Acknowledgements

“There is no real ending. It’s just the place where you stop the story.” — Frank Herbert

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Declaration

This is to certify that:

i) The thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD

ii) Due acknowledgment has been made in the text to all other material used

iii) The thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices

Katie Lamb
Abstract

Family violence is a significant issue facing a large number of Australian families. For many children and young people, the impact of family violence on their lives is both serious and enduring. While research is now available to provide insights into children and young people’s experiences of family violence, we know less about their perspectives on their relationship with their fathers.

The literature suggests that fatherhood is often used as a motivator to engage fathers in programs to address their violence, yet the content of programs may not always support improved parenting or relationships with children. Further, children and young people are often not told their father is attending a program. When children do know fathers are participating in a program they are seldom involved in any way or given information about what their father is learning at the program. Evaluations of programs for fathers who use violence, rarely consider outcomes for children as a measure of success. In order to address these gaps, the aim of this research was to gain children and young people’s perspectives on fathers in the context of family violence as well as the key messages they have for fathers who attend a program to address his violence. The thesis also trials the use of digital storytelling to embed these key messages in programs and explores what the likely impacts are on programs for fathers who use violence and their participants. A qualitative research method was used and was underpinned by a constructionist epistemology, the new sociology of childhood and a feminist understanding of family violence.

The research comprised three stages: interviews and focus groups with children and young people, a digital storytelling workshop and a feasibility workshop with practitioners. The first stage of the research used semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 16 children and young people aged nine to nineteen years who had experienced family violence and were accessed through services they attended for support. The research found that children and young people had strong ideas about what constituted ‘a good father’ and described good communication, meaningful engagement, trustworthiness, protection and good role modelling as important attributes. In contrast, children and young people described their own fathers as disinterested in their lives, emotionally abusive, frightening and controlling. Children and young people also described the impact of their father’s use of coercive control tactics on their everyday lives and the impacts of family violence on their own relationships and plans for the future. Children and young people described reparation and the need for their fathers to ‘make amends’ for their violence as important. The desire for reparation was present for both children and young people who hoped to have a more positive relationship with their father in the future, but also for those who did not wish to have any ongoing contact. Regardless,
almost universally children and young people believed that some form of reparation from their father would help them ‘repair’ and allow them to move on with their lives. Young people saw reparation as comprising three key components: addressing the past, commitment to change and rebuilding trust.

In the second stage of the research, eight young people attended a digital storytelling workshop where they made three minute digital stories about their key messages for fathers who use violence. Children and young people wrote the script, selected the images and music and recorded the voice-over to accompany the story. The third stage of the research was a workshop run with 21 program facilitators and managers working with men who use violence. Discussion focussed on the possible impacts of introducing the digital stories made by children into men’s programs. The results suggested considerable support for the inclusion of the stories and children’s voices generally in programs for fathers who use violence. The key issues identified for consideration were program planning, the management of emotions and the possible impacts on fathers of watching children and young people’s stories.

This research has found that children and young people have much to contribute in the exploration of the relationship between fathers who use violence and their children. Key themes were developed which described both children and young people’s perspectives on good fathers but also their own experiences. In addition, children and young people were particularly interested in the concept of reparation and the need for their father to make amends for his violence and acknowledge the impact that his behaviour has had on their lives. Children and young people supported the idea of their fathers attending a program to address his violence and some expressed an interest in being involved in that process. Like other research with children who have experienced family violence, the results of this study support the need to speak to children and young people about their experiences and the importance of considering their perspectives in the development and programs and policies for fathers who use violence.
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Chapter 1: Introduction and theoretical framework

If our aim is to expand and deepen our knowledge about children who experience domestic violence, we need to use children as our informants, shed light on their perspectives and understandings using flexible exploratory methods, and give the analysis its starting point in their own voices (Overlien, 2013, p. 286).

Family violence has been described as ‘extraordinarily ordinary’, ‘a serious violation of human rights’ and a ‘pervasive problem’ impacting many families in Australia and internationally (Donovan & Griffiths, 2015, p. 1156; Hughes, Bolis, Fries, & Finigan, 2015, p. 283). The Australian Bureau of Statistics suggests that one in four women in Australia have experienced at least one incident of violence by an intimate partner (Cox, 2015). Although the evidence suggests that children and young people are significantly impacted by experiencing family violence (Bogat, DeJonghe, Levendosky, Davidson, & von Eye, 2006; Huth-Bocks, Levendosky, & Semel, 2001; Kitzmann, Gaylord, Holt, & Kenny, 2003), little attention has focussed on the impact of violence on the relationship between children and their fathers. There is currently an assumption that having contact with a father, particularly following separation, is valuable for children regardless of whether or not the father has been violent towards his partner (Holt, 2015b). This has led to a perception within services, courts and society generally that men can be simultaneously ‘poor partners’ but ‘good fathers’ (Heward-Belle, 2016). The current research will explore children and young people’s experiences of fathers in the context of family violence and the messages they would like fathers who use violence to hear.

As Heward-Belle (2016) suggests:

the mainstream fatherhood scholarship has largely neglected the subset of men who perpetrate domestic violence while the mainstream domestic violence scholarship has neglected to consider these men’s identities as fathers (p.2).

Historically, child welfare interventions in families where there was family violence focussed primarily on the role of the mother to manage the behaviour of her husband and keep her children safe (Featherstone & Fraser, 2012; Featherstone & Peckover, 2007; Scott & Crooks, 2006). Research suggests that child welfare workers are more likely to engage with mothers than fathers, viewing men as more difficult to work with, less likely to change (Kelly & Wolfe, 2004) and less worthy of effort (Pennell, Rikard, & Sanders-Rice, 2014). This approach has been criticised for the opportunities lost to work with men to address their violence and improve both their parenting and outcomes for their children (Pennell, Rikard, & Sanders-Rice, 2014).
In programs and services but also in research, inadequate attention has focussed on men who perpetrate family violence, the impacts of their violence on their role as fathers and their relationship with their children (Holt, 2015b). While internationally, some work has been done to develop effective interventions for fathers who use violence (Scott, 2010), in Australia the development of programs for men who use violence has developed without strong consideration of the role of these men as fathers (Broady, Gray, Gaffney, & Lewis, 2015; Mackay, Gibson, Lam, & Beecham, 2015).

This PhD takes a qualitative approach which is used when ‘researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences’ (Merriam, 2014, p. 5). This qualitative approach allows for exploration of the perspectives of children and young people about fathers in the context of family violence. A particular focus of the research is gaining an understanding of what children and young people believe are the key messages fathers who attend programs to address their violence, need to hear. The research also explores one method of capturing and embedding the voices of children through digital storytelling and assesses the feasibility of embedding the voices and perspectives of children and young people within programs for fathers who use violence.

**Terminology and defining the Issues**

**Terminology**

Debates about terminology in describing violence that occurs in intimate relationships are ‘instructive because they reveal issues that are central to discussions of violence and gender’ (Dragiewicz, 2011). In addition, definitions have varied across time and geography as well as in theoretical approach (Lawson, 2012). It has been suggested that the terms used to describe this violence are socially constructed and developed following a process of making choices, negotiation and discussion (Perrin & Miller-Perrin, 2011). The earliest references to family or domestic violence described the victims as *battered women* and the male perpetrators as *batterers* (Martin, 1977; Scott, 1974) and this early conceptualisation of violence guided policy and intervention (Kelly & Johnson, 2008). These terms were favoured for being gender sensitive and reflected the underlying assumption that that gender is at the centre of the issue (Lawson, 2012). There has been support for ensuring that the terminology used, reflects the power relations at play and the need to maintain a gendered focus (Wendt & Zanannettino, 2014). The use of the term ‘battered woman’ have been criticised for allowing the perpetrator to disappear with the focus remaining on the woman (Pahl, 2016). The term ‘battered woman’ has also been critiqued for its limiting focus on the physical nature of violence without
encompassing psychological, emotional, sexual, financial abuse and coercive control which is now understood to often accompany physical violence (Walker, 2009)

Another term that is used, particularly in the United States is ‘intimate partner violence’ which emphasises the relationship between the individuals (Costa, Canady, & Babcock, 2007; Jouriles & McDonald, 2015), but could be described as minimising the impact on children. The term ‘domestic violence’ is also one used frequently in the literature but which has been criticised for a number of reasons. Firstly it has been suggested that the term ‘domestic violence’ may act to trivialise the abuse and allow the matter to be dismissed as merely ‘a domestic’, making the matter a ‘private trouble’ rather the public issue it should be (Mullender, 1996). The term ‘domestic violence’ has also been criticised for its failure to encompass violence between partners that are not residing in the same house, in recognition that violence often continues and even escalates post-separation, when the partners are no longer living together (Saunders, 2004).

In Victoria, Australia the most common term used is ‘family violence’ and it is this terminology that has been selected for use in the current study. The use of ‘family violence’ is all inclusive and acknowledges the impacts of the violence on all family members, but is also the term most favoured by the Indigenous community in Australia who are significantly impacted by the issue of family violence (Vincent & Eveline, 2008). It should be noted that this research is underpinned by a feminist understanding of family violence and is not theoretically aligned with the sociological family violence perspective which views violence within families as ‘universal and inevitable’ conflict and not a product of gender asymmetry (Lawson, 2012, p. 575). It should be noted that where other authors are quoted, the terms ‘intimate partner violence’ or ‘domestic violence’ may appear and these will be considered synonymous with family violence when cited.

Defining family violence

In Victoria, Australia where this research was undertaken, the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/fvpa2008283/) defines family violence as

a behaviour by a person towards a family member that is physically or sexually abusive; is emotionally or psychologically abusive; is economically abusive; is threatening; or is coercive; or in any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of that family member or another person; or behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of, the behaviour referred to above.
This definition of family violence is comprehensive in terms of scope but it is clearly gender neutral. The current research is underpinned by a feminist understanding of family violence and a belief that ‘violence against women cannot be efficiently combated when policy is degendered to the point where gender becomes invisible’ (Strid, Walby, & Armstrong, 2013, p. 575). The findings of research undertaken in the United States which found that women are just as likely to act violently against a male partner has received significant publicity in recent years with multiple studies and reviews completed to explore this issue (Archer, 2000; Fiebert, 1997; Straus, 2011). This research is often based on data gathered through measures such as the Conflict Tactics Scale which conclude that there is ‘gender symmetry’ in family violence and that partner violence against women is unrelated to gender (Jakobsen, 2014). Such research has been critiqued for conceptual and methodological flaws such as focussing on conflict rather than coercive tactics, failing to include sexual abuse, stalking and choking (Taft, Hegarty, & Flood, 2001) and counting incidents of violence with no consideration of level of severity (Kelly & Westmarland, 2016). As Dobash and Dobash (2004) suggest:

research that uses a narrow, ‘act-based’ approach to the definition and measurement of violence is more likely to find ‘symmetry’ or equivalence of ‘violence’ between men and women. This is because it conflates acts of violence and aggression and does not examine the context, consequences, motivations, intentions and reactions associated with the overall violent ‘event’ or the relationships in which the violence occurs (p.343).

It has been suggested that not only is the inaccurate measurement of family violence misleading, it can have concerning consequences in terms of focus of attention and resources (Kelly & Westmarland, 2016). While acknowledging that both men and women can be violent or abusive in relationships, a more comprehensive study of the research suggests that females are victims of abuse at much higher rates, experience more fear, significant injuries and are particularly over-represented in murder by their current or former partners. Males who reported experiencing violence from their female partners report few negative consequences (Byrne & Senehe, 2012; Dobash & Dobash, 2004; Nixon & Humphreys, 2010; Taft, Hegarty, & Flood, 2001). It is for these reasons that a more gendered definition of family violence will be used for this study with the focus on violence and abuse perpetrated by males against their intimate female partners and the effects on children and young people.

Defining the terms ‘children’ and ‘young people’

For the purposes of this study the phrase ‘children and young people’ will be used throughout to encompass the broad age range of participants in the current study. In Victoria, where this study was carried out, the term ‘children’ is generally considered appropriate for those aged from birth to the
age of 11 with the term ‘young people’ preferred for those aged 12-21 (DEECD, 2008). Where quotations from other authors are reported, the terms ‘children’ or ‘young people’ may be used separately. In addition, children and young people who have seen and heard family violence will be referred to in this research as having ‘experienced family violence’ rather than having ‘witnessed family violence’. The use of the term ‘witnessing’ violence has been critiqued for suggesting that children are merely observers of the violence, which is a perspective not supported by the literature which shows that children are often caught up in and involved in violence in the home (Eriksson, 2011; Irwin, Waugh, & Bonner, 2006).

Defining ‘fathers who use violence’

The final issue of terminology that needs to be considered in this study is how to refer to fathers who use violence in the home. For the purposes of this study, the term ‘father’ is inclusive of both biological and non-biological fathers. Throughout the current study, the term ‘fathers who use violence’ will be used. The reason for this is twofold, firstly the Australian Men’s Behavioural Change Program sector uses the term ‘fathers who use violence’ in recognition that the use of violence is a choice (Alderson, 2015). This is a contentious issue as not referring to these men as ‘violent fathers’ may contribute to reinforcing the notion that these men can be violent to their partners but be adequate fathers, which directly contradicts with what the research tells us about how these men interact with their children which often involves physical, emotional and sexual abuse (Goddard & Bedi, 2010; Mullender, 2006; Radford & Hester, 2006). Other research in this area has referred to these fathers as ‘perpetrators’ (Alderson, 2015) and this could have been an appropriate term to use in the current study. However given the Victorian Men’s Behaviour Change Program sector does not use the term ‘perpetrator’ due its focus on a type of person rather than a type of behaviour (Wheeler, 2005) and the current research’s aims to explore the impact on programs for fathers, the term ‘fathers who use violence’ is a term used throughout this thesis albeit with a degree of unease.

Introducing the theoretical framework

This research is underpinned by multiple, yet consistent theoretical approaches which have helped shape the direction and design of the research study. The epistemology of the research is based on a constructionist understanding of knowledge, the social problem of family violence is defined and understood through a feminist lens with the research design and method heavily influenced by the new sociology of childhood.
A constructionist epistemology

Underpinning all research and social inquiry is an epistemological understanding of knowledge which ‘defines the nature of the relationship between enquirer and known, what counts as knowledge, and on what basis we can make knowledge claims’ (Grant & Giddings, 2002, p. 12). The current study is guided by a constructionist understanding of knowledge, which suggests that it is through interactions between people in the course of their daily life that knowledge and meaning is created (Burr, 2015). A constructionist perspective acknowledges that numerous competing viewpoints of the world exist rather than one true view (Şahin, 2006) and requires research to be seen as a joint production between researchers and their participants (Burr, 2015).

The key tenets of constructionism which have had an impact on this research include: the importance of reflexivity, the adoption of a ‘not knowing’ stance and consideration of power imbalances in the relationship between researcher and researched (Burr, 2015). A constructionist approach to research requires the researcher to focus on ‘creating a context for the participant’s experience to develop and be made known in conversation’ (Jankowski, Clark, & Ivey, 2000, p. 244). As Kim (2014) suggests, constructionist research is a way of learning about the world where researchers are also learners. This approach was particularly relevant for this research with children who had experienced family violence. A constructionist paradigm is considered an appropriate approach to research with vulnerable groups due to its focus on participation, self-determination and social justice (Şahin, 2006). This approach facilitates the active solicitation of stories of participants in their own words and gives them a voice, placing importance on making sure the researcher is really hearing what the participants are saying (Jankowski, Clark, & Ivey, 2000).

One of the central tenets of constructionism is a belief that researchers actively construct knowledge rather than being ‘objective processors of information’ and therefore reflexivity is seen as important (Jankowski, Clark, & Ivey, 2000, p. 243). Reflexivity is described as an acknowledgment of the personal values and perspectives which have shaped the research (Burr, 2015). Karnilowicz, Ali, and Phillimore (2014) suggest that reflexivity requires a researcher to reflect upon their own experiences during the research process to ‘enhance and broaden their interpretations of the discourse embedded within an interaction’ (Karnilowicz, Ali, & Phillimore, 2014, p. 363).

Constructions of masculinity

A constructionist view acknowledges that all forms of gender identity including masculinity, are socially constructed and variably defined across time and culture (Hearn & Pringle, 2006; Peralta & Tuttle,
The concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ emerged in Australia in the 1980s and has experienced widespread use as a tool to address narrow constructions of masculinity, the diversity of men’s experiences and the importance of the power relationships between men and women (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Hegemonic masculinity is generally assumed to be enacted by a minority of men but is normative and used as a point of reference and positioning for all men (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Theorists suggest that men can choose to adopt hegemonic masculinity ‘when strategically expedient’ or can choose to distance themselves from harmful forms of masculinity (Peralta & Tuttle, 2013, p. 258). Plantin, Mansson, and Kearney (2003) suggest that the majority of men live in tacit consent toward patriarchal power. It has been suggested that the most visible form of hegemonic masculinity occurs when male behavioural receives support through ‘culture, institutions and persuasion’ (Connell, 2002, p. 832).

Notions of masculinity have been seen to play a significant role in gender inequality and violence at both the individual and community level (Crooks, Scott, Francis, Kelly, & Reid, 2006; Jewkes, Flood, & Lang, 2015). Masculinity has been conceptualised as an opposite to femininity (Hauser, 2015), with violence used as a way of demonstrating masculinity while also maintaining dominance and control (Mansley, 2009). Research suggests that men who have more traditional notions of masculinity are more likely to have attitudes which accept violence against women (Crooks, Goodall, & Baker, 2006; Reyes, Foshee, Nilon, Reidy, & Hall, 2016; Santana, Raj, Decker, La Marche, & Silverman, 2006).

The relationship between hegemonic masculinity and parenting is complex, as hegemonic masculinity is often associated with ‘devaluing of the feminine’ and child caring commonly associated with femininity (Doucet & Lee, 2014, p. 363). Authors are unresolved about how to conceptualise parenting in the context of hegemonic masculinity. Hauser (2015) suggest that some men ‘have attempted to renegotiate the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity, moving beyond the good provider model to incorporate various levels of egalitarianism’ (p.86) with some incorporating additional child care responsibilities into their understandings of masculinity while others do not. Hearn and Pringle (2006) suggest that there is often a contradiction between the ideas men profess and how they actually live, an observation that has lead to the suggestion that parenting and hegemonic masculinity may exist in a complicit way, with fathers expressing support for equal parenting while maintaining traditional divisions of labour (Plantin, Mansson, & Kearney, 2003). Others have suggested that being a parent may go beyond current conceptions of masculinity and may be more reflective of concepts of self and identity (Doucet & Lee, 2014) as well as class and culture (Hauser, 2015).
Construction of parenting and the role of fathers

When viewed through the lens of constructionism, normative parenting is socially constructed and varies between cultures and over time. As Bornstein (2012) suggests, ‘culture helps to construct parents and parenting, and culture is maintained and transmitted by influencing parental cognitions that in turn are thought to shape parenting practices’ (p. 213).

In previous generations, fathers were seen as responsible for ensuring the family’s survival through breadwinning and economic support (Lamb, 2010). Fathers were also viewed as ‘the ultimate source of moral teaching and worldly judgement’ (Pleck, 1998, p. 352). Early research on fathers focused on the concept of father ‘involvement’ or ‘lack of involvement’ in the lives of their children (Bradford & Hawkins, 2006). Paternal involvement was defined by Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine (1985) as the extent of direct contact or interaction with their child, how ‘present’, ‘accessible and available’ they were and the degree of ‘responsibility’ fathers took to ensure that their children had adequate resources and were taken care of.

In the 1970s there was increased emphasis on ‘the new father’ or ‘new nurturant father’ who played a more active role in his children’s lives (Pleck, 1998). This shift occurred due to feminist challenges to the traditional gender roles of men and women and division of labour in the home (Drakich, 1989). These changes were also driven by an increase in women’s participation in the workforce and the need for a more equal division of household tasks and child caring (Myers, 2013). It has been suggested that the development of the new fatherhood ideology was socially driven, rather than empirically constructed (Drakich, 1989).

As a result of this new focus on the role of fathers, research shifted to look beyond ‘involvement’ with the role of fathers being viewed as a ‘composite of caring activities’ which include cognitive, affective, and behavioral components (Bradford & Hawkins, 2006). As a result, contemporary fathers are now expected to spend more time with their children, to be affectionate, and to be more involved with their children’s lives (Shuffleton, 2014). More recently it has been suggested that men feel a tension between the need to continue to fulfil the role of breadwinner and their aspirations to be more involved as a parent (McGill, 2014). These issues relate to broader discussions about modern masculinities which have been described as ‘in transition’ (Williams, 2009, p. 59). This is an area which is still under discussion with some authors suggesting that men are creating new masculinities (Doucet, 2006) while others suggest that the uptake of the new discourse on fatherhood is variable in different cultures, with limited impact at an individual and sociocultural level in some communities (Plantin, Mansson, & Kearney, 2003).
Other relevant developments in the construction of the role of fathers has been the rise in support for father’s rights. This has particularly occurred in the context of divorce and family law and growing out of a perception of absence or loss (Doucet & Lee, 2014). Father’s rights groups are described as diverse ranging from moderate claims for equality to those with an extreme rights based focus. These groups have been viewed by some as part of a larger backlash against feminism and the progress towards equality made by women (Nixon & Humphreys, 2010). In the area of family violence the language of victimisation is being adopted by some father’s rights groups, who suggest that men need to be acknowledged as victims of ‘the system’. Violence against women (including murder) is defended as a natural consequence of fathers being denied justice in the family court system (Maddison, 1999). In recent years father’s rights groups have attempted to refocus attention by suggesting that similar numbers of men are subject to violence from the female partner (Dragiewicz, 2011). In addition, it has been noted that father’s rights groups generally consider their own rights to contact with their children as consistent with their children’s rights (Smart, 2004). It has also been observed that children’s rights and interests are rarely explored in father’s rights literature (Kaye & Tolmie, 1998).

Debate has also occurred about whether parenting should be viewed through a gendered lens and this is a contested space. One perspective conceptualises mothering and fathering as ‘separate sets of multidimensional constructs’ (Palkovitz, Trask, & Adamsons, 2014). Through this lens, important distinctions are seen to exist between the way in which mothers and father parent, differences that could appropriately be considered essential (Palkovitz, Trask, & Adamsons, 2014, p. 407). Others argue that research should move away from the notion that the dimensions of fathers’ and mothers’ parenting are conceptually different from each other and instead consider the gender-neutral dimensions of parenting in terms of behaviours, skills, beliefs, attributes, and motivations (Fagan, Day, Lamb, & Cabrera, 2014).

In addition academic literature suggests that there is a need to ensure clarity when using a term such as ‘fathering’:

the subjective experience of fathering, and parenting as adults’ child-centred care for minor children, cannot be presumed to be identical. These forms of practices must be explored empirically. In the context of violent fathers, the relationship between them is crucial for the safety and well-being of both children and co-parents (Flood, 2007, p. 201).

This thesis focuses on the interactions between children and their fathers and will predominantly refer to father’s ‘parenting’ of their children rather than ‘fathering’ in recognition of the sensitivity and ambiguity that exists around the use of this term. The term fathering will appear in quotations from
participants, cited references and in some of the earlier documents for this project prepared for the Human Research Ethics process.

A new paradigm of childhood

The history and evolution of the new sociology of childhood has been described by a number of authors (Matthews, 2007; Moran-Ellis, 2010; Tisdall & Punch, 2012). In summary, the new sociology of childhood emerged and rejected the notion of children as ‘human becomings’ and passive subjects of social structures and process (Matthews, 2007; Moran-Ellis, 2010; Qvortrup, 2009; Tisdall & Punch, 2012). This change in thinking was supported by a growing body of literature and evidence that children are social actors involved in the construction and determination of their own lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live (Matthews, 2007).

The new sociology of childhood is based on an understanding of childhood as a social construction with children’s social relationships and cultures worthy of study in their own right and independent of the perspective and concerns of adults (James & Prout, 2015). This paradigm acknowledges that there is a plurality of childhoods and a variety of children’s experiences (Matthews, 2007). Through the lens of the new sociology of childhood, children are seen as capable of making sense of their lives and sharing their views on issues concerning them (Tay-Lim & Lim, 2013).

In parallel, and following similar timelines to the emergence of the new sociology of childhood, the modern child rights movement was also gaining momentum (Alanen, 2010). The development of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in the late twentieth century resulted in widespread acknowledgment that children were human beings with their own rights (Tisdall & Punch, 2012). While theoretically and academically the Convention has been influential, criticisms focus on its failure to significantly impact policy and practice internationally (Grugel, 2013; Milne, 2015; White, 2014). In addition, the child rights framework has been criticized for its grounding in a western concept of self and its view of rights as universal, without consideration of diverse social and cultural contexts (Alanen, 2010).

The relationship between the new sociology of childhood and the child rights movement has been described as complementary in some respects but also quite discordant in others (Alanen, 2010; Freeman, 1998; Milne, 2015; Tisdall & Punch, 2012). Freeman (1998) outlines commonalities between the child rights movement and the new sociology of childhood with both focusing on children as persons rather than property and active participants in social processes. Another area where the child rights movement and the new sociology of childhood agree is that children’s perspectives should be
sought about issues which impact their lives. In the early development of the new sociology of childhood, ethnography was seen as the most effective way to undertake research with children for its ability to give a voice to the silent (James & Prout, 2015). However it is now accepted that ethnography is only one of a number of approaches that are appropriate for studying children’s lives (Tisdall & Punch, 2012).

Both the child rights movement and new sociology of childhood challenge the privileging of adult views of children’s lives and advocate interacting with children directly (Matthews, 2007). The current study is also built on an assumption that it is beneficial to our understanding of children’s perspectives to gain information from children themselves. Historically research in the family welfare sector has allowed others (including teachers, workers or parents) to speak for children (Bennett, Dawe, & Power, 1999; DeVoe & Smith, 2002; Lemmey, McFarlane, Willson, & Malecha, 2001; Markward, 1997). In addition as James and Prout (2015) suggest, it is not uncommon for children’s agency to be overlooked in research:

not because of ill will, but is rather a problem of the sociology of knowledge in the sense that adults are often intoxicated with the view of children as dependents and themselves as fair representatives of children. Adults simply ‘forget’ to raise other perspectives. It is more or less taken for granted that ‘what is good for the family is good for the child (James & Prout, 2015, p. 82).

I find this a very relevant observation in the family violence context where the needs and perspectives of children are often conflated with those of their mothers (by family violence services) or fathers (in the case of family court). I believe that the new sociology of childhood has provided the current study with a useful lens for unpicking assumptions and challenging whether they reflect children’s perspectives and agency.

The focus of the new sociology of childhood literature on appropriate ways to collect and analyse data from children has also been particularly useful and thought provoking for the current study. The literature stresses the importance of recognising that what children tell a researcher is the child’s perceived reality impacted by their assumptions and values rather an actual social representation of the child’s life (Kondo & Sjoberg, 2012; Spyrou, 2011). This perspective has been influential on the current study and is reflected in its focus on representing and exploring ‘children’s perspectives’ rather than making any claim to present ‘the truth’ (James, 2007). Greater discussion about the alignment between the theoretical framework and research method will be provided in chapter 6.
Feminist understandings of family violence

There are significant synergies between a constructionist and a feminist approach to research (Dickson-Smith, James, & Liamputtong, 2008). Like constructionists, most feminist scholars identify with the concept of knowledge being socially constructed (Jankowski, Clark, & Ivey, 2000). As Hannman (2012, p. 7) suggests, ‘central to feminism is the view that women’s condition is socially constructed, and therefore open to change’. It has been suggested that all feminists ‘share a consciousness about women’s distinct and shared disadvantages within patriarchal society’ (Parry, 2014, p. 350). However beyond this central goal, feminists vary in their conceptions of power and their theoretical directions (Campbell & Wasco, 2000; Parry, 2014).

Evolving ideas in feminism are often referred to as a series of waves, with each leading to additional refinement in thinking (George & Stith, 2014). The first wave of feminism occurred in the 18th century and predominantly focussed on the abolition of slavery and a call for political and voting rights for women often known as the suffrage movement (Hannman, 2012). The second wave of feminism occurred in the 1960s and 1970s and was focussed on women’s gender identity as a unifying experience of oppression (Beasley, 2015). At this time efforts focussed on gaining attention for women’s civil rights particularly, the right to be free from violence and harassment and ‘looked at women’s rights without really looking at how race intersected with gender’ (George & Stith, 2014, p. 182).

The third wave of feminism in the 1990s called for social action not only to address the injustices and inequities that occur as a result of the power imbalances that exist between men and women but to acknowledge that violence against a person is shaped by a range of multiple inequalities (Strid, Walby, & Armstrong, 2013). The pursuit of social justice and recognition that all social groups are positioned within social structures that influence power relations saw the development of an intersectional approach which has gained traction in research into family violence (Kelly, 2011; Nixon & Humphreys, 2010).

Early social action achieved attention for family violence by focussing on the seriousness and widespread nature of the violence and its occurrence at all socio-economic levels and within varied ethnic groups (Nixon & Humphreys, 2010). However, since that time, feminists have suggested that while gender should still be considered a primary focus, consideration should also be given to ‘triple oppression’ or the ways in which gender is mediated through lenses of class and culture (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 195). In their review of the visibility of intersections of inequality in policy relating to violence against women in the United Kingdom, Strid, Walby, and Armstrong (2013) suggests that a study of
family violence makes ‘visible the connection between inequalities and how they work structurally through intersecting fields and intersecting policy domains’ (Strid, Walby, & Armstrong, 2013, p. 574). It has been suggested that the application of intersectionality to family violence involves examining how structural inequities enable violence against women as well as the impact of disadvantaged social identity on women’s response to violence (Kelly, 2011).

A feminist understanding of family violence underpins the research design and method of the current study. While acknowledging that some men do experience family violence, the current research is based on an understanding of family violence as a ‘gendered social issue’ (Nixon & Humphreys, 2010, p. 145). Through this lens, the construction of gender and power is central to any discussion about violence against women (Aghtaie & Gangoli, 2015). A feminist perspective views gender as more than biological differences between males and females and is more concerned with broader differences in the daily experiences of men and women (Western, 2013). Gender has been described as how men and women operate in their socially constructed roles which are shaped by individuals, organizations and societies (Ferree, 2010).

A feminist view of gender sees it as a system of power rather than a set of stereotypes or differences between women and men (Brod & Kaufman, 1994). This thesis is underpinned by a belief that the social structures and practices of patriarchy are a means by which men ‘dominate, oppress and exploit women’ (Walby, 1990, p. 20). The construction of power within family relationships and both the shared and conflicting interests of women and children have been given considerable attention by feminist writers. They suggest that both women and children are impacted by the socio-political bonds of the power base within patriarchal family structures (Raitt, 2005).

Feminism has been observed to have contributed significantly to both the child rights movement and new sociology of childhood (Grover, 2008; Raitt, 2005). Raitt (2005) suggests that the contribution of feminism to sociological developments in childhood includes; recognition of the need to articulate the association between power, structures and the exercise of agency, the importance of understanding the strategies required to penetrate these power structures, as well as the need to move beyond a right’s based agenda. Given the strong influence of the new sociology of childhood on shaping the research approach for the current study, it is important to acknowledge the relationship between these two separate but connected theoretical approaches.
Situating the researcher

As the theoretical framework is significant in shaping the research it is equally important to situate myself as the researcher and author of this thesis. In searching for a PhD topic, I became interested in the relationship between fathers who use violence and their children as it combined two areas that I am particularly passionate about and have had experience working in; offender rehabilitation and the wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people. My background is in criminology and I have a history of working in the criminal justice and correctional system as a program manager and in policy development. In this work, I have often been struck by how very violent men with serious criminal convictions can break down talking about their children, and how often within correctional programs, men choose to raise issues relating to their children for discussion. In addition while working in victim services I have also seen the pain that the children of these fathers describe in not having a father who is around and engaged and how this loss permeates all aspects of their lives.

In exploring what makes a good father with the children and young people in this study, I felt that my own ideas of what makes a good father changed and were shaped by this process. I also found that the modern notion of a good father is quite different to what it was in the late 1970s and early 1980s when I was a child and where fathers were not expected to play a significant role in the day to day life of their children. As a mother of two children, slightly younger than the age group of this study, I have been struck by how both my own children and those in the current study, have far greater expectations about the role they want their fathers to play in their lives. Children and young people now have a desire for their fathers to provide emotional support, a role that my generation saw as predominantly provided by mothers.

Given this thesis epistemological foundations in constructionism and feminism it was important for me to be reflexive and continually note the ways in which I shaped the research both consciously and subconsciously. These issues will be discussed further in chapter 6.

The following section outlines the thesis structure.
Thesis structure

The research comprises three stages with each stage guided by a research question as outlined in Figure 1 below.

**Stage 1:**
- What are the perspectives of children and young people on fathers in the context of family violence?

**Stage 2:**
- What are the key messages children and young people who have experienced family violence have for fathers who attend a program to address his violence?

**Stage 3:**
- What are the likely impacts of children and young people's digital stories on a program for fathers who use violence and its participants?

Figure 1: Research Structure and Questions

The thesis has been divided into eleven chapters. Following the Introduction, Chapter 2, 3 and 4 provide a Narrative Literature Review,

**Chapter 2** outlines the impact of experiencing family violence on children physically, psychologically and behaviourally as well as the co-occurrence of family violence and other forms of child abuse and neglect. This chapter also explores the literature on intergenerational transmission of violence and factors which can enhance a child’s resilience to violence and the impact of family violence on the relationship between mothers and their children. The final sections of this chapter explore what is known about children and young people’s perspectives on family violence, their feelings during incidents of violence and the impacts on their lives as well as their views on their experiences and interactions with services and supports.

**Chapter 3** outlines what the research tell us about how men who use violence interact with their children, their characteristics, their degree of understanding about the impact of their violence on their children as well as children’s perspectives on their relationship with their fathers. This chapter also explores the evidence on whether fathers might see their children as a motivator for behavioural change.
Chapter 4 discusses the development of interventions used with men who use violence both in Australia and internationally, and the current state of quality standards and accreditation practices particularly around requirements to include issues relating to parenting in these programs. This chapter also explores what we know about the effectiveness of these programs, some of the challenges for evaluations in this area and ways in which program effectiveness is being extended to consider a broader range of outcomes.

Chapter 5 provides a scoping review of the literature about participant’s experiences of digital storytelling workshops to help inform the development of the research method. These findings are then discussed in the context of emerging practice in the use of digital storytelling as part of therapeutic interventions with both adults and children who have experienced trauma.

Chapter 6 outlines the research methodology including the way in which the theoretical underpinnings of the study in constructionism, feminism and new sociology of childhood have influenced the research design, the ethical considerations and the data analysis process.

Chapter 7 and 8 outline the results of the first two stages of the research- the focus groups, interviews and digital storytelling workshop. Chapter 7 outlines children and young people’s aspirations and experiences of fathers in the context of family violence and discusses those findings in the context of existing literature. Chapter 8 outlines children and young people’s perspectives on reparation.

Chapter 9 outlines the findings of the final stage of the research, the feasibility workshop. This chapter presents the findings of discussions with program managers and facilitators about the key issues that arose when exploring the possibility of embedding the digital stories created by children and young people in programs for men who use violence.

Chapter 10 discusses the implications of the research findings for expanding our understanding of children and young people’s experiences of family violence and their relationships with their fathers. This chapter explores issues relating to both father and program accountability to children. This chapter also identifies further opportunities for embedding the voices of children in programs for fathers who use violence.

Chapter 11 gives a summary of the research findings as they relate to each of the research questions as well as implications for policy and programs and directions for future research.
Chapter 2: The impact of family violence on children and young people

The confounding of love and abuse can contribute to the confusion of children of battered women...through receiving these contradictory messages, children can form convoluted understandings of how kindness and cruelty interrelate (Bancroft, Silverman, & Ritchie, 2012, p. 16).

In order to place the current study in context, it is important to understand the existing research that has already been undertaken with and about children who have experienced family violence and their relationships with their fathers. A summary of the literature on the impacts and experiences of family violence on children is presented in this chapter and the literature about how fathers who use violence interact with their children will be outlined in chapter 3. In keeping with this study’s epistemological underpinnings in the new sociology of childhood, the views and voices of children captured in the literature have been sought and summarised where available. This is important because as Mayall (2000) suggests, the new sociology of childhood requires that:

the idea that adult views are sufficient for defining children’s needs has to give way to the understanding that children’s own wishes and expressed needs are relevant to the construction and implementation of social policies and practices (p.248).

For many years, children exposed to family violence were considered ‘forgotten’ or ‘invisible’ victims (Edleson, 1999). Children who were present at incidents of family violence, but not physically assaulted themselves, were considered ‘witnesses’ of family violence. However more recently, considerable attention has been given to exploring and defining the impact of exposure to family violence on aspects of children’s health, learning, wellbeing and development (Evans, Davies, & DiLillo, 2008).

Results suggest that violence is not something children passively witness from a distance, ‘children who experience violence in their homes experience it with all their senses. They hear it, see it and experience the aftermath’ (Overlien & Hyden, 2009). Research by Jaffe, Wolfe and Wilson, (1990) found evidence that children did not have to witness the violence to be harmed by it, by seeing the impacts and after effects including physical damage, fear, hurt and intimidation. Later research by McGee (2000) also confirmed this.

A summary of the research by Harne (2011) indicates a number of ways in which children are affected by family violence. These include through direct child abuse but also in ways that undermine the mother-child relationship such as exposing children to the emotional abuse of their mother and the
deliberate involvement of children in that abuse. Goddard and Bedi (2010) undertook a child-centred review of the intersection between family violence and child abuse and suggest that any implication that children are simply ‘caught in the crossfire’ is not reflective of the experience of children exposed to family violence. They suggest, that family violence may function as intimidation specifically designed to remind children of the consequences of not complying with their father’s wishes (Goddard & Bedi, 2010).

This chapter is made up of two parts. The first section will focus on what is known about the physical psychological and behavioural impacts of family violence on children, the co-occurrence of family violence and other forms of child abuse and neglect and the impacts of violence on the mother and child relationship. The second half of the chapter will focus on children’s perspectives on the impact of the violence on their lives.

Physical, psychological and behavioural impacts

Much has been written about the physical, psychological and behavioural impacts of experiencing family violence on children with a number of systematic or meta-analyses completed (Edleson, 1999; Holt, Buckley, & Whelan, 2008; Kimball, 2016; Vu, Jouriles, McDonald, & Rosenfield, 2016; Wolfe, Crooks, Lee, McIntyre-Smith, & Jaffe, 2003). Research has found that the impact on children of witnessing family violence manifest differently according to the age and developmental level of the child (Stanley, 2011).

Reviews of studies which explored the link between physical violence in the home during pregnancy and birth outcomes found that infants whose mothers were subject to violence had lower birth weights than other babies, higher rates of pre-term labour, foetal distress and death (Donovan, Spracklen, Schweizer, Ryckman, & Saftlas, 2016; Yount, DiGirolamo, & Ramakrishnan, 2011). Research has also found that young children who have experienced family violence display a range of effects including delayed toilet training, development and other symptoms of trauma (Bogat, DeJonghe, Levendosky, Davidson, & von Eye, 2006; Osofsky, 1995; Radford & Hester, 2006). Studies of pre-schoolers have found that family violence has both direct and indirect impacts on intellectual ability and cognitive functioning, including the development of verbal skills (Huth-Bocks, Levendosky, & Semel, 2001) and memory (Gustafsson, Coffman, Harris, Langley, Ornstein, & Cox, 2013).

A review of the literature (Holt, Buckley, & Whelan, 2008) reported that school aged children have been found to have higher rates of conduct disorders and lower educational attainment (Radford & Hester, 2006). These children are also reported to have higher rates of emotional problems, with
adolescents more likely to suffer from depression, display aggression and have difficulties developing positive peer relationships due to poor social skills (Jaffe, Wolfe, Wilson, & Zak, 1986). Research in the United States has also found a link between children’s sleep problems and experiencing family violence, with over sixty percent of the children who had experienced family violence, aged 6-13 years, reported by their mothers as having sleeping issues (Insana, Foley, Montgomery-Downs, Kolko, & McNeil, 2014).

A review of the literature by Edleson (1999) found that children who have witnessed family violence exhibit more aggressive and antisocial or ‘externalized’ behaviours as well as fearful and inhibited or ‘internalized’ behaviours. These findings are supported by a recent meta-analysis (Vu, Jouriles, McDonald, & Rosenfield, 2016). Children who have experienced family violence are also reported to have lower social competence than other children. Edleson (1999) also found that children who witness family violence showed more anxiety, depression, trauma symptoms and temperament problems than other children. These findings complement earlier work by Jaffe, Wolfe, Wilson, and Zak (1986) and align with a later meta-analysis conducted by Kitzmann, Gaylord, Holt, and Kenny (2003) who evaluated psychosocial outcomes of children living with family violence. The analysis by Kitzmann, Gaylord, Holt, and Kenny (2003) found that children achieved poorer outcomes on 21 developmental and behavioural dimensions, with the impacts for child witnesses being similar to children who had been physically abused.

Co-occurrence with other forms of violence

Research has found a significant link between child physical, sexual, psychological abuse, neglect and family violence (Goddard & Bedi, 2010; Mullender, 2006; Radford & Hester, 2006). Numerous studies have explored the links, mostly through the use of child protection and hospital records. It has been suggested that rates of co-occurrence vary dramatically because of differing definitions of violence and the type of samples used, however there is clear empirical support for the overlap between family violence and other forms of child abuse (Hartley, 2002).

Appel and Holden (1998) reviewed 31 studies examining the overlap between domestic violence and physical child abuse. They found considerable evidence that children who live in violent homes are at risk for physical abuse with coexistence rates between six and 100 percent with an average of 40 percent (Appel & Holden, 1998). In their study of the case notes of 200 children presenting at the child protection unit of an Australian hospital, Goddard and Bedi (2010) found frequent reports of co-occurrence of family violence and child abuse, with 55 percent of physical child abuse cases having coexistence of family violence. A study by McGuigan and Pratt (2001) undertook a longitudinal study
with 254 mothers and their children engaged in a child abuse prevention home visiting program. This study found that the presence of family violence in the home of a baby in its first six months of life more than tripled the odds of physical abuse occurring and doubled the odds of psychological abuse or neglect in the first five years of a child’s life.

Child sexual abuse has been described as a part of a global pattern of victimisation with identification of one form of violence or abuse in a family a possible indicator that other abuse is occurring (Bowen, 2000). A study of children aged seven to nineteen years accessing services for sexual or physical abuse undertaken in the United States found that fifty-eight percent of child sexual offenders who were males living in the home, also physically abused their adult female partner. While half of these males who were physically violent to children, also sexually abused them (Kellogg & Menard, 2003).

In addition, research has also found that the cumulative impacts of multiple forms of violence can increase the impacts on children (Wolfe, Crooks, Lee, McIntyre-Smith, & Jaffe, 2003; Wright, Fagan, & Pinchevsky, 2013) and increase their risks of mental illness (Turner, Finkelhor, & Ormrod, 2006). This is significant given research has found that children who experience violence in the home often experiencing violence in a number of other settings (such as school and their community). Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, and Holt (2009) call these children poly-victims and outline four pathways that children who become victims in multiple contexts often follow. One of these pathways is described as living in a dangerous family (Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, & Holt, 2009).

In their child centred analysis, Goddard and Bedi (2010) argue that given the evidence that child abuse and family violence coexist, it makes sense for both research and practice to adopt an integrated approach that reflects this understanding and the experiences of children exposed to family violence. Saunders (2003) suggests that failure to acknowledge and consider that children who have experienced family violence may also have been exposed to a range of other forms of violence can result in misunderstanding the full phenomenon of childhood violence. In addition, it has also been found that these experiences of abuse and violence in the home can have significant long term impacts on their lives.

Intergenerational transmission

It has been suggested that children learn to behave by experiencing how others treat them and by observing how their parents treat each other (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1961). This perspective is known as Social Learning Theory and is used to explain the intergenerational transmission of family violence where children imitate the violent behaviour they have experienced in their own adult relationships.
(Stith, Rosen, Middleton, Busch, Lundeberg, & Carlton, 2000). Edleson (1999) found evidence that violent behaviour and tolerance of violence in intimate relationships can be carried into adult relationships, as did a meta-analysis conducted by Stith, Rosen, Middleton, Busch, Lundeberg, and Carlton (2000). A review of the literature by Holt, Buckley, and Whelan (2008) reports a rate of transmission of violence at 30 percent. Research in the United States (Whitfield, Anda, Dube, & Felitti, 2003) used retrospective reporting to explore the impact of experiencing adverse childhood experiences on later life outcomes. This research found an association between the number of adverse childhood experiences of women and their likelihood of becoming a victim of family violence as an adult. It also found that men whose mothers had experienced family violence were more likely to become perpetrators of family violence (Whitfield, Anda, Dube, & Felitti, 2003). Analysis by Morley and Mullender (1994) suggests caution when reviewing research about the intergenerational transmission of violence given factors such as sample bias, varying definitions of abuse and weakness of reliance on retrospective reporting when asking about negative behaviours. While the evidence on intergenerational transmission of violence is significant, the research also cautions that not all children who witness violence go on to become violent themselves (Morley & Mullender, 1994). However one of the most consistent findings in the literature is a history of family violence in the offender’s family of origin of those who do become domestically violent (Guille, 2004).

Resiliency

The literature indicates that the impacts of experiencing family violence on children varies considerably, with some children showing more difficulties than others as a result. In a review of the literature, Kitzmann, Gaylord, Holt, and Kenny (2003) found an average effect size which indicated that across the 68 studies in the review, an average of 63 percent of children who had experienced family violence demonstrated poorer outcomes than the average child, with 37 percent of child witnesses actually showing outcomes that were similar to, or better than other children.

Some work has been undertaken to explore the factors that may be protective in reducing the harm or increasing the resiliency of children who experience family violence. It has found that influential factors can include both individual traits and external factors. Some of the individual characteristics of resilient children include sociable disposition or temperament (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998), high self esteem (Heller, Larrieu, D'Imperio, & Boris, 1999), self-confidence (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998) and good problem solving skills (Rutter, 1985). Some of the external protective factors were found to be supportive and stable relationships with their mother (Graham-Bermann, De Voe, Mattis, Lynch, & Thomas, 2006; Humphreys, Houghton, & Ellis, 2008; Peled, 1998) or other significant family members (Holt, Buckley, & Whelan, 2008; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Other factors identified as protective
include a lower severity of violence, good maternal mental health and higher capacity of mother to parent under adverse conditions (Humphreys, Houghton, & Ellis, 2008). A recent systematic review undertaken by Kimball (2016) recommends that additional efforts are needed to progress our understanding of how to both identify and foster resiliency in children who have experienced family violence.

