

# A Phenomenological Study: Living with Domestic Abuse

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## Introduction

The societal issue of domestic violence, more recently termed domestic abuse (DA), in current years has become a focal point with regards to monies being spent on supporting survivors and prosecuting perpetrators and the profile of abuse has risen. It is fair to say that DA was once regarded by on-lookers and the legal system as 'personal' and little, if any, intervention was available or offered. The purpose of this study is not to focus on the down-fall of the justice system, the perpetrators of abuse, nor the dynamics a woman faces when in an abusive relationship; it is however to gain an understanding of the effects DA can have on the children in the home.

Before I go further and lend my interpretation to some of the studies on which I have based my theories for this report, I would like to state my personal feelings with regards to DA. Over the past 7 years DA has become an issue that is close to my heart having worked with women and child survivors in a Women's Aid refuge and I am confounded on a weekly basis by the strength women show. I consider myself as having a great understanding and empathy for the dynamics of the abuse, why women find it difficult to leave and may, on an average of 7 times, return to the abusive partner (Women's Aid Federation of England). This study will focus on the phenomenological childhood experience of a woman, who experienced DA between her mother and father, and whilst seated in the privileged position of witnessing her story, in order to fully connect the experience and to convey it to my full ability, I have had to leave all previous feelings mentioned behind. Sharon was a little girl with no adult reasoning or resources and it is from this stance that I have written.

The literature I have reviewed is different to this current study as there is no phenomenological research I have been able to find with focus of DA and a child's experience in isolation. I have found that whilst I focused on the area of DA, the books and articles I have read, predominantly detail the observable effects i.e. difficulties in school and bed wetting rather than the psychological processes and thoughts of the child in that frightening situation, whilst some make small references to 'being lonely' and 'angry' when considering working with the child. I used my experience and knowledge of working with child survivors of DA and looked further a-field, at childhood trauma, violence and abuse without specifying domestic.

An article by Allen & Allen (2000) demonstrates what an 'ideal' family represents and this was striking as they all qualities resembled what a child living in DA could be absent from. Quite often the relationship between children and their mothers in an abusive household is broken down due to the energy and effort that is required by the woman, to sustain functioning and survival and therefore the child is left rendered with no emotional support or information, inadequate problem solving skills and an inability to modulate stressors due to the lack of interaction and modelling in these areas, these are some of the 'ideal' notions suggested by Allen & Allen (2000) that a family provides for a child. It is important to note here that whilst this may be applicable to fractured or broken down relationships, Radford and Hester (2006) say that should children have support through their trauma, they are more likely to develop positive

coping and survival strategies and that having a caring supportive relationship with a non abusive parent is useful in this process of recovery. With relationships being the fundamental governing of scrip development and the implications further relationships face due to DA, it seems imperative to mention here a few of the possible implications. It is highly plausible for a child living with DA to observe a physically aggressive father and a withdrawn, emotionally absent mother; one possible affect that Allen & Allen (2000) discuss is how the child, absent of a nurturing parent, will not be able to internalise a nurturing parent and therefore will be unable to self-soothe; instead violence may be internalised from the relationships observed and from harsh discipline, resulting in the child relating violently from both their Parent and Child ego states. Pfefferbaum & Allen (1998) extend this theory suggesting that when young people grow up in communities characterised by violence and crime, their violent behaviours are a result of posttraumatic symptomatology which evolve from the fight or flight response, internalisation of the violence or person or re-enactment of their experience (sited in Allen & Allen, 2000). Such literature would support the theory that a young person who has experienced DA, particularly violent DA, may project their aggressive primary care-taker onto others' in varying situations resulting in them expecting the world to be sadistic and hostile and reacting accordingly. If a young person or adult continues to project and expect the world to be violent and unsafe, they may employ game behaviours in order to protect themselves from the perceived treat (Ruppert & Ziff, 1994). In their article *The Mind, Body and Soul of Violence*, Ruppert and Ziff (1994) suggest that;

*“Games become a shield that protects both the functional and structural systems of the personality as represented in TA theory”.*

Ruppert and Ziff (1994) continue to propose that the role of persecutor would be to keep the introjected prescriptions for abusive behaviours untouched and in terms of their Child ego-state, the game behaviours protect it from contact.

Allen & Allen's (2000) article, mentioned previously, explores the issue of children void of feeling valued and belonging as a consequence of neglectful parenting, as being emotionally absent could be regarded, and the vulnerability of young people when they seek these unmet needs by their peers. Allen & Allen (2000) suggest that gang membership appeals to young people who feel unvalued, humiliated, shamed and unimportant as they offer social support and a sense of belonging; this is supported by Erskine's (1988) notion that an individual remains in an archaic ego state due to a developmental arrest in childhood, when the needs for contact were not met, TA theory that suggests an unmet need in childhood will be sought out in adulthood until the need is achieved.

