; lines 749:761)

Definitely coz (.) because he was like played off against them both for so long he doesn't really feel like he can talk to either of them about anything (.) um so when he does like have money troubles or like any other kind of trouble he doesn't talk to either of them, he used to talk to me quite a lot about it but when, coz I have been at uni for a year and a half now and like moved away he doesn't really see me that often and when I go home he doesn't he just doesn't coz he's not there he just doesn't talk to me anymore (001; lines 449:454)

Appendix 15: Participant Pseudonyms

001 - Sarah

002 - Amy

003 - Emily

004 - Rebecca

005 - Charlotte

006 - Laura