Impact on the relationship between mother and child

Research into the dynamics of the relationship between fathers who use violence and their partners has found that one of the strategies used to maintain control, is to undermine the relationship between their partners and their children (McGee, 2000; Morris, 2009; Thiara & Humphreys, 2015). Research suggests that this is done by humiliating mothers in front of the children, disparaging the way they engage with their children and encouraging the children to participate in verbal or physical abuse. While some children resist these tactics others lose confidence in their mothers (Harne, 2011, p. 15). Based on her research on maternal alienation by domestically violent men, Morris (2009) uses the concept of Abusive Household Gender Regime as a way to describe the dynamics used by men in these families. She found that fathers who use violence often use multiple forms of abuse and ‘a repertoire of coercive strategies’ that deflect blame, discredit their partners and recruit their children to participate in abusive behaviours (p.416).

Qualitative research by Mullender, Hague, Imam, Kelly, Malos, and Regan (2002) suggests that it is no accident that men who use violence attack women’s ability to mother as they know that this represents a source of positive identity. When children see their mother demeaned there is always some degree of loss of respect even where the children oppose the treatment of their mother. Holt, Buckley, and Whelan (2008) suggest that research indicates that this can impact a mother’s ability to exercise authority and control over her children which can result in adolescents becoming physically aggressive towards their mother. Research was undertaken in the United Kingdom by Thiara and Humphreys (2015) who spoke to mothers and children about ‘the absent presence’ of violent fathers in the relationship between mother and child post separation. This research found that as a result of her partner’s tactics in undermining her both, throughout the relationship, but also post-separation, mother’s experienced an ongoing erosion of confidence in their parenting skills. The mother-child relationship was described as under greater stress as a result (Thiara & Humphreys, 2015).

Research suggests that fathers who use violence often threaten to hurt their children with a dual purpose of controlling both the mother’s and children’s behaviour (Harne, 2011). Australian research which included 120 phone interviews and focus groups with young people, mothers and perpetrators
of family violence found evidence of children being used as ‘bargaining chips’ often following the separation of a violent relationship (Bagshaw & Chung, 2001). This research found evidence to suggest that children were being used as a means for perpetrators to continue to exert control over their former partner with threats of withdrawing financial support, reducing access to children and threats of harm towards children also reported (p.12).

While the evidence suggests that family violence can have negative impacts on the relationship between mothers and their children, it should be noted that research has also found that mothers are seen by children as one of the most significant supports in their lives (Humphreys, Thiara, & Skamballis, 2011). In recognition of the important role mothers play in supporting their children, it has been suggested that strengthening the relationship between mothers and their children should form one of the priorities for those working with families who have experienced family violence (Humphreys, Thiara, & Skamballis, 2011).

Children’s perspectives on the impact of family violence

While in recent years, attention has been focussed on gaining a better understanding of the impacts on children of experiencing violence in the home, less exploration has been undertaken from the perspective of children themselves (Carroll-Lind, Chapman, & Raskauskas, 2011). As Eriksson and Nasman (2012) suggest,

The production of knowledge on children exposed to violence has, so far, mainly drawn upon theories of child development, socialisation and/or trauma. Children’s own views and interpretations have not been central (p.64).

Since the advancement of the new sociology of childhood (James & Prout, 1997), children have been increasingly portrayed as social actors with valid views and as experts in their own lives. As a result, research has begun to acknowledge the importance of listening to children’s views and experiences in research, policy and practice and in decision-making that affects their lives (Cashmore, 2006; Humphreys, Houghton, & Ellis, 2008). With regards to family violence, traditionally the experiences of children were gained through professional and adult observation (Guille, 2004). More recently there have been greater efforts to gain children’s perspectives directly, in recognition that research which consults directly with children gives a much richer understanding of the impacts of violence on their lives (Eriksson & Nasman, 2012; Kolko, Kazdin, & Day, 1996; McGee, 2000; Peled, 1998; Rayns, 2010). Research with children about family violence has ‘decimated a number of myths’ and as a result it is now known that most children are aware of the violence even when mothers believe it has been
hidden from them (Harne, 2011; Jaffe, Wolfe, & Wilson, 1990; McGee, 2000). It has also been suggested that giving children who have lived with family violence an opportunity to be heard, can have important therapeutic benefits (Hogan & O’Reilly, 2007; Mudaly & Goddard, 2006).

Children’s actions and feelings during incidents of family violence

Nordic researchers have particularly pursued the perspectives of children in research, with a number of studies focussed on gaining the views of children who have experienced family violence. One study by Overlien and Hyden (2009) asked children about their actions during episodes of family violence. They found that children almost always did something during violent incidents or alternatively they wished they had done something. The most common step that children took was to ‘distance themselves emotionally from the violence’ when it was it was occurring (p.491). Australian research by Irwin, Waugh, and Bonner (2006) undertook in depth interviews with children and young people (aged 8-18) who had experienced family violence to explore how it shaped their lives. This study found that when young people described their involvement in the violence it included physically intervening to protect their mother, distracting the perpetrator by moving his attention to them and away from their mother or by ringing police (Irwin, Waugh, & Bonner, 2006).

Another qualitative study undertaken by McGee (2000) in the United Kingdom asked 54 children (aged 5 to 17) about their experiences of family violence and found that children expressed overwhelming fear when seeing their mother abused. This fear was both general fear of what the male carer would do next, but also specific fear that they or their mother would be killed. This fear was found to be pervasive (Swanston, Bowyer, & Vetere, 2014) and remained even once the perpetrator was no longer living with them. McGee (2000) also found that children had a ‘generalised fear of men’ which did not seem to dissipate with time. In addition, children as young as seven talked about feelings of sadness and suicidal thoughts. Another common theme that arose from the accounts of children in the McGee (2000) study was a feeling of powerlessness during incidents of violence and how this increased their distress. A number of children expressed a sense of desperation, wanting to stop the violence but not knowing what to do and being paralysed by fear (McGee, 2000).

Children’s perspectives on the impact of family violence on their everyday lives

Several research studies have asked children and young people to reflect on the ways in which family violence impacts their lives. Children and young people are most concerned about the impact of family violence on their schooling (Eriksson, Bruno, & Nasman, 2013; Houghton, 2008; McGee, 2000), the disruption of their lives as well as the psychological impacts of being subject to their father’s coercive
control tactics. Children and young people also suggest that experiencing family violence and the associated impacts on their lives leaves them feeling like they have missed out on their childhoods.

The impact of family violence on schooling has been well documented and was considered one of the most significant issues raised by young people. In a study by McGee (2000), young people reported that the violence in their homes impacted on their experience at school in a number of ways, including being unable to concentrate on their schoolwork because they were so worried about what might be happening or going to happen at home (McGee, 2000). A small study in the United Kingdom with eight young children (aged under nine) found that children talked about wanting to stay close to their mother to protect her and therefore the desire to stay home from school was common (Thornton, 2014). Other ways young people described the impact of violence on their schooling was through their use of aggressive behaviour which often resulted in suspension (McGee, 2000).

When looking at the impact of family law proceedings and family violence on schooling, Nordic researchers (Eriksson, Bruno, & Nasman, 2013) undertook a review of earlier studies and court orders as well as interviews with young people. The authors conclude that family law proceedings often impacted on schooling, as interviews were conducted with family law social workers at the school premises or during school hours. Children suggested they were unhappy that they hadn’t been consulted about this and would have preferred for these meetings not to occur at school (Eriksson, Bruno, & Nasman, 2013). Participatory action research undertaken in Scotland by Houghton (2008), found young people (aged 15-20) talked about the stigma they experienced at school with both peers and teachers showing a lack of awareness of the challenges they had experienced; this included feeling that teachers had a negative perception of them because they lived in a refuge and had patchy attendance. Experiences of bullying at school were also described by children in the same study (Houghton, 2008). Young people have also identified a need for training for teachers and other staff at schools around the issues experienced by young people living with or fleeing from family violence and how these might interrupt and impact on learning (Houghton, 2008).

While the impact of family violence on schooling was seen as a major challenge faced by young people, studies have found that there are a range of other ways in which family violence disrupts children’s lives. Overlien’s (2013) qualitative study with children and young people who had experienced severe or life threatening family violence in the home over a long period of time found that fathers were described as exercising a high degree of coercive control. This control was described by children as forming a part of every aspect of their daily life with children reporting living in a constant state of readiness and fear. Young people in the Overlien (2013) study also gave examples of the ways in which
the perpetrator exercised control over their lives from determining what they wear, who they can socialise with, interception of their emails and phone conversations as well as other forms of surveillance and monitoring (Overlien, 2013). Young people described experiencing many threats from their fathers including explicit promises of physical, psychological or material damage to the child, their possessions or their mother (Overlien, 2013). Earlier work by McGee (2000) supports these findings with children in this study also reporting that their fathers use a range of methods of both intimidation and regimenting their children’s behaviour. Examples of ways in which children described their fathers controlled them included banning them from certain rooms in the house, not allowing the child to have friends over to play, controlling food intake, sleep deprivation and forbidding them to speak to their mothers.

While the impacts of their father’s use of coercive control is described as significant by children and young people, it is only one way in which they experienced their lives being disrupted. Research has also found that young people described some of the significant impacts of experiencing family violence as including the difficulties around moving house and the trauma of losing their possessions and not having the resources to replace them (Houghton, 2008). School aged children and young people have also described having missed out on a normal childhood and feeling responsible for their mother or siblings as other impacts of family violence on their lives (Swanston, Bowyer, & Vetere, 2014).

In recognition that less research had been undertaken to explore how the lives of younger children might be impacted by family violence, a small study in the United Kingdom (Thornton, 2014) chose to focus on children aged five to nine years of age. This study used stories to prompt discussion and drawing activities and found that children represented violence and aggression in many of their discussions and drawings as causing pain and being beyond control. The children in the study expressed anxiety, anger and confusion about the violence they had experienced. They also gave an insight into the impact of the violence on their family dynamics including the disruption of routines and predictability, reduced parental capacity to provide security and a feeling of divided loyalties. In this study, analysis was made of children’s references to coping mechanisms and found that children identified a number of strategies they used including working hard and being good, to make themselves as easy as possible to love (Thornton, 2014). The authors comment that all of the children in the study referred to violence in their story activity in a way that indicated a perception that it was part of all family life (Thornton, 2014).
Asking children and young people about their experiences with services and supports

A considerable body of research has been undertaken to explore the effectiveness of a range of therapeutic treatments and support models for children who have experienced family violence (Graham-Bermann, Banyard, Lynch, DeVoe, & Halabu, 2007; Lieberman, Ippen, & Van Horn, 2006; McDonald, Jouriles, & Skopp, 2006) While an exploration of this literature is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is useful to focus on several studies that have focussed on gaining the perspectives of children and young people who have experienced family violence on services and supports designed to assist them (Stanley, Miller, & Richardson Foster, 2012). This research gives additional insight into children and young people’s perspectives on family violence. Although the research has been conducted in a number of different countries, the responses are fairly consistent, with young people giving clear messages about the way in which services could do more to address their needs.

A particularly strong message to emerge was that young people who have experienced family violence wish they would be consulted more often about issues which impact them (Swanst

On, Bowyer, & Vetere, 2014). One study of young people (aged 10-19) who had experienced family violence in the United Kingdom (Stanley, Miller, & Richardson Foster, 2012) found that children wanted to be taken more seriously by professionals who they felt did not always listen to them or appreciate the significance of their situation. These findings complement are similar to an earlier Australian study (Irwin, Waugh, & Bonner, 2006). Other key messages to emerge from research with children about their experiences of services and supports is that they feel that most services are designed to meet their mothers needs (Irwin 2006). Children and young people also report feeling dissatisfied with services who exclude them from important decisions which impact their lives such as moving house, changing schools, leaving pets (Irwin 2006) as well as residence and contact arrangements (Bagshaw, Brown, Wendt, Campbell, McInnes, Tinning, Batagol, Sifris, Tyson, Baker, & Arias, 2011). Nordic research by Cater (2014) asked 29 children and young people (aged 4-19) and their mothers about the process of engagement in counselling for children and young people who had experienced family violence. The study aimed to gain children’s perceptions and levels of participation in decision making. The study found that children were seldom invited to participate in an intervention with adults initiating contact with services before having any communication with children.

The research suggests that when children and young people are consulted, they have strong views about the types of support they find most useful. Work in the United Kingdom (Houghton, 2008), found that young people valued having one consistent support worker and described the positive impacts of group work. The need for more group work was mentioned by young people across a number of
studies. It was seen as allowing children and young people the opportunity to develop friendships with peers from similar backgrounds. They described the group work environment as contributing to a more relaxed and open discussion of their experiences (Houghton 2008). Work in Scotland using the CEDAR (Children Experiencing Domestic Abuse Recovery) psycho-educational model involved parallel group work for mothers and children who had experienced family violence. This work found that the opportunity for women and children to receive and give peer support enhanced learning and promoted recovery (Humphreys, Thiara, Sharp, & Jones, 2015). These findings are consistent with work in Australia with young people which also found that young people valued peer support and peer education (Bagshaw & Chung, 2001).

Another Australian study asked for reflections from children and young people who participated in a group work initiative (Mudaly, Graham, & Lewis, 2014) as part of a qualitative evaluation of an animal therapy group for children (aged seven to 15 years) with experience of both family violence and homelessness. Mudaly, Graham, and Lewis (2014) found that the children talked about being extremely angry or alternatively quiet, shy and unable to connect with other children when they started the program. Children were asked about the impact of participation in the program which involved long term engagement (for some children up to three years). The children who were interviewed after their participation in the intervention suggested that they felt less angry and less aggressive, more confident and prepared to tackle challenges (Mudaly, Graham, & Lewis, 2014). One of the most significant benefits of participation included the development of friendships and the ability to connect with other young people which the authors saw as significant given the tendency for children who are exposed to violence to lose the capacity to connect and develop relationships (Mudaly, Graham, & Lewis, 2014).

Another significant message from existing research is that children and young people who have experienced family violence are very keen for their experiences to be shared and to influence change. Work by Houghton (2008) asked young people to provide key messages to politicians about priorities for action to help other young people who had experienced family violence. At the conclusion of the project, young people were asked about their participation. Young people reported feeling listened to and believing that their participation was important as they wanted to share their views rather than have adults speak for them. The young people also believed that their participation would make a difference, achieve change and help people better understand family violence, which they viewed as extremely important (Houghton, 2008).
The literature about the influence of family violence on children and young people’s lives outline a number of significant and pervasive impacts (Evans, Davies, & DiLillo, 2008). These include poor behavioural and educational outcomes, as well as emotional and psychological impacts of both the violence but also the mechanisms of coercive control which often accompany the violence and effects of which can be long lasting (Kitzmann, Gaylord, Holt, & Kenny, 2003). When children and young people are asked about their experience of living with family violence they outline a broad range of ways in which their lives are disrupted including being afraid, having to move house, change schools and difficulties maintaining friendships (McGee, 2000). Children and young people who have experienced family violence report positive experiences with support services that provide them one consistent worker and the opportunity to meet other children and young people who have similar experiences (Mudaly, Graham, & Lewis, 2014). However the literature also suggests that children and young people believe that some services do not understand their experiences of violence and are not customised to meet their needs (Irwin, Waugh, & Bonner, 2006; Stanley, Miller, & Richardson Foster, 2012). The literature is clear that children and young people who have experienced family violence express a desire to be consulted about decisions and issues which impact their lives and they value the opportunity to have their perspectives heard (Houghton, 2008). The following chapter will explore the latest research about how fathers who use violence interact with their children as well as children’s perspectives.
Chapter 3: Fathers who use violence

The degrading words and actions, the demand to be perfect, the bizarre acts, and oscillation between rage and tenderness are all parts of a terror aimed at controlling the children (Overlien, 2013, p. 285).

Research suggests that children’s interactions with their fathers can have a significant impact on their learning, development and wellbeing (Edleson, 1999; Gustafsson, Coffman, Harris, Langley, Ornstein, & Cox, 2013; Huth-Bocks, Levendosky, & Semel, 2001; Yount, DiGirolamo, & Ramakrishnan, 2011). While the literature suggests that healthy father involvement in the lives of children can have positive impacts (Lamb, 2010) much less is known about how these findings relate to families where fathers use violence. In addition, our insights into the relationship between fathers who use violence and their children is limited. The evidence we do have suggests that fathers who use violence are often abusive towards their children, use harsh discipline and are disengaged from their children’s everyday lives (Bancroft, Silverman, & Ritchie, 2012; Dick, 2005; Troon, 2014). This chapter will explore the research about fathers who use violence, the type of interaction they have with their children, as well as children’s perspectives on their relationship with their fathers.

Initially research on child development focussed entirely on the impacts of mothers and mothering. In the late 1960s the focus broadened to explore the impact of a father’s absence on child outcomes (Drakich, 1989). More recently, it has been acknowledged that fathers can have a significant influence on their children’s development (Lamb, 2010; Stevenson & Crnic, 2012). Research suggests that fathers can have an impact on child adjustment and that regular positive child interaction is associated with positive social, behavioural, psychological and cognitive development (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000) and educational achievement (Flouri & Buchannan, 2004). Research has also been conducted to look at the relationship between children and their fathers after separation and it has been found that it is not the amount of time that non-resident fathers spend with their children that matters, it’s the quality of that interaction that is most important (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000). There is also considerable evidence to suggest that when fathers are absent or are negative in their interactions with their children there can be long lasting impacts on their children (Stevenson & Crnic, 2012). For example research has found that negative or intrusive father and child relationships can result in children experiencing negative friendships with their peers (Youngblade & Belsky, 1992).

While the literature suggests that children benefit from having positive relationships with fathers or father figures, it has been suggested that these findings may not be generalizable to families with
histories of family violence (Forssell & Cater, 2015; Hunter & Graham-Bermann, 2013). We know that family violence often commences or continues during pregnancy and therefore children are exposed to the impacts of violence even before they are born (Donovan, Spracklen, Schweizer, Ryckman, & Saftlas, 2016), with the violence likely to continue into the child’s early years (Edin, Dahlgren, Lados, & Hogberg, 2010). There is currently limited research available about the father-child relationship in the context of family violence (Alderson, 2015; Kimball, 2016). This is clearly an area where further research is needed to make informed decisions about child contact to ensure the children’s best interests are met.

**Characteristics of fathers who use violence**

The literature indicates that men who use violence in the home are a heterogeneous group of individuals who are influenced by a complex range of societal, psychological, biological and familial risk factors (Johnson, Gilchrist, Beech, Weston, Takriti, & Freeman, 2006; Thijssen & de Ruiter, 2011). To better understand the interaction of these factors, an ecological approach can be used. Bronfenbrenner (1977) developed the concept of ‘the ecology of human development’ (p.514). Under this model, behaviour is understood as shaped through interaction between individuals and their social surroundings (Ali & Naylor, 2013). This approach views family violence as ‘a multifaceted phenomenon’ grounded in an interplay of a range of factors (Heise, 1998).

Bronfenbrenner (1977) described four levels of ecology that influence human behaviour: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem; and the macrosystem. Underpinned by the work of Bronfenbrenner (1977), a variety of ecological models have been used to understand the factors which result in men perpetrating family violence. Each has considered ‘embedded levels of causality’ with a focus on factors at the individual, relational, community and societal level (Heise, 1998, p. 264; Tolman, 2002). Work by Heise (1998; 2011) has been particularly influential in this area and suggests that both men and women bring ‘personal histories and inborn proclivities to their union’ and these relationship dynamics either increase or decrease the risk of abuse (Heise, 2011, p. 7). Based on current evidence, Heise (2011) developed a conceptual framework for family violence with consideration of factors at the individual, relationship/community and macrosocial levels. Evidence about the characteristics of men who use violence will be presented here using two of the dimensions of this framework; the individual level and the relationship level.

At the individual level, research suggests that some of the identified risk factors for men becoming violent include a history of experiencing violence in their family of origin (Murrell, Christoff, & Henning,
antisocial behaviour and attitudes, drug and alcohol abuse (Foran & O’Leary, 2008) and psychological and cognitive disorders (Peek-Asa, Zwerling, Young, Stromquist, Burmeister, & Merchant, 2005; Persampiere, Poole, & Murphy, 2014). At the relationship level factors which have been found to increase the likelihood of family violence include negative peer networks (Ramirez, Paik, Sanchagrin, & Heimer, 2012) and high relationship conflict in areas such as distribution of resources and beliefs about traditional gender roles and female autonomy (Holtzworth-Munroe, 1992; Margolin, John, & Foo, 1998). Research suggests that men who use violence adopt intentional behaviours to maintain control in their relationships such as criticism, verbal abuse, economic control, isolation and cruelty as well as physical, psychological and sexual aggression (Bancroft, Silverman, & Ritchie, 2012).

An ecological approach to family violence sees the individual and relationship level issues as embedded in broader community and social or macrosocial level issues. At the community level, a range of factors have been seen to influence violence including acceptance of violence, tolerance of harsh physical punishment of children, seeing family privacy as important, high levels of community violence, high unemployment and low social capital (Heise, 2011). At the macrosocial level factors such as women’s rights and entitlements, economic factors and cultural factors all need to be considered in understanding family violence. It has been suggested that ecological thinking made a significant step forward by acknowledging that many factors contribute to the occurrence of family violence and by drawing attention to the importance of the interaction between these factors (Roberts, 2002).

By considering the characteristics of men who use violence, a context is provided in which to consider the way in which these men parent and the quality and nature of their relationship with their children. To gain a clearer picture it is necessary to piece together research findings from a number of perspectives and sources. As Fox, Sayers, and Bruce (2001) suggest, ‘It is especially problematic that there is so little in the empirical or clinical literature that specifically addresses the nature of violent men’s relationship with their children and the quality of the father-child relationship’ (p.143).

In addition, Perel and Peled (2008) suggest that our ability to learn about the interactions between fathers who use violence and their children is limited with the discourse that does exist ‘by and large judgemental and focussed on their deficiencies (p.460).

What we do know is that the majority of fathers who use violence maintain some form of contact with their children even after separation with their partner (Rothman, Mandel, & Silverman, 2007). Research with families who separated following family violence in the United States (Hunter & Graham-Bermann, 2013) found that almost two-thirds (72 percent) of children continued to have in person contact with their fathers, most commonly either weekly or bi-weekly. In a piece of Australian
research which evaluated three Men’s Behavioural Change programs through surveys and interviews, it was found that half of the 24 fathers interviewed, were living with their children at the time of the evaluation (Brown & Hampson, 2009). Recent work (Forssell & Cater, 2015) undertaken in Sweden has found that the majority of children impacted by family violence in the study had contact with their fathers. They also found that the degree of violence they experienced had little influence on contact decisions (Forssell & Cater, 2015). Instead they found that higher socioeconomic status and better negotiation skill of a father was linked to more favourable contact decisions (Forssell & Cater, 2015).

The little information we do have about how men who use violence parent often comes from studies with small sample sizes, however they give us some indication about the way in which men who use violence interact with their children. Bancroft, Silverman, and Ritchie (2012) observe that violent fathers have a tendency towards authoritarian discipline, with fathers expecting their children to ‘adhere uncritically to his authority’ (p.35). These authors suggest that a dictatorial style of parenting suits men who use violence, who generally consider children their possessions and tend to prefer to solve problems without the need for serious involvement in children’s thoughts, feelings and conflicts (Bancroft, Silverman, & Ritchie, 2012). Similarly, research undertaken in New Zealand with partners of fathers who use violence described their partners as using harsh, rigid parenting practices as well as verbal abuse to discipline their children (Troon, 2014). Holden and Ritchie (1991) compared the parenting skills of 37 fathers who use violence by speaking to their female partners who were living in refuges and found violent men were angry with their children more often, used negative parenting practices like smacking more frequently and were less affectionate than a comparable group of families where family violence was not present. These findings are consistent with later work by Dick (2005) who undertook research with 104 men about their relationship with their father during childhood. Dick (2005) found men with fathers who used violence in the home reported that their fathers had been less involved in their lives and everyday caregiving and were less accessible for support. The research also found that the fathers who used violence were described as shouting and getting angry more often, were less nurturing and the men reported lower levels of enjoyment spending time with their fathers than the men whose fathers were not violent (Dick, 2005).

Research has also found that this group of fathers describe violence as the only way of controlling their children’s negative behaviour. A small study of 20 violent fathers attending Men’s Behavioural Change in the United Kingdom by Harne (2011) found fathers often described their children as ‘provoking’ their ‘short fuses’ and ‘bad tempers’ (p.140). Fathers in this study also admitted acts of deliberate cruelty to their children, emotional abuse and throwing and breaking children’s possessions (Harne, 2011). Harne (2011, p. 140) also reports that mothers described fathers ‘perpetrating a range of cruel,
often gratuitous, humiliation and extreme control over very young children’ when they were looking after them, or when children were in their presence. This not only made children extremely fearful but also in some cases had an impact on their behavioural, emotional and cognitive development (Harne, 2011). In addition, work undertaken in New Zealand has found that fathers who use violence reporting their use of physical discipline as a means of controlling their children’s behaviour (Troon, 2014). Research in this area is limited in Australia but one study interviewed fathers who use violence, and found they reported hitting their children as punishment (Brown & Hampson, 2009). These fathers acknowledged that this punishment was often excessive and underserved but described seeing no other way of controlling their children (Brown & Hampson, 2009).

Fathers’ understanding of the impact of their violence on their children

Little is known about whether fathers who use violence understand the impact of exposure to violence on their children. A small number of qualitative studies (Bancroft, Silverman, & Ritchie, 2012; Harne, 2011) with fathers who use violence suggests that they often display a lack of awareness of the importance of prioritizing their child’s needs or any understanding of the child’s point of view. Research also suggests that fathers who use violence often blame very young children as an excuse for their abusive behaviour, because they were detracting from their own needs (Harne, 2011).

Few studies have looked at fathers perceptions of the potential harm to children from exposure to family violence and for those studies that have been conducted, results are mixed. A study by Fox, Sayers, and Bruce (2001) undertook observations of perpetrators attending Men’s Behavioural Change programs and in-depth interviews with eight of the men in these groups who were fathers. They found that all participants recognised the negative impact of their violence on their children and the disruption it had brought to their families. However only the fathers who hoped to reconcile with their partners accepted total responsibility for the situation. Those fathers who were not planning to reconcile were reluctant to take full responsibility and emphasised that their partners were also involved in creating a negative family environment for their children (Fox, Sayers, & Bruce, 2001).

Harne (2011) also found that fathers who use violence described their children’s reluctance to have contact with them as being caused by mothers’ undue influence rather than taking responsibility and recognising it as the consequence of their own behaviour. Similarly, work undertaken in New Zealand found that fathers who use violence acknowledged that their violence had impacted their relationship with their children however the men tended to focus on the impact of this loss on themselves rather than showing concern for the impact of the relationship breakdown for their children (Troon, 2014). A recent Australian study (Heward-Belle, 2016) interviewed fathers who use violence at a Men’s
Behavioural Change Program and found that these fathers all expressed a view that witnessing violence had significant and long lasting impacts on women and children. However few of these men perceived that their own children have been adversely impacted with many minimising the impact on their partners who they described as also being culpable (Heward-Belle, 2016). In addition, research was conducted in Canada and the US on the attitudes and behavioural intentions of fathers who use violence, comparing biological fathers with non-biological or ‘social’ fathers (Rothman, Mandel, & Silverman, 2007). In their study of 464 men attending behavioural change programs, Rothman, Mandel, and Silverman (2007) found that biological fathers were more likely to believe that their abuse had negative effects on their children and that their relationship with their children was negatively affected by the violence and abuse than were ‘social’ fathers (Rothman, Mandel, & Silverman, 2007). Biological fathers were also more likely than ‘social fathers’ to report feeling worried about the long-term effects of their abuse on their children (53 percent) compared to 40 percent of social fathers (Rothman, Mandel, & Silverman, 2007). Interestingly, despite their high levels of concern, biological fathers were not more likely than social fathers to report that they would take action to change their behaviour, seek help or change their living situation even when they saw their abuse was harming their children. These research findings suggest that considerable work may need to be undertaken with men to confront the effects of their violence and abuse on children.

Children’s perspectives on their relationship with their fathers

Internationally a small number of studies have undertaken work with children and/or young people who have experienced family violence to gain their perspectives on their relationship with their fathers (Cater & Forssell, 2014; McGee, 2000; Peled, 1998). While some of the children and young people in the studies express fear and anger towards their fathers and wish to have no further contact (Harne, 2011), the majority of children and young people appear to have a complex and contradictory relationship with their fathers which can be a source of confusion and distress (Holt, 2015a; Peled, 1998). McGee (2000) found that children experienced ‘a conflict of emotions’ as they ‘...liked or loved their father but detested his violence’ (McGee, 2000, p. 86).

Research suggests that children are often confused about their feelings for fathers who use violence and that their sentiments often vary according to the age of the child. An Irish study (Hogan & O'Reilly, 2007) of children and young people aged 5-21 years who had experienced family violence and were living in refuges found that younger children (under 10 years) often spoke about missing their fathers and expressed sadness about being separated while older teenagers expressed a sense of growing tired of their fathers controlling ways. Work by Peled (1998) illustrates the internal conflict experienced by children who have lived with fathers who use violence in interviews with 14
preadolescents and their mothers about their experiences and found that children were often caught between two opposing perspectives about their fathers. On one hand children knew that the abusive behaviour was wrong and the fault of their fathers but yet on the other hand they loved and were attached to their fathers who they missed when the relationship was interrupted following separation (Peled, 1998).

Similarly research suggests that children and young people adopt a range of strategies to make sense of their father’s violence and their feelings towards him. Peled (1998) found that very few children were able to accept and live with the contradictory sides of their father; the good loving father and the bad abusive father. She found these children chose to see their fathers as “bad” or found ways to ‘contain, excuse and reframe the father’s abusive behaviour’ (Peled, 1998, p. 418). Children were also found to use strategies to de-emphasize their fathers’ violent behaviour. Strategies used by children included describing their father as a victim or sick, seeing factors such as alcohol as to blame, seeing their father as cured, forgiving their fathers, reframing, minimising, forgetting or repressing the abuse (Peled, 1998). Similarly research in Sweden found that children who have experienced family violence often separate their father’s violent actions from their perception of their father as a person, which allows children to acknowledge the violent acts without giving them primary significance in his role as a father (Cater, 2007). This work explored how children of fathers who use violence (aged 8-12 years) understand general conceptions of fatherhood (Cater, 2007). The study found that some of the children described their fathers as entirely defined by his violent behaviour in the home. Interestingly the author notes that the children did not see violence as central to fatherhood in general and described two types of fathers, one type who is violent and the other who is not. Other children described their father as having many parts to his personality, some which were described as more positive than others and saw their father as ‘changeable’. A final group of children described their fathers by focussing on the father-child relationship where he was seen as nice to the child but not to the mother.

The literature suggests that some children of fathers who use violence express significant anger towards their father and feel let down by him (McGee, 2000). McGee found a number of children coped with their feelings of anger by confronting their fathers about the violence while other children expressed a desire to shun and refuse any contact. In addition, McGee (2000) also found children reported a desire to seek revenge on their father by physically harming him. Children also talked about their violent father’s tendency to favour one child over another (in most instances a son over a daughter) which was a source of emotional upset for a number of children (McGee, 2000).
Research which has explored the way in which fathers who use violence interact with their children and participate in family life, has found that children describe their fathers as disinterested in the lives and inactive around the home. One study of children aged 8-12 who had experienced family violence and were living in a Women’s Shelter (Cater & Forssell, 2014), found that children described their fathers as lazy and doing little around the house while making their children do chores. Fathers were also described as untrustworthy, dishonest and manipulative by their children, who felt they had to adapt to their fathers needs rather than having a father who responds to theirs. The most significant finding related to what was not found. The study found that fathers who use violence although often described as physically present in the home were absent in any description of positive parental support, guidance and participation in general family life (Cater & Forssell, 2014). This finding is consistent with work by Harne (2002) who found that even when fathers who use violence spent time undertaking child care duties they still did not show any understanding of their child’s needs. A New Zealand study also found that fathers who use violence reported seeing parenting as primarily a women’s responsibility and acknowledged that they were not actively involved in their children’s lives (Troon, 2014). Research in the United Kingdom (Holt, 2015a) asked 16 young people aged between seven and 24 who had experienced family violence about their experiences of contact. The research found that young people expressed ‘both apathy and frustration’ with their father’s lack of interest in them and spending time with them (Holt, 2015a). These young people also talked about a sense of awkwardness they feel just being in the same room as their father particularly when he speaks negatively about their mother. The young people in this research suggesting that a ‘proper’ dad would actually talk with his children and be interested in their lives (Holt, 2015a).

**Fatherhood as a motivator for change**

Several authors have suggested that engaging men as fathers may be a powerful lever for obtaining motivation for changing negative behaviours such as criminal activity, drug and alcohol abuse and family violence (Stanley, 2012). With regards to family violence, a two month observational study of men attending group counselling by (Fox, Sayers, & Bruce, 2001) found that a significant amount of shame, guilt and remorse was felt by the men in thinking about the harm they may have caused their children. This study also found that men strengthened their ‘commitment to their fatherhood status as a handhold back into the normative community, drawing on their parenthood as a source of redemption and moral rehabilitation’ (p.158). Fox, Sayers, and Bruce (2001) suggest that it was violent men’s role as a father that gave rise to their desire to change and provided continued motivation. They also found that for men who use violence, the father role may be separable from the husband role and that in their minds, having been an abusive husband does not preclude having been, being or becoming
a good father (p.158). They also found that many of the men gave the development of the father role precedence over efforts to rebuild other relationships, including attempts at repairing the marital relationship (Fox, Sayers, & Bruce, 2001, p. 155). An Israeli study (Perel & Peled, 2008) interviewed fathers who use violence and were attending a program and found all of the perpetrators considered themselves good fathers with many saying they lived for their children. Children were seen as prized possessions and accomplishments and a source of happiness and joy. They also constructed themselves as good fathers while minimising the impact of their actions. Interestingly, few men in the study described their childhood as a source of inspiration and strength for them as parents (Perel & Peled, 2008).

While the literature indicates that there may be potential for the use of fatherhood status as a motivator for change with fathers who use violence, a solid evidence base to support this hypothesis is still being developed. An additional issue is that social psychology has found that behavioural intentions are not always highly correlated with behaviour as can be seen in the Rothman, Mandel, and Silverman (2007) study described earlier. Stover (2013, p. 2) argues that ‘interventions that build on fathers existing commitment to their children may be an effective approach with a subset of these men’. In addition, work by Stanley, Graham-Kevan, and Borthwick (2012) undertook an evaluation of the Strength to Change program in the United Kingdom with 32 men and some of their partners. This research found that the men’s desire to secure or gain access to their children was an extrinsic form of motivation for fathers to engage in a process of change but that children could also function as an intrinsic motivator for change with men sustaining participation in programs once they gain an awareness and understanding of the impact of their violent behaviour.

This chapter has identified that while positive father child relationships can be influential in children’s development, learning and wellbeing, there is not adequate evidence available about how these findings can be applied to families where there is violence. The evidence available suggests that fathers who use violence predominantly adopt aggressive approaches to parenting and discipline and blame children for provoking their anger while failing to provide an emotionally supportive environment for their children. While anecdotal evidence suggests that engaging men as fathers may be an effective way to motivate men to change, further research is needed to build a strong evidence base. The following chapter will explore interventions for fathers who use violence and the consideration of parenting in these programs in greater detail.
Chapter 4: Interventions for men who use violence

*men who have been violent and abusive do need to recover, to move away from the unhealthy and damaging models of male behaviour which they have absorbed, and to learn not just the skills, but the values and attributes, the growth and development needed in order to live at peace with themselves and with others (Morran, 2010, p. 34).*

Programs for men who use violence have slowly been growing over the last few decades both internationally and in Australia. The majority of programs are based on either the feminist Duluth model or a cognitive behavioural therapeutic model or a combination of both (Babcock, Green, & Robie, 2004; Hamilton, Koehler, & Losel, 2013). Considerable attention has focussed on whether these programs are “effective” in achieving key outcomes. In recognition that many men who attend programs to address their violence are fathers or have a role in caring for children, attention has begun to focus on considering whether children’s voices are being adequately included and their needs considered. Previous chapters have outlined the existing literature on the impact of family violence on children and the parenting practices of fathers who use violence. This chapter will outline the development of interventions for men who use violence including current issues in policy and practice. It will also explore what we know about children and young people’s perspectives on the interventions their fathers attend.

Program development

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the resurgent women’s movement in the United States brought attention to the need for resources for women who have experienced family violence and the lack of sanctions for male perpetrators (Brown & Hampson, 2009; Tolman & Edleson, 1995). At this time, the first agencies dedicated to providing shelter to victims of family violence emerged (Barner & Carney, 2011, p. 236). In the late 1970s, victim’s shelters moved from being primarily victim interventions to actively seeking out collaboration with law enforcement, health care and other social service agencies to secure additional funding and services for victims of violence (Barner & Carney, 2011). Stover (2005) suggests that this coordination was driven by a desire to ensure that the safety and security of women and children was seen as a prerequisite for any other form of intervention. Programs for men who use violence started appearing in the 1980s in the United States. Since this time, the development of men’s behaviour change programs has seen widespread development internationally (Humphreys, Houghton, & Ellis, 2008).
As in the United States, Australian Men’s Behavioural Change programs grew out of the refuge movement in recognition that in order for change to occur for women, men who use violence needed help in changing their behaviour (Jory & Russell, 1997). The earliest programs for men who use violence in Australia were group based programs which first appeared in the 1980s with South Australia funding the first program for violent men in 1983 and Victoria in 1985 (Jory & Russell, 1997). One of the earliest models for working with men who use violence in Australia derived from narrative therapy and was guided by the work of Jenkins (1990) who emphasised the importance of ensuring men who use violence take responsibility for their actions in order to work towards the cessation of violence and the facilitation of respectful relationships. The framework proposed by Jenkins (1990) has been used within both individual therapy and group work.

While the setting in which programs are delivered to men who use violence differ, a number of authors have noted the consistency of group program models internationally (Day, Chung, O'Leary, & Carson, 2009; Eckhardt & Utschig, 2007; Tolman & Edleson, 1995) with most programs influenced by the feminist Duluth model or Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (Pender, 2012; Tirado-Munoz, Gilchrist, Farre, Hegarty, & Torrens, 2014). The Duluth model is a multi-disciplinary model, underpinned by feminist theory and developed in Duluth Minnesota in 1981 (Gondolf, 2010). The model is described as a coordinated community response to family violence with a dual focus on holding men accountable for their behaviour while also protecting victims from violence (Mackay, Gibson, Lam, & Beecham, 2015; Shepard & Pence, 1999). The Duluth model is based on a psycho-educational treatment approach designed to challenge perpetrators beliefs about power, control and dominance over their partners (Barner & Carney, 2011). In line with feminist thinking, the program views violence as rooted in patriarchal societal learning rather than a combination of emotional and cognitive triggers. The most well known tool used, is the ‘Power and Control wheel’ which illustrates that violence is part of a pattern of behavioural including intimidation, isolation, emotional and economic abuse (Babcock, Green, & Robie, 2004).

The goal of the Duluth program model is to help men change from using the behaviours of the power and control wheel which are seen to result in ‘authoritarian and destructive relationships’ to using behaviours on the equality wheel which form the basis of egalitarian relationships (Pence & Paymar, 1993). It is also suggested that one of the goals of the Duluth model is to ensure the safety of victims by linking them to social support and networks (Day, Chung, O'Leary, & Carson, 2009). Criticisms of the Duluth model suggest that while the program acknowledges that men use children as a means of controlling and abusing their partners, the program does not have a focus on developing a child-focused intervention (Rivett, 2010). Concerns have also been expressed about the lack of empirical
support for the effectiveness of the model in reducing further incidents of violence (Miller & Drake, 2013) and the lack of consistency in how programs claiming to adhere to the Duluth model are delivered (Day, Chung, O'Leary, & Carson, 2009).

A second approach to Men’s Behavioural Change treatment is based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). This approach is designed by psychologists and focuses on the violence itself underpinned by an understanding that violence (as well as non-violence) can be learned. This treatment model views violence as ‘functional for the user’ achieving compliance and giving a sense of power over others (Babcock, Green, & Robie, 2004). Work with participants includes social skill training and anger management techniques to promote alternatives to violence. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy has been criticised for its use with men who use violence for its narrow focus on risk assessment and lack of depth of approach (Featherstone & Fraser, 2012).

A number of sources suggest that the boundaries between the Duluth model and a Cognitive Behavioural Therapeutic approach are becoming blurred with the distinctions being clearer in theory than practice (Hamilton, Koehler, & Losel, 2013). (Babcock, Green, and Robie (2004)) suggests that modern programs tend to mix different theoretical approaches to treatment including both feminist theory as well as specific interventions to deal with anger control, stress management, and improved communication skills. An audit of programs for men who use violence in Europe found that half of all programs in the study were using multiple treatment approaches (Hamilton, Koehler, & Losel, 2013). Similarly research in the United States found that 68 percent of states that have guidelines for perpetrator programs stated that their conceptual framework was based on a combination of power and control and other psychological theory (Maiuro & Eberle, 2008).

**Quality standards**

Debate has occurred about the advantages and disadvantages of establishing standards for an evolving intervention such as programs for men who use violence (Maiuro & Eberle, 2008). With criticisms made about the tendency for some programs to be delivered in a way that is overly rigid and do not allow for customisation to meet the specific needs (Mackay, Gibson, Lam, & Beecham, 2015). Others have suggested that it is more important to ensure that programs have conceptual clarity (Mackay, Gibson, Lam, & Beecham, 2015). However the need to ensure consistent quality and acknowledgment of the importance of ensuring the safety of victims has seen standards developed both in Australia and internationally. As suggested by Wheeler (2005), work with men who use violence is similar in some ways to other types of counselling work, but different in other ways as it carries additional risks and requires specific skills and knowledge. The following section will focus on current standards for
programs for men who use violence internationally including in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia. This section will focus on how issues of parenting are addressed, as well as the degree to which children of men who attend the programs are considered.

In the United Kingdom, the *Respect Accreditation Standard* was introduced in 2008 and applies to all organisations providing domestic violence prevention programs, working with men who use violence as well as services providing integrated safety services for partners and ex-partners of these men (www.respect.uk.net/wp-content/themes/respect/assets/files/accrediation-standard.pdf). Respect accreditation was established to ensure that only high quality services with a focus on safety would be developed and funded. The development of the Standards included practitioners, policy makers and researchers with assessment methods reviewed every three years to ensure compatibility with the evidence base about best practice. Some of the significant policy directions outlined in the Respect standards include an emphasis on the importance for services to contribute to the development of co-ordinated community responses to domestic violence. The Respect Standards also require all programs to provide support to the partners of men who attend a program through an Integrated Support Service, viewing this is as a key component of safety. However, there does not appear to be a requirement to also provide support work to children. With regards to parenting, the standards require all services to include activities within individual and group work which are designed to support and expand the parenting skills and capacity of clients (Blacklock, 2012).

A study of state standards for domestic violence perpetrator programs in the United States found that 90 percent had standards or regulations (Maiuro & Eberle, 2008). With regards to guidelines relating to how children and parenting are discussed, the study found that: the men’s children are routinely discussed at intake in 41 percent of American states, discussion about the impact of family violence on children was covered in the curriculum of programs in 63 percent of states; while other forms of negative or abusive parenting were covered in the curriculum of only 22 percent of states. The study found that there was only limited requirement to provide support, assessment and intervention with children nationally (Maiuro & Eberle, 2008).

In Victoria, Australia the peak body guiding standards in Men’s Behaviour Change Programs is *No to Violence* the state-wide peak body of organisations and individuals working with men to end their violence and abuse against family members (Wheeler, 2005). The *No to Violence* Minimum Standards describes expectations for Men’s Behaviour programs (www.ntv.org.au/what-we-do/mens-behaviour-change/standards-and-guidelines/standards-of-practice/minimum-standards/). These
minimum standards suggest that men should be asked about their parenting status as part of the assessment process. When looking at guidance for program content, the minimum standards state that men must be provided with information about the impacts of their violence on children and that ‘women and children’s voices should have a place in every group session’ (Wheeler, 2005, p. 104). The standards list a range of ways in which women and children’s voices might be included in programs. The guidelines also note that ‘Children should be included in decision making on an age-appropriate basis’ (Wheeler, 2005, p. 103) but there is no additional information about which decisions young people should be involved in and how the level of involvement may vary according to age. In contrast, the guidelines suggest that for fathers, ‘Becoming non-violent will enable them to have more positive and supportive fathering relationships, based on respect rather than fear’. This statement appears to ignore children’s autonomy to determine whether a relationship with their father is something they want to pursue.

The No To Violence minimum standards suggest that programs must contact women and children and keep them informed, but variability has been found to occur in the mode and frequently this occurs (Diemer, Humphreys, Laming, & Smith, 2015). The standards suggest that specialist work with children may be beyond the scope of Men’s Behavioural Change Programs and therefore programs are strongly encouraged to explore collaborative approaches for the development of children’s programs. The guidelines also suggest that, ‘at the very least, contact workers should be attentive to the needs, concerns and experiences of children and adolescents’ (Wheeler, 2005, p. 105). However, recent Victorian research has found ‘relatively poor’ levels of collaborative practice between Men’s Behavioural Change Programs and other services (Diemer, Humphreys, Laming, & Smith, 2015, p. 81). No to Violence does not run an accreditation system and there is currently no national accreditation system for programs for men who use violence in Australia. As part of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has recently introduced a broad set of National Outcome Standards for Perpetrators Interventions (COAG, 2016) however issues relating to parenting or increasing awareness of the impacts of experiencing family violence on children are not raised.