The research discussed so far provides information that can be interpreted in order to form some postulation of what I expect to encounter in this phenomenological study. I expect the relationships with Sharon and her care-takers to be thwarted and therefore to uncover some script

decisions around being alone, unimportant and the idea that the world and people are untrusting and scary. If this is the case, when telling me of her experience Sharon may also speak about friendships as being of importance and contributing highly to her sense of belonging and self worth as suggested by Allen and Allen (2000). One could assume that Sharon had a lack of nurturing parent available as she grew up and this may have impacted, as Allen and Allen (2000) suggest, her ability to make positive choices, to manage her emotions and stressors and manage conflict amongst peers. With regards to Sharon's survival whilst she was at home, it will be interesting to see how she adapted to the uncertain world of abuse and violence; did she become very sensitive and victim-like or did she developed a strategy to protect herself from further experiences of such behaviours.

## **Methodology**

Existential phenomenological research was undertaken by Sharon and I to explore her childhood experiences of domestic abuse. I interviewed Sharon on this topic for 2 hours and used a Dictaphone in order to transcribe the interview; the transcript was analysed to develop key themes, of which 4 were derived. I made a record of my findings under the headings of themes, using Sharon's spoken words and theory; Sharon was also involved at this stage as she read the findings and gave relevant input to ensure I achieved a close match to her experience.

### Co-researcher Involvement and Ethics

Sharon and I have been close friends for 10 years; she is the mother of her teenage son and has been in the police force for 7 years. In the past when experiencing emotional difficulties, Sharon has been active in seeking support and participating in the process and finds great support from her colleagues, partner and friends.

Sharon has taken an enthusiastic interest throughout my Transactional Analysis Psychotherapy training and has been very supportive of my journey and processes. Our friendship is strong and trusting and over the years we have shared memories of our early experiences. I knew already of some of her experiences of living with DA and considering all the above, I felt our relationship and Sharon herself, would be robust enough for her to participate if she would agree.

Initially I explained my requirement to do a research project as part of my diploma to Sharon and my favour of it being about DA as this is close to my heart and I have been working in the area for 7 years. I asked Sharon if she would be interested in being my participant and I explained what this would involve, including an option of being a co-researcher. Sharon was keen to be involved in my training and after her agreement I drew up my research proposal (Appendix 1). Following the approval of my tutor, a time and date was arranged for Sharon and I to undergo the interview. It was agreed that this would take place at my house so there was privacy, no interruptions and she would not have other commitments to attend to.

We discussed again, to refresh, the details of the research project i.e. title, interview process and ethics. I informed Sharon of the following:

- The study would be confidential and the only persons, at this stage, who would have access to details of the study, would be the two of us, Bob Cooke, Linda Finley and other trainees. I explained that other trainees may be accessed as support in the completion of the study.
- If I were to have the study published I would gain further consent and make any requested changes to her personal details.
- If she needed a break during the interview, this would be OK.
- At any point of the study, from now until its submission, she has the right to withdraw fully or partial information and all data thus far, would be destroyed.
- The recorded interview would be destroyed following study submission and marking.
- She has the right to access the study at any time.
- That this study may elicit painful memories and feelings that may persist after the interview, should this happen, there has been a therapy session agreed for her should she choose to have it.

Sharon confirmed she understood all the information and a written agreement was signed by us both as a commitment to the study and each other (Appendix 2).

### Data Collection and Analysis

On the date of the interview, we had both been at work and we agreed to have time for our tea before we met. When Sharon arrived, I made us a hot drink and I offered Sharon where to sit in my living room and explained that I would be resting at the coffee table in case I wanted to write something down; Sharon sat on a bean bag and we were both very relaxed. As already mentioned I refreshed Sharon on the study and covered the ethical considerations before taking written agreement. Using my experiences of working with survivors of DA, I wrote down some key areas of interest regarding her experience and had paper to hand to write down any prompts during the interview so I did not break Sharon's dialogue; I explained this to Sharon.

My aim was to ask non directed, open questions to facilitate Sharon and to gain an in-depth and as accurate as possible account of her experience.

We sat for two hours as Sharon shared her experiences as a child and their influences today; when it was a suitable place to stop I checked with Sharon that she was OK to do so. I left the Dictaphone recording as I thanked and debriefed Sharon. Sharon was happy with the content of the interview and was reminded of her rights as a participant. We sat for a while, whilst still recording, and spoke about her experience in the room with me that evening and I was assured that Sharon found this a positive experience and was emotionally OK to leave.

The second part of the data collection was to create the transcript of the interview (Appendix 3) which was used, together with the audio, to make sense of Sharon's experience and develop underpinning themes. Before I began with the analysis, Sharon and I spoke and I shared with her the thematic messages that I felt were key and she was very pleased and agreed with them all, stating how they still remain key today; at this point I was satisfied that I had connected with Sharon's experience and could proceed with the analysis.

Once the analysis was complete, I gave Sharon a copy to read and make alterations should she disagree with anything written, should I have not conveyed her experience accurately or neglected information Sharon felt was crucial or relevant. Her modifications were discussed and incorporated into this study.