By analysing a range of quality standards for the delivery and design of programs for men who use violence, it is positive to see that children receive some attention. However, this is primarily in terms of program content which outlines the way in which children are impacted by family violence and ensuring their safety is a paramount consideration in planning and assessment. In addition, the needs of women and children are often conflated suggesting an assumption that their needs are the same.
In terms of the provision of support and involvement of children whose father is attending a program, support is limited primarily to phone contact or referral to other services. This is an area where it appears additional work is needed to ensure programs for fathers who use violence are more accountable and responsive to the needs of children. Consideration of children’s needs in their own right are also needed in addition to those they share with their mothers. The following section will outline some of the challenges and issues that arise in attempting to make an assessment about the effectiveness of programs for men who use violence.

**Challenges for evaluation**

> *Despite decades of scholarship, there still remains as yet no clearly recognized directive concerning how practitioners should best capture perpetrator program effectiveness (Hamilton, Koehler, & Losel, 2013, p. 1201).*

Men’s Behavioural Change programs have caused controversy with concerns about their effectiveness, the impact of allocating scarce resources away from victims towards perpetrators and whether they may actively contribute to violence by creating a false sense of security for women (Brown & Hampson, 2009; Humphreys, Houghton, & Ellis, 2008; Morran, 2010). Research suggests that men who attend behavioural change programs have a number of characteristics which make them difficult to effectively engage with including limited motivation for treatment (Eckhardt & Utschig, 2007; Murphy, Linehan, Reyner, Musser, & Taft, 2012; Scott & Crooks, 2004), a tendency to minimise the severity and extent of the abuse, externalize or deny responsibility for their abusive behaviour and blame the negative qualities of their partner (Eckhardt & Utschig, 2007; Fox, Sayers, & Bruce, 2001; Humphreys & Stanley, 2006; Murphy, Linehan, Reyner, Musser, & Taft, 2012). Men who use violence also display limited engagement in behaviour change tasks (Murphy, Linehan, Reyner, Musser, & Taft, 2012) and demonstrate high rates of treatment non-attendance and drop out (Eckhardt & Utschig, 2007; Gondolf, 1997; Murphy, Linehan, Reyner, Musser, & Taft, 2012).

It is acknowledged that we do not know enough about the effectiveness of programs for men who use violence (Palmer, Brown & Barrera, 1992, Dobash & Dobash, 2000, Mullender & Burton, 2001, Featherstone & Fraser, 2012). A systematic review undertaken in 2013 found that of the nearly 10,500 studies on perpetrator interventions reviewed, only 12 studies evaluated the effectiveness of the program in a systematic way (Akoensi, Koehler, Losel, & Humphreys, 2013). In the context of limited resource availability, there is increasing pressure to provide evidence that investment in men’s programs is providing improved outcomes, to justify the distribution of funds that could be re-directed to victims of violence (Palmer 1992).
Although attempts have been made to evaluate some behavioural change programs, the research that has been conducted is often inconclusive due to a range of factors related to both research and program design and the complexity of practice in this area. Evaluations of Men’s Behavioural Change programs rarely establish control groups, have a reliance on self-reports by men to measure reoffending rates (Palmer, Brown, Maru & Barrera, 1992), have small sample sizes and no pre and post tests (Dobash & Dobash 2000). In addition, access to police data to measure re-offending is problematic as this data is often difficult to obtain (Palmer, Brown and Barrera 1992) and may not be an accurate reflection of the level of violence occurring, much of which will go unreported (Stover, 2005). Additionally, factors such as the tendency for men to drop out of programs before completing the full number of sessions is also an issue, as is the impact of short term treatment effect which can temporarily reduce offending for a short period of time but may not reflect long term outcomes (Russell & Jory 1997).

In their meta-analysis of 22 studies, Babcock, Green and Robie (2004) found the effect size of group intervention on recidivism of family violence was in the small range compared to other interventions such as psychotherapy to treat a range of internalizing factors. While the effects have been found to be small, American group intervention programs are generally considered to have some effect in reducing violent and abusive behaviour with Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Duluth model (the two models most utilized) shown to have similar effect sizes (Babcock, Green & Robie, 2004). However these findings cannot be generalised to the Australian contexts as American programs include a significant proportion of court ordered participants not found in Australian programs (Russell and Jory 1997).

In addition, unlike other areas of offender rehabilitation where it is accepted that the treatment needs of men vary according to their level of risk, this perspective is lacking in the area of family violence (Day, Chung, O’Leary, & Carson, 2009). Kelly and Johnson (2008) classified men who use violence into four categories based on an analysis of the type of violence they use; coercive controlling violence, situational couple violence, violent resistance, separation instigated violence. Coercive controlling violence is described as a pattern of emotional abuse, intimidation, coercion and control associated with persistent physical injury. Situational couple violence relates to violence that is not based on coercive control and is thought to arise from poor communication styles (Day & Bowen, 2015). Violent resistance occurs as a response to coercive control and could be described as self-defence while separation instigated violence describes violence that occurs for the first time during separation (Day & Bowen, 2015). While considered a valuable approach which is frequently cited, ‘this work appears to have had very little impact upon practice’ (Day, Chung, O’Leary, & Carson, 2009, p. 207).
In addition, a lack of consensus currently exists about the outcomes that a program for men who use violence should be achieving and measuring (Tolman & Edleson, 1995). There is currently growing recognition that programs for fathers who use violence should be aiming to make a change for children and that these outcomes should be measured (Alderson, Kelly, & Westmarland, 2015). Recent work (Westmarland, Kelly, & Chalder-Mills, 2010) has suggested that concepts of ‘success’ in programs for fathers who use violence should move away from seeing ‘cessation of violence’ as the sole goal. Research from the Mirabel project in the United Kingdom interviewed a range of stakeholders including women who had experienced family violence and their children and found that when men attended programs to address their violence a range of improvements were reported beyond cessation of abuse (Kelly & Westmarland, 2015). These improvements included: more respectful relationships, expanded space for action, decreased isolation, enhanced parenting and understanding the impact of domestic violence (Kelly & Westmarland, 2015). In addition, when focusing on fathers who use violence, Westmarland, Kelly, and Chalder-Mills (2010) suggest that we need to take a more nuanced understanding of success where more subtle but important changes are recognised including improvements in the relationship between fathers who use violence, their partners and children.

The following section will explore what is known about how issues relating to parenting are raised within programs for men who use violence.

**Consideration of parenting in interventions**

Both in Australia and internationally, it has only been in recent years that the parenting role of men who use violence has been acknowledged (Featherstone & Fraser, 2012; Stanley, Graham-Kevan, & Borthwick, 2012). Historically programs for men who use violence were run separately from parenting programs with neither program considering that men may belong to both groups. Currently we do not have comprehensive information about how the issue of fatherhood is raised in programs for men who use violence, however the limited evidence suggests that many programs may not actually address the impact for children of living with violence (Stover, 2013). In acknowledgement of this gap in knowledge and resources, in 2013 an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Grant was provided to several universities and community organisations (led by the University of Melbourne) to explore parenting in the context of family violence. This project included an audit of programs for fathers who use violence, a survey of those who deliver programs as well as research with fathers who use violence and their partners. The results of this work are due for publication in 2017 and suggest that the way in which fatherhood is addressed in programs is highly variable.
Over the past decade, a small number of programs have been developed internationally to address the issues specific to violent fathers (Featherstone & Fraser, 2012, p. 260):

Some services constructed men primarily as perpetrators of domestic violence and, in that context, offered inputs on fathering. Other programs...constructed men primarily as fathers and considered their violent practices toward children and women within a frame that emphasised the importance of non-abusive fathering.

The distinction between these programs has caused tensions in the field. For example, the Caring Dads model (the second type of program outlined in the quote above) which was developed in Canada in 2001, is primarily concerned with increasing men’s awareness of the impact of abusive and neglectful behaviour on children, enhance motivation for change and improve father-child relationships (Crooks, Scott, Francis, Kelly, & Reid, 2006). The Caring Dads program has been criticised as being more of a parenting program than a suitable intervention to deal with violence by men to women (Featherstone & Fraser, 2012). In the United Kingdom, the Jacana Parenting Programme pilot provided an intervention to fathers who use violence as well as support to the mothers of their children (Coy, Thiara, Kelly, & Phillips, 2011). The key focus of the program was on the mother-child relationship and the impact of the father’s violence and coercive control tactics on that relationship. An evaluation of the program was undertaken (with a small sample) and found that the program achieved its goals of enabling participants understanding the impacts of violence on children and parenting and to make changes to their behaviours and responses (Coy, Thiara, Kelly, & Phillips, 2011).

At present, there is insufficient information available about how issues of parenting are addressed within programs for men who use violence. While quality standards in some states (such as Victoria), require the voices of children and young people to be present in every session of a program, those in other states of Australia such as Queensland and Western Australia are less prescriptive. Therefore it is possible to suggest that the way in which these issues are raised may vary considerably by location, and this is an area where more information is needed.

A recent Australian study explored the question; ‘How can we increase men’s awareness that family and domestic violence has a harmful effect on their children?’ (Lucas, Winter, Hughes, & Walsh, 2016). This study aimed to develop and test a best practice model of education to raise men’s awareness of the impact of family violence on their children, but found that there was little documented best practice evidence available and that relatively few programs had been comprehensively evaluated (Lucas, Winter, Hughes, & Walsh, 2016). The research also found that a recurrent theme in their consultation was ‘the need to bring the voices of children to the forefront of any efforts to raise
awareness about the possible harms resulting from exposure to family and domestic violence’ (Lucas, Winter, Hughes, & Walsh, 2016, p. 62).

Children’s perspectives on interventions for fathers who use violence

Research exploring children’s views and experiences of father participation in programs to address their violence is scarce (Alderson, 2015). A study in the United Kingdom (Alderson, Westmarland, & Kelly, 2013) undertook interviews with 73 fathers who use violence, their ex-partners and service providers. The findings of this study give us some clues about why this may be the case, given half of the violent men they interviewed had not told their children that they were participating in a program. These findings are consistent with those from a small study (Rayns, 2010) which sought to clarify what knowledge children and young people have about the perpetrator program their fathers were attending. The project surveyed 16 children to find out what they knew about Men’s Behavioural Change programs, whether they felt safer once their father was/had attended a program and whether they believed attendance at a program impacted their relationship with their fathers. The study found that many of the children had a poor knowledge of what their father was learning at his behavioural change program and had not been involved or engaged in the program despite many of the children still having contact with their father (Rayns, 2010).

In addition, children and young people in families where family violence has occurred appeared to have little detailed information about the perpetrator programme their father may be attending and there appears to be no consistent process by which they would be informed. Interestingly, Rayns (2010) found children saw the perpetrator program as something to help their father/carer and also thought their mother was safer as a result of his participation, however children did not feel safer themselves. Rayns (2010) concludes by expressing concern about the lack of evidence about whether programs for men who use violence improve outcomes for their children. She suggests that evaluations of interventions appear to rely on self-reporting measures completed by fathers and adult victims with no direct reference to the views and experiences of their children (Rayns, 2010).

An Australian PhD study of men who had attended a Men’s Behavioural Change Program suggests that ‘what is lacking in existing research is the role that children play in men’s accountability’ (Smith, 2013). This gap was also identified by Alderson, Westmarland, and Kelly (2013), who asked family violence services, men and their partners about what they thought success would mean for a behavioural change program from a children’s perspective. In a follow-up study by the same authors, young people whose fathers had attended a perpetrator program were asked to outline their feelings about their father attending a program to address his violence (Alderson, Kelly, & Westmarland, 2015). The
findings suggested that young people considered it important to be told their father was attending a program as ‘it was perceived as commensurate to a promise that the violence would stop’ (Alderson, Kelly, & Westmarland, 2015, p. 191). A number of young people described their relationship with their father as having improved since he attended the program particularly in terms of the activities they did together, with the authors indicating many of these activities were low cost and so therefore confirming that it was the quality of the time they spent with their fathers after the program that was valued (Alderson, 2015).

Research undertaken in the United Kingdom evaluated the Caring Dads Safer Children program which is based on the Canadian program model (McConnell, Barnard, Holdsworth, & Taylor, 2014). It found children reported a range of feelings about their father’s attendance on the program including hoping he would learn new things, talk about his problems, get help and change his behaviour. Children also hoped that following the program they would have a stronger relationship with their father, spend more time with him and see him more regularly and possibly enable him to move home. The Rayns (2010) study concludes with a recommendation that further research be conducted to consider how to capture the views of children whose father who has attended a perpetrator program. It is suggested that the information gained, should be used to inform and influence the development of perpetrators interventions, particularly for those who remain in contact with their children or those who move on to live with other children in new families.

In summary, this chapter reviews the literature about what we know about interventions for fathers who use violence and some of the challenges for ensuring program quality and evaluating outcomes. From this review, it is clear that the perspectives of children are not prominent in the planning, development, delivery and evaluation of these programs. This review of the literature, combined with the findings in chapter 2 about the impacts of family violence on children, support the need to explore further opportunities to embed children’s voices within programs for fathers who use violence. The following chapter will review digital storytelling as a possible mechanism for capturing and sharing the voices of vulnerable community members.
Chapter 5: Participant experiences of digital storytelling

_Narrative approaches, such as digital storytelling can influence trauma recover and resilience by offering a means of owning and being able to tell one’s story (Anderson & Cook, 2015, p. 87)._  

Digital storytelling is increasingly being used as a method of capturing the perspectives of both vulnerable adults and young people about sensitive issues and experiences (Brickell & Garrett, 2015). Existing literature primarily focuses on the perspective of the researcher or facilitator of the process. Much less insight is available into the experiences of participants. In order to explore the suitability of using digital storytelling to capture the key messages children and young people who have experienced family violence have for their fathers, a scoping review was undertaken. This review was designed to gain an understanding of the scope and nature of the literature available about digital storytelling from the participant perspective. The second part of this chapter places these findings in the context of recent practice.

Digital storytelling began in the United States in the early 1990s and has its roots in ‘community arts and oral history’ (Meadows, 2003, p. 191). It involves the use of cameras and computers to create short multimedia personal stories generally designed for publication on the internet. Digital storytelling integrates personal narratives and stories with photographs, artwork, music, voice-overlay, video clips and text (Willox, Harper, & Edge, 2013). Completed digital stories are usually between two and four minutes long (Hancox, 2012). Meadows (2003) suggests that the most promising aspect of digital storytelling is that it allows people to ‘take the power back’ and write their own stories rather than putting up with professionals ‘...recording us for hours and then throwing away most of what we tell them, keeping only those bits that tell our stories their own way’ (p.192).

Hancox (2012) suggests that the rise of digital storytelling could be seen to reflect the shift towards a more participatory online culture that privileges content generated by the user, as well as its potential for social inclusion and participation. While a number of projects and research studies have documented experiences of using digital storytelling in research, education, public health and as a therapeutic intervention, these reports have overwhelmingly been from the perspectives of the researchers or facilitators of the process (Manning, 2010; Willox, Harper, & Edge, 2013). While facilitators often report very positively on their experiences of using digital storytelling to achieve their purpose, as mentioned earlier, much less is known about how participants experience the process. In order to focus on this gap, this scoping review confines itself to exploring research that has directly
asked participants who have attended digital storytelling workshops about their experiences. By focusing on participant experiences, the aim was to gain broader insight into the possible benefits and challenges of using this technology in the current study with children who had experienced family violence.

**Scoping review method**

The scoping review was undertaken with a systematic approach to the inclusion and exclusion of research studies using the method outlined by Arksey and O’Malley (2005). The review was conducted in two parts. The original review occurred from January to July 2014 with a second search conducted to update the review in 2016. The question which guided the scoping review was:

*What are the views and experiences of people who have participated in digital storytelling workshops?*

The scoping review method of Arksey and O’Malley (2005) was followed to ensure confidence that the review has been conducted ‘in a rigorous and transparent way’ that allowed for replication. In describing their method of review, Arksey and O’Malley (2005) suggest that there are four possible reasons for undertaking a scoping review and the reason that is most relevant to the current review is the desire to examine the extent, range and nature of research in a particular area. Given the relatively recent rise in the use of digital storytelling, it seemed timely to explore what research has found about participants experiences of participating in a workshop.

The review method of Arksey and O’Malley (2005) outlines four key phases for undertaking a scoping review. The first phase of the review process is the identification of the research question which provides ‘the roadmap’ for subsequent stages (Levac, Colquhoun, & O’Brien, 2010). Like other reviews following the Arksey and O’Malley (2005) method, it was necessary to revisit and make alterations to the research question during the review process (Daudt, van Mossel, & Scott, 2013).

The second phase of the Arksey and O’Malley (2005) method is the identification of relevant studies. A range of methods were used to locate relevant studies, including a search of electronic databases and reference lists of relevant papers when found. Search terms used were ‘digital storytelling’ and ‘research’ within the title and abstract of the paper. A total of ten databases were searched and these are outlined in Figure 1. Additional search strategies used included the use of Google Scholar and the following up of references listed by relevant papers when they were located.
Figure 2. Scoping Review article selection process for the original review in 2014 and the update in 2016.
In the original review carried out in 2014, a total of 265 abstracts were collected, 59 duplications were removed leaving 206 abstracts for review against the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The same process was then followed to update the review for the period between July 2014 and June 2016. Those references that clearly met the exclusion criteria (not being in English and not directly consulting participants of digital storytelling workshops about their experience) were omitted. Where there was inadequate information provided in the abstract, papers progressed to the next stage of review where the full text was obtained.

An initial examination of the literature discovered the use of the term ‘digital storytelling’ to describe several very different types of digital storytelling. The first type of digital storytelling referred to workshops where an individual personal experience is developed into a short digital story in a structured process in line with the digital storytelling method developed by the United States Centre for Digital Storytelling in Berkeley, California. The term ‘digital storytelling’ was also found to be used in relation to education as a tool for improving literacy and other educational learning activities in the classroom (Condy, Chigona, Gachago, Ivala, Callaghan, & Chigona, 2012; Sadik, 2008) and as a tool for the development and delivery of public health messages (Njeru, Patten, Hanza, Brockman, Ridgeway, Weis, Clark, Goodson, Osman, Porraz-Capetillo, Hared, Myers, Sia, & Wieland, 2015). For the purposes of this review, only research relating to the first type of digital storytelling was included in this review. Unlike other scoping reviews where the number of articles is high, given the relatively recent use of digital storytelling, the numbers of papers remaining for full text review (N=80 and N=10) and was quite small and all papers were obtained electronically with 12 found to fit the inclusion criteria. A list of these studies can be found at Appendix 1.

Study characteristics

Of the twelve studies in the review, all were published between 2008 and 2016, with one paper published in 2008, one in 2011, two papers published in 2013, five published in 2014, two published in 2015 and one published in 2016. The studies were undertaken in Canada (1 study) United States of America (7 studies), Australia (1 study), Zimbabwe (1 study) and the United Kingdom (2 studies). The papers were a mixture of journal articles (N=9) and higher degree student theses (n=3). The populations studied included a mixture of adults and young people many of whom had particular vulnerabilities and included a child who had suffered cancer, a child living in foster care, mental health service users, elderly people, culturally diverse communities, children who had experienced abuse, adults who had experienced trauma and young adults who are HIV positive.
Sample size and study method

The study sample sizes were relatively small with two studies focussing on one young person’s experience, eight studies had between seven and 30 people and the sample size was unknown for two studies. When an analysis was made of the methods used to gather feedback from digital storytelling workshop participants, it was found that seven studies conducted post workshop interviews, four studies conducted qualitative surveys and one ran focus groups. Some studies used multiple methods to gain feedback from participants and two studies also aimed to measure whether participation in the digital storytelling workshop had an impact on a range of clinical measures in addition to asking participants about their experiences.

One study (Loe, 2013) asked participants for a written response about their experience immediately following their participation (with 100 percent response rate) and then re-contacted participants 1-2 years later for a follow up response via email (30 percent response rate). Another study (Ferrari, Rice, & McKenzie, 2015) asked participants for their feedback about their experiences and then asked participants to complete a second survey particularly focussing on the therapeutic benefits which emerged as a significant issue in the first survey. Two studies asked both those who prepared the digital story as well as those who viewed it for their perspectives on the digital storytelling process.

Some of the digital stories were individual projects (where one person develops up their own story with the guidance of a facilitator) and others involved two individuals worked together to develop up one person’s digital story. In this review, ten studies featured individual digital story development while the remaining two studies were of the second type. One study used the digital storytelling method developed by the Centre for Digital Storytelling but integrated it into an evidence-based model of therapeutic intervention.

Participant experiences

The studies in the scoping review found that participants in digital storytelling workshops outlined a number of positive and negative impacts of their experiences. With regards to positive impacts, the results showed some consistency across the studies. Two of the studies asked participants about their motivations to participate in the digital storytelling workshop (Moorehead, 2014; Shea, 2011). Participants in the Carer’s Voices study by Shea (2011) in the United Kingdom found that participants were motivated to share their story to help others, wanted people to understand the impact of mental illness and offer hope to other people in similar situations (Shea, 2011). Similarly Native American Indian participants in the study by Moorehead (2014) suggested that they agreed to participate in the
digital storytelling workshop to help others (both in their family and the Native American Indian community) and to leave a legacy.

Positive impacts

Participants in the Stellavato (2013) study (which included a range of vulnerable populations including young people in youth detention, adults with disabilities and others who have experience trauma) commented on their surprise and appreciation at being allowed to express themselves in their own way in their digital stories. In the study by Gubrium, Fiddian-Green, Lowe, DiFulvio, and Del Toro-Mejias (2016) young Puerto Rican Latino women described the digital storytelling workshop as giving them a sense of being heard and acknowledged, something participants described as lacking in their everyday lives. Similarly Native American Indians who participated in the study by Moorehead (2014) reported that they found their voice in the digital storytelling workshop.

Another positive impact of participating in a digital storytelling workshop described and valued by participants, was the attainment of additional skills. One study found participants described feeling more confident in photography and film making (Willis, Frewin, Miller, Dziwa, Mavhu, & Cowan, 2014), while another study found participants valued the development of improved computing and editing skills (Stellavato, 2013). A number of participants in the studies expressed a desire to do more digital storytelling work or gain more skills in media production (Shea, 2011). While the young adults in the study by Willis, Frewin, Miller, Dziwa, Mavhu, and Cowan (2014) talked about wanting to share the skills they had learnt to teach other young adults how to develop a digital story.

Participants across both the Stellavato (2013) and Willis, Frewin, Miller, Dziwa, Mavhu, and Cowan (2014) studies described the Digital Storytelling process as allowing them to speak freely, share things they have never shared before and open up and be honest to themselves and others about their experiences. Similar views were expressed by participants in the study by Ferrari, Rice, and McKenzie (2015). Participants in the Gubrium, Fiddian-Green, Lowe, DiFulvio, and Del Toro-Mejias (2016) study described feeling like the digital storytelling process allowed them to be honest about their lives and ‘[peel] back the layers of untruths they had previously felt compelled to tell to protect themselves and their families from the judgement of others’(p.6). A number of participants in the Moorehead (2014) study revealed that the digital storytelling workshop was the first time that they had ever talked about the trauma they had experienced.

A number of participants in the Stellavato (2013) study talked about the therapeutic benefits they gained from releasing some of their built up internal tension. This was a view shared by participants in
the study by Shea (2011) who described the workshop as quite emotionally difficult, exhausting and unsettling but also suggested that they found the process powerful, healing and comparable in terms of impact with other forms of therapy they had received. Similarly the studies by Ferrari, Rice, and McKenzie (2015) and Moorehead (2014) found that workshop participants described their experience as ‘cathartic’, allowing them to release emotionally traumatic and stressful memories.

As outlined, two studies reported findings from Digital Storytelling projects which were undertaken in pairs. These stories shared some common themes with the other studies. Both studies found that participants found making a digital story an enjoyable, therapeutic and healing process which allowed them to talk through issues that may never have been spoken about before (Flottemesch, 2013; Loe, 2013). Consistent with other research findings on the positive impacts of group work (Bagshaw & Chung, 2001; Houghton, 2008), participants in the Shea (2011) study talked about the supportive group setting and how this helped them feel safe talking about personal issues. The study by Ferrari, Rice, and McKenzie (2015) also found that the participants valued the opportunity that the digital storytelling workshop gave them to connect with others who had similar life experiences to themselves which gave them reassurance that they were not alone.

In addition, both the studies by Flottemesch (2013) and Loe (2013) found that the process resulted in a deeper connection between the two participants while also allowing the participants to understand the journey the other person had been through. Given the nature of these projects (one was designed to facilitate intergenerational relationships within a family and the other to facilitate understandings between young people and elderly community members), it was not surprising that these projects both found that participation changed attitudes and prejudices about ageing.

In a number of studies, participants described feeling a sense of accomplishment and pride after completing a digital story (Anderson & Cook, 2015; Gubrium, Fiddian- Green, Lowe, DiFulvio, & Del Toro-Mejias, 2016; Willis, Frewin, Miller, Dziwa, Mavhu, & Cowan, 2014) The study by Willis, Frewin, Miller, Dziwa, Mavhu, and Cowan (2014) with young adults who were HIV positive found that they experienced significant pride in their achievement of making a Digital Story and felt like they led and owned the process. This sentiment was also expressed by participants in the study by Ferrari, Rice, and McKenzie (2015). Both in the study by Willis, Frewin, Miller, Dziwa, Mavhu, and Cowan (2014) and Stellavato (2013) comments were made by young people/young adults who often struggled to complete work at school, about how easy they had found making a digital story. In four studies in this review, participants talked about finding the digital storytelling process fun, enjoyable or interesting (Fenton, 2014; Gresham, 2014; Gubrium, Fiddian- Green, Lowe, DiFulvio, & Del Toro-Mejias, 2016;
In one study young Puerto Rican Latino young women saw their participation in the digital storytelling workshop as their first ‘job’ and liked the sense of having somewhere important to be (Gubrium, Fiddian-Green, Lowe, DiFulvio, & Del Toro-Mejias, 2016). In two of the studies, participants talked about a sense of ‘group pride’ in the digital stories created by other members of the digital storytelling workshop (Stellavato, 2013; Willis, Frewin, Miller, Dziwa, Mavhu, & Cowan, 2014). The process of collecting family photos and mementoes for use in the digital stories was also seen as a positive process by some participants who had reconnected with family members they had not spoken to in order to gain these items (Willis, Frewin, Miller, Dziwa, Mavhu, & Cowan, 2014).

Other participants talked about how the completed digital story had become important and significant to them and therefore provided ongoing benefits. One HIV positive young person in the Willis, Frewin, Miller, Dziwa, Mavhu, and Cowan (2014) study talked about her aspiration to become a nurse which she achieved and attributed in part, to her participation in digital storytelling which allowed her to express and articulate her hopes for the future, giving her a goal to work towards. Another participant in the Willis, Frewin, Miller, Dziwa, Mavhu, and Cowan (2014) study talked about using the digital story he made as a motivator. When he felt down, he would watch it again and remember how much he had achieved. In another study, a participant said that when her digital story about her family was played to the local community it prompted people to contact her and share their memories of her grandmother; an experience which she had valued (Moorehead, 2014).

**Issues of confidentiality**

In several studies, participants were asked whether they wanted to keep their digital stories private or whether they were willing to share them more publically. A quarter of storytellers in the Willis, Frewin, Miller, Dziwa, Mavhu, and Cowan (2014) study of participants with HIV were not happy to show their stories to the wider public as they were worried about being stigmatised for their HIV status particularly amongst potential partners. In the same study, the facilitators were given a clear message that no storyteller wanted their story accessible on the internet (Willis, Frewin, Miller, Dziwa, Mavhu, & Cowan, 2014). The study by Loe (2013) also found participants had considerable concern about placing their stories online. In the work by Anderson and Cook (2015) digital stories made by children and young people who were attending a mental health service and had experiences of violence or abuse, were shown (with young people’s consent) to the non-offending parent once complete. In this paper, the authors suggest that as children had used photos and picture of themselves, their homes and at times their offenders, ‘during the final session, the clinician, participants and parents discussed guidelines, particularly safety and confidentiality issues, regarding the sharing of one’s video with
others’ (Anderson & Cook, 2015, p. 83) but the recommendations and parameters were not elaborated upon. In the study by Moorehead (2014), four of nine participants had decided not to show the stories outside the workshop stating that they were ‘private’ and several indicated a preference not to share their stories on the internet.

**Negative issues**

Across all twelve studies, there were only a small number of negative issues identified by participants of digital storytelling workshops (Shea, 2011). These include the downside of technology which was seen to be enabler at times but then at other times restricted work or held it up (Gresham, 2014; Moorehead, 2014). A handful of participants in the Stellavato (2013) study also criticised the lack of time they had to make stories and described wanting to learn more about digital storytelling techniques. Participants in the study by Moorehead (2014) also suggested that they would have liked either more time to make their stories or additional facilitators to assist. Another study described young people as feeling particularly uncomfortable recording and listening to their own voices but that that gradually this dissipated over time for most participants (Anderson & Cook, 2015). In one of the studies, participants suggested that those who undertake a digital storytelling workshop should be emotionally ready as it can be confronting and make participants feel quite vulnerable (Moorehead, 2014). The same participants suggested that the process was also healing and would recommend the workshop to others (Moorehead, 2014).

Only one study outlined a digital storytelling process that had significant negative impacts when the integrity of the voice and the story the participant wanted to tell were not maintained (Nelson, Hull, & Roche-Smith, 2008). This study outlined a case in the United States from 2002 where a 12 year old African American boy who was living in foster care created a story about the struggles he had faced in life and how he was overcoming them and doing well at school (Nelson, Hull, & Roche-Smith, 2008). The researcher found that significant interference by facilitators and family members resulted in a digital story being developed that did not stay true to what the boy wanted to say and more reflected what the adults and caregivers around him wanted his story to be. The study interviewed those involved in the process of the story development including the boy himself five years later aged 17. The study found that the story produced had been disseminated widely in the boy’s community, and while adults praised him for his efforts, he was bullied for years by other children about his mother’s history of drug use and his reasons for being placed in foster care. This study concludes that while new media such as digital storytelling can be a ‘potent’ way of capturing the stories of children, the authors caution that it should not be assumed that new media gives young people the power to communicate
without constraints and that the influences of time, space and power also bear upon agency, authorial choice and content

**Placing the scoping review in the context of current practice**

One of the key themes identified in this scoping review is participant descriptions of the therapeutic and cathartic nature of digital storytelling. In light of this finding and emerging evidence that digital storytelling is increasingly being used as part of a therapeutic approach to the treatment of people who have experienced trauma (Tuval-Mashiach & Patton, 2015), the scoping review findings will be discussed in the context of emerging evidence and practice.

Storytelling has been used for generations by all human societies as a means of seeking to understand ourselves and others (Hancox, 2012). It has been noted that when asking people to talk about their lives it is important to ‘take into consideration the considerable psychological effects telling one’s life story can have’ (Rosenthal, 2003, p. 915). In acknowledgement of the potential impact of storytelling, narrative therapy was developed based on the idea that people tell stories to make sense of and construct meanings about their lives, with problems viewed as arising from and maintained by, oppressive stories which dominate the person’s life (Carr, 1998). In narrative practice, therapeutic solutions to problems are sought within the narrative frame which may involve: ‘opening space for the authoring of alternative stories, the possibility of which have previously been marginalized by the dominant oppressive narrative which maintains the problem.’ (Carr, 1998, p. 486).

In recent years, digital storytelling has increasingly been integrated into a treatment framework with both children and adults who have experienced trauma either as a standalone therapy or combined with Cognitive Behavioural or Narrative Therapy (Anderson & Cook, 2015; Tuval-Mashiach & Patton, 2015). In the United States, Anderson and Wallace (2015) combined digital storytelling with Cognitive Behavioural Therapy with children who had experienced family violence and found that the process gave young people a sense of efficacy and control over the trauma events in their lives. A second documented example from the United States described the use of digital storytelling with recent war veterans (Tuval-Mashiach & Patton, 2015). The authors found that this approach was useful in treating Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which is considered a visual disorder ‘because the memories of traumatic experiences are vivid and visual, and often cannot be expressed in words’ (Tuval-Mashiach & Patton, 2015). Digital storytelling was chosen as an alternative to mental health treatment, as young veterans were reluctant to access traditional forms of therapy (Tuval-Mashiach & Patton, 2015). A quantitative analysis was conducted of participants in 11 workshops which found reductions in ten PTSD symptoms by an average of 17 percent. The authors conclude that digital storytelling offers a
promising new treatment pathway but that additional work needs to occur to identify which individuals can be most assisted by digital storytelling as a therapeutic intervention as well the long term outcomes for participants (Tuval-Mashiach & Patton, 2015).

A third example of the use of digital storytelling as a therapeutic intervention comes from Australia where digital storytelling has been combined with narrative therapy with Aboriginal communities (Wood, Fredericks, Neate, & Unghango, 2015). Recent work in a remote Western Australian Aboriginal community used digital storytelling as a way to address issues relating to colonisation and violence in the community (Wood, Fredericks, Neate, & Unghango, 2015, p. 42). Digital storytelling was chosen for its potential as a therapeutic intervention to explore survival through hard times, while also providing skill development for communities. In addition, digital storytelling was found to provide a way for an isolated community to engage in global dialogues about issues that impact them and provide them with opportunities to influence the perceptions of mainstream Australia (Wood, Fredericks, Neate, & Unghango, 2015). As with the two examples of practice from the United States, this account of digital storytelling is written from the perspective of the researcher and facilitator.

In summary, this scoping review indicates that the use of digital storytelling for research, education and as part of therapeutic interventions is a burgeoning area. In considering whether to integrate digital storytelling into the current research study, an overview of participant experiences was sought. While the literature available from participant’s perspectives is far from exhaustive, it does give us some valuable insights. The literature suggests that digital storytelling is predominantly being used with participants who are vulnerable in some way as well as Indigenous and culturally diverse communities. The literature indicates that while the experience of participation can be emotional and challenging it is generally positive for a range of participants including children and young people. The review suggests that a number of participants enjoyed being able to express themselves in their own way, while also gaining additional skills. The review also found that participants described the digital storytelling process as therapeutic, particularly valuing the supportive group work setting as a safe and welcome opportunity to talk about aspects of their lives that they may not have spoken about before.

These findings are supported by recent examples of the emergence of the use of digital storytelling as part of a narrative therapeutic approach with people who have experienced trauma. Participants in the review reported feeling both individual and group pride having lead and completed the digital storytelling process. While the literature does indicate some areas for consideration, particularly around ensuring the participants have adequate time, support from facilitators with information technology, there are few negative experiences reported. While a lack of negative impacts reported
in the literature would indicate that most participants find the experience of participating in a digital storytelling workshop a positive one, the possibility of social desirability influencing survey responses needs to be considered. Additional studies which explore whether certain groups of vulnerable adults or children find the process more positive than others as well as the short and long term impacts on participants would be very valuable but beyond the scope of this thesis. In addition, further discussion in the literature about how to address challenges around confidentiality in disseminating digital stories would also be useful to help inform the increasing number of professionals using digital storytelling in research or as part of therapeutic practice. The following chapter will outline the research method of the current study including the way in which digital storytelling was used to capture the voices of children and young people who had experienced family violence.
Chapter 6: Methodology, method and ethics

Theory is present in all qualitative studies because no study could be designed without some question being asked (explicitly or implicitly). How that question is phrased and how it is worked into a problem statement reflect a theoretical orientation (Merriam, 2014, p. 66).

The theoretical framework guiding the research method of this study is multifaceted and includes a constructionist view of knowledge and how it is created, a new sociology of childhood orientation and feminist understanding of family violence. This chapter will outline how these theoretical influences have shaped the content and focus of the current study as well as how the ethical issues that arose in the development of the research method were addressed. This chapter will also outline how the data generated by this research was analysed using thematic network analysis.

As outlined in chapter one, the research method for the current study is heavily influenced by a feminist understanding of family violence. As Reinharz and Davidman (1992) suggest, there is no single ‘feminist way’ to do research, instead feminist research uses a range of individual creativity and variety (p.241). In the earliest waves of feminism, qualitative research was considered more compatible with exploring the kind of knowledge about women’s lives that feminists sought, with semi-structured or unstructured interviews considered the most suitable method (Maynard, 1994). This perspective has changed over time with quantitative research also now valued as way of gaining a different perspective on the lives of women. Regardless, the qualitative history of feminist research remains a strong pillar of current work and underpins this study.

Feminist researchers have been particularly sensitive to the hierarchy of power that exists between a researcher and the researched where ‘the researcher has access to all information about the study, its designs, and questions, the participant does not’ (Campbell & Wasco, 2000, p. 785). Concern with hierarchical relationships of power is also a consideration in research with young people undertaken following a new sociology of childhood approach (Hunleth, 2011). Punch (2002, p. 329) suggests that ‘the nature of childhood in adult society means that children tend to lack experience of adults treating them as equals’.

Fitting with both a constructionist approach to knowledge and a feminist approach to research, is the idea that research methods should ‘empower communities to become involved in research that is about their own lives’ (Karnilowicz, Ali, & Phillmore, 2014, p. 355). In addition, research influenced by the new sociology of childhood has seen an increased recognition of the importance of gaining children and young people’s perspectives, with growing agreement that children are the experts on their own
needs and experiences (Saywitz, Camparo, & Romanoff, 2010). McCurry (2012) suggests that there is no longer a need to justify why children should be consulted, with the debate now centred on how best to achieve this.

More recently, there has been support not only for listening to children but engaging them in the research process with researchers moving away from traditional methods to engage children in more participatory or interactive methods of research (Barker & Weller, 2003). Lundy, McEvoy, and Byrne (2011) see it as essential for children to be involved in the design and delivery of research projects if their rights and interests are to be respected. The literature on research with children under a new sociology of childhood approach suggests that there are many ways for researchers to involve children in research. While some researchers now seek to involve children and young people at the very start of the research process, other researchers have developed youth advisory bodies to oversee the research process (Mccurry, 2012). While there was some consideration of involving children and young people in the earliest stages of this research, there are some challenges in doing this in practice.

As outlined by Franks (2011), involving children and young people in the earliest stages of research and method design can be problematic. Ethical approval is commonly required before commencing research and this process requires a fairly detailed description of the research design before approval can be obtained to commence recruitment and engagement with children. In addition, some researchers question whether it is appropriate to involve children and young people as co-researchers when the subject matter is sensitive or traumatic (McCurry, 2012).

Research undertaken in the new sociology of childhood use a broad range of traditional methods as well as newer technologies, with many studies with children using multiple methods. The use of multiple methods of collecting data when working within child-focused research has been comprehensively documented by Crivello, Camfield, and Woodhead (2009). These authors suggest that use of several methods of collecting data is favoured when working with children in recognition that they possess a broad range of capacities and preferences for expressing themselves (Crivello, Camfield, & Woodhead, 2009).

A number of research studies with children mention a desire to make the research ‘fun’ for participants as a central goal driving method design (Hunleth, 2011; Punch, 2002). The literature suggests that methods in which children produce data through a range of practical activities can be more engaging (Gallagher & Gallagher, 2008). As a result, researchers are using a range of activities to facilitate children’s participation by introducing craft, games, drawing and other activities where children can choose the direction and focus of the discussion in either individual or groups settings (Fargas-Malet,
It has been suggested that children who have difficulties in expressing themselves verbally or in writing may find more creative research opportunities more pleasurable (Spyrou, 2011). A range of newer technologies are also being used in research with children including digital photography and video diaries (Fournier, Bridge, Pritchard Kennedt, Alibhai, & Konde-Lule, 2014; Gibbs, MacDougall, & Harden, 2013; Heidelberger & Smith, 2016).

Another issue that emerges from research with children within a new sociology of childhood approach is the need for researchers to be very clear with children and young people about the likely impacts of the research (Franks, 2011; McCarry, 2012; Parkes, 2008). A study by Parke (2008) looked at children’s experience of violence in South Africa. During the research process, a group of 13 year old girls asked for their ideas to be taken to the government which prompted Parkes to note the danger of research implying false promises and recognition that her study may have ‘generated in children a sense of agency that was not matched to the everyday reality of children’s marginalisation’ (p. 303). Franks (2011) also commented on the blurred distinction between the role of a researcher with vulnerable children and that of an advocate. (Franks, 2011) conducting research with a disadvantaged group is a commitment in itself to further the goals of the group being researched. This was an issue that was considered in the current study.

In order to encourage children to feel more comfortable with an adult researcher, methods that are ‘more sensitive to children’s particular competencies or interests’ are often used by researchers influenced by the new sociology of childhood (Punch, 2002). This issue was given consideration in the current study where efforts were made to attempt to shift the traditional researcher/participant balance of power through the use of a combination of traditional and more innovative and participatory research methods.

Participatory Action Research is described as the approach to research and evaluation ‘that builds a partnership with those with knowledge and invites them to reflect on what they know’ with those insights then used to help inform social change (Ungar, McGrath, Black, Sketris, Whitman, & Liebenberg, 2015, p. 601). Participatory Action Research was designed as a community development strategy which would build the capacity of and increase the relevance of research to the community in which it occurs (Ungar, McGrath, Black, Sketris, Whitman, & Liebenberg, 2015). A participatory Action Research approach was considered for the current study however consultation with other PhD students and academic staff suggested that this would be difficult to achieve in the short timelines and resources of a PhD project. Klocker (2012), suggests that ‘the small body of literature specific to
graduate research using PAR circulates a standard (and discouraging) message: PAR is more demanding and difficult than conventional research, and doctoral students attempting PAR will face many battles’ (p.151). Therefore a pragmatic decision was made to make the research as child focussed as possible but that the research would be designed and carried out by adults rather than a partnership approach with children and young people.

Efforts to ensure research with vulnerable groups, including children, is more participatory and empowering, has been driven by a need to ensure that participants can see the positive impact of their research participation (Liegghio, Nelson, & Evans, 2010, p. 90; McNamara, 2013). This principle was reflected in the current study with the use of digital storytelling was particularly informed by the feminist research tradition of exploring alternative media to present research findings to ‘...target audiences beyond the academic elite, and aim to involve and touch them on an emotional and moral, as well as intellectual level’ (Giacomini, 2010). In this way the study aimed to embed the voices of children and young people in a program area where their voices are seldom heard.

**Research framework**

The current research comprised three stages, with each guided by a research question which was developed iteratively and involved a different method of data collection. The first stage of the research used focus groups and interviews to explore the question: ‘What are the perspectives of children and young people on fathers in the context of family violence?’ The second stage of the research used a digital storytelling workshop to explore ‘What are the key messages children and young people who have experienced family violence have for fathers who attend a program to address his violence?’ The final stage of the research aimed to explore the question: ‘What are the likely impacts of children and young people’s digital stories on a program for fathers who use violence and its participants?’

**Recruitment and sampling**

A Steering Committee comprising two community organisations and University of Melbourne researchers was initially established to discuss the development of an ethics application to submit to the University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). This Steering Committee provided advice about the study design and the community organisations involved agreed to assist in the recruitment of young people for the study.

In her book on conducting research with vulnerable populations Liamputtong (2007) suggests that when undertaking research with vulnerable groups, it can be useful having a person who is respected
amongst the population you are focussed on to provide an introduction and create a ‘bridge’ to link researchers into a new social world. For this project, recruitment of young people occurred through the workers that were supporting the young people. In this way, the approach to participate in the research came from someone the young person knew. In order to recruit sufficient young people for the study, the researcher approached a number of community based organisations providing support to young people who had experienced family violence. The researcher (or supervisor) would approach organisations initially by phone, ask to attend a staff meeting to speak to program/support workers about the project and to encourage recruitment. A total of four young people were recruited through the two community organisations on the Steering Committee with an additional 12 young people recruited for the study across an additional four organisations.

The difficulty of recruiting community organisations and their clients to participate in research has been well documented (Campbell, 2008) and was also a challenge for the current study. Initial contact with organisations found considerable enthusiasm to participate from workers and program managers. However challenges arose when it came time to identify suitable participants for focus groups. Organisations reported that in practice, few of their group based programs were being run purely for children and/or young people who had experienced family violence. Another issue that arose in the recruitment process was that a number of the organisations only worked with a younger primary school aged cohort. Not only were these organisations interested in participating, they were particularly passionate about the need for the voices of this younger age group to be included in the project given the strong views they had about feeling ignored by many of the institutional processes in their lives. Given the theoretical underpinnings of the research in the new sociology of childhood, an amendment was sought and approved to lower the minimum age of recruitment from 12 years down to nine years.

As this research was interested in gaining the perspectives of a specific population (young people who had experienced family violence), a non-probability method of sampling was adopted. Purposive sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton 2002). This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about, or experienced with, a phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2002).

In this study, the form of purposive sampling applied was ‘criterion sampling’ where all cases that met certain criteria were selected (Patton, 2002). The inclusion criteria established to guide recruitment, included young people in the approved age range (initially 12-21 years and then 9-21 years) who had
experienced family violence and who were attending a program or support service and had already spoken about the violence. This approach was adopted in recognition of the evidence that conducting research with young people who have already talked about their experiences of family violence reduces the likelihood of distress (Stafford & Smith, 2009).

A total of 16 children and young people participated in the research. Participants in the study were aged from 9 to 19 years (with an average age of 13 years) and included three boys and 13 girls. Young people in the study came from both rural and metropolitan areas of Victoria with nine young people from metropolitan Melbourne and seven from rural Victoria. Two of the young people spoke a language other than English at home and one young person identified as Aboriginal.

Ethical considerations for focus group and interviews

Once the research design was completed a Human Research Ethics Application was prepared and submitted to the University of Melbourne. A two stage process required approval to be gained from the School of Medical, Dental and Health Sciences as well as the University’s central Human Research Ethics Committee. The completed application can be found at Appendix 2.

An additional ethics application was required by one of the non-government organisations who agreed to participate in the project. As a result of this process a small number of changes to procedures were made to the way contact occurred with the parents of minors. A card was also developed which listed a number of services and supports young people could contact if they experienced distress as a result of their participation and wanted to discuss those issues with someone other than their existing worker (Appendix 3).

Like all research undertaken with vulnerable populations, an important part of the development of the research method for this study was the consideration of ethical issues. For any research conducted in the area of family violence, there are a range of specific issues relating to ensuring the safety of all family members that have to be considered. These included: issues relating to preventing coercion, gaining informed consent, disclosure of abuse and issues relating to safety, payments, confidentiality and anonymity.

As the young people recruited for the research were in a therapeutic relationship with the agencies, particular attention was given to ensuring that the possibility for coercion was minimised. To ensure young people’s consent to participate in the research was free and unencumbered by a sense of obligation to the organisation they attend for support, a clear delineation was made between the staff
of the organisation and the researcher. In addition, the plain language statement for the study clearly articulated that regardless of whether they decided to participate in the study, the service young people would receive from the organisation would not alter. This was also reiterated verbally at the commencement of the focus group and interview sessions.

Gaining informed consent with vulnerable young people is an ethically challenging issue that has received much attention in the literature. Some research has identified a group of young people as mature or competent minors and have exempted these young people from needing parental consent (Morris, Hegarty, & Humphreys, 2012). Competent minors have been described as needing to have enough knowledge to understand what is proposed and enough discretion to be able to make a sensible decision in light of their own interests (Fargas-Malet, McSherry, Larkin, & Robinson, 2010).

Given the age group of young people in scope for this project (9-15 year old minors and 16-21 young people) a two pronged approach was undertaken. For those aged 16-21, their informed consent was sought. Like other research with children (Cocks, 2006) it was determined that for those aged 15 and younger, their assent would be obtained as well as the consent of their parent/guardian. Asking children for their assent to participate, acknowledges that regardless of whether they are able to fully comprehend all of the implications for their participation, their level of understanding is sufficient to decide whether to participate or not. In order to address risks associated with perpetrators becoming aware of their child’s participation in this research, only the consent of the non-offending parent/guardian was sought which is an approach adopted in other studies with children who have experienced family violence (Morris, Hegarty, & Humphreys, 2012).

In the context of the feminist and new sociology of childhood underpinnings of this research, another ethical issue that was considered was that of the power imbalance between the researcher and the young person. Focus groups were initially chosen as the best opportunity for reducing the power imbalance, but as will be outlined, recruitment challenges meant this method had to be revised. Other efforts to mitigate the power imbalance between the researcher and young people included carrying out the interviews in a place familiar to the young person and allowing them to have a support person/worker to attend.

Like all research in the area of family violence, the researchers were mindful of ensuring that no young person (or their family) became at greater risk from the perpetrator of the family violence as a result of participation in this research. A risk assessment was developed and was completed by young people aged above 16 and with the mother of those aged 15 and under (See Appendix 2i). The risk assessment asked about who the child/young person was living with, whether the child/young person had contact
with their father and was fearful of their father and the possible consequences of their father becoming aware of their participation in the research. The assessment also asked about the child/young person’s general health and wellbeing. This assessment was a useful tool for discussion between the family and their worker when deciding whether a young person would participate in the research. The support workers completed these assessments before referring them to the researcher.

Another ethical issue considered in the development of the research method was whether participants should be offered a payment for their participation. Some have expressed concern that offering payments to vulnerable people for participation in research can be coercive (Dickert, Emanuel, & Grady, 2002). Rice and Broome (2004) suggest that the use of incentives in research with children is a controversial issue due to the inferior power relationships with adults and their inability to weigh risks and benefits. However a feminist approach to research has traditionally considered payment to participants as a principle of ethically sound research (Crivello, Camfield, & Woodhead, 2009). A number of researchers advocate for offering some compensation to vulnerable persons who participate in research in order to value the skills and time given as well as equalise the power relationship to some degree (Wiebel, 1990).

Rice and Broome (2004) suggest that any rewards to research participants should be proportionate to the time, effort and level of commitment required. In this project the young people participated in the research in their own time. Therefore it is felt that children should be rewarded not only for their time but for the emotional cost of participation. It has been suggested that by not mentioning payments to research participants upfront, this reduces the ‘possibility of tempting participants to expose themselves to a level of risk they would otherwise not agree to’ but also removes any possibility that financial compensation can assist recruitment (Braun, 2013). A number of the organisations stated that their internal policies required an honorarium be paid to clients who participate in research. For this research it was decided that young people’s contribution to the project should be acknowledged and they were given a $20 gift voucher for participating in the interview/focus group and an additional $40 voucher for attending the two days of the digital storytelling Workshop.

An additional issue that arose in this research was the need for the young people’s identity to remain anonymous. A number of measures were introduced in the second stage of the research and this will be discussed later in this chapter. Due to the small size of the sample and the fact that young people were promised that their comments would not be attributed to them, in the results section of this research, young people’s quotations are presented without reference to their gender or age and by a number denoting the order in which they were interviewed. The use of pseudonyms was considered
but only at the completion of the research when it was too late to allow children and young people to select their own name and it was not felt appropriate for the researcher to select names on their behalf.

Another possible risk of this project as with any with children about violence is that there would be disclosure of current/ongoing abuse. As Patton (2002) suggests, researchers should be prepared and have a framework in case disclosure occurs. For this study, a protocol was developed which outlines how disclosure of ongoing abuse would be responded to if it was to occur (Appendix 2ii). It is important to note that between the development of methodology for this project and the completion of parts of the ethics process a new ‘failure to disclose’ offence was introduced in the state of Victoria which made it a criminal act for an adult to fail to make a report if they have reasonable belief an adult has sexually abused a child (Appendix 4). All young people were informed about this responsibility to report any concerns about child safety at the start of the research project and in their informed consent and plain language statements.

Another issue for consideration in research of this type is the need to prepare for any instances of participant distress. The Steering Committee overseeing this project was in favour of ensuring a staff member from the organisation where the focus group/interview was being held would be present at each of the focus group sessions to ensure that each young person had a familiar worker they could receive support from should they become distressed during the research process. As already outlined, a resource card was also developed (See Appendix 3). Additional ethical issues arose in planning for the second stage of the research, the digital storytelling workshop and these will be outlined later in this chapter.

**Stage 1: Focus groups/interviews**

The first phase of the research explored the perspectives of children and young people on fathers in the context of family violence. Focus Groups were initially chosen for this stage of the research for a number of reasons including the compatibility with theoretical underpinnings of the study and the fact that focus groups have been found to be research method suitable both for working with children and young people as well as a supportive way to undertake research on sensitive issues.

Focus Groups have been considered powerful in reducing power imbalances as noted by a number of feminist researchers (Jowett & O’Toole, 2006; Wilkinson, 2004). It has been suggested, that focus groups are attractive to researchers working from ‘power sensitive’ theoretical perspectives as they reduce the imbalance in power relationships. In addition, researchers suggest that small focus groups
are one of the best ways to obtain data from children, because they replicate a natural and familiar form of communication in which children talk with their peers (Gibson, 2012).

Considerable research has documented the benefits of the use of focus groups to empower and give voices to marginalised groups (Bagnoli & Clark, 2010) while providing an opportunity to gain ‘rich amounts of data in the respondents’ own words’ (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rooks, 2007, p. 42). It has been suggested that there is a common misconception that people will be inhibited by the possibility of talking about sensitive topics in a group setting, while evidence suggests that the group setting actually facilitates disclosure and makes people more comfortable discussing sensitive topics than an individual interview (Wilkinson, 2004). Kitzinger (1995) suggests that focus groups ‘can actively facilitate the discussion of taboo topics because the less inhibited members of the group break the ice for shyer participants’ (p.300). It has also been suggested that focus groups are a suitable way of exploring sensitive issues with vulnerable populations as they can provide peer support and reassurance allowing people to feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts with others who have had similar experiences (Liamputtong, 2007).

While the suitability of focus groups as a research method for sensitive research with young people was strongly supported by the literature, in practice the use of focus groups was found to be problematic for a number of reasons. One issue (as mentioned earlier) was finding groups running specifically for young people who had experienced family violence and focussed on the adolescent/young adult age group was a challenge as most groups seemed to be running for a much younger (primary school aged) children. In addition, the lives of the young people and their families were of a nature that crises emerged and therefore at certain times it became unsuitable for some young people to participate, making scheduling focus groups difficult. Workers also reported some young people wanting to participate in the research but not wanting to participate in a group discussion.

While one focus group was run with four young people, difficulties in recruiting additional focus groups meant that it was agreed that individual interviews would also be offered. There is precedent for the use of interviews with children about their experiences of family violence in other Australian studies (Callaghan, Alexander, Sixsmith, & Fellin, 2015; Irwin, Waugh, & Bonner, 2006; Morris, Hegarty, & Humphreys, 2012). Once interviews were offered, more young people were recruited and an additional 12 interviews were conducted. Some young people (N=4) participated in an interview with a sibling. It should be noted that interviews were conducted with two young people via telephone as they did not attend their scheduled interview time but were very determined to participate in the
research. A total of 16 young people participated in the research which was slightly lower than the 20 participants initially sought. Additional interviews were not able to be conducted due to the time constraints posed by the second stage of the research, with the digital storytelling workshop dates being set well in advance for the upcoming school holidays. It should be noted that additional young people were sought for interview once the digital storytelling workshop was completed, however no additional interviews were able to be engaged, with organisations being less interested in encouraging young people to participate in a research study without there being a tangible benefit for their clients (such as the opportunity to participate in the digital storytelling workshop).

It has been suggested that when undertaking interviews it is extremely important to capture what interviewees have said in their own words (Patton, 2002). In agreement with this view, all focus group and interviews were audio-recorded and sent to a professional transcription service. Seale, Gobo, Gubrium, and Silverman (2004) suggests that academic research mostly uses transcription of interviews rather than just note taking as it allows for the analyst to ‘return to the data and respond to challenges’ (p.73). It has also been suggested that the use of tape recorders allows the interviewer to be more attentive to the interviewee rather than being focussed on taking copious notes (Patton, 2002). The interviews and focus groups questions were structured around five questions which were developed in partnership with the Steering Committee outlined earlier in this chapter. The interview questions were:

**Question 1**  What do you think makes a good father?

**Question 2**  Sometimes fathers do things that are frightening, what impact do you think this behaviour might have on their children?

**Question 3**  Some fathers do things that are frightening and abusive attend a program to learn to behave differently, we would be interested in knowing:

- Whether you think young people should be told if their father is attending a program?
- What changes in their father do you think young people would like to see after they completed a program?
- How would young people decide whether the program ‘had worked’?
If the voices of children and young people were to be included in one of these programs what do you think would be the key messages or things they would want fathers who use frightening behaviour to know?

**Question 4** If we wanted to make sure that fathers who attended a program for their frightening and/or abusive behaviour get a better understanding of children’s perspectives how do you think we could do this?

**Question 5** I would now like to ask you about the type of father you would like to be/ Like your partner to be to your children.

For greater detail about the interview questions and prompts used see Appendix 2iii.

**Stage 2: Digital storytelling**

**Using visual methods in research with young people**

Amongst those who undertake research with children there has been significant enthusiasm about the development of research methods that are both ‘fun’ and ‘child friendly’ (Kirk, 2007). Increasingly visual research methods are being used as an acknowledgement that they can offer potential for working with vulnerable populations and young people.

Visual research methods encompass a broad range of techniques (such as drawing, scrapbooking, photography and video) one of those being used fairly widely is ‘photovoice’. Photovoice is the use of photographs with accompanying descriptions by the photographer (Walsh, Rutherford, & Kuzmak, 2010). Drew, Duncan, and Sawyer (2010) outline six key reasons why they used photovoice as part of their research method for young people living with a long term health problem. These include wanting to focus on young people as social actors, wanting to seek information from young people directly, to promote depth of communication and to appeal to young people with an activity they would enjoy. They also describe this method of research as enabling and empowering young people as well as promoting young people’s voices being heard through the research.

Given the underpinnings of the current study in the new sociology of childhood it is these last two points that are particularly salient for this piece of research and explain in part why visual research methods have been incorporated into this study. Guillemin and Drew (2010) suggest that
participant-generated visual methodologies are beneficial not only to researchers, but potentially also to participants. Image-based methodologies can foster a sense of participation, particularly for those groups who are often reluctant to participate in research, such as young people. By fostering participation, these methodologies can be empowering, giving voice to those who may not otherwise be heard (p.177).

The digital storytelling workshop

In consideration of the potential offered by visual methodologies and the encouraging findings from a scoping review of the impact of participating in digital storytelling workshops (as outlined in Chapter 4) the second stage of the research was carried out in the form of a two day workshop at The Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI). ACMI has been running digital storytelling workshops with different groups and individuals for a number of years. The workshops guide people through the telling of a personal story using multimedia tools. ACMI has created digital stories with a number of groups around sensitive topics including Aboriginal young people, survivors of cancer, war veterans and those impacted by the Victorian bushfires. The ACMI workshop was provided with funding from a charitable organisation, the Luke Batty Foundation which was established by Rosie Batty, a family violence campaigner, former Australian of the Year and the mother of an 11 year old boy who was murdered by his father following years of post-separation family violence.

Ideally ACMI requires participants to undertake a three day workshop, however following discussions with the project’s Steering Committee and concerns about the young people being asked to give up three days of their school holidays, it was decided that a modified two day workshop would be planned. Other research using digital storytelling also noted the need to ensure flexibility in workshop length and have used a shorter two day format to produce digital stories (Gubrium, 2009).

Young people who participated in either the focus group or interviews were asked to self-select to participate in the digital storytelling workshop. At this workshop they were assisted to develop a short piece of work (3-4 minutes long) outlining the key messages they have for fathers who use violence. A total of ten places were available in the workshop and eight young people participated which was an exciting achievement for everyone involved.

At the commencement of the workshop the researcher gave the young people a short summary of the issues raised across the interviews and focus groups and then asked them to write down all of the key messages they had for fathers and then they started to develop a script for their story. By the end of the first day all of the young people had written and edited a script and recorded a voice over for their
story. On the second day the young people worked to select images and music to accompany their voice over. Several of the digital stories created can be found at https://violenceagainstwomenandchildren.com/.

Ethical considerations and digital storytelling

Ethical considerations played a significant part in determining how the digital storytelling workshop was run. The issue of informed consent for this stage of the work required consideration. As for stage one, young people aged 16 and over were considered mature minors and able to consent to participate for themselves and for those aged under 16 parental consent to participate was sought (consent forms and plain language statements are at Appendix 2ix, 2x, 2xi and 2xii). The more challenging aspect of the informed consent process was ensuring the young people were clear about how their digital stories were going to be used. A paper by Guillemin (2010) suggests that too often researchers do not discuss the use of visual resources until the end of the project and suggests that this discussion should be an ongoing one. In consideration of this point, in the current study the discussion about the ownership and use of the digital stories was initiated in the first session of the workshop and then discussed again in the final session. In addition to the two group discussions, an individual discussion occurred with each young person about how they felt about their stories being used to educate practitioners and within programs for fathers.

At the conclusion of the research, once the digital stories were completed (with credits and titles added), all digital stories were sent out to the young people with details for how they could provide feedback about their final stories and also the process of being involved in the research. This was done because as Liamputtong (2007) suggests, the provision of research results back to participants is one way to show respect, she recommends allowing participants to re-read what they have said to make sure they are still happy. While some young people provided no additional feedback, several young people provided feedback that they had enjoyed the process and found it interesting but that they had felt pressured by the tight timelines and the adults assisting them to make some decisions about content and layout of their stories in a rush and this had impacted on their degree of happiness about how the final product looked and how their voices sounded.

In addition, as all of the young people still felt in some degree of danger from their fathers, it was decided across the group that no young person would be identifiable in their story. This meant that all images for the digital stories were taken from the ACMI Image Library. It was also determined that all identifiable stories would be altered to be slightly different (for example an event which occurred on a 9th birthday would be changed to say on my 7th birthday). The voices of all of the young people were
digitally altered as well to ensure they could not be identified which was an effective strategy in protecting identity but did lead to the voices sounding somewhat ‘robotic’ and this is an issue that concerned some of the young people and will be discussed further in the context of feasibility testing in chapter 9.

This issue of anonymity was challenging for this research and is often discussed in the literature in a range of contexts. Patton (2002) suggests that traditionally researchers believed that protecting research participant’s privacy was paramount but that these norms are now being challenged ‘by new directions in qualitative inquiry’ (p.411). Participatory research in particular supports the concept that ‘participants should stand on equal ground with academics’ and questions what happens to that ground when participants are given pseudonyms or their names are deleted in materials produced through a research process that was meant to be empowering’ (Gubrium, Hill, & Flicker, 2014, p. 1611). Others suggest that the researcher should consider the knowledge power dynamic that allows them to attach their name to a journal article, while the participants work goes unacknowledged suggesting, ‘There is a nebulous line between protecting and patronizing potential storytellers’ (Gubrium, Hill, & Flicker, 2014, p. 1609). This is an issue considered by Phelan and Kinsella (2013) who question whether deciding to blur faces or not use photographs of young people in research is an example of researchers silencing children in an attempt to protect them. In the context of digital storytelling, a researcher from the Silence Speaks project found that rather than desiring anonymity, storytellers often spoke of wanting to be identifiable to show they had acquired skills in media, storytelling and were experts on their topic (cited in Gubrium et al., 2014, p.1611). Similarly work in the United Kingdom found that young people did not want to be anonymized in visual or textual data (Bagnoli & Clark, 2010).

For this study, the risks of identifying young people went beyond that of regret or embarrassment. In this research the risk of fathers becoming angry and abusive or violent towards their children or their partner for allowing them to participate in the research was significant. Therefore a decision was made to ensure all stories were anonymous. Not all young people agreed with this decision, as some suggested that they felt quite safe and proud of their work. However when the actual risks of their father viewing the stories was discussed, there was general agreement that anonymity was the safest option. In recognition of the contribution and achievements of the young people, each was given a copy of their final story along with a certificate that showed they had successfully completed a ‘Digital Storytelling Workshop’ at ACMI without details of the subject of their stories.
In terms of coercion and disclosure of abuse and distress, the same protections that were enacted for the focus groups were relevant for this second stage of the research as well. In addition a support worker was funded to attend both days of the digital storytelling workshop and provide support to anyone who became upset or distressed during the workshop. As Gubrium, Hill, and Flicker (2014) suggest, the digital storytelling ‘experience can be triggering as participants may choose to tell painful stories’ (p.1609).

Digital storytelling and data collection

Deciding on a data analysis method for the digital storytelling workshop was a challenge. The literature provided some guidance but this is an area that is currently underdeveloped. A range of ways of collecting and analysing data from the digital storytelling workshop were considered in planning the research. These included Narrative Analysis of the stories and ethnographic observation of how the stories were made. However it became clear during the workshop that rich data was being created by the young people themselves in the form of the scripts for their digital stories. As other researchers have suggested, the process of allowing young people to indicate what they saw as the areas of greatest importance can ensure the young people’s influence on the research process and reduced ‘reliance on researcher- generated logic about which areas were important to focus upon’ (Drew, Duncan, & Sawyer, 2010, p. 1686).

At the commencement of the workshop, children and young people were asked to write a list of key messages they had for fathers who use violence. From this list, the young people selected the messages they wanted to focus on in their story. Therefore the written material produced by the young people (both the initial documents and the final script) provided a rich source of data which was compatible with and expanded on some of the issues raised in the interviews and focus group. Several conversations with young people during the workshop were also taped and transcribed and analysed with the other written material.

Stage 3: Feasibility workshop

The final stage of this research was a preliminary discussion about the feasibility of using the young people’s digital stories within programs for fathers who use violence. A workshop was held with professionals who either facilitate or manage programs for fathers who use violence across both Aboriginal Community Controlled and mainstream services. The group of professionals was accessed at a day of professional development/networking for services working with fathers who use violence. Program managers and facilitators were invited stay for an extra session at the end of the day if they
were interested in seeing the young people’s stories and participating in a discussion. An email was also sent to a mailing list of Men’s Behavioural Change Programs through their peak body ‘No to Violence’ inviting program workers and managers who were interested to attend the session. The purpose of the workshop was to determine whether workers believed that it would be feasible to introduce the digital stories created by young people into Men’s Behavioural Change Programs and what the impacts and challenges of doing this might be. A total of 21 professionals attended the screening and discussion.

At the commencement of the workshop four of the young people’s digital stories were shown to the group and then the professionals were split into 3 groups and were asked a series of questions by facilitators (University researchers) asking them to reflect on what they had seen which included:

- Do you think these digital stories could be used in programs for fathers who use violence?
- What do you think the stories would bring to the program content?
- How do you think fathers would respond, react to or receive these stories?
- What would be the challenges to programs to introduce these stories?
- Are there other ways that children could be more involved in programs for fathers who use violence?

The three discussions were audio recorded, transcribed and analysed.

**Data analysis**

Data analysis is defined as the ‘process of systematically arranging and presenting information in order to search for ideas’ (Minichiello, Aroni, & Alexander, 1995, p. 247). It has also been described as the process of ‘piecing together data, of making the invisible obvious, of recognizing the significant from the insignificant’ (Morse, 1994). Patton (2002) suggests that one of the largest challenges for qualitative researchers is making sense of large volumes of data, as was the case in the current study. A decision was made to analyse the data collected from interviews and focus groups with the data collected as part of the digital storytelling workshop. This decision was made due to the similarity of issues raised in both stages of the research. Data from the feasibility workshop was analysed separately.
Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS)

Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) QSR NVIVO was used to facilitate the analysis, with all interview/focus group transcripts and scripts produced in the digital storytelling workshop loaded into the software. The use of CAQDAS is widespread in qualitative research (Kelle, 2004). As a number of researchers point out, software such as NVIVO are tools that assists in data management and analysis but ‘...can’t provide the creativity and intelligence that make each qualitative analysis unique’ (Patton, 2002, p. 44).

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data for all three stages of the research and is a process for encoding qualitative information which often involve the development of themes or patterns found in the information that describes an organises or interprets aspects of the phenomenon (Boyatzis, 1998). According to Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012), thematic analysis moves beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focuses on identifying and describing ideas within the data. Thematic analysis is suitable for use across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches including constructionist paradigms (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Boyatzis (1998) notes that thematic analysis is a technique that is often used by researchers, but which is often skipped over or omitted from reporting. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that a lack of information about how data has been analysed, and the assumptions which informed that analysis makes it very difficult to evaluate and replicate a research study. In seeking direction in the process of thematic analysis, an article about ‘thematic network analysis’ was located (Attride-Stirling, 2001). This article attempted to address the gap in information available about exactly how researchers carry out thematic analysis and in doing so describes a number of steps (Attride-Stirling, 2001). While there are a number of ways to conduct thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Tuckett, 2005), it was decided that the systematic method outlined by Attride-Stirling (2001) would be useful to guide analysis of the current research.

According to Attride-Stirling (2001) there are six steps in thematic network analysis and these include:

1. Code Material
2. Identify Themes
3. Construct Thematic Networks
4. Explore the Text
5. Summarise Thematic Networks
6. Interpret Patterns

Figure 3 shows the structure of thematic networks.

![Figure 3: Structure of Thematic Networks taken from Attride-Stirling (2001, p. 388)](image)

Code material

The first phase of the data analysis process described by Attride-Stirling (2001) was the development of a ‘coding framework’ shaped according to the theoretical interests and/or research questions guiding the study or the significant issues that arise throughout the research process. Minichiello, Aroni, and Alexander (1995) suggest that any researcher who wishes to do good qualitative research must learn to code well as this allows the researcher to ‘reorganise the data according to topics which open the inquiry and permit the researcher to make sense of the thousands of lines of words’ (p. 257). The coding framework was developed within QSR NVIVO and has been reproduced as a word document at Appendix 5.

The second step required the data or text to be dissected into segments using the coding framework (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The authors note a need to ensure that codes have explicit boundaries and definitions. For the current study the process of developing a coding framework was an iterative one which was revised continuously throughout the analysis process. However an initial framework was developed with the most significant challenge, ensuring that no analysis or interpretation crept in at this early stage.
Identify themes

The second stage of analysis occurred once all of the text had been coded within the framework established in NVIVO. In this stage of the analysis all common or significant themes were identified through a re-reading of the data located in each code. In this way, underlying patterns and structures were pulled out and developed to ensure that they were broad enough to encompass a range of ideas but also specific enough to differentiate each theme from each other. In this way the data was arranged ‘into a more manageable set of significant themes that succinctly summarizes the text’ (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 392).

Construct thematic networks

Once the major themes in the text were established it was possible to start arranging them into similar groups with each becoming a thematic network comprising of basic themes and organising themes which are all connected to a global or overarching theme. The basic themes were already identified from the coding process and they were then arranged into clusters of related or shared issues which Attride-Stirling (2001) define as ‘organising themes’. By looking at the claims and principles encapsulated in each of the organising themes the global theme or themes were then identified. For this research, the data was divided into two parts through an iterative process, each with its own global theme. The two global themes were; ‘Children and young people experiences of and aspirations for fathers in the context of family violence’ and ‘Children and young people’s perspectives on reparation’.

Each of the two global themes comprised several organising themes underpinned by a set of basic themes. This stage of the analysis took some time with the networks in one of the sections more easily delineated and arranged than the other. The second part of the network took a longer time to arrange given the larger volume and diversity of data it contained and considerable discussion occurred with the research supervisors to ensure that the themes encompassed all the major issues which were identified in the data coding. The thematic network model of (Attride-Stirling (2001)) presents the networks as ‘non-hierarchical, web-like representations’ where each global theme produces a network (p.393). A process of ‘verifying and refining the networks’ was then followed to ensure the content of each basic theme, organising theme and global theme were consistent with some adjustments made at this time (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

Describe, Explore and Summarise Thematic Networks

Once the thematic networks were developed, a process of exploring the thematic networks occurred to ‘to take the researcher deeper into the meaning of the text’ (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 393). Initial
writing up of the findings commenced by taking each network in turn describing its contents with reference to the text from which it derived. As directed by the data analysis method followed, the text was not read in a linear manner but through the lens of the Global Themes, Organising Themes and Basic Themes which resulted in the thematic network becoming a useful tool not just for the researcher but for the reader of the research as well (Attride-Stirling, 2001). In the final stage of data analysis the key concern was tying all of the networks together to create a ‘cohesive story’ while also referring back to the research questions (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 402).

**Reflexive reflection**

The concept of reflexivity is one that is important to researchers working within constructionist, feminist and new sociology of childhood frameworks. It is described by Karnilowicz, Ali, and Phillmore (2014) as a researcher’s capacity to reflect upon their own experiences in the research process in order to enhance and broaden their interpretations of the discourse embedded within an interaction (p.363). Reflexivity is considered a valuable tool to legitimize, validate, and question research practices and representations (Pillow, 2003). In addition it has been suggested that there is a moral imperative for reflexive researchers to communicate openly, ethically and truthfully about their research (Woods, Macklin, & Lewis, 2016).

A review of the literature has uncovered a broad range of ways in which reflexivity can be considered by researchers (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). It is suggested that reflexivity can be particularly important in research with children (Powell & Truscott, 2016). As Nutbrown (2011) suggests, when research involves children there is a need to outline our own ‘positionality’: what brings us to the project; and what we really think about children. She suggests that this calls for self-reflexivity, integrity and honesty (Nutbrown, 2011). Powell and Truscott (2016) suggests that despite the existence of a considerable body of literature promoting the merits of reflexivity, there are ‘few practical tools or frameworks for fostering this in the context of research involving children’ (Powell & Truscott, 2016).

Some of the key areas of consideration in this research were directed towards self-reflexivity, ethical reflexivity and the representation of voice.

**Self-Reflexivity**

As the researcher, my own beliefs, background, culture and experiences all have a significant influence on the current research. It has been suggested that much of the focus on ethical considerations in research explores how not to have an impact on the lives of those involved in research, however I agree with Hosking and Pluut (2010) who argue that all inquiry is intervention. It has been suggested
that although researchers invite participants to speak as experts on a topic, ‘it is usually the researcher whose voice dominates the what, the how, and the why (Hosking & Pluut, 2010, p. 69). This is the case in the current study where I wrote the research questions, the interview questions and determined (parts of) the research method before I had met with any children or young people. As mentioned, the use of a more participatory approach to the development of the research was considered but ultimately rejected as suitable within the tight time constraints of a PhD. It is important to acknowledge that this piece of research was developed by adults but informed by children and young people in the study. One child in the study criticised the interview questions for being too heterosexually focussed with the assumption that they would go on to get married and/or have children challenged. Another young person perceived the research as focussing too heavily on the negative impacts of having a father who uses violence with less opportunity for discussion about the positive side of their father. As a result of children and young people’s comments, revisions were made to several elements of the study. The other way in which I was aware of impacting the research outcomes and findings was in the analysis of the results. As a result of this awareness, in line with a constructionist understanding of knowledge I specifically avoided the use of language which would suggest that the findings ‘emerged’ without interference from the researcher.

**Ethical reflexivity**

Much of the literature on reflexivity focusses on its utility as a tool for ensuring ethical practice (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Authors suggest that being reflexive throughout the research process is just as important a consideration as following the procedural ethics process agreed to at the commencement of the project. Following this approach to reflexivity, a researcher must acknowledge and be sensitive to the ethical dimensions of research practice and be prepared to deal with ethical tensions that undoubtedly will arise (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 278).

One of the ethical dilemmas that often arises for researchers is when to intervene and when to stay in the role of researcher. This was also one I faced in the current research. In several instances child behaviour was such that in my usual position (as a mother of two children) I may have (gently) chastised such behaviour (such as being disrespectful or not listening to other children). But in my role as a researcher I chose to remain silent. In the current study one young male confidently stated that ‘every father is violent sometimes, you know that’. When I asked him to explain how he knew this, he said that he learnt this from both real life and from video games and went on to describe some very violent video games he had been playing. I found this a challenging moment in the interview process. From my position as a parent of a son, this felt like a good teaching moment to talk about how video games are not a source of factual information. However, from a position as a qualitative researcher
this seemed highly inappropriate, especially given the boy’s mother was in the room. I also wanted to engage with the mother and talk to her about why she was allowing her son access to video games rated for use for adults over the age of 18 years. I admit that my concerns went beyond the use of video games reinforcing notions of the ubiquity of male violence but also drew on the knowledge I have about criminology, the intergenerational transmission of violence and concerns about the young person’s likelihood of becoming violent himself. This was a really uncomfortable moment for me both personally and professionally.

A second area of discomfort was the tension between protecting the safety of children and young people in the study while also giving them credit for their work. Often while speaking at conferences or planning for a possible public launch of the digital stories, the irony of the fact that an adult is presenting the findings of research purporting to support children to be seen and heard does not escape me. While co-presentation would seem more appropriate, it would be dangerous given the volatile living situations a number of children in the study are still living in. In addition, this would compromise the ethical agreements around confidentiality I have with the university and other organisations providing support to these young people and their mothers. This is also an issue for which I do not have a perfect solution.

Representations of ‘voice’

In the context of the new sociology of childhood, considerable attention has been focussed on ways to gain children’s ‘voices’ in research. The literature is very clear about the benefits and insights that have been gained through the use of a range of participatory research methods which has painted a clearer picture of how children construct their lives and those around them (Barker & Weller, 2003). More recently there has been criticism about the tendency for childhood research to use participatory methods and claim to be representing the authentic voices of children effectively simplifying and reducing the complexity of children as social actors (Elden, 2012; Gallagher & Gallagher, 2008; Hunleth, 2011; Spyrou, 2011). This adds weight to the importance of self-critical reflection on the research process and the representations researchers claim to make (Elden, 2012). This is a relevant issue for the current research which also claims to present the perspectives of children. It is therefore important to acknowledge the impact of a range of factors which can have an influence on research with children, some of which are outlined in the following sections.

In their paper on the importance of reflexivity Hosking and Pluut (2010) point out that an important consideration in every inquiry are ‘whose voices are (not) included, who’s muted and who’s
silenced’ (Hosking & Pluut, 2010, p. 69). I felt consciously aware of this issue, particularly in the data analysis process. In particular I reflected on whether the voices of the older children were drowning out those of the younger children. In the current study the older young people appeared more confident expressing their perspectives on fathers in the context of family violence and were quite eloquent in expressing their feelings while the younger children were more ambivalent. As Spyrou (2011) suggests what a child ‘does not respond to, omits or ignores—the silent and unsayable’ might actually tell us more than what they do say (p.157). In the current study, at times the only way to ascertain a child’s ambivalence was through body language, pauses and non-verbal cues which are very often difficult to pick up from an audio recording and often did not make it into the data analysis process. I have since reflected on whether video recording and/or ethnographic observation would have added to the analysis but then I believe that some of the younger children may have found being video recorded fairly confronting. So this issue remains somewhat unresolved in my mind. Like others, I am comforted by the words of Pillow (2003) who suggests that:

The qualitative research arena would benefit from more “messy” examples, examples that may not always be successful, examples that do not seek a comfortable, transcendent endpoint but leave us in the uncomfortable realities of doing engaged qualitative research (Pillow, 2003, p. 193).

This chapter has outlined the research method used for the current study in the context of the theoretical framework and particularly new sociology of childhood informed research. By combining the use of traditional research methods with digital technology, this research method created a sense of excitement and enthusiasm amongst workers as well as children and young people. The combination of these methods provided young people with both the chance to learn new skills and the opportunity to shape their message for fathers who use violence in their own words and in their own artistic ‘style’. While the ethical issues surrounding this work were numerous and complex they were not unsurmountable. While some learnings have been gained as a result of this research process, the outcomes in terms of the young people’s contribution was remarkable considering the average age of participants was 13 years. The following three chapters will outline the research findings.
Chapter 7: Children and young people’s perspectives on being parented by a father in the context of family violence

Having an abusive father, it's kind of like having a monster in the closet who sometimes buys you a Christmas present (Young Person 6)

As has been outlined in chapter 6, the current research comprised three stages: interviews and focus groups; a digital storytelling workshop and a feasibility workshop. This chapter will report the findings of the first two phases of the research. As described in Chapter 6, thematic network analysis was used to analyse the data collected in the interviews, focus groups and at the Digital Storytelling Workshop. The thematic networks created through the organisation of data have been divided into two parts (Part A and Part B). The global theme for Part A of the results was ‘Children and young people experiences of and aspirations for fathers in the context of family violence’ ‘and for Part B was ‘Children and young people’s perspectives on reparation’. This Chapter will present the results of Part A and the data for Part B will be provided in Chapter 8. Both this chapter and the following will be structured around the organising themes identified in the data analysis process. In this way the results from the interviews, focus groups and digital storytelling workshop are integrated.

Experiences of and aspirations for fathers

As outlined in the research method in Chapter 6, in the interviews, focus groups and digital storytelling workshop children and young people were asked to reflect on what makes a good father, the impact of having a ‘frightening’ father, and their views about whether programs for fathers who were ‘frightening’ are a good idea. They were also asked to identify important messages for fathers who attend programs about the impact of their behaviour on their children. Young people were also asked about the sort of father they would like to be when they have children (for males) or the type of father they would like for children (if female). When the interview and focus group transcripts and the scripts written in the digital storytelling workshop were analysed a number of key themes were identified using thematic network analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Each of these (basic) themes were then grouped under one of four organising themes: communication, control, role modelling or child centred. See Figure 4 for the thematic networks identified.
Figure 4: Children and young people’s experiences of and aspirations for fathers in the context of family violence (Part A of Results).
It is important to note that the interview/focus group questions were phrased in such a way to allow young people to answer in the abstract or to choose to answer from personal experience. For example, one question asked ‘Sometimes fathers do things that are frightening. What impact do you think this behaviour might have on their children?’ The opportunity for young people to answer in the third person was provided as an option for any young person who did not feel comfortable disclosing their personal experience. The researcher found that the younger children interviewed were more likely to take up this option. Only one young person (aged 10) continued their interview in this mode while the majority of young people commenced their interviews in the third person and then moved into answering from their personal perspective. The tendency for people to talk in the third person has been described by Soderstrom and Skarderud (2013) as a protective mechanism to keep difficult feelings and experiences at a distance. It should also be noted that when young people’s comments are cited in this chapter, they are labelled only by number without reference to age or gender. This decision was made to ensure additional anonymity for the young people to prevent anyone who knew they participated in the research being able to identify them due to the small sample size.

The following section will outline the results under each of the four organising themes: communication, control, role modelling and child centred.

Communication

Communication has been described as ‘a shared activity that enables human relationships to be established and maintained’ (Haslett, 2013, p. 4) and supportive communication within a family has been described as assisting in the development of social and coping skills, and more positive sense of self for adolescents (Noller & Callan, 1990, p. 350). The young people in the study saw meaningful and respectful communication as a skill of good fathers and something often not present in their relationship with their fathers.

Meaningful engagement

When asked about the characteristics of ‘good fathers’, young people described good fathers as someone they could have ‘meaningful’ discussions with, and who showed an interest in and want to be part of their lives. As one young person suggested:

‘... what I think makes a good father is when they’re caring and they ask how your day is and they’re very...like involved with you’. (Young Person 10)
The word ‘supportive’ was also often used to describe a good father by a number of young people. Young person 9 suggests that a good father is:

‘someone that’s supportive. Mm-hm. I don’t know, like they talk to you. I don't know. Um, yeah I guess someone that’s like just supportive of things that you do and just nice to you’. (Young Person 9)

While young people acknowledged that fathers have a role in providing resources to their children they stressed the importance of fathers providing for their children emotionally as well:

‘Yeah. But um, I think it’s not just that, but like, people talk about parents having to provide. But I think it’s not just financially, but emotionally as well. Like my father, when he was around and not being an arsehole, he was very emotionally distant. And like, he wouldn’t interact with us. So I think a lot of it comes down to emotional interaction and communication with your children. Cause yeah, I don’t think a lot of fathers - well - that I've had experiences with - they don’t do that’. (Young Person 5)

Young people often contrasted their aspirations for meaningful relationships with their experiences of their fathers being physically at home but not overly interested in talking to or engaging with them:

‘Like, he was around every day, technically. But it would be like, an hour long dinner and then it would be, go to your room’. (Young Person 6)

Another young person described a good father as one that

‘wouldn’t just sit there and watch TV he would actually care about doing stuff with his kids’. (Young Person 11)

This tendency for fathers who use violence to be ‘quite accessible in a physical sense’ but to be described by their children in terms of ‘lack of care’ and involvement in family life was noted by recent Swedish research (Cater & Forssell, 2014, p. 188) and by a study in Ireland where children who had experienced family violence described feelings of frustration with their fathers lack of interest and unwillingness to spend time with them (Holt, 2015b). One young person in the current study suggested that they believed that one of the reasons that fathers who use violence do not really understand the impacts of their behaviour on their children is because they do not ever really talk to them:
‘cause it’s just like, abusive fathers generally don’t talk to their kids. They don’t understand that they’re having an emotional impact’. (Young Person 5)

In a recent Irish study (Holt, 2015b) some young people found talking to their fathers uncomfortable as they felt they were not really interested in them or their lives. This sentiment was reflected in the current study where young people also described their fathers as being awkward or difficult to talk to:

‘We don’t really have a relationship. He’ll ask me questions and try and talk to me but it’s very awkward, just like a couple of questions and like oh, okay, well that’s good then. Like, that’s about it’. (Young Person 9)

Other young people said that while they would have liked to, they found it difficult to engage in an honest and meaningful way with their fathers for fear that he would become angry as one young person explains:

‘my father would be a bit aggressive towards me… he yells a lot I guess and raises his voice and that can become really intimidating and scary and I don’t like that feeling when I have that with my father, because that’s - I don’t want to be scared of him. I want him to talk to me’. (Young person 7)

Emotional abuse

Young people in the current study talked about how a ‘good father’ would make his children feel special, valued, loved and wanted however they reported that interactions with their father often resulted in verbal or emotional abuse. Garbarino (1989) defines child psychological maltreatment (also referred to as ‘emotional abuse’ in Australia) as a concerted attack on the child’s development of self and social competence, and an attack on the psyche. Garbarino (1989) goes on to outline five categories of psychological maltreatment including; rejection of the child’s worth and needs, isolation of the child from normal social experiences, terrorizing and verbally abusing the child and creating a climate of fear, ignoring or being psychologically unavailable to the child and depriving them of psychological sustenance, corrupting or encouraging the child to engage in antisocial or destructive behaviour (Garbarino, 1989). The young people in the study described examples of their father’s behaviour that would fit into each of these categories.

Several young people spoke about their father swearing at them and calling them names while one young person saw the verbal and emotional abuse as related to their connection with their mother and said:
‘We were products of her, so we got that watered down hatred that he held for her’. (Young Person 6)

One young person showed the researcher an email she received from her father who had found out that she planned to change her surname from her father’s. She explained:

‘this is the first contact he’s had with me since I was 14. He sent me an email saying, “you’re such a worthless bitch”. Like, I can’t believe you’re going and doing this. Like, I’m going to write you out of my will. You know, how are you going to feel when it’s just your mother at your wedding, who everyone hates and despises? Like, don’t you want your father who loves you to be there?’’. (Young Person 5)

This young person’s sister then recalled another incident where her sister had been verbally, physically and emotionally abused,

‘I remember watching it, but [my sister] was on the computer. And [our father] came up behind her, grabbed her by the hair, slammed her face into the desk and said, get off you stupid slut, then grabbed her by the hair and threw her to the ground….Called, ah, his own daughter a slut for being on the computer’. (Young Person 6)

Research supports the link between emotional abuse and depression (Paul & Eckenrode, 2015). In the current study, several young people talked about the ways their father’s criticism impacted their self-confidence and made them feel depressed or anxious:

‘if he was calling ‘em names um they could, like he, they could actually believe what he is saying…and take that to heart and they may or may not get depressed from what he was saying’. (Young Person 10)

One young person describes the impact of the emotional abuse on her sister who was planning to attend the interview, but who decided on the day not to attend. Her sister described the reasons why she is reluctant to leave the house:

‘My sister suffers like really bad anxiety and stuff like that. And I don’t know, like probably it stems from Dad probably putting her down. Just, I don’t know. She doesn’t want to go anywhere because she doesn’t want anyone to
look at her. Like she just freaks out. Doesn’t want anyone to speak to her or anything like that because whenever you’d talk to Dad or anything, like he’d make you second guess everything that you’re saying, or he’d put you down with however you look or whatever you’ve done or anything like that. Just not nice’. (Young Person 9)

Another young person reflected on the way her father’s emotional abuse had had an impact on her life:

‘Someone once told me that you will remember the way people make you feel, not what they give you. For years, I was made to feel hopeless, a disappointment, useless, demonised’. (Young Person 16)

Lack of respect

It is suggested that men who use violence against their partners rely on women’s vulnerability due to gender inequity (Stark, 2007). In the current study two young people talked about their fathers having sexist or misogynistic views about women, and said that he associated with other men who shared similar values:

‘I think that a lot of these men who are abusive don’t exactly have the best opinions of women, and they don’t have the best opinion of women’s opinions’. (Young Person 6)

Young people also described how their fathers treated their sons differently and more favourably than their daughters. These findings reflect other research with fathers generally which found that fathers gave far more significance to their role as father to their sons than their daughters in the belief that their responsibility was to raise their son while their partner was responsible for the upbringing of their daughter (White, 1994). Research by Morman and Floyd (2006) found that in a study of 374 fathers not one responded to the question about good fathers by referring to their daughters or the father-daughter relationship, every one of the father’s responses focused on raising their sons.

In the current study examples were given of unequal treatment of daughters occurred such as following separation where, birthday cards were sent to their brother but not them:

‘We’re the middle children and we’re girls, so it doesn’t matter’  
(Young Person 5 and 6).
The same young people then go on to describe:

‘like our younger brother [name], he was the only boy in the family. So he
definitely got pretty much all of our father's attention. Like, we didn't get any -
I probably never spoke to my dad. And if, ah, our dad was in a parenting mood,
it would always be just with [our younger brother]. And if you tried to talk to
him, he'd be like, this is boy’s stuff. We don't want you around’. (Young person
5 and 6)

Another way in which the issue of respect was raised by young people was in the context of good
fathers being able to accept and love his children ‘unconditionally’.

‘A dad should be - supportive - not just financial, but in every way. He should
accept what I am and who I am’. (Young Person 10)

Another young person reflected on her belief that her father’s feelings for her were not
unconditional as illustrated by an example where she became emotional and told her father:

‘I don’t really like you. I would rather spend my weekends doing something
else. He said that’s ok - You just won’t have a father any more’. (Young
Person 14)

Another young person said a good father should:

‘... just be someone who’s there to help and someone who’s going to be there
and like just respect your decisions and respect who you are’. (Young Person
15)

Young people also talked about fathers needing to accept and respect that children grow up and as
they change fathers need to adapt to these changes. As one young person suggested:

‘we are all going to change, as a father you need to adjust to these changes.
It might be a hard job, but it’s your job’. (Young Person 7)

One young person felt that her father did not respect her maturity and level of understanding of the
the issues in their family:
'Whenever I challenged his values, I’d hear “I’ll tell you one day, you’re not mature enough”, when in all reality I was mature enough. The way he had treated me had forced me to become that way. (Young Person 16)\

Control\

The tendency for men who use violence to adopt a range of techniques for controlling their partners is well documented (Day & Bowen, 2015; Jouriles & McDonald, 2015). Coercive control has been defined as a ‘malevolent course of conduct that subordinates women to alien will’ by violating their physical integrity, denying them respect, autonomy, access to resources and social connectedness (Stark, 2007). Studies measuring control and psychological abuse have found women who have experienced family violence have been subjected to some form of control tactics in between 50-80 percent of cases (Stark, 2007).

Katz (2016) suggests that much less is known about children’s perspectives on that control and how it impacts their everyday lives. In her research with mothers and children who have experienced family violence, she found that children were significantly impacted by their father’s use of coercive tactics, findings consistent with the current study. In the current research, young people talked about being impacted by their fathers exercising control in three ways: through the distribution of resources; through the use of surveillance and isolation, and through the use of fear as a means of ensuring compliance.

Distribution of resources\

The role of provider is one which fathers often identify as important (Morman & Floyd, 2006). In a recent study of fathers who use violence this role was highlighted by fathers as an important component of their role as fathers ‘and by mothers and children as a mechanism by which fathers could continue to exercise control over the family finances’ (Holt, 2015b, p. 217). In the current study, a number of the young people (including all three boys) suggested that working hard and earning money was one of the key roles of a good father. A number of young people linked the earning of money with the ‘survival’ of his family. This was a particularly strong theme with the young people accessed for the study through a service which supported families experiencing homelessness and family violence:

Facilitator: So first of all I just want to ask you what do you think makes a good father

Young Person 7: Mm, money.
Facilitator: What does the money do? How does the money make him a good father?

Young Person 7: Help the children survive.