## **Analysis**

### Alcohol and Fear

As Sharon spoke about her childhood experience of the domestic abuse perpetrated by her Dad to her Mum, she consistently referred to him being intoxicated as this, she expressed with reference to her Dad being like Jekyll and Hyde, was the only time that he became Hyde; his actions being immoral, inconsiderate and denied. The theme of alcohol is prominent in all her memories and still impacts her in adult life; at different times of the interview, Sharon makes negative references such as 'pissed up', 'drunken twat', 'alchy smell' and 'beer breath'. As Sharon shared her first memory of her abusive Dad, at the age of 5, she spoke;

*'....and the first memory of my Dad just being.....just a drunken twat, was actually at my Grandma; because she came round for something and we were sat at the table.....and.....I can't remember what it was she came for, erm....I think it might have been she was like asking to take the dog for a walk, I don't know if she dint have her own dog at the time or whatever but it was something like that and I just remember my Dad being really just real mad and just like proper shouting, like.....irrational shouting over something small and I can remember him being drunk and I know, I know that I can remember that because it was always like.....when I'd grown up and I got older and the things that I'd associate with when he was, in that state, although it was really early memories, I know he was like that and he was pissed up.'*

Sharon was sad when she shared how she would question why her Dad 'can't (ya) just be like a nice Dad', how at times she had a 'normal' Dad until he had a drink; when then she said it was as though they (Sharon and siblings) were 'invisible' to his rage and violence. Early in the interview Sharon described, with vivid clarity, an incident which led to, what she described as,

her Dad *'fighting her (Mum) on top of me'*; Sharon was then, a 5 year old girl asleep in her bed. She continued to describe how her Dad hit her Mum with a child's rocking chair to an extent that it broke; this too was recalled with a distinct association with it being a *'weekend night'* as he *'only ever really used to drink on a weekend night anyway'*.

When Sharon and I spoke of her feelings as a child, she reported being scared and anxious and *'I'm like on edge, like I'm, like I'm prepared, like I expect it'* she said that she has always found drunken men to be *'unpredictable'*. When in the company of drunk men, at home or at work, she is aware that she feels on edge and described how she is prepared for the drunk man.....

*'....to change like that (clicked fingers), be agro. Erm..... I just feel ner, I feel, I do feel like a bit nervous and I know I don't always show it but I think I just feel on-guard that, or like ready for something to happen....'*

Sharon was able to make a link that her past experience of her drunken Father still impacts her to a high degree in her adult life. She sat for a while and described how she struggles to be around drunken men, even if they are not a real threat, because she is always on-guard that they may be;

*'I'd rather kill someone than be subjected to that; all the time. And I do think I try and give out, and it's not always a conscious thing, but, give out the message like, you're not fucking doing that to me even if it's not a real threat but it's a possibility that I think it could be, like.....I don't know, it's really hard to explain...but.....'*

Sharon received a clear message from her childhood experiences, that as she got older she would *'be game for a fucking fight'*. Initially, Sharon made this statement when speaking about her older sister Mandy; she described another drunken night where he had been out on a Friday, straight after work and had come home *'in one of them fucking moods, that it was gona start'*. As she told me about her Dad chasing Mandy up and down the stairs until he squeezed her tight in a bear hug my heart sank as I imagined and shared with Sharon, my fantasy of her as a little girl, worrying about her fate as she were to grow older; though her reality was very different. Sharon conveyed how she was scared of her Dad like no other drunken man, because she knew he had potential, she knew what he was capable of; this being what she learnt at the age of 15 when her Dad was sexually inappropriate with her and made references to previous encounter/s with 15 year old girls. Throughout the time Sharon reflected on her experiences of the abuse she witnessed, she seemed to be detached when speaking of her anxiety and fear, perhaps due to her young age and memory of precise events yet at this point, she described her fear with power and velocity; she knew *'how fucking scared I felt'*. I felt a huge sense of honour as Sharon shared her scary private story with me and I felt a great sense of sadness as I envisaged her, at that point, becoming aware that the boundaries have shifted; she wasn't a spectator of her drunken *'proper evil, nasty'* Dad, she now was violated, so invisible that he no longer saw his daughter sat there, or didn't care.

Loneliness and Abandonment

Sharon is one of 6 children, however, one of her sisters unfortunately did not survive past infancy; although Sharon speaks of a large family there are strong themes of loneliness and abandonment that run through the interview and this concept is influenced by her description of her emotionally absent mother, a father to whom she felt invisible, older siblings that left the home and neighbours, police and teachers that either ignored her trauma or didn't identify her as a child in need.

As I heard of how incidents of abuse were never discussed and were sometimes denied, I saw Sharon experience the sadness she felt when she was little; wanting reassurance, information and acknowledgement of her experience, all which she never received. We spoke at length of how she wanted attention and a sense of belonging and how the absence of this has encouraged her investment in these areas with her son Levi;

*'he's clever but he's got no common sense because he hasn't learnt things for himself; I've either shown him or done it for him; just because.....I think that's what a parent should do, should be'*

I asked Sharon if she was the type of parent that she needed or wanted and she answered that she both needed and wanted this from her parents, instead she spoke of a family in conflict where things were *'never discussed'* and only brought up to prove a point against another. I felt as though Sharon's home environment was unpredictable and un-nurtured and I was moved by her plight for contact and love;