Another young person talked about fathers needing to provide money to that she and her siblings would survive and have enough to eat. However other young people talked about disliking the idea of the father as a provider for a number of reasons including the tendency they saw for men to consider their role of father as fulfilled by simply making payments without providing any emotional support:

‘I think that’s why I hate, like, that idea of like the father is the provider. Because it’s very - you know, here’s a cheque. I’ve provided for you. My role is done’. (Young Person 5)

This young person suggested that her father used money as a way of exercising control over the family and her mother even after separation:

‘I remember during one of the custody things, he gave us, like, birthday presents or whatever. And they were gift cards for Westfield. And he’d gone in, made it so mum could – you couldn’t spend money at Coles or Safeway – because he didn’t want mum spending them on groceries’. (Young Person 5)

Young people suggested that some fathers believe that by paying child support they had bought themselves a right to have contact with their children and this was something that made them quite angry.

‘he’ll be like, I’m going to stop paying your child support because I don’t get to see the children. And because I pay child support I should be allowed to see the children. And it’s just like [laughs] - he doesn’t seem to understand the fact that the reason why we aren’t seeing him is because we don’t want to see him’. (Young Person 5)

Surveillance and isolation

Research has found that men who use violence often use means of coercive control such as monitoring time as well as restricting mobility and communication (Stark, 2007). Consistent with prior work, in the current study fathers were described as using surveillance and monitoring of their partner and
children’s whereabouts to maintain a sense of power and control as well as systematically reducing the options for emotional support for their children and their mothers.

With regards to surveillance one young person suggested that a good father:

‘...would trust me and my mum to go places like the shopping centre and not need to know all the details of where we are, what we’re buying, what time we come home who we talked to on the phone’. (Young Person 11)

She contrasts this with her own father’s behaviour:

‘... I would say we would be home around 1 hour and he would say “cut that time short” or “make it half an hour”’. (Young Person 11)

This young person’s experience typifies the concept of ‘absent presence’ described by (Thiara & Humphreys, 2015) who outline the tendency of fathers who use violence to belittle and undermine their partners in front of their children and which can have impacts on the mother–child relationship long after the mother and father have separated.

Research in the United Kingdom (Callaghan, Alexander, Sixsmith, & Fellin, 2015) found that children described the psychological impacts of experiencing family violence as inescapable and Stark (2007, p. 209) suggests that the control tactics utilised by men who commit family violence are so ‘extensive and penetrating’ that their partners feel like they are ‘omnipresent’ a sentiment expressed by one young person in the current study,

‘If I look hard enough, I can still see him in the shadows and around corners. My mind adds silhouettes of him underneath streetlights and behind windows, the figures unshakeable no matter how many times I blink. (Young Person 16)

When the researcher spoke to her about this section of her digital story she said that she got the idea for those lines from earlier in the morning when she saw her dad following her to the train station on her way to attend the workshop.

Other young people reported being physically restrained and having their phones taken away by their fathers:
The tendency for men who commit family violence to prevent their partners accessing technological assistance (such as mobile phones and electronic communication) which might enable them to escape, restore their identity or garner assistance has been documented (Stark, 2007). In the current study one young person said that their lack of access to phones and other electronic devices reduced their ability to get help but also to document evidence of the abuse:

‘Mum wasn’t allowed to have a phone. Like, how were we going to take photos? Like, there was no way for us. We were a poor household. We didn’t have a camera’. (Young Person 5)

In terms of isolation from supports, this young person said:

‘He told a lot of people lies. He went to our primary school. He told our principal that my mum was lying. He told my teachers that my mum was lying. ....He went to our church. He made sure that every single adult that I could have turned to for help never believed me. When he left the first time, I went to my teacher. He was a guy. And I told him what was going on. And I told him about the abuse. My dad had gotten there first and told my teacher that my mum had brainwashed me into believing all of this stuff. My teacher believed him’. (Young Person 6)

She then said,

‘a teacher who’s supposed to be supportive of you and who’s supposed to like, when they hear about stuff like this, they’re supposed to, you know, tell the authorities and protect their student...But there’s just this really like, ah, at the time there was just like completely, ah, a network of male comradery. Like our principal was a man and like, there was this idea of, how stupid women, always making up lies about men being rapists - that’s so funny, ha-ha-ha-ha. You know, it was a complete, I’m going to believe him ‘cause he’s a bloke and I’m a bloke and he’s telling me about this as blokes’. (Young Person 6)
This tendency for people (particularly other men) to take the father’s version of events as true over a young girl was a very significant one for this young person and her sister who described having an ongoing lack of trust of men because:

‘...even all these men who have never been abusive towards me, they would still believe his word over mine any day’. (Young Person 6)

Her sister agreed saying:

‘what happens if something happened to me and I was to go to them and tell them what happened. Would they believe me? Like, if I told them, like would they get me help or would they just be, oh, she’s just a woman. She’s just being hysterical, like’. (Young Person 5)

Research has found that some young people express regret that teachers and schools did not reach out to them and offer them support when they were experiencing family violence (Buckley, Holt, & Whelan, 2007). This perspective was present in the current study where a young person with an intervention order against her father was dismayed at the schools response when he turned up at the school:

‘Yeah, like when I was in year 11, he came to the school during lunchtime because we’d moved houses and he wanted to see where we were. So he came to the school when I was there, even though we had an Intervention Order stating that if he was anywhere on the property of the school, he was to be arrested and put in jail and charged. The school were like, aw, he’s just a loving dad wanting to know where his children are, and they didn’t call the police’. (Young Person 5)

However other young people spoke about trying to keep the violence in their families a secret for fear of people finding out or ‘spreading it’. In her digital story, one young person talked about how she had mixed feelings about keeping secrets from her friends:

‘I didn't really like lying to my friends but I knew if I told them the truth they would want to know more. I felt embarrassed if my friends knew. Even now, they only know my parents split up and don’t know that my Dad would hit my Mum’. (Young Person 13)
Using fear to ensure compliance

The tendency for fathers who use violence to be more punitive in their punishment of their children has been documented (Bancroft, Silverman, & Ritchie, 2012; Holden & Ritchie, 1991). However less is known about children’s perspective on this discipline. In the current study, a number of young people spoke about discipline, what they saw as normal or healthy discipline and what they saw as unhealthy. While some young people talked about the need for good fathers to find alternatives to violence in disciplining their children, several young people expressed support for quite punitive and strict discipline.

Facilitator: Good parenting, why - what does that mean?
Young Person 7: [I don’t know]; good at training their kids.
Young Person 7: It’s a bit like training a wolf in the wild. If you train it right it will do things you want.
Facilitator: Okay. So training - like a wild animal, if you train it right it does - it behaves in the way that you want it to behave?
Young Person 7: Mm.
Facilitator: And is that what a good dad does?
Young Person 7: Yeah.

The young people discussed in some detail the difference between discipline and abuse and they believed that society can be quite unclear about this with young people believing that fathers using discipline as a justification to get away with abusing their children.

‘And so he - he would hit us with his belt and like, he’d use the metal end. So you’d get massive belts and lashes and stuff. But in all the court proceedings the judge was like, that’s discipline. That’s not abuse. And so we all had, like, it all thrown back in our faces.’ (Young Person 5)

Another issue which was discussed was the way that fathers who use violence often use fear as a means of controlling their children’s behaviour and mistake this as respect:

‘Abusive fathers believe that their actions result in their children respecting them. I don’t have any respect for you- I’m scared of you’. (Young Person 5)
‘And, so I think, like, he would say [unclear] hit you you’ll respect me. We never respected our father. We feared him. So I think it’s something very important with children. Like, when you’re going to punish them, you’ve got to do it in a way that’s correct and a way that’s not going to instil bad values and like, bad ideas about how to punish people’. (Young Person 6)

Role modelling

Research with fathers has found that they consider role modelling as one of the most important facets of being a father (after love and availability) (Morman & Floyd, 2006). Children and young people in the study ascribed significant importance to fathers being good role models for their children by being ‘good’ or ‘moral’ people, by providing them good examples of healthy relationships and by being trustworthy and reliable. When it came to describing their own fathers, they felt that their fathers were not always healthy role models for them and their siblings.

In the current study, several young people talked about the role of the father being one of leadership and setting the standards for the family.

‘The father is the main leader of the family. It’s is important that they show good leadership. They are their child’s role model’. (Young Person 7)

Two of the young people said that they did not want to provide an answer about what makes a good father. They both said that they had no experience to draw on and would not know what a good father was like. A number of young people suggested that their father made them think all men were abusive and that they should be feared:

‘My dad made me think that all men were violent or mean’. (Young Person 10)

‘I’m scared of men quite generally. Like if a man raises his voice, I mean, I will freak out. And like, if I’m backed into a corner or someone stands over me I will freak out. If someone comes up behind me and touches me without my consent, I’ll freak out’. (Young Person 5)

Several young people spoke about the moment they found out that not all fathers were violent and not all families were like their own. They spoke about feeling angry, sad and confused about this:
‘When I was 14, I went away with one of my friends to her beach house, I remember sitting down for dinner on the first night and thinking how bizarre it was that [his father] wasn’t yelling at anyone. I slowly came to the realisation that my family wasn’t normal and that what I went through was wrong’. (Young Person 5)

‘Well to start off I actually thought that like, it was normal. Like, just completely, like if he would smack us or hit us or something it was because we’d been naughty. Like I didn’t think any different until like I don’t know, I just realised that it wasn’t like all that’. (Young Person 9)

When it came to role modelling healthy relationships, one young person suggested that having a father who uses violence was having a significant impact on the types of relationships she develops:

‘Well I think it’s already impacted me. Like with the relationship I’ve had now. Um, he like didn’t really have much respect for me or anything like that until I like realised like I’m just letting him walk all over me and everything. Like I talked to him and stuff and like it’s all better now but um, yeah. Like he just didn’t treat me very nicely or anything like that, so it already does impact me because I obviously just think it’s normal. Like that’s just how it is’. (Young Person 9)

Another young person said that she avoids dating altogether as she is aware of the intergenerational transmission of violence and this makes her too fearful to date anyone:

‘Like, people ask me why I don’t date.. And it’s like - ‘cause people tell me, like, it’s always a cycle. And I’m really scared I’m going to get with someone who’s going to abuse me like my mum got abused’. (Young Person 5)

Her sister then said:

‘Like, the first guy I ever properly had a crush on was the dead spit of my dad. And that grossed me out, and now I’m not like that at all because I realise that that’s weird. But it just kind of affects your view of relationships. And it also really effects your view of how men see you. Like, I just [breathes], you kind of just assume that all guys are secretly like him and that all guys are secretly
thinking about you like how my dad thought about my mum - you know, you fat slut’. (Young Person 6)

One young person stated very emphatically that:

‘Every father is violent sometimes, you know that?’ (Young Person 8)

When asked whether the young person was sure, he answered that he knew that from video games and from real life. A number of young people described healthy relationships and the type of relationship they were hoping to have themselves. The issue of equality was raised in this context a number of times:

‘I think one of the main things about fatherhood is that you treat the mother equal. So, when I imagine that - my children's father - I don't imagine the dynamic that my parents had at all, because that dynamic was definitely fed down to us. So, just someone who treats me as an equal. And I feel like if they treated me as an equal, then they would treat my children as an equal’. (Young Person 6)

A number of young people explored what equality and respect mean in within a relationship and some suggested:

‘Um, be supportive. Um, like be supportive in all ways. Like, um, respect’. (Young Person 9)

‘I think he would, he would have to respect her with all her different um her - their differences in like what they have to say um if just - uh, [pauses] so like if they have disagreements or arguments about something that he needs to put her point of view in perspective um and yeah just like look at it from her side as well’. (Young Person 7)

‘I think when he's not supportive of the mum it throws up the whole family dynamic’. (Young Person 5)

Several young people talked about equality in a relationship meaning that a father does equal amounts of parenting and housework:
‘... it’s not just an equal partnership as in viewing your wife as equal, but like, you do stuff around the house. Like you do the cooking, you do the cleaning. You do the parenting. You help your children with their homework. You give them advice in their life. You be there for them emotionally when things are going badly for them’. (Young Person 5)

Another issue that arose when young people talked about their futures and their relationships was that several (three) suggested that they did not plan on having children themselves and were fairly emphatic about this. As one young person said:

‘I don’t want babies [laughs]’. (Young Person 11)

Another young person said she did not plan to have children because there is so much she wants to do and she doesn’t want to tie herself down she also then added:

‘There’s so much to worry about as well’. (Young Person 16)

One young person described how she sees the impact of her father’s violence on her own behaviour and doesn’t intend to have children in case she becomes a violent parent herself:

‘Also, when I’m angry, I’ll want to hit stuff and want to act out because that’s what I’ve seen my father do. So growing up, my brain was just told, that’s just how we act when we’re angry. And like, I don’t want to be that person. Like, if I’m going to act that way, I don’t want to have children and treat them the same way that I was treated’. (Young Person 5).

Trust and reliability

In the current study, a number of young people talked about the importance of children being able to trust and rely on their fathers and know that he will always ‘be there’ for them. A recent Nordic study of children who had experienced family violence found that these children expressed a general distrust of their fathers and described them as dishonest and unreliable (Cater & Forssell, 2014). In the current study, a number of the young people described their own fathers as unreliable and as moving in and out of their lives and the uncertainty and upset that this caused them:
‘It all started when I was little. You used to come and go. Some days you would be there… and then you wouldn’t. WHY? I was little, and I didn’t understand’. (Young Person 15)

Another young person described how sad he felt when his father doesn’t do what he says he will,

‘He usually promises something and then breaks the promise’. (Young Person 8)

The tendency for young people who have experienced family violence not trusting that their father will not hurt their mother or siblings has been found in other studies which described children taking on a role of monitoring other’s safety (Stanley, Miller, & Richardson Foster, 2012). In this study the fear extended to workers assisting the family at supervised access:

‘But I didn’t really feel safe there though ‘cause the women who was supervising us, she was heavily pregnant…and he was a very, very violent man. So that if anything, it just made us feel more scared because there’s a pregnant woman in here. Like, what if he decides to hit her as well as us or something’. (Young Person 5)

Another young person talks about the fear for her sister when her father takes her away:

One of the memories I have was on my sister’s birthday. She wanted to see my dad, so he came and picked me and my sisters up. At the shops he tried to call my mum, but couldn’t get through. He started yelling and screaming at the phone, to the message-bank, saying that he was going to hurt us and take us away forever and we would never be able to see her again if she didn’t come right away. We ran and hid in the toilets because we were so scared - he was getting violent, and punching the car. He even broke the keys off in the lock. I saw my dad’s friend, and begged him to take us home - he said he would, but made me promise not to tell dad. I was still really scared because my dad took my younger sister with him, and I was worried about what he would do. (Young Person 10)

Several young people expressed concern about their father causing harm to them and their mothers:

‘I felt that I had to stay living with you. You asked if I wanted to go. I was scared to leave I thought you would do something to mum’. (Young Person 14)
‘I honestly believe if my father ever found where we lived, like I wouldn’t be surprised if he came and killed us all. Because that’s the sort of person he is’. (Young Person 5)

Research has consistently found that abuse of pets can occurs in conjunction with family violence (Simmons & Lehmann, 2007) with studies finding between 25-30 percent of family violence victims witnessed animal cruelty and that the presence of animal cruelty in a home acts as a reliable ‘red flag’ for the presence of child abuse or family violence (DeGue & DiLillo, 2009; Simmons & Lehmann, 2007). In the current study, young people talked about their fathers using their animals to hurt them or their mothers:

‘I remember my dog [name]. He was a [breed], and he was the best dog ever. Usually I get scared when I’m around animals, but [my dog] was different. I remember one day the phone rang, and I found out that [my dog] had been hit by a car. He came to stay with us for a while to get better, but my dad made us give him back to him. I then found out that dad put him down, and he said it was to get back at my mum for leaving him. It was one of the most horrible things I could ever imagine. (Young Person 10)

‘He stole our dog. Like, literally took it’. (Young Person 5)

Morals

Children and young people described a good father as a ‘good person’ and someone who can be trusted and acts as a role model. A number of the young people described the importance of a father being a moral and good person and teaching their children healthy ways to live and interact with others:

‘Cause your morals definitely affect your children growing up. And even if they don’t turn out to be a bad person like you, they still have that kind of exposure to the bad side. (Young Person 6)

One young person talked about the influence of her father on the development of her moral code:

‘When I was about younger, I used to spend time with my dad and sister. Everything seemed so simple then, my concept of right and wrong was governed purely by what he decreed’. (Young Person 16)
Child centred

Prioritising child safety and wellbeing

A number of young people described the need for a good father to keep his family, and particularly his children safe with many seeing this is as a key area where their own fathers had failed in their parenting. As one young person said:

‘I shouldn’t have to feel unsafe and scared around you. You are meant to be there for me’. (Young Person 16)

Children and young people in this study described their father as failing to protect them in a number of ways including by being abusive to their children themselves and by exposing them to abuse of their mother:

‘I remember…dad breaking mum’s arm - had to have it in a sling. Remember that mum? You were trying to get in your closet.’ (Young Person 8)

Another young person described being very frightened of her father and in her digital story recalled a time when she saw her father abuse one of her siblings:

‘The time you came to my school, choking my brother on his birthday. Yelling. Blaming us. I thought that was normal. Seeing how different we were treated…. I always had things I wanted to say to you but I never felt I could because I was too scared. Scared I’d get hit or yelled at’. (Young Person 10)

Young people also described their fathers as failing to protect their children from violent family and friends. A particularly vivid example of this was given by two sisters who experienced abuse from their father’s parents:

‘I blocked so much of it out, like. I only have flashbacks every now and then. I’ve blocked so much of it out. Yeah, they would put us in our rooms and stuff, and…But not like actual time out. Like, I’m going to close the blinds and turn off the lights and you have to sit in the corner in the dark for six hours and um, which was scary, because you only saw these people like three times a year’. (Young Person 5 and 6 in conversation)
These siblings then went on to say:

‘Even if you’ve been abusive previously, you need to foster a safe environment for your children and make sure that not only that you don’t abuse them, but they don’t witness abusive behaviour and don’t get abused by other people.’

(Young Person 5 and 6)

Valuing the Relationship

Research has found that fatherhood can be source of great pride for many men who see it as an opportunity to ‘create an extension of oneself in the next generation’ and as something that gives men additional social status (White, 1994, p. 123). Young people in this study suggested that one of the key characteristics of a good father was wanting to ensure a positive relationship with his children:

‘A good dad would want to have a good relationship with me’. (Young Person 12)

However almost universally, children in the current study did not feel their fathers valued or nurtured their relationship. One young person was particularly focussed on the need for fathers to make an effort with their children and said:

‘Without putting in effort, your child won’t be able to see that you’re trying to show them what they mean to you.’ (Young Person 7)

This young person recalled her relationship with her father as being more positive when she was younger but that as she had grown up her desire for greater independence had caused friction and increased violence and abuse.

A number of the young people spoke about feelings of loss and sadness that their fathers did not make much effort to see them or build a stronger relationship with them. Even those who had said that they did not want to be around their fathers often later talked about the sadness they felt that their fathers did not care whether they had a relationship or not:

‘Even though I don’t want to spend time with someone who hurts me emotionally and physically - it still makes me upset that you don’t make an effort to be there’. (Young Person 16)
In this chapter, children and young people’s perspectives on fathers in the context of family violence have been outlined. The findings suggest that most children and young people have clear ideas of the characteristics of ‘good fathers’ and the ways in which their fathers measured up against these standards. Children and young people placed considerable value on the need for fathers to communicate with them positively and be interested and engaged in their lives. Young people described a number of ways in which their father’s violence impacted their lives and his attempts to exert control over them in a way that was described as abusive and constraining. Young people in the study saw a father’s responsibility to be a good role model as particularly important in demonstrating positive relationships. A number of the children and young people in the study suggested that they did not intend to have children or enter into relationships as a result of their childhood experiences of family violence and the fear that their lives would lead down similar paths as their parents had. A particularly powerful message to come from children and young people was that they wish their fathers could see things from their children’s perspective and put effort into their relationship and keeping their children safe.
Chapter 8: Children and young people’s perspectives on reparation

Once I thought an apology was all you needed. But I don’t think that would even be enough. I need to see your actions have changed. Because saying sorry... well they are just words. I need actions. Actions to prove to me you are truly sorry. (Young Person 15)

The previous chapter has outlined Part A of the research findings relating to children and young people’s perspectives on parenting in the context of family violence. This chapter will present the results for Part B of the results ‘Children and young people’s perspectives on reparation’. Reparation became a global theme in this study in recognition of the importance that young people placed on their fathers going through a process of acknowledgment, apology and re-establishment of trust if a relationship with their children is to be maintained following family violence, or alternatively for closure to be achieved.

Figure 5 on the following page outlines the three organising themes that young people believed were required for Reparation including Addressing the Past, Commitment to Change and Rebuilding Trust.
Figure 5: Children and young people’s perspectives on reparation (Part B of results)
Reparation

Reparation is defined by the Oxford dictionary as ‘The action of making amends for a wrong one has done, by providing payment or other assistance to those who have been wronged’. The concept of reparation has been a principle of law that has existed for centuries and has typically focused on processes and outcomes that ‘repair the harm’ caused (Daly & Proetti-Scifoni, 2011). In the context of family violence a model of reparation for fathers who have used violence and their children called the Fathering After Violence Framework (FAVF) was developed in the USA based on reports from mothers of children who had experienced violence and fathers who use violence (Arean & Davis, 2007). The current study builds on this knowledge to include the perspectives of children on reparation and it is useful to place this in the context of the earlier work.

The children and young people in the current study were generally interested in the concept of reparation and the need for their fathers to ‘make amends’ for their violence in the home. While a small number of young people said that they did not want to have any further contact with their father, the majority of children and young people said they would consider having some contact if their father made some dramatic changes to both his behaviour and attitudes. It should be acknowledged that even those young people who stated that they did not want to have any contact with their father still had significant thoughts about the type of reparation they would like to receive from their fathers so that they could move on with their lives and achieve closure. Therefore reparation had two goals from young people’s perspectives- healing the past; and then (in some cases) conditions for rebuilding trust and moving forward where the demonstration of a commitment to change was considered a key element.

Addressing the past

Almost all of the children and young people in the study felt strongly that their father needed to acknowledge his past violent/abusive behaviour in order for them to be able to start to repair both individually and (in some cases) the relationship between themselves and their father. The children and young people felt that it was important for their fathers to admit what they had done was wrong, acknowledge that their behaviour had been harmful and to apologise and take the consequences for their behaviour.
Admit wrongdoing

A number of the young people saw the need for fathers to admit they had done something wrong as a significant challenge. They described their fathers as being ‘deluded’ and in ‘denial’ about their behaviour. One young person described her father as being certain that the reason his children did not want to see him was because their mother had encouraged them to feel negatively towards him and this was a real source of frustration for the young person who felt her mother had been unfairly demonised within their family’s social networks:

‘Yeah, [our father] like, completely brainwashed himself into thinking that he is the good parent and that mum’s brainwashed us. He never hit us. He never yelled at us. He was always the perfect father’. (Young Person 6)

Young people were also very clear that they did not want to hear excuses from their father about why the violence and abuse had occurred. One young person said that their father often stated that he was only violent ‘when they deserved it’ and that it look some years before she realised this was not an acceptable justification. Another young person said that her father used his history of growing up around violence as a justification for why he was abusive. While she had some sympathy for the negative environment he had grown up in, she objected to him trying to justify his behaviour:

‘by saying, my father did the same thing to me. And just because your dad acted the same way, doesn’t mean you have to. So, I think it’s very important that like, parents shouldn’t let their, like, experiences reflect on the way they parent their children. Like, we shouldn’t use them as an excuses’. (Young Person 5)

Acknowledge harm

Throughout the interviews and digital storytelling workshop young people described the many ways family violence had impacted their lives and how they wanted their fathers to both understand the profound impacts of his behaviour and acknowledge that he had been the cause:

‘I know - they must consider their effect on the child. But - and it’s just kind of making them see that, ah, the long lasting impact of what they’re doing. You know, there’s a difference between knowing that when you hit a child, a child cries. But it goes on a long time after that’. (Young Person 6)
To illustrate the significant impacts one young person said:

‘As a kid, I can barely remember anything ‘cause my brain just decided it was...Yeah I don’t really have many childhood memories...Yeah, it was like, too much for my brain to deal with, so it’s just, oh, put it in a box’. (Young Person 5)

The impacts of experiencing family violence on children and young people has been documented in previous studies (Edleson, 1999; Harne, 2011; Holt, Buckley, & Whelan, 2008; Kitzmann, Gaylor, Holt, & Kenny, 2003) and the findings of this study are consistent with earlier research. The young people in the current study talked about having their lives disrupted by their fathers which included having to move house frequently, sometimes having to sleep in the car and often having to leave home without their possessions:

‘I remember one time, they went to court. Mum couldn’t go, she was in the hospital. She lost a baby. The court said that dad could look after us. He came to school and picked us up. We didn’t get to say good bye or get our stuff. I remember how embarrassed I felt and how sad I was. We didn’t have any of our clothes. He had to buy us all new stuff’. (Young Person 15)

Several young people talked about their father coming to their school and behaving aggressively, an experience they described as both traumatic but also profoundly embarrassing. Young people also talked about the impact of having experienced family violence on their relationships with their teachers and how distressed they felt when a teacher raised their voice at them as they feared they were going to be hit. Young people also talked about the trauma they experienced when male teachers used similar words and phrases as their father used:

‘I wince when people raise their voice, my teacher does that. Yeah he yells and every time he does I want to cry’. (Young Person 16)

Young people also spoke about the impact of being tired and distracted on their experiences at school:

‘It can impact them in a lot of ways. Um, the kids can become really distressed and everything. Um, just if everything is bad like the kid will just react sort of, like won’t have a good time at school, can’t concentrate.’ (Young Person 9)

Another said:
‘Um when my parents are arguing um and it’s affected me or my brother um that could cause me to feel a bit sad at school because I just came from - like especially the mornings, like I just come from hearing this arguing to school and try to forget about it I guess yeah’. (Young Person 7)

Young people also spoke about the impact of the violence on their social networks and friendships and how they feel that the violence they experienced at home had a profound effect on how they interact with others:

‘Yeah, so being the product of an abusive household, you’re very different. It’s just - like, even at friends’ houses I act - like I’m not weird - like I’m not bad around children, I’m just weird around them. Like, especially happy kids. Like, I don’t know how to interact with children, ’cause I was just - like I was really bullied as a kid as well at school. So I was bullied at the home and bullied at school. So like, having a healthy childhood wasn’t really a thing for me’. (Young Person 5)

Several young people suggested that they rarely bring friends home to their house and prefer to go to other people’s houses just in case their father turns up and ‘embarrasses’ them and another suggested that they do not have friends over as they want to keep their address secret for safety reasons:

‘We did not feel safe in that house. Like, I would - we worry about having friends come over and stuff in case someone lets it slip where we live’. (Young Person 5)

Apologise and Take Consequences

The young people in the study were in universal agreement about how valuable a genuine apology from their father would be.

‘Parents just in general think that you don’t have to apologise to your children when you’ve done something wrong. You have to apologise. Because, when you are teaching a child when they’re young, when they do something wrong you tell them that they have to apologise. And then you do something wrong and then you don’t apologise. It’s very, very confusing when you’re a child’. (Young Person 6)
However when questioned further, each had a different view on the necessary content and context of an apology that would be needed to be truly effective. Several young people said that their father never apologised and this was a significant issue for them:

‘So I’m still angry because you never even apologised, admitted the least bit of guilt and that makes me angrier still and unable to move on. (Young Person 6)

Other young people described having a father who apologised all the time but kept repeating the behaviour and so therefore the apology became meaningless:

‘I’ve seen apologies all the time and he always - he does apologise but it just always comes back to the same case so yeah I feel a bit more relieved when he apologised but it just, it repeats itself’. (Young Person 7)

Another young person said:

Young person 8: ‘Same way I think about [my dad]. He usually promises something and then breaks the promise’.

Facilitator: ‘How does that make you feel?’

Young person: ‘Sad’

While some young people felt that an apology on its own could be important:

‘Like it would be amazing for them to apologise and actually mean it, like they could apologise and like not mean it, but like they’ve got to mean it and then it’ll just - an apology can like do a lot but like yeah. (Young Person 15)

Others were very clear that an apology needed to be real and genuine and backed up with evidence of change. An apology would become meaningless if the violence/abusive behaviour occurred again. One young person also said that she wanted to be clear that just because a father apologises to his child for his behaviour did not mean that their mother automatically had to forgive him as well.

One set of siblings (young person 5 and 6) had strong feelings about the need for an apology to be followed by taking the consequences of your actions, publically admitting you have been abusive and paying ‘penance’: 
‘Yeah, and like, I want him to tell people that he abused us. Like, I want him to own up to the fact...yeah it’s just like this healing process’. (Young Person 6)

They felt that their father should have had consequences from the legal system and that he should have served prison time and that if he had admitted his behaviour and been punished for it, this may have resulted in them wanting a relationship into the future however:

‘he denied all the abuse and stuff. If he had of - I mean, that’s what happened. And maybe if he’d done some time in prison and apologised for what he did, I’d probably - you know, I might think about seeing him. But he just denies that everything happened and he refuses to apologise for anything or own up to his behaviour. He’s like a child’. (Young Person 6)

In the absence of a criminal justice intervention they felt that they would ensure he still experienced the consequences of his actions. They said that fathers who are violent should have to face the consequences ‘And sometimes the consequences don’t end up being legal time. They end up - your kids are going to be weird around you for a while’. (Young Person 5)

In her digital story one of the siblings said:

‘What you did to me was wrong and as a result I don’t want you to be a part of my life. Your behaviour has consequences even if you don’t ever see the inside of a prison cell. I will never let you near my children. You will never walk any of your daughters down the aisle. As you get older, there will be no one to care for you’. (Young Person 6)

Commitment to change

Another key part of the reparation process that was identified by young people was the need for their fathers to make a real commitment to change. Once the violence and its harm has been acknowledged, an apology made and some consequences followed, the next priority identified was a need to see evidence of willingness to change. This sentiment is expressed by the quote provided and the start of this chapter and repeated here:

‘Once I thought an apology was all you needed. But I don’t think that would even be enough. I need to see your actions have changed. Because saying sorry... well they are just words. I need actions. Actions to prove to me you are
truly sorry. I don’t care about the money or the bribes to win me back. I just want a father that I am not scared to see.’ (Young Person 15)

Involvement of children and young people in the change process

Several young people suggested that one way that their father could show a commitment to change would be if he attended therapy or a program to address his violence. As outlined in earlier chapters, there is very little information available about children’s involvement when their father attends a program to address his violence. However the evidence available (Rayns, 2010) suggests that children are often not told when their father is attending a program, nor do they have any involvement in the program or know what their father has learnt. This has been raised by Alderson, Westmarland, and Kelly (2013) as a significant issue for accountability and the results of the current study support the notion that children currently have limited involvement in these programs. While the current study has a small sample, the results indicate support for the belief that very few young people are told when their father attends a program with only one young person being aware that her father was attending a program at the time the research was being carried out. The remaining 15 young people replied that they were not sure whether their father had ever attended a program for his violence.

When asked whether they believed that young people should be told when their father is attending a program, the majority of the young people answered that they believe they should be and the reasons they gave included:

‘So that they know that there is something wrong. Like, that their father has been acting in a wrong way’. (Young Person 9)

‘[You would want to ] know that your dad is taking it so you could regain the trust...and you know he’s trying’. (Young Person 10)

‘they should to know they’re trying to help...like they’re trying to fix what they done’. (Young Person 11)

‘Yeah I think [children should be told] what was going on because I don’t like to be left in the dark. But again, because it also gives them evidence that their father is trying to be a better person’. (Young Person 5)

‘Yeah because I think that way the kids could know that they’re actually trying to improve, they’re trying to say to - they’re trying to say to their kids basically
that I want our relationship to go back to normal or however they used to be. Yeah so I think it’s a good thing if the kids knew’. (Young Person 7)

One young person believed that only older children should be told if their father was attending a program:

‘Like I think if they’re quite young then I don’t think they really need to be told but um I think once they get older, like myself and my older brother’s age then it’d be good to’. (Young Person 10)

Another suggested that young people should be told but then said

‘..but then they shouldn’t at the same time because it could worry them’. (Young Person 12)

Several young people said that it was particularly important that young people are told whether their father chose to attend a program as his own decision rather than being mandated- this seemed to be a significant distinction that was important to these young people’s opinion about their father’s real commitment to change:

‘Yeah, but like, if they’re court ordered to, the children should be told that as well....Cause it's, yeah, like, it isn't, oh your dad's doing a behavioural change program. Oh, he must want to change. But like, he is attending it involuntarily. It's very different. But maybe there should be different programs I think for people who are attending voluntarily and involuntarily, because they're very different mindsets’. (Young Person 5)

Research has found that when programs for fathers who use violence are evaluated, children’s perspectives are rarely heard (Alderson, Kelly, & Westmarland, 2015; Alderson, Westmarland, & Kelly, 2013). In the current study, the majority of young people were confident that their fathers could change if they wanted to and believed a father who would not change just did not care enough for his children or family:

‘he can change - a dad can change. But you can also tell that he’s also - if he goes there and just listens then he probably doesn't even care and then comes back and then he doesn't change - he doesn't change a bit. It's like he doesn't care’. (Young Person 3)
Another young person compared how much she had changed from one year to another as support for the possibility of change for her father:

‘like I’ve changed a lot from Year 7 to Year 8…and I think it’d be great if my dad could change’. (Young Person 10)

**Change in attitudes**

Young people were asked about the type of changes they would like to see if their father attended a program for his violence. The changes they valued as important indicators of the program’s effectiveness included changes to both attitudes and behaviours with many outcomes directly relating to their interactions with their children.

There were a range of areas where young people believed their fathers needed to change their attitudes and this included their attitudes to women and their children:

‘one of our father’s favourite mottos was children should be seen and not heard, especially when it came to women, and his wife shouldn’t be seen OR heard’. (Young People 5 and 6 in conversation)

Young people suggested that in order to make real changes their fathers needed to change the social networks and friendships they had:

‘Stay away from other people that are drunk’. (Young Person 1)

and

‘separate yourself from all those sources that told you what you were doing was okay’. (Young Person 6)

It was also suggested by one young person that fathers who have completed a program for their violence should not be able to immediately move back in with their children and that there:

‘needs to be some kind of tracking to make sure that these ideas haven’t re-cemented themselves’. (Young Person 5 or 6)

Another area where young people believed their father’s attitudes needed to change was around issues of family interaction where young people wanted their fathers to learn more healthy ways to...
communicate. They suggested that an important outcome of attending a program would be that fathers come to terms with the abuse they experienced as children:

‘Because men - people like these need to change not just for their children, but for themselves emotionally as well, like’. (Young Person 6)

Changes in behaviour

One young person said that she would judge whether a program had worked if her father showed more positive behaviour and less violence and abuse:

‘Um, like if they’d stopped, like getting angry... and violent’. (Young Person 13)

Another suggested that she would determine whether change had occurred by the way her father made her feel:

‘like be there when we do drop off and pick up for him to actually be there and for him to not get angry at me and say bad things, not to make me feel uncomfortable when I’m there, to make me feel safe, to make me feel wanted, to make me feel loved, like yeah’. (Young Person 15)

While another said she would know if the program worked by how her father acted towards herself and her siblings:

‘Well I just think there’ll be improvements. Like I could tell, I would be able to tell by the way he speaks and like if it’s loud or not because my dad is a very loud person um the way he acts so towards us as kids’. (Young Person 7)

One young person said that the outcome she would like to see would be for the violence to stop completely:

‘Ah, just a complete halt to abuse. I wouldn’t want any kind of slow phasing to happen. Like, I don’t want it to be going from being beaten to being hit to being yelled at, to not abusive. I want it to be, you’ve attended this. No more abuse. End of story.’ (Young Person 6)

Several young people spoke about wanting their father to stop their violence not only for their children and their relationships but also for themselves, as a number of young people believed their fathers
were having unhappy lives as a result of the violence.

‘They’re not going to have a good one [life], like you wouldn’t feel good about yourself’. (Young Person 7)

In the context of concern about the type of negative life their father is living, a number of young people also referred to the fact that since their parents have separated their fathers have re-partnered and the same issues that occurred in their home are now occurring in their father’s new relationship. Earlier work in Scotland (Morrison, 2009) also found that children worried about the prospect of their father being violent in future relationships and were not convinced their father would be able to stop being abusive. In line with the Scottish study, one young person in the current research said her father had been violent in his previous marriage and his children from that relationship are also estranged from him and this made her sceptical about his ability to change his behaviour:

‘because the same thing happened with his other kids and even now they haven’t forgiven him fully’. (Young Person 16)

Rebuilding trust

While some young people expressed an interest in having an ongoing relationship with their fathers if a range of conditions and changes were made, many expressed the view that the biggest hurdle to overcome remained the lack of trust they have in their fathers. The importance of rebuilding trust has been identified in previous research as a key issue by both fathers who use violence and their partners (Alderson, 2015; Arean & Davis, 2007). In the current study, children and young people suggested that even if their fathers admitted wrongdoing and harm, apologised, and committed to making changes, the rebuilding of trust was considered the most challenging to see occurring. When asked what they thought would need to happen, young people saw three key ways for trust to be built: through investing time, stepping up to parenting and co-parenting, and acknowledging the child’s view as important.

Investing time and effort

One of the areas of significant agreement was that for children to be able to trust their fathers was going to take quite some time. One young person suggested fathers need to:
‘Tell them it’s going to be alright and work on it, like they’re not going to trust him straight away, but he’s gotta like work on it and let the kids know that nothing like that is going to ever happen again’. (Young Person 15)

When children and young people were asked about what their fathers could do to make it up to them one young person was very clear that that the emphasis should be on the fathers to think of ways to make it up to their children:

‘I don’t really know what you could do, so that I would want to see you again. How do you think you are going to change this? It’s up to you’. (Young Person 12).

Other young people were more willing to offer suggestions for how their father could make it up to them and this included ensuring that time spent with your children was spent well and was quality time and not uncomfortable. Some of the suggestions for fathers included being generous, giving your child things, making them feel special and taking them somewhere.

Step up to parenting and co-parenting

Another concept discussed by young people was the need for fathers who have been violent to ‘step up to parenting’ and in fact one young person called their digital story Step Up Your Game. The young people discussed this issue when talking about what makes a good father and then again when reflecting on how a father who has been violent might go about making amends and rebuilding trust with his children. Another young person suggested that just what this would mean would differ according to their child and their interests and dad’s should make the time to find out about what their children were interested in. One young person said:

‘I like maths and a good dad helps with homework. Some dads help by making worksheets’. (Young Person 11)

Young people believed that fathers too often play the role of ‘good time guy’ and do not help out enough or get involved in the good and bad parts of parenting:

‘Like, when you’re actually being seen in that fathering role where you’re actually doing things for your children. Your children are going to like you more because they are going to see you as a nurturing person.’ (Young Person 6)
Another area where young people wanted their fathers to ‘step up’ and do a better job was with regards to co-parenting with their mothers. The literature suggests that ‘maternal alienation’ is one of the tactics deployed by fathers who use violence, with the aim to undermine the relationship between mothers and their children (Morris, 2009). In the current study, young people expressed considerable anger about how even after the physical violence had ended and their parents had separated how their fathers often continued with the verbal and emotional abuse of their mothers and how damaging this was for their children as one young person described:

‘In the emails you do not want to know what he calls our mother. ‘Cause he thinks we don’t read them. He’s convinced that mum never shows them to us, and that, how it’s all this elaborate plan of mum and she’s planted these ideas that he abused us in our heads. And he’s completely delusional. So in the emails that he thinks we don’t read, he calls her, like a paranoid bitch and like, a worthless cunt and stuff’. (Young Person 6)

One of the youngest participants in the research said that the key message she wanted fathers who use violence to get was that they needed was not to be so hard on our mums and when asked why this was important said:

‘So the kids could have a good life’. (Young Person 14)

Another young person spoke about how she had looked forward to visits with her father (and even snuck out to see him at times) but how these visits often ended in frustration and disappointment because:

‘all he wanted to talk about was how bad my mum was’. (Young Person 16)

This young person stated that because her father spoke very negatively about her mother this resulted in her avoiding visits with her father altogether. The need for positive co-parenting relationships is considered important with the literature suggesting that even within a context of conflicted intimate relationships, it can be protective and result in improved child adjustment (Stover, 2013).

A final issue raised was the need for fathers to keep their words and that if they apologised and promised not to be abusive or violent again that they keep their word. Young people said that a father who fails to keep his word could not be trusted by his children:
Another young person said that if a father who said he would stop being abusive and repeated the same behaviour it would be:

‘Well just like a betrayal of trust... If you trust someone and then they do it again’ (Young Person 16)

Consider children’s perspective

One of the issues that children and young people were emphatic about was that fathers who want to rebuild trust with their children need to ask and listen to what their children want. In the framework developed by American researchers (Arean & Davis, 2007) it was acknowledged that a relationship between fathers and children after violence is not always appropriate. Some of the children and young people in the current study certainly agreed with this and said that there are cases where what the fathers have done is too horrific for their children to forgive them. Young People felt that society often places pressure on children to forgive their fathers and they believe they have the right to decide not to forgive their fathers and cease contact:

‘but I think a really important part of it is, after the apology, you can’t expect your kids to go, daddy, we want you home again. Sometimes you do have to not be around for - like you have to give the kids space’. (Young Person 5)

Young people also said that children should receive support when their father attends a program to address his violence so that they have an understanding of what their dad is learning and what to expect:

‘Yeah, ‘cause like even if the fathers are taught how to be better dads, the children aren’t taught how people should act towards them and how they - like how to be a normal kid. Like, and they aren’t taught how to recognise the signs and like, what happens if your dad acts this way again’. (Young Person 6)

One of the key messages from children and young people that was identified in the current study was the importance of reparation. This was identified as an important theme regardless of whether children and young people intended or wanted to have an ongoing relationship with their fathers. By combining the thoughts of all 16 young people in the study an understanding of children’s perspectives on reparation was gained. Reparation was seen as comprising three stages: Addressing the Past, Commitment to Change and Rebuilding Trust. Children and young people saw the need for each stage to be addressed before moving on to the next. Children and young people’s perspectives on reparation
provide new insights into how children and young people feel about their relationships with their fathers while also providing some strong key messages for programs who work with fathers. In the following chapter, consideration is given to how these messages from children who have experienced family violence might be embedded in programs for fathers who use violence.
Chapter 9: Feasibility of introducing children’s voices into programs for fathers who use violence

It becomes critical to understand the perspectives of different stakeholders who will affect and be affected by the revised intervention. Those stakeholders form a system whose gears must mesh smoothly for the intervention to be taken up and integrated into practice (Bowen, Kreuter, Spring, Cofta-Woerpel, Linnan, Weiner, Bakken, Patrick Kaplan, Squiers, Fabrizio, & Fernandez, 2009, p. 5)

The third and final stage of the research focussed on assessing the feasibility of using the digital stories (prepared in stage 2 of this research) within programs for fathers who use violence. This stage was considered an important step in making the transition from theory into practice. The research question guiding this component of the research was: ‘What are the likely impacts of children and young people’s digital stories on a program for fathers who use violence and its participants?’ This chapter will outline the findings of the feasibility discussions where a number of areas for consideration were identified as significant. These issues can be categorised into four themes: those relating to program planning; the management of emotions; the impact of the stories on participants as well as a final section on workers perspectives on further opportunities to embed the voices of children in programs for fathers.

Studying feasibility

Feasibility has been defined as ‘the extent to which a new treatment, or an innovation, can be successfully used or carried out within a given agency or setting’ (Proctor, Silmere, Raghavan, Hovmand, Aarons, Bunger, Griffey, & Hensley, 2011). A search of the literature finds that the concept of feasibility testing is understood in a variety of different ways in different sectors with numerous articles and papers reporting the findings of feasibility studies (Alhassan, Nwaokeleme, Mendoza, Shitore, Puleo, Pfeiffer, & Whitt-Glover, 2016; Komatsu, Yagasaki, Yamauchi, Yamauchi, & Takebayashi, 2016). However, guidelines and standards for conducting feasibility studies are more difficult to locate (Bowen, Kreuter, Spring, Cofta-Woerpel, Linnan, Weiner, Bakken, Patrick Kaplan, Squiers, Fabrizio, & Fernandez, 2009, p. 2). Those that do exist primarily confine themselves to one specific content area.

In general terms it appears that there are many different types of feasibility studies undertaken for a variety of purposes including: technical, operational and economic feasibility assessment (Overton, 2007). Technical feasibility considers whether the work can be conducted with existing technology
and resources, operational feasibility testing aims to understand if an intervention considered for development is likely to be used and economic feasibility testing makes an analysis of the cost benefit of an intervention (Overton, 2007).

Feasibility testing is often used in the area of information technology to test that the software created meets the needs of the client it was designed for and to identify any errors (Velupula, Prasad, Kurli, & Kajjam, 2011). In medical or clinical research, feasibility studies are often described as an important step in informing the implementation of larger-scale experimental research (McClure, Catz, Ludman, Richards, Riggs, & Grothaus, 2011). These studies offer ‘the opportunity to evaluate which outcome measures are most suitable to quantify the effect, and to identify inadequate methodological ideas’ (Warth, Kessler, Hilleke, & Bardenheuer, 2015, p. 437).

In the development of programs and interventions in family and other welfare services, there is a greater tendency for feasibility research to attempt to explore ‘the realities of community and practice settings’ and therefore involve and engage practitioners and community members (Bowen, Kreuter, Spring, Cofta-Woerpel, Linnan, Weiner, Bakken, Patrick Kaplan, Squiers, Fabrizio, & Fernandez, 2009, p. 4). This approach to feasibility research which has been described as moving university investigators out of ivory towers and into ‘everyday earthen trenches’ (Jensen, Hoagwood, & Trickett, 1999, p. 207) was adopted in the current study. Feasibility discussions were held with program workers to explore whether the digital stories prepared in the second stage of the research could be integrated into existing programs for fathers who use violence. This process also aimed to identify issues that might need to be considered in doing this.

**Exploring the feasibility of introducing children and young people’s digital stories into programs for fathers who use violence**

As outlined in chapter 6, in November 2015 a workshop was run with 21 professionals managing or facilitating programs who support fathers who use violence. A brief presentation was given about the preliminary findings from the interviews and focus groups with children and young people and then four of the digital stories were played. At the end of the stories, participants were divided into three groups for discussion. The discussion lasted for approximately 45 minutes and was loosely structured around the following five questions:

- Do you think these digital stories could be used in men’s programs?
- What do you think the stories would bring to the program content?
- How do you think fathers would respond, react to or receive these stories?
• What would be the challenges to programs to introduce these stories within a program for fathers?
• Are there other ways that children could be more involved in programs for fathers who use violence?

Program planning

The majority of the program managers and facilitators could see benefits from integrating the digital stories into their existing program structure (there were exceptions and these views will be presented in a later section). A number of complex issues were identified for consideration in the planning process, including: how to rework program content, the most appropriate time to introduce the stories and the best way to prepare men for the emotive content.

Program content and timing

Two participants discussed whether it would be more appropriate to show the digital stories in a one on one session with the men at the start of the program rather than in a group context to allow for individual issues raised by the stories to be addressed and ‘contained’ and then revisited later in the program:

‘So it could be more useful having it in that one on one. That way, the counsellor can deal with any emotion that’s being treated, and then they feed into the men’s behaviour change, and then later on, it’s reintroduced to say, this is why you’ve done all this work. This is why you need to concentrate on putting all this work you’ve done into practice when you go home’. (Discussion Group 1)

Many participants suggested that they believed the digital stories would work well within Men’s Behavioural change and other programs working with fathers in the context of discussions about the impact of experiencing family violence on children:

‘I think they work really well with men’s programs. Most Men’s behavioural change programs would have at least two sessions, generally around working with your kids or the impact on your kids. It is one of the most crucial change points for men because they get asked stuff like ‘is this the dad you want to be’. (Discussion Group 3)
The major issues for discussion centred on the optimum time to introduce the stories and how the structure of the program would need to be reworked to accommodate them. As one worker suggested:

‘We do a 14 week program and I thought in that 14 week program I would have to look at the modules and the content of the modules to see where that might fit in really well and work with maybe redesigning that week or those weeks to kind of accommodate and manage that content’. (Discussion Group 2)

Generally the workers were supportive of adding the digital stories to their programs as one worker said:

‘You can often build in extra space if that’s where the men need to go or it’s a useful place to go’. (Discussion Group 3)

Issues that workers said they would need to consider included ensuring nothing important was left out of the program and that enough time was available to ensure that all of the issues raised in the digital stories could be addressed:

‘the whole change in behaviours is a long process. Trying to squeeze it all into 20 weeks, 22 weeks, you don’t want to overload the men, because a lot of it focuses on accountability in their behaviours, yeah. The reasons why they do it, and the reasons why - what the - the impact is on their environment - you know, you can’t just touch on it then let it go. (Discussion Group 1)

Much discussion occurred across all three groups about the issue of ‘timing’ and at what point in the program the digital stories should be shown to have greatest impact. Some workers suggested that they would use the digital stories at the start of the program to get the men focussed on why they need to change:

‘At the start, you know...as a father you’re coming from that side and say, look, this is the reason why you need to do this program’. (Discussion Group 1)

More commonly, workers thought that it might be too confronting to show the digital stories too early in the program and this issue will be taken up under ‘managing emotions’.
Consistent with the literature which suggests that fathers who attend a program often have pride in their parenting ability and are often quite resistant to criticism in the first few weeks (Kelly & Wolfe, 2004; Scott & Crooks, 2006), a number of workers suggested that men are most receptive to change by week six or seven of a program and that this would be the time to play the stories to have greatest impact:

‘midway or just before midway, from what I have read it’s about the half way point that change occurs, it takes about six weeks so I wouldn’t play it any sooner’. (Discussion Group 3)

A couple of workers considered showing the digital stories at the end of a program for men as:

‘..a reminder of why you need to change your behaviours, and everything that you’ve learnt, this is why you need to put all that stuff into practice...’. (Discussion Group 1)

One issue on which all of the program managers and facilitators were agreed was that the decision about when to introduce digital stories into a program needs to be made by the individual facilitator based on the dynamics of each group of men:

‘They [digital stories] definitely should be used. But...that decision should be left up to the facilitators to decide on where - what stage the participants are at’. (Discussion Group 1)

Preparation

Participants in the feasibility discussion had varied ideas about how they would prepare men to view the digital stories. As there were eight digital stories available to use, some participants in the discussion groups suggested that as workers might need to consider using different stories at different points in the program

‘I think that different stories have different levels of anger in them, too. It might be about picking the right - the right story. (Discussion Group 1)

One strategy outlined was to show the less emotive stories first and then build up to showing the stories with greater levels of anger later on in the program.
'maybe if some of them are more about the emotional stuff, maybe you could start off with an [story] with a child that says this is how it makes me feels... and then sort of work through the different types of violence that can be perpetrated, have a story that could sort of back that up with how it effects the child in that situation'. (Discussion Group 3)

One area where all participants were agreed was there would be a need to prepare the men for seeing the stories the children and young people had made:

‘I guess you would want to say something at the start to prepare them, ‘you will hear the voices of the children who have been affected by violence in different ways’... I would want that said in the first week so the men know that this is going to happen, not just turn up in week 5 and say now we are going to hear from the kids’. (Discussion Group 3)

Managing emotions

In determining how the digital stories might be used in programs for fathers who use violence, discussion group participants generally agreed that the stories would have a fairly significant impact on the men who viewed them and are likely to raise a number of issues which would need to be anticipated and addressed:

‘It think it is really very powerful and has the potential to have a really great impact in terms of their understanding but at the same time it’s really important to have facilitators who are capable of then dealing with what comes out of that from a trauma point of view or from a range of points of view and then manage it and contain it so it doesn't become a damaging thing or a triggering thing’. (Discussion Group 2)

History of Abuse

One of the issues that the workers believed might arise for the men who view the digital stories was their own history of experiencing violence and abuse as a child which may bring up some quite traumatic memories:
‘...because lots of the guys that do groups will have experiences, growing up, of family violence themselves. So they will be the children in that room sometimes, too’. (Discussion Group 1)

Some workers saw this as an important and necessary part of the behavioural change process

‘[They’ll have to] unpack their own family of origin experience in some way [or another]. Absolutely, yeah, and with that comes vulnerability, sadness, and a whole range of other emotions’. (Discussion Group 1)

Other research with fathers who use violence has found that asking men to reflect on their experiences of family violence as a child can be used as motivation to ensure their own children have a better childhood (Kelly & Wolfe, 2004; Stanley, Graham-Kevan, & Borthwick, 2012). Some workers in the current study saw the digital stories as providing a positive opportunity for men to reflect on their own childhood and how they were fathered:

‘I think it’s a good tool, also, to remind them, and take them back to......if they had an experience of being a child, of growing up in an abusive family as well, that they can then relate as well to the child’s voice. Sometimes, the parents need to reflect on their own experience of being parents - and for them to be able to understand their child’s experience as well’. (Discussion Group 1)

Others suggested that encouraging men to reflect on how they were fathered could lead into a really productive discussion about the type of father they wanted to be to their own children:

‘that question around, is this the father that you wanted to be? Is this how you saw yourself as a father’. (Discussion Group 1)

Balanced approach

While many workers said they would be very interested in using the digital stories in a program for fathers who use violence. A number suggested that they would try to balance the confronting messages from children with positive examples of fathers:

‘Part of that structure would be around having the alternative story there, you know because, in of itself it could be very disempowering. For people to hear that, who had some history of being an abuser or being abused. So the
pathway out of that isn’t just through confrontation obviously it’s also about building up.....So that structure would be about bringing out some of those other stories and capacities to change behaviour’. (Discussion Group 2)

A similar discussion occurred in Group 3:

‘I would like to see a good one [story] in there, so then you are not just knocking them down, you want to also want to build them up. I am actually feeling a bit flat after watching them. If there was a nice positive one and my father changed and now we are doing this. I would feel like I can change it is possible...whoever the perpetrator is, is walking away feeling good. You still want them to be thinking about what’s happened but think there is a light at the end of the tunnel.’ (Discussion Group 3)

Risk and shame

There were a small proportion of workers that said they had reservations about using the digital stories with some groups of fathers who use violence. Their concerns centred around the impact that the stories might have on the men. Generally their concerns focussed on how the men may experience the stories and react to those feelings. These thoughts are consistent with research which has found that stigma, shame and embarrassment can all be barriers to men acknowledging abusive behaviour and seeking to change (Stanley, Fell, Miller, Thomson, & Watson, 2012). The same research has also found that men experience ‘damage to their self-image’ when their own violence is reflected back to them and this can carry a heavy emotional weight (Stanley, Fell, Miller, Thomson, & Watson, 2012).

An example of the way men attending a program can be sensitive to shame was given by a worker who said:

‘The week before we asked men to bring their children’s shoes in and put them in their children’s space and that was confronting enough for them’.

(Discussion Group 2)

Several workers cautioned that using the stories too early in the program could be dangerous and these comments can be viewed with the context of the work of Perel and Peled (2008, p. 478) who suggest that fathers who use violence be viewed as ‘simultaneously harmful and vulnerable’:
‘the danger is if you have it in that group, and you set up all these triggers in the group, that sort of stuff too early, you know, because in - in the group, they still have - the men have that reliance on still trying to protect themselves and their emotion. Until you get to a point where you can start really tapping into it’. (Discussion Group 1)

Another worker agreed:

‘...that kind of process, I think, could be really - um - unsafe for a lot of men, and I think um, this is really good to bring in the young people’s voices. But you need to have had the people in the group for a little bit - for a while - at first....I think. So that they’re kind of trusting the group, and it’s - they’re open to reflecting on maybe some of the things...’. (Discussion Group 1)

One worker said he wouldn’t use the stories until he felt the fathers were firmly engaged in the program for fear of drop out which the literature suggests is a significant problem for programs for men who use violence (Day, Chung, O’Leary, & Carson, 2009). The worker suggested:

‘Because there is a bit of a danger that some men start off attending, you introduce this when they’re um-ing and ah-ing, and then they don’t come back. Well they can turn that in their head, that their kids have also turned against them...’. (Discussion Group 1)

Others expressed general concern about how men might react to hearing the stories and whether there is a risk that they may become more violent as a result:

‘Some of the men who attend the groups are narcissists or very very power and control and misogynist and they would view that as a threat to them. It could trigger them to go home and do something’. (Discussion Group 2)

Another participant in Discussion Group 2 also said that she would not use the digital stories with men because:

‘it could trigger something quite dangerous. That’s my view...those things are real those things do happen in Men’s Behaviour Change programs’. (Discussion Group 2)
Consistent with these comments, several workers expressed concern about the impact of the digital stories in terms of making men feel shame:

‘I think too if they are being forced to do it and they listen to the child voices it could have an opposite effect and make them more angry and feel more guilty which in turn could make the outcomes worse. That’s a possibility is all I’m saying’. (Discussion Group 3)

‘issues around shame as well. I mean men are ashamed often of their behaviour with their partners but they are really ashamed if they know that their kids have been affected by their violence or abuse’. (Discussion Group 3)

**Impact of the stories**

When asked about the likely impact of the digital stories on the men who attend programs for their violence, the participants in the workshop were mixed in their views. While the majority of participants believed the emotional impact would be significant, other workers had recommendations for altering the stories to make them more impactful.

Many of the participants commented on the power of the visual medium to drive home key messages which can be tuned out when delivered in a less engaging way:

‘It’s a good [tool] to have in combination with that psycho-ed stuff, because, I mean, when you’re just sort of lecturing people on, you know, the neurobiology and all that stuff...some people shut - shut off, and then they need more visuals,... to understand that’. (Discussion Group 1)

Another worker suggested that:

‘I think the kid’s voices add authenticity...to the process of facilitators standing up and saying, and here’s a list of the impacts on children of family violence and your behaviour... but I think this will - this adds an authenticity to it. But also a connection of their own lived experience...’. (Discussion Group 1)
Hearing children’s voices

A number of the participants acknowledged that the voices of children are often not well captured within programs for fathers who use violence and that this is something that programs need to better at:

‘There are a whole lot of techniques that programs use...but the voices, I haven’t heard much about voices being used and I think that could be a really powerful way of getting the message across and it does have an impact’.  
(Discussion Group 3)

A number of participants spoke about the digital stories as being a very ‘authentic’ way to give men who attend a program insight into the impact of their behaviour on their children:

‘It is one thing being handed a piece of paper being asked about how do you feel about what you have done to your children. But hearing an actual story a true story from a child it resonates better....it has more impact than handing them a piece of paper...that visual content it is really mind blowing. I reckon that is an awesome tool for parents. It will hit home really hard for the fathers. Sometimes it’s what’s needed...this is what my kids are feeling when I do this’.
(Discussion Group 3)

One worker suggested that often they find it hard to explain to fathers how their children would be feeling and that the men often believe that their children’s mother has ‘turned the children against him’ and the digital stories would be one way of overcoming this resistance:

‘I think it’s really good, because it actually shifts, sometimes, the blame, oh the children are that way because mum has kind of, you know, told - like, indoctrinated them that - you know, dad’s bad - well, actually, that kind of gives voices to the kids - this is their experience, and this is how they’ve experienced it.’ (Discussion Group 1)

When asked whether hearing the children’s voices would have a different effect on those who attended a program voluntarily or were mandated to attend the consensus of the group was that the stories would have an impact on both groups of men:
'I think regardless of whether they were mandatory or voluntary, if the voices were of a child it would actually have some sort of impact'. (Discussion Group 3)

Several participants commented on the fact that as the children’s voices had been digitally altered, they found it more difficult to connect emotionally with their stories,

‘I think if you are going to digitally…. change the voices you should actually make them sound like children not like robots. Because I think if that had actually been the voice of a child. It would have touched me’. (Discussion Group 3)

Others in the discussions did not see the digitalised voices as problematic while one worker suggested that she liked the fact that the voices and identities were obscured:

‘You know, it gives that step back. So maybe it’s not as confronting for the guys.’ (Discussion Group 1)

Increased understanding of abuse

The literature suggests that fathers who use violence can be extremely moved when they realise the impact of their violence on their children (Fox, Sayers, & Bruce, 2001). In the workshop discussions, workers thought digital stories might be a good way of helping fathers understand the real impact of their behaviour on their children:

'I am sure there are a lot of men who do programs who do not even think that they are endangering their children. It could make them think'. (Discussion Group 2)

Another suggested:

‘it's very easy sometimes for - for adults to think that children don't experience family violence because they were not there, or they were asleep. Or even if - you know, people talk about children witnessing family violence, but actually, it's all experiencing. I think sometimes, also, it can be easy for men to discount’. (Discussion Group 1)

It was also suggested that the digital stories might help some men understand the concept of abuse
more broadly, particularly in terms of the effects of emotional abuse and coercive control:

‘I just think also parts of the stories that the kids talk about, like their phones, the use of control, all these things are really powerful messages, I think, for men to hear if they want to repair those relationships, and how they need to let go of some of those things. Or what those things mean to the child. So to actually hear that from the child.’ (Discussion Group 1)

Motivation to change

In line with evidence suggesting that children can act as a motivating factor for fathers who use violence (Stanley, Fell, Miller, Thomson, & Watson, 2012), workers believed that digital stories could act as additional leverage in motivating men to change:

‘And children are - you know, a leverage point in terms of behaviour change...they might be ambivalent about being better partners sometimes. But being better fathers certainly ticks a box for a lot of men’. (Discussion Group 1)

A number of the participants in the workshop felt that they could hear messages of hope in the children’s stories where they were very clear that they wanted the abuse to stop but also that they also did want to have a relationship with their fathers and missed them:

‘...you know, confusion for children, and that difficulty... I think is really powerful and how you draw hope out of that...’. (Discussion Group 1)

Another suggested that the digital stories could help reinforce that fathers needed to complete the program so that they could have a chance at salvaging a relationship with their children:

‘...this is why it's important for you to do this program, you know, reinforcing that in their heads, because if they're only seeing it as a punishment, you know, and the danger is, is that I don't want to have a relationship with him no matter what’s on the program, then what's his investment into the program...’. (Discussion Group 1)
Universality of the message

Some discussion occurred within the groups about how universal the messages in the digital stories would be and whether they would be suitable for use in a range of different programs and with differing cultural groups. One issue that was raised was that not all men who attend a program to address their violence may be fathers and this was an issue for one worker who suggested that:

‘some of the men who do MBC may not have children so that needs to be looked at too’. (Discussion Group 2)

Others felt that this was not a big issue as all of the men would have contact with children in their families or by becoming a father at a later point in time and it was still important to think about the impact of violence on broader family:

‘I think, to be honest with you if they are not dads yet they will be one day or they have nieces or nephews and sisters or brothers who have kids and their voices are still going to impact them...they could be hearing that’. (Discussion Group 3)

When workers from Aboriginal organisations were asked if they thought the stories could be used in programs for Aboriginal fathers, several were enthusiastic:

‘I reckon across the board. Not just Aboriginal any father that hears it... could be for both and it should be for both’. (Discussion Group 3)

One worker said that she wouldn’t use the stories with culturally diverse groups as the images in the pictures did not portray culturally diverse faces however another participant disagreed and said:

‘but in general you can use it across the board because a kid is a kid....’
(Discussion Group 1)

Further opportunities to include the perspectives of children and young people in programs for fathers

In general participants in the feasibility workshop were very supportive of the idea of bringing children’s perspectives into programs for fathers who use violence. Workers generally agreed that doing this is a challenge, and an area where programs were variable in their attempts. This finding is
supported by the literature which suggests that an analysis programs for men who use violence reveals ‘a marked diversity’ in the way in which programs are delivered (Day, Chung, O’Leary, & Carson, 2009).

The participants reflected on the summary given at the start of the session which outlined the issues raised by young people in the first two stages of the research, particularly the finding that very few young people were informed when their father attended a program to address his violence and this was something young people wanted to be more involved and informed about. Workers found this result surprising:

‘but it’s so interesting that the program’s not reaching out to the kids in any way, or keeping them informed...about dad’s progress, or what you should see, what should change’. (Discussion Group 1)

Another participant in the group agreed and suggested that children should be more included:

‘Yeah, especially given safety. You know, like, women contacted for partner contact and safety planning...but kids are just as important in the process’ .(Discussion Group 1)

There were some concerns raised about how contact between programs and children would occur with a need for the development of protocols and guidelines seen as important to ensure this process was safe and positive for children:

‘I reckon if you’re having, like, partner contact, children’s contact in terms of informing the kids, you probably want some protocols from an agency point of view about what information you gave the children depending on their age and lots of different stuff. So there’d be a guide for workers when they’re having their contact with - with kids’. (Discussion Group 1)

The conversation then moved on to looking for other opportunities where children’s voices could be included within programs for fathers who use violence:

‘Do you know what would be really good is for their voices to come into men’s behaviour change, but actually talk about what it means to them for their fathers to actually be attending men’s behaviour change...’. (Discussion Group 1)
The workshop participants also discussed opportunities for ensuring the voices of children were included in evaluations of programs for fathers:

‘It would be really nice to see men's behavioural change programs consider - you know, when working out - doing evaluation of the programs, at least one question from the kid’s perspective. Like has this made a difference to the lives of their kids or parenting? It doesn’t solve the way they feel about their fathering role or something that does tie into the kids? Because you sort of think, what's the point, if the answer’s no...’. (Discussion Group 1)

Overall findings from the feasibility workshop suggest that there are opportunities for introducing the voices of children in programs for fathers who use violence. Workers agreed that this was an area being addressed in varied ways across programs with many suggesting that there are opportunities for improving practice. There was general enthusiasm for the use of visual tools such as the digital stories to introduce children’s views from the majority of program workers, however a small group of workers had concerns. These concerns centred on the impact of viewing the stories on the men’s levels of anger and whether this may incite them to commit additional violence. There were varied views about the impact of the digitalised children’s voices with this being a non-issue for some and a major issue reducing the emotional impact of the stories to others. The key challenges identified for further discussion and exploration were the timing of when to introduce the stories and the context in which they are shown with particular emphasis on the need to ‘sandwich’ these stories with some more positive stories about father’s capacity to change. The program workers showed surprise at the lack of child involvement in the evaluation of programs and identified this as area that needs further consideration and development.
Chapter 10: Reflections on the research findings

Proper understanding of the social order requires consideration of all its members, all social groups. And children, like other minority groups, lack a voice and have a right to be heard and their views taken into account. It is through working towards better understanding of the social condition of childhood that we can provide a firm basis for working towards implementation of their rights (Mayall, 2000, p. 243).

The current research raises some interesting issues which warrant further discussion. These issues relate to broadening our understanding of children’s perspectives on family violence, the relationships between children and their fathers after violence and the degree of accountability that both fathers and programs have to children. In addition, the suitability of digital storytelling as an option for embedding children’s voices in programs where their opinions are rarely included, will also be discussed. This chapter will explore these issues in the context of other research in this area and the following chapter will outline policy and program implications as well as directions for future research.

Broadening our understanding of children and young people’s perspectives on family violence

The current research extends our understanding of children and young people’s perspectives on family violence particularly in terms of how fathers who use violence parent. Children and young people in the study described fathers who failed to put their interests and safety first and were often both physically and emotionally abusive. Given fatherhood is still overwhelmingly constructed as nonviolent, there seems to be a gap between the way in which society understands fatherhood in the context of family violence and children’s perspectives (Eriksson & Hester, 2001).

This current study adds to the body of knowledge that rejects the notion that a man can be a violent husband and a good father. Although the sample size of the current research was small, this finding is supported by a range of studies which have found a strong relationship between family violence and child abuse and neglect (Appel & Holden, 1998; Goddard & Bedi, 2010; McGuigan & Pratt, 2001; Mullender, 2006; Radford & Hester, 2006). Almost all of the young people in the study had experienced some form of abuse themselves in addition to witnessing abuse directed towards their mother and siblings. While some of the abuse described was physical, much of the abuse was in the form of emotional abuse or coercive control. This evidence supports the assertion by Holt (2015b) that ‘abusive men are not good enough fathers’ with change possible only if they address their abusive
behaviour and acknowledge the impact on their children (p.219). She concludes, that in order to address the reality of men’s abusive behaviour, a paradigm shift is needed to see fathers as a risk to their children rather than focussing solely on the ‘ideology of involved fatherhood’ (Holt, 2015b, p. 220). The following section will outline three key areas where our knowledge about the impact of family violence on children’s lives was enhanced by the current research including the impact of coercive control; the consequences for the mother-child relationship; and impacts on future relationships.

Coercive control

The literature on family violence has found that some of the most damaging impacts of family violence on women relate to the impact of coercive control on their lives:

- women have consistently talked about how it is those abuses that cannot be seen which are most problematic to deal with, the abuses that erode a women’s self esteem, self confidence, and self-respect (Williamson, 2010, p. 1412).

Coercive control is described as a particularly harmful form of family violence and can involve a range of tactics intended to humiliate, intimidate, degrade, isolate and control (Katz, 2016; Stark, 2007). Coercive control includes emotional abuse as well as the control of time, space and movement, monitoring, stalking, threats, financial abuse, denial of resources and isolation from support (Katz, 2016). Research has found that women who experience controlling violence report higher levels of fear and perceived threat of future harm, sexual coercion and forced sexual activity (Marshall & Holtzworth-Munroe, 2002).

The impact of coercive control on children has only recently been considered (Callaghan, Alexander, Sixsmith, & Fellin, 2015; Katz, 2016). Emerging evidence suggests that the impacts of pervasive and ongoing non-violent forms of coercive control contribute to the behavioural and emotional problems of children who have experienced family violence (Jouriles & McDonald, 2015). Research suggests that reliance on ‘the physical incident model’ of family violence as a means for describing and understanding children’s experiences of family violence is inadequate (Katz, 2016).

The current study supports the findings of other recent studies which have found that children are also impacted by coercive control (Callaghan, Alexander, Sixsmith, & Fellin, 2015; Jouriles & McDonald, 2015; Katz, 2016). In the current study children and young people gave numerous examples of their father’s use of coercive control which they described as a source of distress. Children and young
people described having their internet and phone use monitored and controlled, the time they took to do shopping recorded, being belittled, having their interests ridiculed, being locked in rooms and being systematically isolated from support networks. Once considered merely witnesses to family violence, there is now general acceptance that children are both involved and impacted when family violence occurs in the home (Goddard & Bedi, 2010; McGee, 2000; Overlien & Hyden, 2009). What is now needed is consideration of the impact of coercive control on children who have experienced family violence both in the short and long term (Katz, 2016). By having a greater understanding of the impacts of coercive control on children, future research and program development can ensure that this element of children’s experience is both acknowledged and addressed by services and supports designed to assist them.

Impact on the mother-child relationship

One way in which a father’s use of coercive control impacts children who have experienced family violence is on the child’s relationship with other people:

the isolation that children lived with as a result of perpetrators/fathers controlling tactics severely limited children’s opportunities to create resilience building relationships with non-abusive people outside their immediate family (Katz, 2016, p. 54).

This behaviour can also have a significant impact on the mother-child relationship. As Katz (2016) describes:

these behaviours entrapped children (and their mothers) in constrained situations where children’s access to resilience-building and developmentally-helpful persons and activities was limited (p.55).

We know from the literature that having supportive adults in their lives and a strong mother-child relationship are strong protective factors for children who have experienced family violence (Humphreys, Mullender, Thiara, & Skamballis, 2006). When fathers actively seek to isolate children and negatively impact the mother-child relationship, the long term impacts for children can be significant (Katz, 2016).

Several children in the current study spoke about their father’s attempts to denigrate and criticise their mothers both when residing together and post separation. The level of viciousness in some of the comments reportedly made by fathers about their partners was confronting for adult researchers let alone their own children. These findings support other evidence which suggests that even when
fathers are no longer living with their children and the physical violence stops, children will often continue to experience coercive control (Holt, 2015b; Katz, 2016; Thiara & Humphreys, 2015).

Impacts on future relationships

Another way in which the children and young people in the current study contributed to our knowledge about the impact of family violence on their lives was their concern about the intergenerational transmission of violence. Research suggests that children who have experienced violence are at increased risk of becoming violent themselves as adults or being in a relationship with someone who is violent (Edleson, 1999; Stith, Rosen, Middleton, Busch, Lundeberg, & Carlton, 2000). However, this outcome is not inevitable (Morley & Mullender, 1994). Knowledge about the intergenerational transmission of violence led a number of children in the current study to decide that it would be safer if they never became involved in a relationship. Even more concerning was the number of young people who said they did not intend to have children themselves as they were fearful of being violent parents or because they said there was just too much to worry about. These findings have significant implications for those who work with children who have experienced family violence.

Understanding children’s perspective on their relationship with their father after family violence

One of the most significant contributions of the current study to our knowledge about children and young people who have experienced family violence came from their perspectives on their relationship with their fathers. In particular, the issue of reparation emerged as particularly significant. While other research (Arean & Davis, 2007) has looked at mother and father’s thoughts about reparation with children after family violence, there is little literature on this issue from children’s perspective. The conceptualisation of reparation is quite complex, contested and understood in varying ways in different contexts (Daly & Proetti-Scifoni, 2011). Recent commentators have suggested that the issue of gender needs to be taken into consideration to ensure reparation for women who have experienced trauma, does not end up denying them justice (Walker, 2016). It has been suggested that reparation that only aims to restore victims to the condition they were in prior to the violation ‘might only recreate or reinforce conditions of powerless [and] inequality’ (Walker, 2016, p. 109). This concern has seen the development of ‘transformative reparation’ which calls for reparation to be ‘designed to evade, contest or subvert patriarchal norms that disempower or disadvantage women’ (Walker, 2016, p. 109).

The issue of reparation after family violence is one that has been discussed in the literature in the context of ‘responsibility initiatives’ and more specifically ‘restorative justice’, a field which is described
as ‘evolving and dynamic’ (Daly & Proetti-Scifoni, 2011). Restorative justice gained momentum in the area of family violence in response to a range of factors. These included the large number of cases of family violence that were unreported and perceived failures of the criminal justice system to address issues such as the psychological damage caused to victims (Elias, 2015; Hopkins, 2012; McCold, 2000). While there are many forms of restorative justice, use in family violence has focussed on:

striking a necessary balance between serving the state’s interest in controlling harmful behaviour and the victim’s interest in preserving individual dignity, personal integrity and the development of a healthy family life (Elias, 2015, p. 68).

Feminist critiques (Daly, 2016) of the use of restorative justice in the family violence area have expressed concern about restorative justice being a ‘soft response’ to the violence which may place too much emphasis on reconciliation (Hopkins, 2012, p. 339). Feminist critiques also express concern that power imbalances that exist between men who use violence and their partners may also be present in restorative justice interventions (Gavrielides, 2015; Hopkins, 2012). Another criticism levelled at the use of restorative justice in the context of family violence have been that it may be more suited to discrete incidents of violence rather than sustained campaigns of control (Stubbs, 2002). In response to these criticisms, it has been suggested that while the use of the criminal justice system to raise awareness of the serious nature of family violence has been a successful strategy, it has not made a fundamental social change (Strang & Braithwaite, 2002). In this context, restorative justice is seen as offering an alternative mechanism for bringing about this change ‘without relying on the tools of the patriarchy’ (Strang & Braithwaite, 2002). While the literature on restorative justice in the area of family violence is growing, it contains little reference to children’s perspectives.

Children and young people’s perspective on reparation

As outlined in chapter eight, children and young people placed considerable importance on the need for a process of reparation with their fathers and this was regardless of whether they intended to have any ongoing contact or relationship with their father into the future. The process of reparation was seen as something important for young people to gain a sense of closure or repair. Previous work which has explored reparation from father’s perspectives shared some common themes with the current study (Arean & Davis, 2007). What was unique to the current study was that children and young people described the process of reparation as comprising three stages with progression to the next stage contingent on completion of the previous stage. Fox, Sayers, and Bruce (2001) describe their analysis as ‘a constructed composite’ of the perspectives of all of the participants in their study and not a summary of every individual perspective (Fox, Sayers, & Bruce, 2001, p. 147). This is also a good
description for how the current study was undertaken. Each young person described the elements of reparation that were important to them and the completed analysis is comprised of all of these perspectives and does not necessarily describe every young person’s individual view.

The first stage of reparation described by young people, which has been summarised as ‘addressing the past’ prioritised the need for fathers to acknowledge that they had done something wrong, acknowledge the harm they had caused and apologise for this. The impacts of a public statement of admission of responsibility by men who use family violence has been identified in the literature as having benefits for victim recovery (Hopkins, 2012). It has also been found that children who have experienced family violence describe ‘the ability of their father to truly listen, empathise, and understand what life had been like for those living under his regime of control’ as important (Alderson, 2015, p. 223). However it has been suggested that practices of apology and forgiveness can be dangerous in the context of family violence and can also be used as a powerful tool for continuing oppression and control in the family (Acorn, 2004; Hopkins, 2012). This is a relevant point in relation to children and their fathers who, in this study as in others, described fathers who constantly apologise but do not really mean it and continued their violence:

Apology and forgiveness, the primary method of restorative repair, can often be anything but healing. They can be essential weapons for placing an offender in a position to inflict new wounds and reopen old ones (Acorn, 2004, p. 74).

This is probably why children and young people described the first stage of reparation ‘addressing the past’ as being supported by a ‘commitment to change’. The second stage of reparation or ‘commitment to change’ was described as a father showing he had changed his attitudes and behaviours and that he had included his children in that process. The element of stopping abusive behaviour is considered an essential element of any reparation between children and their fathers and it is one identified by fathers in the reparative framework developed by Arean and Davis (2007). In the current study, children and young people wanted to see violence stop as part of the process of committing to change. Children and young people also wanted to see a change in attitudes and behaviour towards themselves and their mother. These findings fit well with other recent work which found that cessation of violence alone may not make women and children safer, as once the physical violence stops it is possible women and children may continue ‘to live in unhealthy atmospheres laden with tension and threat’ (Westmarland & Kelly, 2013).

Research from the United Kingdom expands the concept of perpetrator program success to reflect the realities of how partners and ex-partners of men who use violence define positive program outcomes.
Like the children in the current study, the changes women wanted to see in their partners were improved communication, better listening, increased respect and empathy, letting go of coercive control and a stronger partnership (Westmarland & Kelly, 2013).

The third stage of the reparation process described by young people in this study was identified as ‘rebuilding trust’. This was the stage that young people who wanted to have an ongoing relationship with their father saw as extremely important but also as one which they saw as difficult to achieve. It included their fathers investing time in them, stepping up to parenting and being a reliable co-parent. Part of being a reliable co-parent was seen as respecting their child’s mother and listening to what their children want from them, even if what they want, is no ongoing contact for a period of time. This was a key element of reparation for some young people who felt that even if their fathers had admitted the harm they caused, apologised, shown a commitment to change that there was still the opportunity for children to say, they were not ready to spend time their fathers. The key message was that it was up to children to decide if or when they were prepared to have their fathers in their lives and in what capacity. This is a point acknowledged in the reparation framework by Arean and Davis (2007) but not reflected in the current No to Violence Minimum standards in Victoria, which suggest that if fathers become non-violent they will have a more positive and supportive relationship with their children (Wheeler, 2005). When viewed in the light of how children viewed reparation, this statement seems to imply that ceasing violence on its own, will result in fathers having a positive relationship with their children. This concept is not supported by the research which found that children and young people saw reparation as a more complex process where they believed children should have the power to decide what degree of involvement (if any) they would like their fathers to have in their lives. The research also found that the way in which their fathers spoke about their mothers was a key factor that determined whether young people wanted to spend time with their fathers or not and is therefore a critically important message from children to fathers.

Children and young people’s description of the type of reparation that they would like from their fathers gives us valuable insights into an area that no research has addressed previously. The model of reparation described by children and young has potential for use with families where there has been family violence and gives valuable insight into where children and young people would like their fathers to focus their efforts. A final point to consider is that the model of reparation described by children and young people is what they believe would give them closure and repair. It would be useful for future work to explore how children and young people actually feel if this process is followed.
Accountability of fathers and programs to children who have experienced family violence

At present we know that children are often used to provide fathers with either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation to attend a program to address his violence (Stanley, Graham-Kevan, & Borthwick, 2012). Emerging evidence suggests that while the impacts of violence on children is raised in some programs for fathers who use violence, the degree of attention given to children’s experiences, varies dramatically from program to program (Stover, 2013). In addition, the patchy evidence we have which is supported by the current study, suggests that children are often not told when their father attends a program to address his violence and have little or no involvement in the program (Alderson, Westmarland, & Kelly, 2013). We also know that when programs for fathers are evaluated for their impacts and outcomes, the needs and perspectives of children are rarely considered (Rayns, 2010). The following section will discuss the issues raised by this study about the degree of accountability to children who have experienced violence from both fathers who use violence and the programs they attend.

The efforts of feminist researchers have ‘transformed domestic violence from a private concern into a significant and widely recognised public issue that has considerable resonance outside the feminist movement’ (Devaney, 2014, p. 481). With this transformation has come recognition that addressing family violence requires change at both the individual and societal level to reinforce the message that it will not be accepted. The issue of accountability for men who use violence is increasingly becoming a policy and practice focus, with emphasis on the need to ensure strong messages are conveyed that family violence is unacceptable and will result in negative consequences for those found to engage in such behaviour (Devaney, 2014). Less attention has focussed on whether and how fathers who use violence should be held accountable to their children.

One way of ensuring fathers who use violence are accountable to their children is by bringing their needs and issues into programs men attend. However there are a range of barriers to the voices of children and young people being included in programs for fathers who use violence which result in marginalization of children from the rehabilitative and reparative process. Children and young people in the current study have contributed to our understanding of the role they would like to play in programs. Consistent with other studies in this area which have found that children are seldom told when their father attends a program to address violence, (Alderson, 2015; Rayns, 2010), 15 of the 16 children in the current study were not sure whether their father had attended a program or not. It has
been suggested that men should be encouraged to be open and honest with their children about their participation in a program to address their violence:

Such conversations also offer opportunities for fathers to show that they are aware of the costs of their actions for children and provide a space for children’s hurt and distress to be heard. This is fundamental if the principle of accountability for violence is to be extended to children. (Alderson, 2015, p. 158)

The current research findings supports the idea that the level of involvement and consideration of the needs of children and young people by programs for fathers who use violence is important. As Alderson (2015) suggests,

Unless children are included in matters that affect them, and are recognised as active subjects rather than passive objects, their place within a co-ordinated community response to domestic violence is marginalised’ (p.153).

It was interesting to note that in the research by Alderson (2015) and also the current study, professionals who work with fathers who use violence admitted that they had not thought to ask fathers whether they had informed their children that they were attending a program. This is an area that warrants future exploration. In addition there is a need for fathers (with support from workers) to give children age appropriate information about the program they are attending:

While it is undoubtedly inappropriate for a child to be given detailed information about the content of programme sessions, men need to be encouraged to consider age appropriate language and matching the child’s own language understanding for explaining to children what changes they might expect in his behaviour….such conversations also offer opportunities for fathers to show that they are aware of the costs of their actions for children and provide a space for children’s hurt and distress to be heard (Alderson, 2015, p. 159).

Discussions with program managers and facilitators found that a number of the men’s programs were concerned about how they would engage with the children of fathers on the program. They cited the need to protect young people as a barrier preventing further involvement. Ensuring the physical and emotional safety of children is an important issue to consider in looking at ways to engage children in their father’s rehabilitative process. This was an issue that some of the younger children raised in the research stating that they were not sure whether all children would want to be informed if their father attends a program. However the majority of young people in the current study did want to know that
their father was attending a program as they felt it would be a significant indication of a willingness to change which they saw as important. These findings suggest that programs for fathers who use violence should look at ways to inform and involve children when their fathers are attending program and should encourage fathers to share information about their progress with their children in a way that is appropriate for their level of development and understanding.

The findings from this study suggest additional attention is needed to consider the way in which fathers who use violence are accountable to their children. Additionally programs for fathers who use violence also have opportunities to facilitate that process. One area where the inclusion of children’s perspectives are needed within programs for fathers who use violence is in the evaluation of program effectiveness. At present, children’s perspective on program success or the impact of their father’s attendance on a program are absent from the literature with one exception (Alderson, 2015). Based on a theory that evaluations of programs for men who use violence focus too narrowly on cessation of violence as the key measure of program success, research in the United Kingdom (Westmarland & Kelly, 2013) asked men, their partners and program funders to elaborate on what program success might look like. The current study adds children and young people’s voices to this earlier work and finds that they have strong ideas about what they would like their fathers to achieve in a program to address his violence. As one of the managers of a program for men who use violence who participated in the feasibility component of this research suggested, if programs for fathers who use violence do not improve outcomes for children then, what is the point?

One of the issues discussed in the third stage of the research in the feasibility discussion with facilitators and managers of programs for fathers who use violence was whether there were greater opportunities to embed the voices of children within those programs. Programs suggested that they did attempt to bring children into the discussion in ways such as making the men bring photos of their children, or a pair of their children’s shoes into the room but that the ‘voices’ of children had not been attempted. Similarly the No to Violence Standards for Men’s Behavioural Change Programs in Victoria suggests that the voices of children should be heard in every session, however there is no additional detail about how this might be achieved and this might also be an area for future attention.

Using digital storytelling to embed children’s voices in programs for fathers

In the current study, the use of digital stories was trialled as one way of embedding the voices of children and young people in programs for fathers who use violence. This method was chosen to ensure the messages children wanted to deliver would be created in their own way. However it has been suggested that ‘research can never mediate an “authentic” child’s voices because it is always
created in a dialogic process with a researcher’ (Noppari, Uusitalo, & Kupiainen, 2016, p. 1). In the current project the preparation of digital stories actually occurred in a discussion with three parties: the researcher, the technical advisors, and the young people. It is important to note that this did not occur without some issues arising (as outlined in chapter 6). Some young people felt they were rushed into making decisions by the technical team who were focussed on completing the stories in the allotted time period. In particular the issue around the digital distortion of voices also caused considerable discussion and disquiet for young people and some programs workers as outlined in chapter 9.

The issue of really hearing what children say is important and has been described as an active subjective process (Alldred & Burman, 2005). Therefore it is important to note that:

in placing children’s voices “in the public sphere”, we need to examine the broader contexts of meanings brought into play. We need to ask through what cultural understandings of children are the words of any child “heard” and how our account of them will be heard (Alldred & Burman, 2005, p. 193).

In consideration of these comments, the use of digital stories in programs for fathers who use violence is far from straight forward. Overall, the digital stories were considered by participants in the feasibility discussion groups as a positive and powerful way to ensure that the key messages that children who have experienced family violence reach fathers. Understanding just how the digital stories will be heard by the fathers who attend the programs is an area that needs further exploration. The workers in the feasibility discussions were mixed in their views of the impact of these stories on fathers. Some believed they would provide good motivation to change. Others were concerned that the emotional impacts may be significant, particularly if the men identify with the children in the stories and therefore relive their own childhood traumas. Some workers had concerns that men would hear the digital stories as being from their own children and may feel shame and anger and may become aggressive as a result.

One issue that the program managers and facilitators agreed on, was that decisions about the use of digital stories would need to be determined by individual program facilitators based on the composition and attitudes of individual groups of men. One criticism made of the digital stories was that the digital altering of voices had removed some of their childlike qualities. While this is something that was needed to protect the identity and safety of the children and young people in the stories, it has been an aspect of the stories that has been criticised. A recommendation to come out of discussions with program managers was that fathers should be informed about why the voices were
altered before the stories are played. In this way fathers will understand that the reason that the voices of these children sound a little robotic is because these children are all still living in significant fear of their fathers, which may be a powerful message in itself.

When it comes to motivation to change, we have anecdotal evidence to suggest that fathers are motivated by their desire to be better fathers and this is something they see as important (Fox, Sayers, & Bruce, 2001; Stanley, 2012). What we also know is that many fathers commence a program to address their violence while still in the very early stages of change (Murphy, Linehan, Reyner, Musser, & Taft, 2012). Using the transtheoretical model as a framework, Murphy, Linehan, Reyner, Musser, and Taft (2012) suggests that most fathers enter a program to address their violence as either ‘precontemplative’ and see no need for change, or see change as not possible. Alternatively some fathers enter programs as ‘contemplative’ and see change as needed but are ambivalent and uncommitted (Murphy, Linehan, Reyner, Musser, & Taft, 2012). What we know less about is whether the desire to be a better parent is influential enough to move fathers into the ‘preparation’ or ‘action’ stages of change. This is an area where further research is needed to explore the relationship between wanting to be a better father and the impact this has on behaviour.

The literature suggests that in recent years there has been an ‘increased interest in listening to children’s perspectives as separate to their adult carers’ (O’Kane, 2012). The current research study demonstrates the valuable insights that can be gained by doing so. By hearing the perspectives of children and young people, a broader understanding of family violence and its impact on their lives and the relationships with their mothers has been gained. The research has also raised a number of issues relating to the reparation process between children who have experienced family violence and their fathers; an area that has not been given attention previously. In discussions with children and young people about reparation, the issue of accountability was identified as important with knowledge that their father was attending a program to change his behaviour seen as an important indicator of willingness to change. These discussions have significant implications for the way in which the issue of accountability is considered both in terms of fathers but also in terms of the responsibility of programs. The following chapter outlines the implications of these findings for policy, practice and future research.
Chapter 11: Summary and implications of the research findings

In one important way, an abusive man works like a magician, his tricks largely rely on getting you to look in the wrong direction, distracting your attention so that you won’t notice where the real action is (Bancroft, 2002).

Fathers who use violence are effective and skilful manipulators, who often view their violence against their partners as justifiable and believe that they are having minimal impact on their children (Bancroft, Silverman, & Ritchie, 2012). However, the current research findings support existing evidence that this perception is inaccurate. Research suggests that children and young people who experience family violence suffer from the impacts of violence in a number of ways including poorer outcomes in health, safety, learning, development and wellbeing (Holt, Buckley, & Whelan, 2008). Evidence indicates potential for the use of fatherhood status to motivate men to change their behaviour (Stanley, Graham-Kevan, & Borthwick, 2012). The current research supports the notion that there is a need for greater efforts to ensure children’s perspectives and experiences are embedded in programs for fathers who use violence (Lucas, Winter, Hughes, & Walsh, 2016). This study aimed to address the gaps in our understanding of children’s perspectives on fathers in the context of family violence and the key messages children and young people have for fathers who attend a program to address his violence. The research also explored the feasibility of using digital storytelling as one method of embedding children and young people’s voices in programs for fathers by studying the likely impacts of the digital stories on programs for fathers who use violence and their participants. This chapter will summarise the research findings for each of the three research questions as well as outline the study’s contribution to knowledge and implications for policy, practice and future research.

Responding to the research questions

What are the perspectives of children and young people on fathers in the context of family violence?

There is now an evidence base that strongly supports the notion that fathers who use violence are having significant negative impacts on their children (Edleson, 1999; Holt, Buckley, & Whelan, 2008; Kitzmann, Gaylord, Holt, & Kenny, 2003). The current research adds to the evidence. In Chapter 2 the existing literature about the impacts of family violence on children was outlined and indicated that children who experience family violence suffer from both short and longer term consequences. This literature provided a useful context for the exploration of children and young people’s experiences of family violence. The current study supports previous research findings where children and young
people described their fathers as disengaged and disinterested in their children with communication limited or described as superficial or awkward (Cater & Forssell, 2014; Holt, 2015b). Several young people in the current study suggested that although they wanted to, they found it difficult to engage with their father for fear of making him angry. Children and young people in the study described good fathers as making their children feel safe and loved unconditionally but suggested that their interactions with their father often resulted in verbal or emotional abuse. In line with research which indicates that emotional abuse can lead to mental health problems (Paul & Eckenrode, 2015) a number of young people described their fathers abusive behaviour as leaving them feeling depressed, anxious and undermining their self-confidence.

Recent work has suggested that children are also impacted by their father’s coercive control (Callaghan, Alexander, Sixsmith, & Fellin, 2015; Katz, 2016). This study was consistent with previous work and found that children and young people described a number of ways in which their fathers used coercive control and the distress that this had caused them. Methods of control described by children and young people were similar to those that have been described by women and included: control of the distribution of resources, use of surveillance and isolation, and the use of fear as a means of ensuring compliance (Stark, 2007). The use of isolation was described as particularly damaging by young people who felt that their father systematically removed all forms of support including family, friends, school and their mother.