*'Like when she was pissed of with ya, or in a bad mood, or....you'd done something wrong. Instead of like telling you off and then, getting over it and being fine, she'd like be in a mood with ya and it felt like forever, and you just wanted her to say 'right this is what you've done, bla bla bla' and that's is, and be done. But it dint, she'd carry it on, she'd be like....atmosphere and pissed of with ya; and really as a kid, I can remember like wanting her to go 'tut, come here' and do ya know when ya get upset when you've been told off as a kid and you're crying, and then just.....and I suppose even as an adult as well, when you're upset and you want someone to go 'come here' and put their arm around ya; I can remember wanting that all the time and that turned into a pattern of bad behaviour for me.....trying to get.....you know, seeing how far you could go; what does it take cos.....and really wanting her just to go tut, like 'forget it now, come here' like as if ya like sort of almost getting upset and crying, for the sympathy vote yourself.....so OK, that's enough...but she dint. She was like 'oh for fuck sake get out me sight'. Just like, you know, get more annoyed with ya.....so I don't know whether she just was either pissed off, cos of what was going on, with my Dad, or pissed off at that situation or she just seemed to just have no, emotions....do ya know.....'*



On more than this instance, Sharon spoke about the relationship she longed for with her Mum, that was absent due her Mum's adaptation to her own situation. I feel the need to state that I work with women survivors of domestic abuse on a daily basis and I would never condemn a woman for the survival strategies she develops, but the power of Sharon's sadness was overwhelming and I felt that sadness and in me, it started anger; anger for little Sharon.

*' and thinking fucking, don't you care.....about us.....and feeling like rejected and like left out, as if we're just....as if we're just there and we just go along with what ever she does...without any....oh well actually you've had like..... yeah I can remember then cos I was obviously about 11/12ish then....these feelings went from being about 11 to about 15....and I used to, I can, and I did think...well what about us, what about me, what about my feelings...and I just thought she was selfish, cos it was like, kind of like, it was about her needs, then....and not about us like....we were just there.'*

There was never an opportunity to make sense of what was happening for Sharon, she was an invisible factor in her Dad's behaviours and choices that were blanketed by alcohol and there was no sense of support from her Mum; leaving Sharon feeling lonely, isolated and abandoned by those who were meant to be;

*'....your teachers, your protector, your, you know, comforter....all the things that I, I feel that I probably still want today, would love today from my parents.....never gona happen, I know that but.....'*

Sharon spoke of her experience of feeling safe, one period of time when her Dad had left and they were going through their divorce, a time when *'it was like us against him. And them times, I remember my Mam, me, Steven, Helen, all being together against him'*. This experience was short lived, inconsistent and dependant on a new relationship, as when her Mum had her first boyfriend Sharon described how he took up her Mum's time and attention;

*'....when we really needed it, and wanted it, and it was like the only time we got it and we loved it.....I loved it.'*

Sharon didn't speak of times when her older siblings would protect her or make situations better, more to the point that things would *'go on as normal'*, but I sensed an underlying security that existed by their presence and when Mandy had her;

*'.....first opportunity (...) to leave Hull she did and she never came back. I kind of like...again, like abandonment, like...feel like again, what about us....'*

Sharon was lonely at home, Sharon didn't experience one positive relationship with her care-givers and the older siblings she had eventually left; Sharon also remembers being restricted and abandoned by professionals too.

*'.....and I know the doctors must have noticed, I mean she had 6 kids for god's sake, there was always going to be a mid-wife or a health visitor, or someone involved that will have asked questions.....'*

*'.....the police didn't give a shit in them days, he used to get arrested and they'd take him away until he'd sobered up and then he'd come back the next day, it was like, it was like, he was never arrested for....an offence or whatever, it was just like 'oh.....put him in the cell until he sobers up' kind of...taking him away. And then he was allowed to come back home and do it the next weekend again and.....erm.....obviously doctors never did anything, they could have....I think, I think about how that situation was, that family life was then, compared to now, today, you know kids, erm....like going to school like, you know, knackered, crying and upset, my Mam going to the doctors with fucking black eyes and the neighbours hearing it; people would intervene now-a-days, where as before it was almost as if it was just accepted so I think even if she did tell anyone, I don't think anything would have happened....I don't think anyone would have done anything about it because it was almost as if, what could they do?'*

As human beings we are social creatures and yearn for contact, acceptance and belonging; Sharon found this in her friends as she started to grow older and I feel that growing up in an abusive, lonely, emotionally sparse environment meant that she didn't always do this in the safest of ways which I will discuss more under the next theme of Resentment and Anger as they are very much linked; Sharon's feelings of resentment and anger are the consequences of feeling lonely and abandoned by her care-takers.

### Resentment and Anger

This theme is closely linked to all the themes discussed so far, these are the feelings Sharon expressed throughout the interview when discussing the absence of her parents, the behaviour and denial from her Dad, the abandonment from her Mum and Sister and the fear and despise of men under the influence of alcohol; for all the needs that were not met, Sharon tried to accomplish in her teens and still battles with some in adulthood. Sharon speaks of resentment implicitly and explicitly; the picture begins to develop as she speaks about the secrecy of the abuse, neighbours not doing anything to help, her Mum's and her own needs not being identified by professionals and then I asked her how she felt then, towards her Mum, for not leaving;

*'I used to resent, I used to resent her for like, I suppose for letting that go on for all those years and for us to see that and I got.....I can remember being mad at her as well and feeling like 'do*