Consistent with other research about fathers (Morman & Floyd, 2006), the current study found that children and young people believed an important role for fathers was to act as a positive role model. With only a few exceptions, the children and young people in this study felt that their own fathers were poor role models who made them feel sceptical and afraid of men in general. Several of the young women suggested that they had already had experiences of dating men who were like their fathers and they believed that their experiences of growing up with violence had impacted their view of relationships. Several young people also suggested that they did not plan to become involved in a relationship or have children, as they saw the world as too scary a place for children or else worried that they would become violent parents themselves.

These findings broaden our understanding of family violence and indicate that fathers hurt their children in a number of ways. Supporting previous work, the current study found that these forms of harm and control often continue post separation and cause children and young people significant upset (Callaghan, Alexander, Sixsmith, & Fellin, 2015). Children and young people have provided clear descriptions of how they conceptualise a good father and the ways in which their fathers fail to live up to these standards. This information provides valuable insight for both those who provide support to
children and young people who have experienced family violence, but also for those who work in programs for fathers.

What are the key messages children and young people who have experienced family violence have for fathers who attend a program to address his violence?

Children and young people had a number of key messages for fathers who use violence, and these were expressed in both the interviews and focus groups as well as the digital storytelling workshop. Most of the children and young people in the study were convinced that their fathers did not really understand the impact of his violence on their lives. Some suggested that this might be because fathers who use violence do not communicate and engage with their children in a meaningful way. Consistent with other studies when children and young people spoke about their relationship with their father after violence, they described feelings of confusion, disappointment and sadness (Holt, 2015a; McGee, 2000; Peled, 1998). One of the key issues which almost all of the children and young people in the current study had an interest in exploring was reparation. Children and young people’s discussion of reparation was underpinned by a strong belief that once family violence has occurred, it should be up to them to determine the type and degree of involvement their fathers should have in their lives.

Children and young people saw reparation as an opportunity for repair and this was something they were interested in, regardless of whether they had a desire for an ongoing relationship with their father or not. The issue of reparation was conceptualised as something that would help give a sense of closure they described needing, in order to move on with their lives. The model of reparation described by children and young people is outlined in Chapter 8 and comprised three stages ‘addressing the past’, ‘commitment to change’ and ‘rebuilding trust’. Children and young people described the need for each level of reparation to be addressed before progression to the next level.

A key component of ‘addressing the past’ required fathers to admit he had done wrong, caused harm to his children and apologise and take the consequences of his actions. These consequences were described as inclusive of a range of outcomes including criminal justice sanctions but also children deciding not to have contact with their fathers. Children and young people were also very clear that once their fathers had addressed the past, they needed to show a real commitment to change and they saw attendance at therapy or a program to address violence as examples of this. A significant part of the ‘rebuilding of trust’ was the need for fathers to cease denigrating and disrespecting their mothers. Children and young people described this as a significant factor in determining whether they wanted to spend time with their fathers or not. Finally, children wanted their fathers to ‘consider children’s perspective’, ask them what they wanted and abide by those decisions. Children and young
people believed that their fathers should not only respect their autonomy, but acknowledge that it was their violent behaviour that caused their children to feel the way they do.

What are the likely impacts of children and young people’s digital stories on a program for fathers who use violence and its participants?

The final stage of the research explored the use of digital storytelling as one means of embedding children’s voices and perspectives in programs for fathers who use violence. In chapter 5 a scoping review was undertaken to look at the suitability of using digital storytelling in research with children who had experienced family violence. These results suggested that the process of participating in the process of digital storytelling can be therapeutic for both children and adults who have experienced trauma (Shea, 2011; Tuval-Mashiach & Patton, 2015). The stories developed were then shown and discussed at a workshop with those who manage or facilitate programs for fathers who use violence. In principle, programs were supportive of the idea of embedding children’s voices in programs for fathers and agreed that this was an area that they could improve their practice. It was also suggested that careful consideration would need to be given to the way in which the stories were delivered. The issues identified for consideration were: program planning; management of emotions; and impact on participants.

With regards to program planning, workers suggested that in order to integrate children’s stories into their program content they would need to do some reworking. They also stated that consideration should be given to the most opportune time to show the stories: a time when they felt men would be most receptive to the messages. In addition, programs noted the need to prepare men for the emotive content within the stories. Program workers also discussed the need to give the men adequate preparation and warning that children’s stories would be heard in program so that they did not feel blindsided when the stories were shown.

Much of the discussion about feasibility focussed on how to manage the emotions that may be triggered for fathers who view the children’s digital stories. This was seen as a particular issue for men who had histories of experiencing family violence as children and who may hear and see themselves as the children in the digital stories shown. Another issue raised was that the stories may make men feel a strong sense of shame which may be accompanied with anger. It was suggested that these feelings and behaviours would also need to be carefully managed by facilitators to ensure no women or children were placed at greater risk following attendance at the session. Overall program workers and facilitators saw an opportunity to use the digital stories to embed the voices of children within
their programs, but suggested that a degree of planning would need to occur to work these stories into their existing program structure.

Limitations

It should be noted that this study had a small sample size (16 interviews/focus group attendees, 8 participants in the digital storytelling workshop and 21 professionals at the feasibility workshop). This sample was drawn from a purposive and non-representative sample. Therefore the results are not intended to be generalizable. All young people in the sample were living in Victoria, Australia and attending a support service or program to address issues arising from their experiences of family violence. Therefore young people who had not received such support were not represented in this study. In addition, only young people who spoke and understood English were included in this study as resources were not available for translators for this project. Young people who were in out of home care and under the state’s guardianship were also excluded from this project due to the short timeframes available and the complex consent and ethics processes required to access this population. An additional limitation of this study was the gender imbalance of the young people who chose to participate in the study (Male =3, Female= 13). In the digital storytelling workshop, all 8 participants were female. Considerable effort was made throughout the recruitment stage to increase participation of young males however none of these efforts proved successful. Organisations who recruited young people for the study were asked for their opinions about why it had been so difficult to recruit males to participate in the research. They suggested that young males might be more cautious about talking about sensitive issues, were too busy in terms of their after-hours commitments. Workers suggested that a number of males agreed to participate but failed to turn up and they believed this might have been because they felt more conflicted about their feelings for their father. Other workers saw cultural issues around ‘saving face’ and protecting their family name as an additional barrier. While the lack of young male participants was a significant limitation, this gap provides an opportunity for future research to focus on engaging young males to compare whether their views are consistent with those found in this study.

Translating children’s perspectives into policy and practice

The literature suggests that when children and young people are asked about their perspectives on an issue their views should be given due consideration and where possible, have an impact on policy and programs that impact their lives (Shier, 2001). There is a considerable body of literature that guides consultation and research with children and young people about issues which affect their lives (Archard & Skivenes, 2009; Crowley, 2015; Pascal & Bertram, 2009). However less is known about how
young people’s perspectives impact policy change and development (Crowley, 2015). Recent research undertaken in Wales looked at the impact of children’s views on policy and public services and found that while participation had benefits for the children involved in terms of empowerment, skill development and increased confidence, ‘it was hard to discern any resultant changes in policy or practice’(Crowley, 2015, p. 608). This finding is echoed in the work of Archard and Skivenes (2009) where social workers suggested that children’s views in the context of child welfare had little impact on outcomes.

Several authors caution that consultation and research can become tokenistic when children and young people are asked for their views but do not receive feedback and never know if their views have produced any change in policy or practice (Tisdall & Davis, 2004)p.132. Therefore in research like the current study which is guided by the new sociology of childhood, it is important to make sure, as far as possible, that the voices of young people are heard and acted upon (Gormally & Coburn, 2014). As Landsdown (2001) suggests:

It is not sufficient to give children the right to be listened to. It is also important to take what they have to say seriously...obviously, this does not mean that whatever children say must be complied with – simply that their views receive proper consideration (Landsdown, 2001, p. 2)

It is suggested that supporting children to have their voices heard ‘has the potential to lead to social policy which more accurately and compassionately reflects the concerns of children’(Grover, 2004, p. 83). This was certainly the aim of the current project where young people’s perspectives on fathers in the context of family violence and their key messages for fathers were sought with view to embedding these perspectives in programs for fathers who use violence. The following section will outline the key policy and program recommendations to emerge from this research.

**Recommendations**

The current research has a number of implications for practice some of which have been given attention in the previous chapter. The following section will summarise the recommendations that emerge:

**Children and young people who have experienced family violence should be provided with opportunities to share their insights and perspectives**

Children who have experienced family violence have been described as silent and forgotten victims (Edleson, 1999). Research that provides children and young people with the opportunity to share their
perspectives on family violence can be empowering while also expanding our understanding of the dynamics and impacts of family violence on children’s lives (Swanston, Bowyer, & Vetere, 2014). The current research found that children and young people were particularly interested in participating in a research project where their views would be shared with fathers who use violence as well as those who work with them. These findings suggest that greater space should be made to include the voices of children and young people not only in research but also in the design and implementation of programs and services for families where family violence has occurred.

The intergenerational transmission of violence should be described to children and young people in a way that does not make them feel it is inevitable

A number of children and young people in the current study expressed an intention to avoid relationships or becoming a parent themselves. The reason for children’s reluctance was described as fear of becoming involved in violent relationship like their parents, fear of becoming a violent parent or because their experiences of childhood made them feel like the world is too dangerous for children. These insights are incredibly valuable. They indicate that while efforts to make young people aware of the literature around the intergenerational transmission of violence is important in order to attempt to break the cycle, those that work with children who have experienced family violence need to exercise caution. This information needs to be carefully placed in the context of findings that the majority of children who experience family violence do not grow up to be violent. Children and young people who have experienced family violence need to feel that there is an alternative and more positive future available to them rather than feeling that they are stuck in a predetermined and negative cycle.

There needs to be recognition that it is not possible to be a violent husband and a good father

Like other research in this area, the current research findings suggest that fathers who use violence not only cause harm to the partners they abuse, but also to their children (Cater & Forssell, 2014; Goddard & Bedi, 2010; Holt, Buckley, & Whelan, 2008). Currently in Australian policy and programs, as in other countries, a man’s identity as a husband who uses violence is seen as separate from his identity as a father (Eriksson & Hester, 2001). The current research findings indicate that we need to very carefully consider the impacts of children’s contact with fathers in the context of what is known. The current study found a number of ways in which fathers who use violence are not being good fathers including: negatively impacting the child’s relationship with others and particularly the mother-child relationship; through the use of coercive control and by being emotionally abusive. In particular children and young people were very clear about their views on their father’s tendency to put down,
denigrate and demean their mothers. While research indicates that family violence can have significant impacts on the mother-child relationship (Mullender, Hague, Imam, Kelly, Malos, & Regan, 2002; Thiara & Humphreys, 2015) the current research also found that the way in which father treated their mother also had significant impact on whether children and young people wanted to spend time with their fathers or not. This a key message from this research from children to fathers who use violence and one which should be transmitted to all fathers who attend a program.

**Children and young people’s views on reparation with their fathers should influence work with both children and their fathers after violence**

Children and young people in the current study identified the issue of reparation as significant, regardless of whether or not they wanted an ongoing relationship with their fathers. The way in which reparation was constructed by children and young people has significant implications for both policy and practice. One of the most important tenets of reparation was the need for the process to be controlled by children and young people themselves, with the view that it was up to children and young people to determine the degree of involvement that fathers should have in their lives after violence. Children and young people clearly described the process that they wanted their fathers to follow that they believed would give them a sense of closure and repair. For some children, this would build the foundations for a relationship into the future. Children and young people’s desire to engage their fathers in a process of reparation needs to be acknowledged by those who work with families where there has been family violence and opportunities for working with both fathers and their children towards reparation should be explored in future work.

**Fathers who use violence and the programs they attend should be more accountable to children and young people**

One of the key findings of this research is that both fathers who use violence and the programs they attend, need to consider their accountability to children. The current research adds to existing evidence which suggests that fathers who attend a program to address violence rarely tell their child they are attending a program (Alderson, Westmarland, & Kelly, 2013; Rayns, 2010). In addition, children are often not involved in the program in any way (Rayns, 2010). This is a key area where programs for fathers, as well as standards which guide the development of these programs need to make changes. This is particularly important in light of the current study’s findings that children consider their father’s decision to attend a program as a demonstration of commitment to change and a positive step on the road to reparation. While some programs for fathers who use violence now include information about the impacts on children in their program content, there is now a need for programs to find opportunities to engage children and young people whose fathers are attending a
Programs should be encouraging fathers to be more open and honest with their children about why they are attending the program and what they are learning, in a way which is developmentally appropriate and where a child expresses a desire to be involved in the process. In addition, any evaluation of program success needs to consider children’s perspectives in determining whether a program has been effective.

**Digital storytelling should be considered as a possible way of capturing and embedding the voices of children in programs for fathers who use violence**

Digital storytelling is increasingly being used as part of participatory research methods and also as part of a therapeutic intervention with both adults and children who have experienced trauma (Anderson & Cook, 2015; Tuval-Mashiach & Patton, 2015). The current research explored the use of digital storytelling as one way of embedding children and young people’s voices in programs for fathers who use violence with promising results. While a number of issues were identified for further consideration and planning, feedback has suggested that the stories developed were generally considered a powerful way of ensuring the voices of children and young people are heard within programs for fathers who use violence.

**Directions for further research**

Throughout this research a number of areas were identified as needing additional exploration and they will be briefly summarised here. Firstly we do not have adequate information about how programs for fathers who use violence are addressing issues of fatherhood in Australia. We have anecdotal evidence that fathers who use violence primarily attend either Men’s Behavioural Change Programs or generalist parenting programs but we do not know to what degree parenting is covered in programs for men who use violence or how violence is addressed in general parenting programs. A group of researchers lead by the University of Melbourne is currently in the final stages of mapping this area of practice as part of an Australian Research Council Grant and when complete, this work will be useful in informing future directions in this area.

In the current study, children and young people have expressed an interest in being informed and involved in their father’s behavioural change process and this is an issue that requires further exploration and possible reviewing of current standards for programs for fathers. Additional research is needed to explore the perspectives of children and also program facilitators about ways to better engage and support children while their father is attending a program to address his violence while also ensuring that their safety is also protected. There were only a small number of culturally diverse children and young people in current study and therefore additional research that explored issues with
both Aboriginal and other culturally diverse communities would be useful. This research would then be valuable to inform the development of policies and procedures within programs for fathers who use violence in a variety of communities.

In addition, anecdotal evidence suggests that fathers are more open to hearing about the impacts of their violence on their children than on their partners. It has been suggested that when discussing the impacts of their violence on their partners, men become defensive and lay blame, or at least partial blame on their partner for the violence (Eckhardt & Utschig, 2007; Fox, Sayers, & Bruce, 2001; Humphreys & Stanley, 2006; Murphy, Linehan, Reyner, Musser, & Taft, 2012). It is therefore hypothesised that fathers will be more motivated to change by hearing about the impact of their violence from their children’s perspective. As evidence to support this notion is lacking, further exploration of the factors that motivate fathers to change their behaviour is needed. In addition, while our feasibility discussions with program staff were positive about the possible use of the digital stories in programs for fathers, we do not have evidence about the actual impacts on the fathers who view these stories and whether this differs by cultural group. Additional research in this area would be beneficial to guide how digital stories made by children should be used in programs for fathers in the future.

This research found that reparation was a key issue of interest for children and young people and a framework was developed based on young people’s views. Future research which sought the perspectives of mothers and fathers and those who provide psychological and emotional support for children and young people who have experienced family violence would be valuable in enhancing our understanding of reparation after family violence. In addition, exploration of the outcomes achieved for children, their fathers and their families more generally if the framework is followed would also be valuable.

Emerging evidence suggests that participation in a digital storytelling workshop can have positive impacts for people who have experienced trauma. Future research should explore which groups of participants experience benefits from the process. Additional information about the outcomes that can be achieved using digital storytelling as part of therapeutic intervention would also be useful.

**Strengths and original contribution**

The current research has made a significant contribution to knowledge about the perspectives of children and young people who experience family violence. It is the first Australian study to ask children and young people about the key messages they believe fathers who attend a program to
address their violence need to hear about the impact of their behaviour on their children. In speaking to children and young people about their relationship with their fathers, greater insight was gained into children and young people’s experiences of coercive control and the impact on the mother-child relationship. This research has identified reparation as a key concern for children and young people who describe it as a necessary step in achieving closure, repair and the ability to move on with the lives. The model of reparation developed is based entirely on children and young people’s perspective and will hopefully provide a useful tool for those working with both children and fathers where family violence has occurred.

In addition, this research was the first in Australia to ask children and young people about their views on programs for fathers who use violence and the outcomes they would like to see achieved. By producing digital stories designed and developed by children and young people, this research has been able to not only recommend that children’s voices be considered in programs for fathers who use violence, it has produced a resource that will assist in facilitating that process. By speaking to those who facilitate and manage programs for men who use violence, a richer perspective has been gained on the feasibility of using the digital stories within those programs. The positive feedback received and the high number of requests for access to the digital stories, gives a clear indication that this research has produced a tool which fulfils an unmet need.

**Conclusion**

One of the significant conclusions that can be drawn from this research is that children as young as ten years of age are often very interested in being involved in research even when the subject matter might be described as sensitive or traumatic. By seeking the perspectives of children who have experienced family violence, a greater understanding of the interaction between children and fathers in the context of family violence has been gained. In the current study children and young people described their fathers as having significant negative impacts on their lives, although they also expressed interest in engaging in a process of repair. In some cases this repair may lead to an ongoing relationship with their fathers and in other cases, children would like the process to provide them with closure and the ability to move on with their lives without further contact with their fathers. Regardless of their aspirations for the future, children and young people are unequivocal that the decision about whether to re-establish a relationship with their father after violence, should lie with them and not their fathers. In Australia at the moment there is a political window of opportunity where family violence is being recognised as a significant social issue with government appetite for reform. While the recent attention on the perspectives and impacts on children who have experienced family violence is positive, we need to move beyond these initial discussions, to consider ways in which we
can listen to their voices and really demonstrate that we have heard what they have said by embedding their perspectives in our program responses. As Dreher (2012, p. 166) suggests:

*It is also imperative to ensure that the offer of ‘voice’ is not an empty promise, but rather that commitment to voice is accompanied by political listening to ensure voice that matters. Crucially the opportunity for voice must be understood not as an end-point, but rather as a vital starting point for ongoing processes of engagement and debate, negotiation and response.*
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Shea, M. (2011). An exploration of personal experiences of taking part in a digital storytelling project. (MSc), Sheffield Hallam University, United Kingdom.


Appendices

Appendix 1  List of studies in scoping review of participant experiences of digital storytelling

Appendix 2  University of Melbourne, Human Research Ethics Committee Application
   i.  Risk assessments
   ii.  Child Abuse Disclosure protocol
   iii.  Focus Group/Interview Questions
   iv.  Flyer for agencies
   v.   Focus Group- Plain Language Statement (Minors, Mature Minors and Young Adults)
   vi.  Focus Group- Plain Language Statement (Parents of Minors)
   vii. Focus Group- Informed Consent Form (Minors, Mature Minors and Young Adults)
   viii. Focus Group- Informed Consent Form (Parents of Minors)
   ix.  Digital Storytelling- Plain Language Statement (Minors, Mature Minors and Young Adults)
   x.   Digital Storytelling- Plain Language Statement (Parents of Minors)
   xi.  Digital Storytelling- Informed Consent Form- Minors, Mature Minors and Young Adults
   xii. Digital Storytelling- Informed Consent Form (Parents of Minors)

Appendix 3  Organisations to contact for support handout

Appendix 4  Failure to disclose law summary

Appendix 5  Coding framework
Appendix 1: List of studies in scoping review of participant experiences of digital storytelling


Shea, M. (2011) An exploration of personal experiences of taking part in a digital storytelling project . MSc, Sheffield Hallam University


1. PROJECT DETAILS

1.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY IN PLAIN ENGLISH: Provide a brief summary of the project outlining the broad aims, background, key questions, research design/approach, the participants in the study and what they will be asked to do, and the importance or relevance of the project. [This description must be in everyday language, free from jargon, technical terms or discipline-specific phrases. (No more than 300 words).]

This research study aims to embed the voices of children and young people within programs for fathers who use violence. The Research Question for this project is ‘How could young people who have experienced family violence better inform the development and delivery of Men’s Behavioural Change Programs?’. The research consists of three phases- Focus/Discussion Groups, Digital Storytelling and a Feasibility assessment. The first phase of the research will consist of four focus groups which will aim to gain the perspectives of young people aged 14-21 about what makes a good father, what sorts of things fathers do that frighten their children and how programs designed to assist fathers change their behaviour should involve children in their development and design. The second phase of the research will involve the development of digital stories with ten of the young people who participated in the focus groups. The young people who express an interest in digital storytelling will participate in a two or three day workshop at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI). With the young person’s agreement, one or more of the stories created would then be embedded within a program for fathers who use violence and feedback gathered from program staff about the impact on the program and participants. Although children are often used as a motivator to encourage fathers who use violence to attend a program to change his behaviour, the voices of children and young people have rarely been heard within these programs. This piece of research will be the first opportunity for young people to have their say and have those views integrated into one program. It is hoped that this research will provide guidance to other programs about how best to ensure children’s perspectives are considered in the future.

[NB For the purposes of this study, ‘fathers who use violence’ or ‘abusive fathers’ will be used throughout and is intended to be inclusive of domestically violent biological fathers, step fathers and male defacto partners of the child’s mother. The age of children and young people who will be engaged in this research...]

1443329.1

Young People’s Voices: a child rights framework for the development and delivery of programs for fathers who use violence

Prof. Cathy Humphreys

**NOTE THE ORGANISATIONS WHERE RECRUITMENT OCCURRED HAVE BEEN REMOVED TO PROTECT THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS IDENTITY**
1.2 AIMS OF AND JUSTIFICATION FOR THE RESEARCH: State the aims and significance of the project. Where relevant, state the specific hypothesis to be tested. Also provide a brief description of current research/literature review, a justification as to why this research should proceed and an explanation of any expected benefits to the community. [No more than 500 words]

For many years the voices of children who experienced family violence were considered ‘forgotten’ victims, with children who were present at incidents of family violence, but not physically assaulted considered ‘witnesses’. However more recently, considerable attention has been given to exploring the impact of family violence on aspects of children’s health, learning, development and wellbeing. Research has explored the impacts of family violence and found children who are exposed can have delayed development, higher rates of conduct disorders and aggression, lower educational attainment and higher rates of emotional problems.

Less research has been undertaken to explore the perspectives and views of children themselves as traditionally the experiences of children who had lived with family violence were gained through professional and adult observation. In the context of ‘the new sociology of childhood’, literature is increasingly portraying children as ‘social actors’ with valid views as experts in their own lives. It is increasingly recognized now that consulting with children who have experienced family violence themselves is important and gives a more meaningful understanding of their experiences.

One area where children’s voices and perspectives are still seldom heard is in Men’s Behavioural Change (MBC) programs for fathers who use violence. We know that historically programs for violent men and for their children have developed separately with limited cross over and co-ordination across both types of services. We also know that currently there is no documented evidence that children and young people are engaged in the design, delivery or content of many men’s behavioural change programs and this is

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5 Edleson op cit.
13 G. Rayns, G. ‘What are Children and Young People’s views and opinions of perpetrator programmes for their violent father/male carer?’ (2010), Children’s Workforce Development Council, NSPCC, UK
This PhD Project is nested within a larger ARC Linkage Grant which is exploring how fathers who use violence (from both the perspective of fathers themselves, partners and professionals). A strand of the ARC Linkage Grant, work is underway to audit the degree to which children are considered in Men’s Behavioural Change (MBC) programs in Australia with preliminary results supporting previous work which has found that many MBC programs may not actually address the impact of experiencing violence on children. This PhD project will be the one opportunity in this larger project to engage the voices and perspectives of young people themselves. The research will be guided by a Child Rights Framework, and will find out what level and type of involvement young people believe children and young people should have when their father is attending a program and the key messages they would like to deliver, and the method they would like to use to deliver these messages. The project will also aim to assess the feasibility of using the children’s messages within a men’s behavioural change program as well as likely impacts and outcomes. The ultimate aims of the research are to develop a mechanism to encourage Men’s Behavioural Change Programs to become more child-focussed in their development and delivery, that young people will feel like their voices are being heard.

1.3 METHOD Provide an outline of the proposed method, including details of the recruitment strategy and data collection techniques, the tasks participants will be asked to do, the estimated time commitment involved, and how data will be analysed. [No more than 500 words]

The proposed research has three phases:

Focus/Discussion Groups

Researchers suggest that small focus groups are one of the best ways to obtain data from children, because they replicate a natural and familiar form of communication in which children talk with their peers. For this project it is proposed that four focus groups be held comprising young people aged 14-21. It is anticipated that there would be between 5-8 participants in each focus group which would run for between 60-90 minutes. The purpose of the focus groups is to gain an understanding of what young people think makes a good father, what sorts of things fathers do that frighten their children and how fathers who have behaved in a frightening way and are attending a program to address their behaviour need to know about the impact of their actions as well as ways young people think these programs should involve them.

Participants for these focus groups will be recruited by the researcher at [organisation 1] and [organisation 2] which are two community agencies who work with children and young people who have experienced disadvantage. Both of these organisations are Industry Partners in the larger ARC research study. Young people will be invited to participate in the research by the PhD student who will be introduced to the young people by workers with whom they are familiar. Young people will all be in programs where family violence has already been identified and responded to with the young people. It is possible that some focus groups will comprise existing groups of young people who are already familiar with one another. If a young person becomes distressed during the research process, support will be available within the agency which they are already familiar. If there are potential participants who do not feel comfortable participating in a group discussion, individual interviews will be offered as an alternative. The proposed focus group questions or prompts are included as Appendix iii. All of the focus groups will be audio-recorded, transcribed, coded and thematically analysed in an iterative manner.

Digital Storytelling Workshop

Digital storytelling began in the US in the early 1990s and uses low cost digital cameras and computers to create short multimedia personal stories generally designed for publication on the internet. Meadows suggests that the most promising aspect of digital storytelling is that the public no longer has to tolerate media being done to them. He suggests that digital storytelling allows people to ‘take the power back’, write their own stories rather than putting up with professionals ‘...recording us for hours and then throwing away most of what we tell them, keeping only...


those bits that tell our stories their own way"19. The second phase of the research will involve inviting up to ten young people who have participated in the focus groups to a Digital Storytelling Workshop at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI). Digital Storytelling has been selected as way to capture the perspectives of children by allowing them a way to communicate directly but safely to fathers who use violence and are attending a MBC program.

ACMI has experience running Digital Storytelling Workshops with a range of different groups and individuals. The workshops guide people through the telling of a personal story using multimedia tools. Participants combine the audio visual resources of their personal archives (photographs, video footage, text, music and sound) to produce one 3-4 minute personal story per participant which they then narrate. ACMI has created digital stories with a number of vulnerable groups and on sensitive topics including people impacted by the Victorian bushfires, living with mental illness, with experiences of homelessness and breast cancer sufferers. For this research it is proposed that up to ten young people who have participated in phase 1 focus groups would self-select to participate in a digital storytelling workshop to develop a short piece of work outlining their key messages for fathers who attend programs for their abusive behaviour. This workshop would be provided in 2 or 3 sessions (dependent on the level of editing required).

Feasibility Testing (A separate ethics application will be submitted for the feasibility testing phase)

The final phase of the research will look at integrating the Digital Stories into one Men's Behavioural Change Program and assessing the impacts on program delivery and program outcomes. This will involve discussions with program staff about their reflections on the impact of integrating children's messages within a program on participants. The format of these discussions will be either a focus group or individual interviews as preferred by workers. The digital stories would not be trialled in either of the organisations recruited from. A separate ethics application will be submitted for this section of the project.

1.4 USE OF INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS Will parts of this project be carried out by independent contractors? (e.g. interviewing, questionnaire design and analysis, sample testing, etc)

YES-
The Australian Centre for the Moving Image will conduct the Digital Storytelling Workshop which they researcher will attend as an observer.

1.5 MONITORING

(a) How will researchers monitor the conduct of the project to ensure that it complies with the protocols set out in this application, the University’s human ethics guidelines and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research? [Address, in particular, cases where several people are involved in recruiting, interviewing or administering procedures, or when the research is being carried out at some distance from the Principal Researcher (i.e. interstate or overseas)]

The research project and data collection will be undertaken by the PhD student and another experienced member of staff from the Social Work Department of the University and will be supervised by the student's supervisors who will monitor adherence to the relevant ethical guidelines and protocols outlined in this application and other relevant documents pertaining to research with human subjects. A steering committee has been established to oversee this project comprising staff from the University of Melbourne and the two participating agencies. The group will meet quarterly to discuss the progress of the research.

(b) For student research projects how will the student be supervised to ensure they comply with the protocols? If the student is working overseas, provide additional details of any local supervision arrangements.

Fortnightly supervision sessions will be held with the student and two supervisors to monitor the progress of the research and to address any issues which arise.

2. PARTICIPANT DETAILS

2.1 DOES THE RESEARCH SPECIFICALLY TARGET: [Tick as many as applicable]

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2.2 NUMBER, AGE RANGE AND SOURCE OF PARTICIPANTS

Provide number, age range and source of participants.

Participants in this study will be Victorian young people who are currently attending, or have attended one of the participating agencies for support. Participants will be aged 14-21 and have received support for or been involved in programs that discuss family violence. It is proposed that four focus groups be held with approximately five to eight young people in each group, it is likely that groups will be arranged by gender and age to keep focus groups as close to the composition of programs participants will be recruited from so that young people participate in a focus group with others they already know. The groups are likely to comprise a range of culturally diverse young people given the high populations of Arabic, South East Asian and Chinese communities in areas where our recruitment organisations are located. To ensure literacy is not an issue all young people will be read the plain language statement and consent form before signing to ensure literacy and ability to read English does not prohibit participation or informed consent. It is anticipated that approximately 20-32 young people will participate in focus groups lasting 60-90 minutes. It is also proposed that a small number of young people who participate in these focus groups (approximately 10) will participate in a second activity, a Digital Storytelling Workshop at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (AMCI).

2.3 JUSTIFICATION OF PARTICIPANT NUMBERS [The quality and validity of research is an essential condition of its ethical acceptability (refer National Statement)]. Where applicable, provide a justification of sample size (including details of statistical power of the sample, where appropriate), explaining how this sample size will allow the aims of the study to be achieved.

As this study will be exploratory in nature and the first time in Australia that research has directly asked young people about their views about programs for fathers who use violence, the small sample size (20-32) is appropriate. It is proposed that up to 10 young people who participate in the focus groups will be involved in the development of a short audiovisual story through participating in a workshop at ACMCI. It is hoped that the development of these stories will provide a concrete practical tool which could be used in men’s behavior change programs. Given the small sample for this work, there will be no attempt to generalize the findings to the rest of the population, what we will be able to do through this project is document the way in which children’s voices can be embedded in programs for fathers who use violence using a child rights framework. The practical application of this research is a key focus of the work given its ARC funding.

2.4 PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

(a) Please indicate the method of recruitment by ticking the appropriate boxes. Tick all that apply.

- Mail out - see below
- Advertisement - see below
- Contact details obtained from public documents (eg. phone book)
- Participants from a previous study
- Email - see below
- Recruitment carried out by third party (eg. employer, doctor) – see below
- Contact details obtained from private sources (eg. employee list, membership database) – see below
- Snowball (participants suggest other potential participants)
- Recruitment carried out by researcher/s
- Personal contacts
- Other (Please explain in no more than 50 words):

- If using a mail out or email who will be distributing it?
  NA

- If using an advertisement:
  - explain where will it be placed? (e.g. on waiting room wall, in newspaper, in newsletter)
Flyers will be placed in the two agencies where the researcher will be recruiting young people.

- **have you attached a copy?**
  
  Yes- see Appendix iii

- **If recruitment is to be conducted by a third party, (eg employer, doctor) have you attached an approval letter?**
  
  - requesting their assistance? (yes, no or not applicable)
    
    NA  If “No” please explain (no more than 50 words):
  
  - confirming their willingness to assist?
    
    NA  If “No” please explain (no more than 50 words):
  
  - that has been drafted for the third party to send to potential participants?
    
    NA  If “No” please explain (no more than 50 words):

- **If contact details are to be obtained from private sources, have you attached an approval letter?**

  Yes  No  If “No” please explain (no more than 50 words):

(b) Describe how, by whom, where potential participants are to be identified or selected for this research.

Participants for this research will be drawn from two agencies who provide support for children who have experienced family violence.

(c) Describe how, by whom, where potential participants are to be approached or invited to take part in this research.

The Phd student will spend time at both of the agencies getting to know the young people who attend there, including through attendance at group work sessions where facilitators consider this appropriate. A flyer will be placed around the agency outlining the research (Appendix iv) with contact details and the researcher will be introduced to young people by the agency staff and given an opportunity to explain the research to the young people. If a young person expresses willingness to participate a plain language statement will be given to them (Appendix v) by the researcher as will a consent form for them to sign (Appendix vii). Parental/guardian consent will then also be sought from those young people aged under 16 (Appendix vii and viii)

2.5 DEPENDENT RELATIONSHIPS

[The issue of research involving persons in dependent or unequal relationships (e.g. teacher/student, doctor/patient, student/lecturer, client/counsellor, warder/prisoner, and employer/employee) is discussed in Sections 2 and 4.3 of the National Statement. Such a relationship may compromise a participant’s ability to give consent which is free from any form of pressure (real or implied)]. Are any of the participants in a dependent relationship with any of the researchers, particularly those involved in recruiting for or conducting the project?

NO  The staff from the NGOs will only introduce the researcher who will then explain the study to the young person or people. Young people who are interested will opt into the project through expressing to the researcher their interest in the project either during or after the explanatory session. The Plain Language Statement will be very clear in explaining that participation in the research is voluntary, participants can withdraw from the study at any point and that their agreement or disagreement to participate in the research will have no impact on the service they receive from the organisation they are attending. This point will also be reiterated at the commencement of the Focus Group sessions.

2.6 PAYMENT OR INCENTIVES OFFERED TO PARTICIPANTS
Do you propose to pay, reimburse or reward participants?

YES Young people attending the focus groups will be given a token of appreciation for their participation in the research as an acknowledgement that their time is valued. The compensation will be in the form of a gift voucher for $20 for the focus group attendance and for each session of the digital storytelling workshops. The young people who participate in the digital storytelling workshops will be provided with meals for the days they attend the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI).

2.7 DECEPTION OR CONCEALMENT

[Limited disclosure, deception and active concealment are discussed in Section 2.3 of the National Statement. Essentially the practice is not considered ethical unless there are compelling reasons given for its use]

Will the true purpose of the research, or the collection of data itself, be concealed from participants or will participants in any way be deceived?

NO

If you answered YES, provide a clear justification. [You will also need to provide participants with details of the deception in a debriefing (refer 3.4) and give them the opportunity to withdraw their data if they wish to do so.]

N/A

3. RISK AND RISK MANAGEMENT

3.1 STUDY PROFILE – DOES THE RESEARCH INVOLVE THE FOLLOWING:

[Tick as many as apply. Provide details in methodology – section 1.5 and attach information where indicated]

- use of questionnaires designed by the researcher (*attach a copy*)
- use of standard survey instruments (*attach a copy*)
- use of on-line surveys (*attach printout of screen information*)
- use of interviews (*attach the list of interview questions*)
- use of focus groups (*attach the list of focus group topics/questions*)
- observation of participants without their knowledge
- covert observation
- audio-taping interviewees or events
- video-taping interviewees or events
- access to personal and/or confidential data (including student, patient or client data) without the participant's specific consent
- administration of any stimuli, tasks, investigations or procedures which may be experienced by participants as physically or mentally painful, stressful or unpleasant during or after the research process
- performance of any acts which might diminish the self-esteem of participants or cause them to experience embarrassment, regret or depression
- research about participants involved in illegal activities
- research conducted in an overseas setting
- administration of any substance or agent
- use of non-treatment or placebo control conditions
- collection of body tissues or fluid samples
- collection and/or testing of DNA samples

3.2 POTENTIAL RISKS TO PARTICIPANTS

Identify, as far as possible, all potential risks to participants (e.g. physical, psychological, social, legal or economic etc.), associated with the project and the setting (e.g. overseas) in which the project is conducted. It may be useful to consider the study profile above and your response to participant details in section 2

In the development of this research method, a number of potential risks to participants have been considered and these include:
3.3 MANAGING POTENTIAL RISKS

Describe what measures you have in place to minimize these potential risks to participants and to ensure that support is available if needed. [Depending on risks, participants may need additional support (e.g. external counseling) during or after the study]

A number of mechanisms for minimizing risk have been built into the study design and devised with assistance and consultation with practitioners and managers in the organisations involved. Two lengthy meetings have been held to consider the process through which the safety and wellbeing of young people can be considered. Staff in the organisations are very enthusiastic about the project and believe the project has great potential to enhance the well-being of young people.

Recruitment and Coercion

As the potential participants for this research are being recruited from an organization where they have or are receiving support, the risk of coercion is present in this study. In order to address this risk it has been agreed that the staff from the organisations will only introduce the researcher who will then explain the study to the young person or people and invite participation. Young people who are interested will opt into the project through expressing to the researcher their interest in the project either during or after the explanatory session. The Plain Language Statement will be very clear in explaining that participation in the research is voluntary, participants can withdraw from the study at any point and that their agreement or disagreement to participate in the research will have no impact on the service they receive from the organisation they are attending. This point will also be reiterated at the start of the focus group sessions.

Informed Consent

Given the age group of the study is 14-21, issues of consent also pose a risk. For the purposes of this project, it has been decided that the consent/assent will be sought from all young people as a first step - consent for those aged 16+ and assent for those aged 14-15, with consent also sought from a guardian/parent of those participants who are under the age of 16. In accordance with the project’s child rights based framework, young people’s assent will be sought first with parental/carer consent only sought for those young people who express interest in participation. In order to address risks associated with perpetrators becoming aware of their child’s participation in this research, only the consent of the non-offending parent/guardian will be sought which is an approach adopted in other studies with children on family violence20.

As mentioned, those aged 16-18 will be considered ‘mature minors’ for the purpose of this study21. Competent minors have been described as needing to ‘have enough knowledge to understand what is proposed and enough discretion to be able to make a wise decision in light of one’s own interest’. Discussions were held at the first Steering Committee Meeting with the agencies who will be involved in the recruitment of young people for this study and they supported the researcher’s decision to consider young people aged 16+ as mature enough to make their own decisions about participation.

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment will be undertaken to ensure no young person’s safety is jeopardized as a result of participation in this study. With regards to young people aged under 16, consent will be sought from their mother via a phone conversation where a series of questions will be asked which will aim to ensure that the young person will not be placed in any additional danger as a result of participation in this research (see Appendix III for risk assessment questions). The same questions will be asked of those aged over 16 to ensure they have considered all aspects of their safety in agreeing to participate in this research (See Appendix III). It should be noted that if a young person (of any age) suggests that they are fearful of their

21 ibid

father and still have contact with him they may be able to participate in the focus groups (subject to a safety plan being developed) but not the digital storytelling workshop.

**Disclosure of current Abuse**

Another risk for this project, like all work with children, is the possibility that young people will disclose current/ongoing child abuse. The literature suggests that there are divergent views about how to address this issue in research with some researchers suggesting that children should have the same right to confidentiality as adults and that any intervention could be seen as an inappropriate intrusion into the researcher/subject relationship.\(^\text{23}\) Other projects have developed procedures and protocols for supporting children and making reports if there is a concern for safety.\(^\text{24}\) Each organization has well developed procedures to follow when children disclose abuse and where there has not already been an appropriate response and the researcher will be briefed and follow carefully the organisation’s procedures. In this project a protocol has been developed prior to the commencement of the project which will outline what will be done in such a situation. (See Appendix 4). A child rights focused approach would require a young person to be spoken to about a report prior to any being made with child protection/police. All children and young people will be made aware of this procedure at the commencement of research in the Plain Language Statement.

**Participant Distress**

The population of young people participating in this research are known to be vulnerable given their engagement in support services. Participating in research which asks children and young people to reflect on the key messages they would like to deliver to fathers on men’s behavior change programs may result in some participants feeling some level of distress. The method has attempted to reduce the likelihood of distress by ensuring participants will be introduced to the researcher by a service they attend/have attended by staff that they know, therefore only young people who have already spoken about their experiences of family violence before will be included in the study which has been found by other researchers to reduce distress\(^\text{25, 26}\).

In addition, focus groups will be held in buildings and surrounds that young people are already familiar with and have travelled to previously with groups arranged according to gender. Another way in which reducing distress has been addressed is through the development of focus group questions and topics. The focus group will commence with a discussion about what constitutes good fathering and the remaining questions have been constructed in a way that young people can decide whether to answer them generally without being directly asked to disclose their own experiences, so their opinions rather than their experiences are being sought. If participants become distressed, arrangements will be made with the agency they attend, to provide some debriefing and/or counselling after the project where it is needed. A worker will be present as an observer at the focus group discussions and also at the Digital Storytelling Workshop.

**Confidentiality/ Anonymity**

With regards to the Digital Storytelling Workshop, some particular issues arise around confidentiality/anonymity given the potential for the identification of young people in videos.\(^\text{27}\) Therefore it has been decided that young people aged 16-21 will be able to make their own decisions about whether they wish to be identifiable in their videos while young people aged 14-16 will have their identity obscured in a way that they will determine (ie filmed from behind, use of their voice only as a voice over, or a blurring of their face). The feasibility testing of the digital story telling process will not occur in either of the

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\(^\text{23}\) J. Cashmore, ‘Ethical Issues concerning consent in obtaining children’s reports on their experience of violence,(2006) Child Abuse and Neglect, 30, 969-977

\(^\text{24}\) Ibid.

\(^\text{25}\) Peled, loc.cit

\(^\text{26}\) A.Stafford and C. Smith (2009), ‘Practical guidance on conducting research and working in participative ways with children and young people experiencing domestic abuse’, The University of Edinburgh, UK

\(^\text{27}\) L. Mortari and D. Harcourt, “‘Living’ ethical dilemmas for researchers when researching with children” (2012), International Journal of Early Years Education, 20 (3), 234-243
participating organisations to ensure that the young people’s anonymity is further protected. Young people’s stories **will not** be shown to their own fathers as part of this research process.

Given that the Digital Stories may be used by the Men’s Behavioural Change Programs beyond the scope of the research and may become part of their practice tools, a decision has been made that only those young people who are not living in fear of their fathers are able to participate in the Digital Storytelling Workshop. The risk assessment process conducted as part of the focus group or first phase of this research will provide the information needed to assess which young people should be able to participate and who should be excluded for their own safety.

**Researcher distress**

In terms of researcher distress, it has been suggested that research with vulnerable populations exposes researchers to a range of challenges and may have an impact on the researcher’s wellbeing.28 In this project, the PhD student has been working with vulnerable families, victims of crime and offenders for the past 15 years as a criminologist and has considerable experience hearing distressing life stories. However if the researcher did feel emotional distress, both of the research supervisors will be available to provide debriefing to the PhD student given their backgrounds as a General Practitioner and Social Worker.

3.4 **DEBRIEFING (if applicable)**

*What debriefing will participants receive following the study and when? (Attach a copy of any written material or statement to be used in such a debriefing, if applicable.)* [Participants may need to talk about the experience of being involved in the study with the researchers, as well as learn more about the aims of the research]

Once the focus groups are completed, a summary of the results in an accessible format, with names and identifying information removed will be made available to participants through the agencies that young people have contact with. Ideally at the completion of the project a summary of what happened as a result of the research will be prepared in an accessible newsletter style to let both the organisations and the participants know the impact of the work.

3.5 **BENEFITS COMPARED TO POTENTIAL RISKS**

*Outline the benefits of the study to the community (and participants, if applicable), relative to the potential risks to participants*

Young people who grow up in families where family violence is present often report feeling silenced and ignored in the criminal justice and child welfare system.29 Evidence suggests that children are also not often involved in any aspect of their fathers treatment and rehabilitation. This study will be one of the few studies that gives children a voice in a study developed with a child rights framework guiding the work. The research will ensure that the perspective of young people in the study are valued, listened to and acted upon with the work informing how men’s behavior change programs are developed and delivered into future. While there is some risk of distress in discussing a sensitive topic, evidence also suggests that talking about negative family experiences can actually be therapeutic for young people.30

3.6 **MANAGING ADVERSE / UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES**

*Describe what measures you have in place in the event that participants experience adverse effects arising from their involvement in the project (e.g. adverse drug reaction, revelation of illegal activity, or unexpected distress due to questioning)*

As discussed already, staff with experience working with the children and young people in this study will be available to support young people who may become distressed during/following the research. Additional adverse outcomes considered include the possibility that children will disclose ongoing abuse. In order to address this if it occurs, a protocol for reporting child abuse has be developed which will involve discussing any report with the young person prior to making a report to authorities (see Appendix IV).

3.7 **POTENTIAL RISKS TO RESEARCHERS**

*Will there be any significant risks to researchers associated with the project and the setting (e.g. overseas) in which the project is conducted. (e.g. personal safety, health, emotional well being)? [Refer to the University’s Environmental Health & Safety Manual for more information]*

× **NO**  
* (If YES, how will such risks be addressed)

29 Goddard and Bedi, loc.cit
It is not anticipated that any risk will be posed to the researcher however all work with vulnerable young people carries a degree of risk that some of the participants may be affected by drugs, alcohol, mental health issues or become angry or violent. The researcher in this study has experience working with offenders in a correctional setting and will ensure adequate access to telephones/mobile phones to summon assistance if needed. A decision to undertake the research in the offices of the organisations rather than private homes will also reduce risks to the researcher. A worker will also be present at all focus groups.

4. INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS AND INFORMED CONSENT

Before research is undertaken, the informed and voluntary consent of participants (and other properly interested parties) is generally required (refer Section 2 of the National Statement for more details). Information needs to be provided to participants at their level of comprehension about the purpose, methods, demands, risks, inconveniences, discomforts and possible outcomes of the research. Such information is often provided in a written Plain Language Statement. Each participant’s consent needs to be clearly established (e.g. by using a signed Consent Form, returning an anonymous survey or recording an agreement for interview).

4.1 PROVIDING INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

(a) Will you be providing participants with information in a written Plain Language Statement?