*ya like it?’ And that sounds; I don’t like hearing myself say that but I kind of used to think that ‘oh do you like, like, like being the victim and all the bad stuff happens but then, like as if you kind of like feel sorry for yourse....do you know like feeling sorry for yourself’ and....I do kind of like still feel a little bit like that about my Mam today because she’s the sort of person that she does have quite a lot of self pity; an d that sounds really horrible and I don’t mean it in a horrible way, but that’s how I think she.....kind of like gets attention....from.....being the victim.....does that make sense?’*

I felt a strong sense of conflict at this point; I could hear Sharon using both child and adult resources to make sense of this situation. It was as though I was hearing the child feel anger for the lack of protection that was available, knowing that there were other families that did not co-exist with abuse and the resentment

When I listen to Sharon say the words quoted, I feel a great sense of confusion; I feel as though Sharon as a little girl was aware of the lack of protection she had available and was angry and resentful to her Mum, who was also a victim, for not being available to offer information nor support and feel that she resents her Mum for having needs of her own and prioritising them over Sharon’s. Sharon has the awareness to know that, at times, her Mum gets her needs met by playing victim and having all the ‘*bad stuff*’ happen, so how could Sharon, as a child, possibly demand that her own needs are met when it is never acknowledged that she was ever affected; the anger builds as the abuse is denied, kept secret and the impact over-looked. I saw Sharon switch from the childhood feelings into adult processing as she discussed her Mum being ‘*effectively stuck*’ in the abusive relationship;

*‘.....But on the other side of it, like how could she leave? She.....he was the bread-winner, she dint have a job, she had 5 kids, she was, she was like effectively stuck, there was no immed.....there was, there want like the help for her to say like, you know, just go with 5 kids, go to a refuge, and like I said, she dint have the strength herself to do that so; I know there was two sides of it but I just remember feeling.....like resentment to wards her.’*

When I listen back to this quote, in context of theory, I feel really sad, as though Sharon’s cognitive thinking comes to her rescue, to sooth her little child that was ‘*invisible*’ and ‘*rejected*’ and although I agree with the information Sharon is able to offer herself in Adult, I know that as a little girl, she didn’t have the resources internally or externally. I also feel an element of admiration for Sharon as it is her Adult cognitive thinking and ability to self sooth, that has led to many good things in her adult life.

The resentment and anger she felt when she was younger, paired with the loneliness and abandonment meant that Sharon sought to get her needs met elsewhere and as she did not have

the importance of safety modelled to her by care takers, she often participated in risky behaviour. Moreover, from anger developed rebellion as she made the decision that in order to survive;

*‘Just take after yourself and make your own decisions.....and....yeah.....do what I wana do and not anyone.....yeah.....look after yourself.....just look after myself.’*

Sharon told me how she feels that she became independent and distanced herself from her parents, looking to other relationships to fill the void;

*‘...what I needed.....you know part of being something, being wanted and being cared about...’*

Furthermore, Sharon described how this led to her, at the age of 15 years, getting on a train by herself to visit a boy who didn't know she was coming, she didn't know where he lived; only that he went to Lincoln College. As she spoke about this I was shocked and so was Sharon at the risk she opened herself up to and she described this time as;

*‘.....like risky and independent fuck you behaviour, just do.....well I'm gona do it; but I dint think it was risky at the time.....I just did it.....cos.....I don't know, weird, I just did what I wanted to do.....(...)...a bit like a big fuck you.’*

## **Discussion**

Taking into consideration the literature review for this study, I feel the interview and analysis of the transcript took me on a journey above and beyond my expectations. The literature discussed in the introduction set the scene with reference to possible implications of experiencing DA between parents yet the sheer depth, richness and clarity of Sharon's personal and moving account was something I had not experienced in my preparation for the study; this surely uncovers an un-met need in the area of DA, for the services that support survivors. There is the possibility however that this need is met in the form of memoirs or auto biography format. The research I was able to find was, in particular the study by Allen and Allen (2000), without doubt informative and yet lacked connection to the experience, to the fear and to the trauma that often persists. Nevertheless, the available literature did provide material useful in the hypothesis of this phenomenological study to which Sharon's experience upheld.

As I proposed, Sharon experienced a strained relationship with both parents, neither of which were available to support her through the recurrent traumas. The themes uncovered in the transcript are a direct result of the relationship with her parents, confirming the earlier statement that relationships are the fundamental governing of scrip development. I'd like to make reference to the literature using the themes I have stated:

## Alcohol and Fear

From this theme I experienced a great deal of fear and anger and though I sense that much of this may have been Sharon's, my anger and fear was for the little girl who lived with constantly shifting boundaries, one who sat and waited for her nice Dad to appear, one who was in preparation for a fight as she inevitably grew older and one who lived in fear; one who was Sharon. The implications for Sharon as she grew older were that she projects her Dad when he was drunk, onto all drunken men. As she spoke about this she expressed how her whole attitude can change and she too can become confrontational and aggressive to ensure that they knew they were *'not fucking doing that to me'*. This lends hand to Pfefferbaum and Allen's (1998) theory that she may have internalised the violence or parent and more so to Rupper and Ziff's (1994) suggestion that she employs a game behaviour of persecutor to protect her Child ego state from being exposed to the potential threat which she as a child, was exposed to on a weekly basis. It could be argued that Sharon's development of her protective behaviours were initially employed out of necessity as she clearly stated that her experience showed her, as she grew older, she would be *'game for a fight'* without choice; this would be supporting of TA theory regarding script development.

Sharon was aware, on reflection, that all drunken men did not pose a *'real threat'* but also that the compulsivity to take care of her self was much stronger at the time. This compulsive and protective behaviour is even employed with her partner when drunk, although he has never shown that he could be aggressive or violent when under the influence of alcohol. As Sharon shared this with me, she felt guilty for her behaviour, as though she wasn't being able to allow her boyfriend to have a good time, because she would become all *'arsey'* and in a sense hostile in preparation; it was as though when speaking, the guilt over-rid the knowledge of the impact her drunken Dad had on her and she expressed how she was finding it difficult to explain herself. I told Sharon how I understood what she was saying to me with regards to the dynamics of her Dad and her boyfriend Matt, and also mentioned about protection and changes in behaviour; I didn't offer this to elicit or encourage change, nor did I take this any further once initially stated, but the counter-transferential pull I was feeling was to *'rescue'* Sharon out of her guilt and shame; since this was not a piece of therapy and I am her friend, I made the choice to do so. It is not surprising that Sharon does not like to be around drunken men as this is associated to such painful memories, not only of what she witnessed but of being *'invisible'* and forgotten as it was whilst her Dad was drunk, that he would fight on top of her, harm her siblings in the cross-fire and make inappropriate advances to Sharon. Being *'invisible'* were Sharon's words and from the first time she said it and throughout the interview my sadness grew, at times my skin would hurt; for around 12 years alcohol was the void between herself and her Dad, regardless of how much she yearned for it not to be.

Whilst speaking of alcohol and the fear of her father in relation, Sharon identifies her earliest memory of the violence; at 5 years old; also whilst Sharon spoke about her relationship with her peers, she also noted that she herself would become involved in violence at times. I find this an

interesting concept; does witnessing violence lead to violent behaviour? Moffitt (1983) would suggest that the early onset of violence has a greater prognosis for this outcome though Miller (1980) (as cited in Allen & Allen, 2000) proposed that if the onset on an individual's violence was in adolescents, this is likely to be developmental which seems the case for Sharon; I am not discounting that her experience of DV may have had its influencing factors at the time. As the times when Sharon speaks of having a '*normal Dad*' are when he is not under the influence of alcohol it seems to be the centre of the themes to follow.

### Loneliness and Abandonment

This theme ran throughout the interview as Sharon felt abandoned by so many people and the secrecy that surrounds DA meant that she had no-one to turn to. Although Sharon does connect with, as did I, and describe the sadness, she used adult reasoning throughout as in the here-and-now she seemed to feel guilt by her words. As she described the failure by services such as the police, medical practitioners and even teachers, she used the context of how DA was regarded so differently in the 80s than it is today. When she described how she felt '*abandonment*' when her sister Mandy left, she rationalised this saying that she was older and times were difficult for her then, so she had no choice. Whilst all this is very true, Sharon as a child or young person did not have this information as a resource and I felt really sad that she felt wrong for saying how she felt at the time. I did share with Sharon how I felt about this and as I did, I saw a shift as though Sharon felt accepted for the feelings that she had, that they were finally, on some level acknowledged; something I'm almost sure she had never been receipt of before. As a child, Sharon shared how there would be no discussion of what was happening in the house and if ever her Dad's actions were raised, they were as quickly denied. As a child with access endless fantasy, Sharon certainly did not have adult reasoning of her own and non that was offered by the adults she knew, as I write this I can not help but imagine how she would make sense of it all then.

Sharon felt alone from an emotionally absent mother and a father that was abusive, her sister moved out and one even left the city and no other adults were noticing or willing to do anything about it. Due to the hostile and unpredictable home-life, it is common for a child's social life to also be affected. Above the social skills which they develop, which I will discuss in the next theme, during the interview Sharon also said that she could never have friends round to the house as a weekend was the only time friends could stay over and her Dad was at his most unpredictable and violent. I thought when she said this and as I read it back, that this must have impacted Sharon's self esteem; she had the emotional void with both parents and wasn't able to have friends over to embrace her existence, her family, her home. I remember having friends to stay over and my Mum would make a fuss for us all and my body would almost burst with excitement and pride. I felt angry, I still feel angry; Sharon was robbed of so many childhood experiences and not just that, they were replaced with trauma, abandonment and loneliness. The first time Sharon described a glimmer of hope, '*.....us against him*', was when her Dad left the

home; yet it rapidly disappeared when Mum had a new relationship and Sharon was once again abandoned. The impact of the two themes discussed so far are seen in the next theme, when Sharon has become a little older and even more independent.