× YES

(b) Will arrangements be made to ensure that participants who have difficulty understanding English can comprehend the information provided about the research project?

□ NO

Due to the financial constraints of the project, interpreters will not be able to be funded and therefore only those people who can speak and understand English will be obtained for this study which is a limitation. However it is anticipated that literacy may be an issue, this will be overcome by ensuring all prospective participants are read the plain language statement and consent form before signing. Once consent is gained, there will not be any additional reading or writing required for the project as the rest of the data will be collected verbally.

4.2 PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

CONFIRM THAT THE PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT WILL:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NOT APPLICABLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. be printed on University of Melbourne letterhead</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. include clear identification of the University, the Department(s) involved, the project title, the Principal and Other Researchers (including contact details), and the study level if it is a student research project.</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. provide details of the purpose of the research project</td>
<td>×</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. provide details of what involvement in the project will require (e.g., involvement in interviews, completion of questionnaire, audio/video-taping of events), and estimated time commitment</td>
<td>×</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. provide details of any risks involved and the procedures in place to minimise these.</td>
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<td>6. advise that the project has received clearance by the HREC</td>
<td>×</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. (if the sample size is small), confirm that this may have implications for protecting the identity of the participants</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. include a clear statement that if participants are in a dependent relationship with any of the researchers that involvement in the</td>
<td>×</td>
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</table>
9. state that involvement in the project is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw consent at any time, and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied

10. provide advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations (see ** below)

11. provide advice as to whether or not data is to be destroyed after a minimum period (if relevant)

12. provide in the footer, the project HREC number, date and version of the PLS

13. provide advice that if participants have any concerns about the conduct of this research project that they can contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, ph: 8344 2073; fax 9347 6739

[**Re 10 – it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information request or mandated reporting by some professions. Depending on the research proposal you may need to specifically state these limitations]

Please see Appendix iii and Appendix iii (Focus Group) and Appendix iii and Appendix iii (Digital Storytelling Workshop) for copies of the Plain Language Statements for young people and their guardians (where relevant) for each phase of the project.

4.3 OBTAINING CONSENT

(a) How will each participant’s consent be established?

| By signing and returning a Consent Form – see 4.4 | × | By returning an anonymous survey | ☐ |
| Via a verbal agreement | ☑ | Via a person with lawful authority to consent (eg. parent, doctor) – see 4.3(b) below | ☐ |
| Via a recorded agreement for interview | ☐ | Other (Please describe in no more than 50 words): | ☐ |

(b) If participants are unable to give informed consent, explain who will consent on their behalf and how such consent will be obtained.

Assent to participate will be sought from all young people who wish to participate in this research and who are aged under 16 years. For those aged 16 and over, written consent will be sought from the young people themselves. For those young people aged under 16, consent will also be sought from their parent/carer via a phone conversation so that a risk assessment can be undertaken at the same time. Plain Language Statements and Informed consent forms will be sent to parent/carers before the phone call is made for Informed Consent forms.

4.4 CONSENT FORM (IF APPLICABLE)

CONFIRM THAT THE CONSENT FORM WILL:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NOT APPLICABLE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. be printed on University of Melbourne letterhead</td>
<td>×</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. include the title of the project and names of researchers</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. state that the project is for research purposes</td>
<td>×</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. state that involvement in the project is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw at any time, and free to withdraw any unprocessed identifiable data previously supplied</td>
<td>×</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. outline particular requirements of participants including, for example, whether interviews are to be audio and/or video-taped</td>
<td>×</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. include arrangements to protect the confidentiality of data</td>
<td>×</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. include advice that there are legal limitations to data confidentiality (see below)**</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. (if the sample size is small) confirm that this may have implications for protecting the identity of the participants</td>
<td>×</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. (once signed and returned) be retained by the researcher</td>
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</table>
**Re 7 – it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information request or mandated reporting by some professions. Depending on the research proposal you may need to specifically state and explain these limitations.**

5. **PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

Privacy can be described as “…a complex concept that stems from a core idea that individuals have a sphere of life from which they should be able to exclude any intrusion.” A major application of the concept of privacy is information privacy: the interest of a person in controlling access to and use of any information personal to that person. ‘Confidentiality’, a narrower more specific term than ‘privacy’ refers to the legal and ethical obligation that arises from a relationship in which a person receives information from or about another.

At the Commonwealth level, the collection, storage, use and disclosure of personal information by Commonwealth agencies is regulated by the Privacy Act 1988. Sections 95 and 95A of the Act are of particular relevance to researchers. There is regulation at State and Territory level in the form of legislation related to privacy generally or the administration of agencies, or administrative codes of practice. In Victoria, the Health Records Act 2001 regulates health information handled by the Victorian public sector and private sector, while the Information Privacy Act 2000 regulates the collection and handling of non-health-related personal information. The National Statement states that an HREC must be satisfied that a research proposal conforms to all relevant Commonwealth, State or Territory privacy legislation or codes of practice.

5.1 **ACCESSING PERSONAL INFORMATION**

[Personal Information’ includes names, addresses, or information/opinion about an individual whose identity is apparent, or can reasonably be ascertained, from the information/opinion. It also includes Health Information (e.g. health opinions, organ donation or genetic information) and Sensitive Information (e.g. political views, sexual preferences, criminal records)]

Is there a requirement for the researchers to obtain Personal Information (either identifiable or potentially identifiable) about individuals without their consent?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
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<tr>
<td>a) from Commonwealth departments or agencies?</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) from State departments or agencies?</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) from Other Third Parties, such as non-government organisations?</td>
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If you answered YES to (a), (b) or (c), you will need to complete Module P and attach it to this application.

5.2 **REPORTING PROJECT OUTCOMES**

(a) Will the project outcomes be made public at the end of the project?

YES

Yes the results of this study will be made public in a number of ways including through the publication of a PhD, journal articles and presentations at conferences and forums. Given the practical application of this work it is anticipated that the results will be shared with practitioners who deliver and develop men’s behavioural change programs with an accessible form of results made available to the young people who participate in the research.

(b) Will a report of the project outcomes be made available to participants at the end of the project?

YES

Program participants will be provided with a de-identified summary of the results of the study at the conclusion of the project as well as updates about any changes that occur in policy or practice as a result.

5.3 **WILL THE RESEARCH INVOLVE:**

<table>
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<th>YES</th>
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<tr>
<td>complete anonymity of participants (i.e., researchers will not know the identity of participants as participants are part of a random sample and are required to return responses with no form of personal identification)?</td>
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</table>
• de-identified samples or data (i.e., an irreversible process whereby identifiers are removed from data and replaced by a code, with no record retained of how the code relates to the identifiers. It is then impossible to identify the individual to whom the sample of information relates)?

• potentially identifiable samples or data (i.e., a reversible process in which the identifiers are removed and replaced by a code. Those handling the data subsequently do so using the code. If necessary, it is possible to link the code to the original identifiers and identify the individual to whom the sample or information relates)?

• participants having the option of being identified in any publication arising from the research?

• participants being referred to by pseudonym in any publication arising from the research?

• any other method of protecting the privacy of participants? Please describe:

Note that where the sample size is very small, it may be impossible to guarantee anonymity/confidentiality of participant identity. Participants involved in such projects need to be clearly advised of this limitation in the Plain Language Statement.
6. DATA STORAGE, SECURITY AND DISPOSAL

6.1 DATA STORAGE


YES

6.2 DATA SECURITY

(a) *Will the Principal Researcher be responsible for security of data collected?*

YES

(b) *Will data be kept in locked facilities in the Department through which the project is being conducted?*

YES

(c) *Which of the following methods will be used to ensure confidentiality of data?* (select all options that are relevant)

- data and codes and all identifying information to be kept in separate locked filing cabinets ✗
- access to computer files to be available by password only ✗
- access by named researcher(s) only ✗
- other (please describe)

(d) *Will others besides the researchers associated with this project have access to the raw data?*

NO

6.3 DATA RETENTION AND DISPOSAL

[Research data and records should be maintained for as long as they are of continuing value to the researcher and as long as recordkeeping requirements such as patent requirements, legislative and other regulatory requirements exist. The minimum retention period for research data and records is five years after publication, or public release, of the work of the research as stated in the University of Melbourne *Code of Conduct for Research*. If the project involves clinical trial(s), the data should be kept for a minimum of 15 years (refer to Section 3.3 of the National Statement for further details)]

In accordance with the University’s code of conduct all data will be kept for five years after the completion and submission of the PhD.

7. POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST

7.1 POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST

*Is there any affiliation or financial interest for researchers in this research or its outcomes or any circumstances which might represent a perceived, potential or actual conflict of interest?*

NO

7.2 COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESEARCH

[University researchers must disclose and manage Conflict of Interest in accord with the provisions of the University’s *Code of Conduct for Research*. See [http://www.unimelb.edu.au/ExecServ/Statutes/r171r8.html](http://www.unimelb.edu.au/ExecServ/Statutes/r171r8.html)]

*Is the Conflict of Interest noted above in section 7.1 being managed in accordance with the Code of Conduct?*

Not Applicable
8. DECLARATION BY RESEARCHERS

The information contained herein is, to the best of our knowledge and belief, accurate.

We have read the University’s current human ethics guidelines, and accept responsibility for the conduct of the procedures set out in the attached application in accordance with the guidelines, the University’s Code of Conduct for Research and any other condition laid down by the University of Melbourne’s Human Research Ethics Committee or its Sub-Committees. We have attempted to identify all risks related to the research that may arise in conducting this research and acknowledge our obligations and the rights of the participants. We have the appropriate qualifications, experience and facilities to conduct the research set out in the attached application and to deal with any emergencies and contingencies related to the research that may arise.

If approval is granted, the project will be undertaken in strict accordance with the approved protocol and relevant laws, regulations and guidelines.

We, the researcher(s) agree:
- To only start this research project after obtaining final approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC);
- To only carry out this research project where adequate funding is available to enable the project to be carried out according to good research practice and in an ethical manner;
- To provide additional information as requested by the HREC;
- To provide progress reports to the HREC as requested, including annual and final reports;
- To maintain the confidentiality of all data collected from or about project participants, and maintain security procedures for the protection of privacy;
- To notify the HREC in writing immediately if any change to the project is proposed and await approval before proceeding with the proposed change;
- To notify the HREC in writing immediately if any adverse event occurs after the approval of the HREC has been obtained;
- To agree to an audit if requested by the HREC;
- To only use data and any tissue samples collected for the study for which approval has been given;

We have read the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and agree to comply with its provisions.

All researchers associated with this project must sign

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researchers’ Name (please PRINT)</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Katie Lamb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor Cathy Humphreys</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assoc.Professor Kelsey Hegarty</td>
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9. DECLARATION BY DEPARTMENTAL HUMAN ETHICS ADVISORY GROUP (HEAG)

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<th>DATE APPLICATION RECEIVED:</th>
<th>/</th>
<th>HEAG NO:</th>
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☐ TECHNICAL REVIEW COMPLETED ☐ ETHICAL REVIEW COMPLETED

The HEAG has reviewed this project and considers the methodological/technical and ethical aspects of the proposal to be appropriate to the tasks proposed and recommends approval of the project. The HEAG considers that the researcher(s) has/have the necessary qualifications, experience and facilities to conduct the research set out in the attached application, and to deal with any emergencies and contingencies that may arise. [Note: If the HEAG Chair is also a principal researcher for this project, the declaration should be signed by another authorised member of the HEAG]

Comments/Provisos:

Name of HEAG Chair (in BLOCK LETTERS)

Signature

Date

10. DECLARATION BY HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

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<th>DATE APPLICATION RECEIVED:</th>
<th>/</th>
<th>HEAG NO:</th>
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☐ TECHNICAL REVIEW COMPLETED ☐ ETHICAL REVIEW COMPLETED

I have reviewed this project and consider the methodological, technical and ethical aspects of the proposal to be appropriate to the tasks proposed and recommend approval of the project. I consider that the researcher(s) has/have the necessary qualifications, experience and facilities to conduct the research set out in the attached application, and to deal with any emergencies and contingencies that may arise. [Note: If the Head of Department is also a principal researcher for this project, the declaration should be signed by another authorised member of the Department]

This project has the approval and support of this Department/School/Centre.

Name of Head (in BLOCK LETTERS)

Signature

Date

11. WHEN COMPLETE

When this form has been completed and finalised it should be attached to the coversheet section of the application completed in Themis Research and then submitted to the nominated Human Ethics Advisory Group for review.
References


Humphreys, C; Houghton, C and Ellis, L(2008), Literature Review: Better Outcomes for Children and Young People Experiencing Domestic Abuse- Directions for Good Practice, Edinburgh, Scottish Government


Morris, A., Hegarty, K. and Humphreys, C,(2012), ‘Ethical and safe: Research with children about domestic violence’, Research Ethics, 8 (2):125-139


Rayns, G. (2010), *What are Children and Young People’s views and opinions of perpetrator programmes for their violent father/male carer?*, Children’s Workforce Development Council, NSPCC, UK


Stafford, A. and Smith, C. (2009), *Practical guidance on conducting research and working in participative ways with children and young people experiencing domestic abuse*, The University of Edinburgh, UK

Risk Assessment for Mothers of Minors

Hi.................... My name is.................. I have contacted you because your son/daughter [name] has expressed interest in becoming involved in the ‘Young People’s Voices’ project which is a research study being carried out by researchers from The University of Melbourne. Are you able to talk now or is there a better time I could call you back?

I am calling you to see if you are happy for your son/daughter [name] to participate in this project and that you understand what is involved in the project and that your child is in a safe situation to be able to freely participate in this project.

Firstly, I just want to check that you have received a copy of the Information sheet in the mail? [If they answer yes ask whether they have had a chance to read it, if the answer is no to either receiving the form or having had read it then say... For clarity, do you mind if I read the information sheet out now?]

[Read Plain Language Statement]

Do you have any questions about the research?

Do you think you would be happy for [child’s name] to participate?

[If no, then end call.]

In order to make sure that your child remains safe throughout the research process, I was just hoping to ask a few questions about where your child lives, is that ok?

Could I ask who your child currently lives with at the moment? Do you think your child feels safe where he/she lives? Is there anyone that your child lives with that they might be fearful of? [If the child does not live with their father] Does [your child] have contact with his/her father? [If yes] How often does he/she see their father? Do you believe that your child is fearful of their father? Do you think your child’s father is dangerous any way? If Yes, ask Why?

Does your child have any health issues? (Prompt such as illnesses, disability, mental illness, substance abuse, anxiety or depression or behavioural issues?). If so, how do you think this could impact on their participation in this project?

Is there anything else you think we need to know about your child to help keep them safe while they participate in this project?

Thank you so much for your time, we are really looking forward to working with your child on this project. If you have any queries about the research or your child’s participation, you are welcome to call me on xxxxxxxxxxxxx.
Risk Assessment for Mature Minors

Thank you for expressing an interest in becoming involved in the Young People’s Voices Project, in order to make sure that you remain safe throughout the research process, I was just hoping to ask a few questions if that is ok?

- Who do you live with at the moment?
- Do you feel safe where you live?
- Is there anyone that you live with that you are fearful of?
- Do you have contact with his/her father? [If yes] How often do you see your father?
- Are you fearful of your father?
- Do you think your father is dangerous in any way?
- Do you think your father would be angry if he knew you were participating in this discussion?
- Do you have any health issues? (Prompt such as illnesses, disability, mental illness, substance abuse, anxiety or depression or behavioural issues?).
- If so, how do you think this could impact on your participation in this project?
- Is there anything else you can think of that we need to think about to help keep you safe while you participate in this project?
Appendix 2ii

Child Abuse Disclosure Protocol

- In order to participate in this research, young people will complete an informed consent form. For those aged under 16 assent will be sought and for those aged 16-21 consent will be sought. Both forms will indicate that if a young person aged under 18 discloses that they are currently exposed to child abuse, their confidentiality can not be guaranteed and authorities might need to be contacted to ensure their safety.

- If any of the young people aged under 18 who participate in either the focus groups or digital storytelling workshop discloses that they are currently exposed to child abuse, the researcher will:
  - Make a note of what the child disclosed
  - Speak to her University Supervisors to determine an appropriate course of action to ensure the child’s safety
  - Speak to the child and the child’s worker before any action is taken such as contacting the child’s parent/carer, police or the Department of Human Services.
Appendix 2iii

Proposed Focus Group/Interview Questions

1. **Start with introduction about this project**
   We have come here to speak to you today because we are interested in exploring what makes a good father and we are very interested in your thoughts and ideas. When we use the word fathers we are talking about fathers, stepfathers or a mum’s boyfriend.

   Before we start, it is important that we make sure that everyone has chosen to be here today, this discussion group is voluntary and no-one has to attend if they don’t want to. If you chose not to participate that is ok and this decision will not make a difference to the service and support you will receive from [SPECIFY COMMUNITY ORGANISATION].

2. **Firstly, we would like to know what you think makes a good father?**
   - How does a good father interact with his children?
   - What sort of relationship would a good father have with his children?
   - How does a good father communicate and get along with the mother of his children?
   - What role does a good father play in a family?
   - If a family goes through separation or divorce, what kind of relationship would a good father have with his children after that separation?

3. **Sometimes fathers do things that are frightening. What impact do you think this behaviour might have on their children?**
   - In what ways do you think this frightening behaviour would have an impact on children’s lives?
   - What could a dad who has been frightening, do to make his kids trust him again? How could he make it up to his kids?

4. **Some fathers who do things that are frightening and abusive attend a program to learn how to behave differently, we would be interested in knowing:**
   - whether you think young people be told if their father is attending a program?
   - What changes in their father do you think young people would like to see after they completed a program?
   - How would young people decide whether the program ‘had worked’?
   - If the voices of children and young people were to be included in one of these programs what do you think would be the key messages or things they would want dads who use frightening or abusive behaviour to know?

5. **The messages you have given us today about fathers and fathering have been really important. If we wanted to make sure that fathers who attend programs for their frightening and/or abusive behaviour get a better understanding of children’s perspectives how do you think we could do this?**
   - Discuss Digital Storytelling as an option [maybe show an example?]
   - Also discuss other possibilities like a photo exercise
   - Ask for any other suggestions
   - Ask if any of the participants would like to participate in Mechanism Development (Digital Storytelling or otherwise)

6. **I would now like to ask you about the type of father you would like to be (If you are male) /or like your partner to be to your children (female)?**
Young People’s Voices

Are you aged 12-21 and would you like to share your opinion about fathers and fathering?

Researchers from the University of Melbourne are undertaking a project to gain the views of young people about all sorts of fathers and we would be very interested in speaking to you. We will be running group discussions for young people who are interested in having their opinions heard about what makes a good father, what sorts of things fathers can do that can upset or frighten their children and how programs designed to help change father’s negative behaviour should involve young people.
Appendix 2v

Discussion Group and Interview, Plain Language Statement,
(Minors, Mature Minors and Young Adults)

*This information sheet is for you to keep. It tells you about the Young People’s Voices project and how you can be involved.*

**What is this project about?**

The ‘Young People’s Voices’ project invites young people to talk about:

- what makes a good father,
- what types of things fathers can do which might make their children feel frightened
- and what fathers who attend a program to change the way they behave at home should know about the impact of their behaviour on their children.

The project will also ask about how programs for fathers should involve children and young people.

**Who are the researchers?**

Katie Lamb is a Social Work PhD Student at the University of Melbourne and she will be supervised by Kelsey Hegarty who is a doctor and a researcher and Cathy Humphreys who is a social worker and researcher.

**Who can participate?**

The research invites young people aged 9-21 who have thoughts they would like to share about what makes a good father, what makes a father frightening and how programs designed to help fathers change their behaviour should involve children. It is important to know that participation in this research is voluntary and will have no impact on the service that you receive from [X Agency].

**What is involved?**

If you would like to participate in this research, you would attend a small group discussion which would last approximately 60-90 minutes.
All of the discussions will be audiotaped and kept confidential. Your real name would not be used in any reports about the findings of the research.

As some of the subjects that might be discussed may be upsetting, if you feel like you need it, support will be provided from a familiar worker at [X Agency].

A second part of the research will include making a video story about your experiences. If you attend a focus group, you will hear about this option and can decide whether you might also like to participate in this second workshop which is also voluntary.

For young people aged 15 and under to participate in the research, parents or carers permission will also be needed. All young people who participate in the research will be provided with a gift to thank them for sharing their opinions.

How will my privacy be protected?

The information collected in this study will be treated as entirely confidential and will be used for research purposes only. All information provided by you will be kept secure at The University of Melbourne and destroyed after five years.

The confidentiality of the information you provide will be safeguarded with the following exceptions:

1. If you provide information that is deemed by the researcher to suggest child abuse is currently occurring the researcher may provide information to the Department of Human Services and/or police; or
2. Any data that is required by a court of law or other legal requirement (i.e. freedom of information or mandatory reporting).

If you have any questions about the research study please contact the principal researcher Katie Lamb on 0497 308 185 or Cathy Humphreys on 0437 392 181.

This project has received clearance from the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the way in which this research is being carried out please contact the. Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, University of Melbourne on ph.8344-2073.
Appendix 2vi

Discussion Group and Interview Plain Language Statement

(Parent/Guardian)

Young People’s Voices

*What is this project about?*

The ‘Young People’s Voices’ project invites young people to talk about:

- what makes a good father,
- what types of things fathers can do which might make their children feel frightened
- and what fathers who attend a program to change the way they behave at home should know about the impact of their behaviour.

The project will also ask about how programs for fathers should involve children and young people.

Young people’s consent to participate in the research will be sought first and then the consent of a parent/carer will be sought for those young people aged under 16.

*Who are the researchers?*

Katie Lamb is a Social Work PhD Student at the University of Melbourne and she will be supervised by Kelsey Hegarty who is a doctor and a researcher and Cathy Humphreys who is a social worker and researcher.

*Who can participate?*

The research invites young people aged 9-21 who have thoughts they would like to share about what makes a good father, what makes a father frightening and how programs designed to help fathers change their behaviour should involve children. It is important to know that participation in this research is voluntary and will have no impact on the service that you receive from [X Agency].

*What is involved?*

If your child would like to participate in this research, they would attend a small group discussion which would last approximately 60-90 minutes.

All of the discussions will be audiotaped and kept confidential. Your child’s real name would not be used in any reports about the findings of the research.

As the subjects being discussed may be upsetting, support will be available for your child from a familiar worker at [X Agency].
All young people who participate will be provided with a gift to thank them for their participation.

A second part of the research will include making a video story about your child’s experiences. If your child attends a focus group, they will hear about this option and can decide whether they want to participate in this second workshop which is also voluntary.

How will my child’s privacy be protected?

The information collected in this study will be treated as entirely confidential and will be used for research purposes only. All information provided by your child will be kept secure at The University of Melbourne and destroyed after five years.

The confidentiality of the information your child provides will be safeguarded with the following exceptions:

- If your child provides information that is deemed by the researcher to suggest child abuse is currently occurring the researcher may provide information to the Department of Human Services and/or police; or
- Any data that is required by a court of law or other legal requirement (i.e. freedom of information or mandatory reporting).

If you have any questions about the research study please contact the principal researcher Katie Lamb on xxxxxxxx or Cathy Humphreys on xxxxxxxx.

This project has received clearance from the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the way in which this research is being carried out please contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, University of Melbourne on ph.8344-2073.
Appendix 2vii

Discussion Group and Interview Informed consent/assent,
(Minors, Mature Minors and Young Adults Focus Group)

[This form will be read to all young people before they sign to ensure literacy issues do not impact informed consent]

Your Name:________________________________________________

Date of Birth:________________

Age:________

I do / do not (please circle) voluntarily consent to participate in the ‘Young People’s Voices’ research project

If I am aged under 16, I understand that my parent/guardian will also be asked for their consent to allow me to participate in this project.

I understand that participation involves my attendance at one group discussion with the researcher for 60-90 minutes about my views about fathers and fathering.

I have been informed that even though I have been invited to participate in this research by a researcher introduced to me by [Agency], if I decide not to participate in the research, this will not have any impact on the service that I will receive from [Agency].

I understand that I may also be invited to participate in a second voluntary workshop.

This research has been explained to me and a written copy of the information has been given to me to keep.

I acknowledge that:

- I have been informed that I am free to stop participating in the research at any time throughout the project and may withdraw any unprocessed data

- I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be protected unless my safety is considered to be in danger or for other legal reasons

- My identity will be protected in any publications arising from this research
• This signed consent form will be retained by the researcher

Signature________________________________________ Date: ___________

HREC Approval Number XXXXXX Date XXXXX Consent Version X

If you have any questions about the research study please contact the principal researcher Katie Lamb on 0497 308 185 or Cathy Humphreys on 0437 392 181. This project has received clearance from the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the way in which this research is being carried out please contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, University of Melbourne on ph.8344-2073.
Discussion Group and Interview Informed consent
(parents/carers)

Young People’s Voices

Your Name:________________________________________________

Your Child’s Name: __________________________________________

I do / do not (please circle) voluntarily consent for my child to participate in the ‘Young People’s Voices’ research project.

I understand that my child will also be asked for their assent to participate in this project.

I understand that participation involves my child being involved in one small group discussion with the researcher for 60-90 minutes about issues relating to fathers and fathering.

I have been informed that even though my child has been invited to participate in this research by a researcher introduced to them by [Agency], if they decide not to participate in the research, this will not have any impact on the service they will receive from [Agency].

I understand that my child may also be invited to participate in a second voluntary workshop. If my child expresses interest in participating in the second workshop, I will be provided with additional information about that workshop.

This research has been explained to me and a written copy of the information has been given to me to keep. My child will also receive written information about the project to keep.

I acknowledge that:

- I have been informed that my child is free to stop participating in the research at any time throughout the project and may withdraw any unprocessed data
- I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information my child provides will be safeguarded subject to legal requirements
- My child’s identity will be protected in any publications arising from this research
• This signed consent form will be retained by the researcher

Parent/Guardian Signature__________________________________________ Date: __________

If you have any questions about the research study please contact the principal researcher Katie Lamb on 0497 308 185 or Cathy Humphreys on 0437 392 181. This project has received clearance from the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the way in which this research is being carried out please contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, University of Melbourne on ph.8344-2073.

HREC Approval Number XXXXXXX Date XXXXX Consent Version X
Appendix 2ix

Digital Storytelling Workshop- Plain Language Statement

(Minors, Mature Minors and Young Adults)

Young People’s Voices

What is this project about?

As part of the ‘Young People’s Voices Project’, a group of young people who have participated in the first phase of the project (Discussion Group) are invited to participate in a Digital Storytelling Workshop at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI).

The Digital Storytelling Workshop is the second part of this project. The first phase involved small group discussions with young people aged 9-21 about fathers and fathering.

In this second part of the research, you are invited to attend a two or three day workshop at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) where you will prepare a short video about what you think fathers who attend a program to learn to behave in a less frightening way need to know about young people’s perspectives.

Who can participate?

The research invites young people aged 9-21 who have opinions about fathering and who have participated in a discussion group as part of the first phase of this research.

What is involved?

If you would like to participate in this research, you would attend a two or three day workshop at ACMI which is located at Federation Square. In this workshop you will develop a short video in which you will have the opportunity to deliver the messages you think fathers who behave in a frightening way in the home need to know.

As the subjects being discussed may be upsetting, if you feel like you need it, support will be provided from a familiar worker at [X Agency]. For young people aged 15 and under to participate in the Digital Storytelling Workshop, parents or carers permission will also be needed.

How will my privacy be protected?

It is hoped that the digital stories that are produced can be shown to those who design, develop and deliver programs for fathers. In order to ensure you remain anonymous, your identity will be protected and you will help to decide how this is done (such as picking a false name, filming you from behind or not showing your face at all using a voiceover). Each young person will have a say about how their identity is altered. If you are aged over 16 you will be able to choose whether your identity is obscured or not.
If you have any questions about the research study please contact the principal researcher Katie Lamb on 0497 308 185 or Cathy Humphreys on xxxxxxxxxxxx.

This project has received clearance from the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the way in which this research is being carried out please contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, University of Melbourne on ph.8344-2073.
Appendix 2x

Digital Storytelling Workshop, Plain Language Statement for parents/guardians

Young People’s Voices

What is this project about?

As part of the Young People’s Voices research project, a group of young people who have participated in the first phase of the project (Discussion Group) are invited to participate in a Digital Storytelling Workshop at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI).

The Digital Storytelling Workshop is the second part of this project. The first phase involved small group discussions with young people aged 9-21 about fathers and fathering.

In this second part of the research, your child is invited to attend a two or three day workshop at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) where they will prepare a short video about what they think fathers who use frightening behaviour need to know about children’s perspectives.

Who can participate?

The research invites young people aged 9-21 who have participated in a discussion group as part of the first phase of this research.

What is involved?

If your child decides to participate in this research, they would attend a two or three day workshop at ACMI which is located at Federation Square. In this workshop they will develop a short video in which they can will have the opportunity to deliver the messages they think fathers who use frightening behaviour in the home need to know,

As the subjects being discussed may be upsetting, if your child feels like they would like it, support will be provided from a familiar worker at [Agency]. For young people aged under 16 to participate in the Digital Storytelling Workshop both the permission of young people themselves and a parent/carer is needed.

How will my child’s privacy be protected?

It is hoped that the digital stories that are produced can be shown to those who design, develop and deliver programs for fathers. In order to ensure your child remains anonymous, your child’s identity will need to be protected. In the development of the digital story, your child will be able to decide how their identity will be obscured, such as picking a pseudonym (or false name), filming from
behind or not showing their face at all using a voiceover. Each young person will have a say about how their identity is altered.

If you have any questions about the research study please contact the principal researcher Katie Lamb on xxxxxxxxx or Cathy Humphreys on xxxxxxxxxx. This project has received clearance from the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the way in which this research is being carried out please contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, University of Melbourne on ph.8344-2073.
Appendix 2xi

Digital Storytelling Workshop, Informed Consent
(Minors, Mature Minors and Young Adults)

Young People’s Voices

Your Name:________________________________________________

Date of Birth:______________________________________

Age: ______

I do / do not (please circle) voluntarily agree to participate in the ‘Young People’s Voices’ Digital
Storytelling Workshop.

I understand that if I am aged younger than 16, a parent/carer will also be asked for their consent for
me to participate in this project.

I understand that participation involves a two or three day workshop at the Centre for the Moving
Image (ACMI) in Federation Square where I will produce a short video outlining what I think fathers
who are frightening or abusive need to know.

I have been informed that even though I have been invited to participate in this research by a
researcher introduced by [Agency], if I decide not to participate in the research, this will not have
any impact on the service I will receive from [Agency].

This research has been explained to me and a written copy of the information has been given to me
to keep.

I acknowledge that:

- I have been informed that I am free to stop participating in the research at any time
  throughout the project and may withdraw any unprocessed data

- I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded
  subject to legal requirements

- My identity will be protected in any written publications arising from this research

- This signed consent form will be retained by the researcher
If you have any questions about the research study please contact the principal researcher Katie Lamb on xxxxxxxxxx or Cathy Humphreys on xxxxxxxxxx. This project has received clearance from the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the way in which this research is being carried out please contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, University of Melbourne on ph.8344-2073.

HREC Approval Number XXXXXXX Date XXXXX
Appendix 2xii

Digital Storytelling Workshop, Informed Consent form

(Parents of Minors)

Young People’s Voices

Your Name:________________________________________________

Your Child’s Name:_________________________________________

I do / do not (please circle) voluntarily agree for my child to participate in the ‘Young People’s Voices’, Digital Storytelling Workshop.

I understand that my child will be asked for their assent to participate in the research.

I understand that participation involves a two or three day workshop at the Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) in Federation Square where my child will produce a short video outlining what my child thinks fathers who attend a program for their frightening behaviour need to know.

I have been informed that even though my child has been invited to participate in this research by a researcher introduced by X [Agency], if they decide not to participate in the research, this will not have any impact on the service they will receive from X [Agency].

This research has been explained to me and a written copy of the information has been given to me to keep.

I acknowledge that:

• I have been informed that my child is free to stop participating in the research at any time throughout the project and may withdraw any unprocessed data

• I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information my child provides will be safeguarded subject to legal requirements

• My child’s identity will be protected in any publications arising from this research

• This signed consent form will be retained by the researcher
Signature__________________________________________ Date: ___________

If you have any questions about the research study please contact the principal researcher Katie Lamb on xxxxxxxxx or Cathy Humphreys on xxxxxxxxx. This project has received clearance from the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the way in which this research is being carried out please contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, University of Melbourne on ph. 8344-2073.

HREC Approval Number XXXXXXX Date XXXXX Consent Version X
Appendix 3: Organisations to contact for support handout

Do you need someone to talk to?
If at any time throughout the research project you feel you need someone to speak to here are some numbers you might want to call or websites to look at:

**Phone**
- Kids Helpline  1800 551 800
- Lifeline 131 114

**Internet**
- [www.burstingthebubble.com](http://www.burstingthebubble.com)
- [www.reachout.com](http://www.reachout.com)
- [www.youthbeyondblue.com](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com)
Appendix 4: Failure to Disclose Law

Failure to Disclose Law Fact Sheet, taken from the Victorian Department of Justice Website


The new ‘failure to disclose’ offence

Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. Accordingly, a new criminal offence has been created in Victoria that imposes a clear legal duty upon all adults to report information about child sexual abuse to police. Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 has an obligation to report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence.

1. **What is a ‘reasonable belief’?**

   A ‘reasonable belief’ is not the same as having proof. A ‘reasonable belief’ is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a ‘reasonable belief’ might be formed when:

   - a child states that they have been sexually abused
   - a child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
   - someone who knows a child states that the child has been sexually abused
   - professional observations of the child’s behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been sexually abused
   - signs of sexual abuse leads to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.

2. **Are there any excuses for not reporting child sexual abuse to police?**

   A person will not be guilty of the offence if he or she has a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information. A reasonable excuse includes:

   - fear for safety
   - where the information has already been disclosed.
### Appendix 5: Coding Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes (Step 1)</th>
<th>Issues Discussed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No experience of good father to draw on</td>
<td>• I have no experience of this and no idea, I don’t really care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>• A good dad is fun and playful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>• A good father gives his family happiness and love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Unconditional love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• You need to make time and effort for love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Partner</td>
<td>• A good father should support his partner during divorce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Accept differences in your partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Emotional Support</td>
<td>• A good father emotionally supports Partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A good father is there for his children when they are struggling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A good father would leave them alone and also be there when needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Support</td>
<td>• Money because it helps his children survive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Be a hard worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Go to work and get money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Buy kids things/treats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right way</td>
<td>• Teach your children the right way to do things (like discipline)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Set a good example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Give leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kind</td>
<td>• Nice to you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove Emotional support</td>
<td>• Took my phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• My father actively removed all supportive adults from me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>• I would say a key message is for my dad- try and avoid death (drug user)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>• Need my phone to keep me safe from you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imprisoned</td>
<td>• My grandparents were violent too and locked us in a room for punishment for 8 hours at a time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• You locked me in a room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>• A good dad lets you see your friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Let’s you go shopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Trusts you when you are out somewhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Doesn’t need to know your every movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to you</td>
<td>• Dads can change so it’s up to them to make a difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No escape</td>
<td>• Feels like I will never escape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>• Dad should accept me as what I am or who I am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaming others</td>
<td>• It was always our fault or our mums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relief</td>
<td>• So glad it’s over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awkward</td>
<td>• Our relationship is awkward now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good and Bad</td>
<td>• My dad is in between</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embarrassment</td>
<td>• My parents broke up at my pool party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Value             | • I wouldn’t want to have friends over in case they saw violence at my house  
|                   | • People might think I am like my dad  
|                   | • None of my friends know about the violence, it’s too embarrassing  
|                   | • He abused my brother at school which was embarrassing  
| Protect           | • Important to make your children feel valued and like they matter  
|                   | • Acknowledge your children as people  
|                   | • Make me feel special  
| Equal Treatment   | • A good father protects them from abuse he doesn’t abuse them  
|                   | • Don’t expose your children to your violent friends or family  
| Communication     | • A good father would treat his kids equally regardless of gender  
|                   | • My dad sends things to my brother but not his daughters  
| Interaction/Involvement | • Literally speak to your kids  
|                   | • Interact with your kids  
|                   | • A good dad makes an effort to talk to your kids  
|                   | • Could at least send us birthday cards but he doesn’t  
|                   | • Our communication is awkward- he asks a few questions and that’s it  
|                   | • A good relationship has good communication  
|                   | • I tried to express my feelings and you slapped me  
| Protect           | • Be involved in your kids lives  
|                   | • Help with homework  
|                   | • Do activities  
|                   | • Even when my dad was at home he wasn’t interested in us  
| Mother            | • He doesn’t understand that when he abuses our mother it impacts us  
|                   | • His treatment of the mother has a profound effect on the children, you are witnessing that  
|                   | • We saw you abuse her more than you think  
| Trust             | • You need to rebuild trust before you can have a normal relationship  
|                   | • Rebuilding trust takes time  
|                   | • I want you to trust me  
| Promises          | • He promises things and then breaks the promise  
| Fear              | • I believe if my father finds us he might kill us  
|                   | • I am much more frightened of my father than our violent public housing neighbours  
|                   | • I am scared he will hurt others (like a worker or my younger siblings)  
|                   | • I was scared to say I didn’t want to live with dad in case he hurt mum  
| Respect           | • Fathers want respect and think they can get it through violent punishment  
|                   | • Violent fathers get kids who fear than not respect them  

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Selfless</strong></td>
<td>• A good father puts aside his own emotions and puts children first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Be less selfish and think about the kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Make effort</strong></td>
<td>• During divorce a good father makes an effort to see his kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equality</strong></td>
<td>• Do your fair share of (mundane) parenting and household chores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A dad who does everyday things around the house is more approachable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Punishment/Discipline</strong></td>
<td>• Punish in a good non-violent way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Don’t give kids bad ideas about what punishment is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A violent dad teachers his kids it’s ok to hit your kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A good father is good at training his kids- kids are like wolves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• It’s the subtle stuff that’s confusing, the violence may have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• stopped but you are still left feeling bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He should think before he speaks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He makes me feel useless and helpless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He laughs at things I am passionate about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• When I said I don’t want to see him he said oh well you just</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• won’t have a father any more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He puts me down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partnership</strong></td>
<td>• A good partnership is where both parents understand each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(even if they split up)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feeling Bad</strong></td>
<td>• He tries to make me feel bad and says he will write we out of his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He says I will regret not having a relationship with him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He makes me feel like I don’t exist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• It’s the subtle stuff that’s confusing, the violence may have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• stopped but you are still left feeling bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He should think before he speaks</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• He makes me feel useless and helpless</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• He laughs at things I am passionate about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• When I said I don’t want to see him he said oh well you just</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• won’t have a father any more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He puts me down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identity</strong></td>
<td>• Not wanting to have same surname as father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Not calling him dad/father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criticism</strong></td>
<td>• He put us down and made us second guess everything we said/did/wore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• It’s about how a father makes his kids feel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• His words follow me like a dark cloud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entitlement</strong></td>
<td>• Payment of child support does not entitle fathers to contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The courts pressure mothers to actively maintain a relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• between children and their fathers- why is this her problem?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Too much push to get families back together again and the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• rights of a father to a relationship need to be looked at- if you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• stuffed up so badly they don’t want to see you bad luck- that’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• the consequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• We need to break down that wall of entitlement, if you have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• done things that might mean you can never see your kids again,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- At the moment there is a presumption that you can see your kids unless something can be probed against you - that is the wrong way to look at it
- If you haven’t been a father up to that point, why should you push to become one now

**Control**
- Put restrictions on what we could and could not use on vouchers he gave us
- He lost power and control when I found other things in my life

**Hate**
- My father hates, my mother, his kids and himself
- Fathers should stop causing harm to people even those you hate

**Sexist**
- Sexist comments, behaviours and values

**Facilitation**
- He surrounded himself with other violent men like himself who said it was ok
- Institutions (school, church, court) facilitated the violence continuing and said it was ok
- I have lost faith in the CJ system
- He used male comradery to get other men to side with him
- The community doesn’t want to believe DV happens, it’s easier to think a story has been made up

**Excuses**
- Using a history of being abused as an excuse for being violent

**Denial**
- He believes he is a good dad and he never hurt us
- He believes we don’t want to see him because our mother has brainwashed us and not because we don’t want to.
- Don’t make excuses

**Lies**
- Tells everyone our mother is crazy
- He lied in court and denied the violence, he said we made it up and our mother brainwashed us
- People believe the lies he tells
- To make it up to us he would need to publically admit to all the lies he told (maybe he could put it on facebook)
- I lied to my friends about why the police came

**Choices**
- He doesn’t understand that we don’t want to see him, it’s not our mother stopping us
- You made bad choices

**Resources**
- I would like an apology and for him to buy me something
- It’s not what a father buys for you but how he makes you feel that matters

**Admit**
- Own up and admit what you have done
- Admit to lying

**Apologise**
- Not enough people apologise to their children
- Need to apologise early, waiting for too long might mean it’s too late and your kids don’t want to hear it
- An apology isn’t enough you need to SHOW you are sorry
- Apologise without any ‘buts’
- If you apologise and do it again children feel betrayed
- I wouldn’t need an apology just a change in behaviour
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>He would need to apologise and mean it, if that happened that would be amazing</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talk to your kids about and it and try and start again</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>You need to apologise so I can move on</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Consequences/Penance**

- I would still talk to him if he had taken some consequences like prison time
- Sometimes the consequences for dads who are violent is their kids are weird around them
- He needs to go through the legal system
- He needs to do therapy
- I hope he goes to hell
- I will tell my kids he’s dead
- Even if there is no prison there will be consequences- you will never walk me down the aisle and no one will care for you when you are old

**Responsibility**

- Few dads are willing to take responsibility AND the consequences of their actions

**Time/Space**

- You need to give children space even after an apology
- I can’t bear people invading my personal space
- Back off if your kids don’t want to see you
- If your kids don’t want to see you, you don’t follow them home from school, you don’t show up at their sports matches, you need to leave them alone if that’s what they want.

**Different**

- I thought all dads were violent like mine
- I don’t know how to interact with children, particularly happy ones, I am weird
- It weirds me out that people have healthy relationships with their fathers, like its bizarre
- I had no idea that it wasn’t normal
- I think all dads are violent sometimes
- It made me confused I didn’t have normal family

**Repair**

- It can take a long time to build trust and repair

**Cycle**

- When I get angry I want to hit out, I don’t want to have children in case I am violent too
- I am reluctant to get in a relationship in case I chose someone violent, the first boy I was attracted to was just like my dad and that was scary
- Do fathers want their kids to turn out like them?
- In therapy we are told it’s up to us to break the cycle- dad’s should be told this too
- I have been in a disrespectful relationship and I just think that’s normal, it’s what I think is normal

**Vigilance**

- Having a violent father has impacted how I view men, I think they are all bad people
- I am scared of all men
- I assume the worst of all men
- I am terrified of raised voices
- Even now I cannot bear raised voices and I cry
- I think all men view me like my dad saw my mum- disrespectfully
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bullied</td>
<td>• I was bullied at home and then also at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>• Children should be told if their dad is court ordered to do a program or volunteers- it is important to know whether he wanted to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I didn’t even know the court stuff was about the abuse and him getting punished for what he did to us, I just thought it was about the divorce, I wasn’t allowed to know what was going on.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I don’t want him knowing anything about me</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Kids should know if they are trying to fix what they have done</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Might worry kids knowing dad is doing a program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>• Voluntary attendance at a program is evidence of wanting to change so children should be told</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validation</td>
<td>• Make sure men in MBC don’t validate each other’s behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad life</td>
<td>• A violent father has a bad life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I learnt early that life was not perfect</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I don’t even strive for happiness I just survive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• You ruined mum’s and our lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never ending</td>
<td>• Even once he has left and we have an IO he can still email our mother abuse and every time he emails she falls apart and we suffer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misplaced anger</td>
<td>• He takes his anger at our mother out on us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term Dad</td>
<td>• I hate it when I hear people call their fathers dad, it grosses me out, I call mine by his first name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>• Men who have done a MBC program should be monitored for a while before they are allowed unsupervised contact with the children</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• If men don’t show change they should have to do another program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>• Violent fathers need to learn to treat women better and have better opinions of women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He needs to seek out better male influences, better men to be around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Stay away from people who are drunk</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Men need to want to change for programs to work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Men attend programs to learn to be different dads but their kids aren’t taught how to respond/be normal</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I would judge whether the program had worked by his behaviour changing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I’ve change a lot in the last year and it would be great if my dad could change too</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memories</td>
<td>• I have few childhood memories, I have put them in a box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I only have bad childhood memories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional abuse</td>
<td>• Leaves you with scars just as much as physical abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious</td>
<td>• Why is DV serious enough to get you off murder but not put you in jail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness</td>
<td>• We don’t have to forgive you</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- We gave you many chances to change already- don’t ask us to give him ‘another chance’ he used them all up
- There is currently too much emphasis on children forgiving their fathers ant to enough on fathers apologising
- Society pressures children to forgive fathers regardless of what they have done- you will regret it later in life, what if he died etc

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obligation</th>
<th>Children are obliged to love their fathers regardless of what they do and I hate that</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concentration</td>
<td>Hard to concentrate at school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Wrongdoing          | MBC programs are a good idea so dads can learn all the things they are doing wrong- my dad didn’t think he did anything wrong
- Children should also be told that the way their father behaved is wrong |
| Drugs               | It’s the drugs that make him violent, if he gave up he wouldn’t be that way         |
| Lose family         | Dads should know that if they don’t stop they’d lose their families
- Dad’s violence is the reason we’re not together |
| Vulnerable          | Frightening dads makes kids feel vulnerable, they want to help but don’t know what to do |
| Listen              | My dad needs to learn to hear our perspectives too
- He says I just want my kids to listen but maybe the kids don’t listen because they are scared |
| Spend time          | If the MBC program worked the dad might be able to spend more time with his kids    |
| Missing dad         | I miss my dad
- I want to see my dad
- I wish my parents were back together |
Author/s: Lamb, Katie

Title: Seen and heard: embedding the voices of children and young people who have experienced family violence in programs for fathers

Date: 2017

Persistent Link: http://hdl.handle.net/11343/129319

File Description: Seen and heard: embedding the voices of children and young people who have experienced family violence in programs for fathers

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