### Resentment and Anger

Sharon at times spoke with venom about both her parents, in disgust, anger and at times hate towards her Dad for his ignorance and violence, and anger towards Mum for missing Sharon on such a grand scale. Sharon conveyed a definitive idea of what parenting is about during the interview, stating all and more of the concepts that Allen and Allen (2000) propose a family to offer a child and she also said that all of this, was missing from her childhood experience of it. Sharon said that she accepts that she will never have this from either of her parents but the poignant thing for me was when she said that she would still want it, at 33 years old. Sharon initially spoke explicitly of being angry towards her Mum when she explained how '*mad*' she was for staying with her Dad and for herself and her siblings have to live through and see it all and on one level, Sharon thought that her Mum must like being the victim and having '*bad stuff*' happen to her. Sharon was quick to use her adult reasoning and feel guilty about thinking and feeling this but after being given permission to think this way, at a time when she didn't have all the information she does now, she shared how she still feels this way about her Mum, at times, today. In their article *The Mind, Body and Soul of Violence*, Ruppert and Ziff (1994) suggest that if someone has been a victim of or witness to violence; in order for them to develop a sense of integrity and personal security, they must find a way for the trauma to make cognitive sense. So what does this mean for Sharon? I have already proposed the notion, as suggested by Ruppert and Ziff (1994), that Sharon's game behaviour of persecutor towards drunken men is to protect her child from being exposed to violence. If Sharon made sense of her Mum's situation and her remaining there for so long, to be about choice and enjoyment, it would make sense that Sharon's game behaviour is to show that she would not welcome nor enjoy violence because perhaps if she didn't act this way, people may presume she did enjoy or welcome it, as to Sharon as a child, that was the reason it happened, wasn't it?

Her loneliness and abandonment was soon to be surrounded in anger and blame towards her Mum as she was oblivious to the silent turmoil Sharon was experiencing. At the reality of her Dad leaving, being safe and no longer constrained, she was shown what life could be like and she said '*I loved it*', yet as soon as her Mum felt that she herself had recovered from living with DA she got a new partner and Sharon lost what she had for that short time. Sharon's feelings were not taken into consideration, it seemed as though the concept that the abuse may have impacted Sharon and she is struggling, was never thought of. The result of this was as Allen and Allen (2000) suggested, Sharon sought her un-met needs in her peers and acknowledged that this was not always a positive experience nor did she always make the best choices. Sharon made choices that could have potentially put her at risk and she amazed herself as she told me how, that she was so oblivious to the dangers. Allen and Allen (2000) also argued that without

appropriate guidance and modelling, young people will be left with unsuccessful problem solving strategies which I feel could have been a contributing factor towards Sharon's choices as she was growing up. Migdow (1994) wrote how a child wants to see their parent's face light in the delight of the miracle of them, Sharon didn't get this and took it very personally, she said that she felt she was on her own, she had to look after herself as no-one else would do it, no-one would tell her that she couldn't or shouldn't and she then took it to some extremes. Lederer (1996) described a concept called 'tough kid', one that insists they can do things on their own and this is a consequence of lacking a positive internalised mother. Lederer (1996) argues that the 'tough kid' takes executive, creating a dependant child to protect the vulnerable child from those who pose the greatest threat of abandonment. The 'tough kid' will remain in conflict with the parent to ensure an outlet for their rage and to protect from their own loss and sadness (Lederer, 1996). Kirkman (1989) offers an interesting view of the 'tough kid' when he speaks of revenge and how this is a way of keeping hold of an object (mum) whilst being able to get back at it at the same time. It makes absolute sense that Sharon should protect herself from her vulnerabilities after so many years of them being reinforced but it is painful to think of a little girl that must go through so much effort to do so and ultimately, sabotaging what she wants more than anything in the world;

*'you know part of being something, being wanted and being cared about...'*

The purpose of this study was to understand what it was like to live with DA as a child and I think Sharon did an amazing job at assisting with this process. There were times that my body ached with pain and sadness and this was mirrored in Sharon's eyes and tone. It highlights that much of the literature I have read, thought listing some of the effects of living with DA, I feel as all fall short of the experience. This is a small scale study that I would be interested in repeating, if not to reinforce Sharon's experience but to be involved in such a moving and intimate piece of work where I have the opportunity to take so much time with everything Sharon said and didn't say. The study didn't set out to prove anything and this is one aspect I loved about this study, it was free and open for Sharon to express herself as she wished and interpret my input in the same manner. It could be argued that Sharon's experiences is not a typical experience but more isolated and applicable only to herself though my experience of working with child and adult survivors of DA assures me this is not the case. I've wondered how my relationship with Sharon effected the study, and in particular the interview. I feel certain that much of my responses were those I would give to any client I work with though it felt different, Sharon was not coming to me for help in fact she was offering me help with something very personal to her. It is an honouring position to be in when someone trusts me with such truth and openness and though we agreed that the content of the interview would never be used in any other context, it was still information I had learnt, about my friend. Some of Sharon's feelings and experiences were harrowing for me to hear and I was aware that she was going through this process for me. At the end of the interview Sharon said that she has never spoke like that or about her experience, with



anyone one before and although she said that it was great to have it all acknowledged and hear that she was OK to feel the way she did; I on the other hand wanted to make sure she felt safe throughout and in writing, I wanted to make sure that I treat her experience with integrity; Sharon's involvement as co-researcher was crucial for this to be achieved. One particular area I struggled with was that I already knew some of the information Sharon shared in our interview and I was aware that she was not in receipt of my original, authentic response and thought all my responses were authentic, I wonder if more fruitful results might have been obtained.

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Appendix 1

Manchester Institute for Psychotherapy

**Research Project Proposal Form**

**Name:** Alex Carling.

**Research Topic/Focus:** To gain an understanding and explore the experience of becoming an oldest child in an abusive household.

**Intended Methodology:** Qualitative, phenomenological research on an unstructured interview of between 1 and 2 hours with a co-researcher.

**How will you prepare your participant and minimise any risk of harm to your participant?**

*(Consider your duty of care, informed consent, confidentiality and debriefing procedures plus issues around maintaining appropriate research boundaries particularly).*

- Agreement to conduct the co-research with friend (participant) in May 2010, providing time for myself and participant to prepare and the participant to withdraw.
- During the time between agreement to participate and the interview date, I have monitored co-researcher's emotional well-being and checked out that they feel they wish to proceed.
- I have been working in the area of domestic abuse for 7 years and therefore have a good understanding of the dynamics and sensitivity which offers the co-researcher greater safety and comfort.
- I have been friends with the co-researcher for 10 years and a sound and stable relationship is present which we both feel adds further safety
- Arranged for colleague to be available for 2 therapy sessions following the interview if co-researcher required some emotional support.
- We discussed confidentiality and were in agreement that details could be discussed with my training group, Bob Cooke and Linda Finley to enable me to seek support in the process of the research project.
- If the research is to be published, this will be done with the consent of the co-researcher.
- We will undertake a debrief at the end of the interview to promote safety; areas to be discussed will be subsequent therapy regarding any issue that may have arose, to ensure co-researcher is accepting of the content and the level of disclosure. If the co-researcher were to be unhappy with areas of the interview, it will be discussed that these areas will be

eliminate and if necessary, the interview may be re-conducted or the co-researcher may abstain from participation.

- Agreed boundaries: we agreed that this was research and not therapy and should the co-researcher require any additional support, she will partake in 2 sessions with a colleague of mine and seek further support if necessary.

**I have read the ‘Manchester Institute Guideline for Research in Psychotherapy’ and I agree to abide by them.**

**Signed:**

**Date:**

**Approval given by:**

**Date:**

Appendix 2

Manchester Institute for Psychotherapy

**Written Agreement for Research Project**

**Name of Researcher:** Alex Carling  
**Name of Participant/Co-researcher:** Sharon Louise Carr

**Research Topic/Focus:** To gain an understanding and explore the experience of living with and surviving domestic abuse.

**Intended Methodology:** Qualitative, phenomenological research on an unstructured interview of between 1 and 2 hours with a co-researcher.

**We are both in agreement of the following:**

- The study is confidential and the only persons, at this stage, will have access to details of the study, are Alex Carling, Sharon Carr, Bob Cooke, Linda Finley and other trainees.
- If the study is published Alex Carling will gain further consent and make any requested changes to personal details.
- A break during the interview on request is OK.
- At any point of the study, from now until its submission, Sharon Carr has the right to withdraw fully or partial information and all data thus far, will be destroyed.
- The recorded interview will be destroyed following study submission and marking.
- Sharon has the right to access the study at any time.
- The study may elicit painful memories and feelings that may persist after the interview, should this happen, there has been a therapy session agreed for Sharon Carr should she choose to have it.

**Signed:**.....

**Date:**.....

**Signed:**.....

**Date:**.....

## Appendix 3

The aim of the research project is to produce an experiential write up of someone's experience and there were a few areas I had thought of and chose your experience at home, living with domestic violence because it's the area I have been working in for the past 7 years so I felt like I would be able to contribute a little bit more with the knowledge base I have due to my experience. I hope that we will be able to speak about your experience, the impact of the abuse on your home life and social life and look at your internal processes too, how you thought about things and how it shaped your thoughts about yourself and others that were involved. As you talk, if you see me writing, it will be notes to remind me of where I want to go back to because I don't want to interrupt you and your flow, but so that I still manage to get the bits that I think are important to the project. Once it's all done, erm, I'll do a debrief at the end. If at any point you're thinking that you want to take five minutes that's perfectly fine and we'll stop.

OK

Also, if there's a place that you don't want to go then please say that you don't want to talk about it and at the end when I give you the debrief, I'll be asking you if you're happy with the content of what's on it so it is absolutely your choice of what you disclose and also bare in mind that with regards to confidentiality, the only people that may listen to it will be myself, my group members, my tutor and Linda Finley who will be marking the projects and the reason why they'll be involved is to aid me with the process of completing project; if at any point you would like to pull out, that's your call and it is fine to say so. If my project is offered to be published then that decision will require your consent.

Alright

So if you want to set the background for me, maybe talk of your first memories of the abusive situation at home, who was born at that time and what happened.....

I think the earliest memory was when I was about 5 – ish, because I can remember where we lived, erm, and that Steven was a toddler, so I think Helen, Helen was really young, sort of like only....your talking like my Mum was pregnant with her or..... Erm, it was around that time that Helen was like, my Mum was pregnant or Helen was just born. Erm, and th first memory of my Dad just being, just a drunken twat, was actually at my Grandma; because she came round for something and we were sat at the table.....and.....I can't remember what it was she came for, erm....I think it might have been she was like asking to take the dog for a walk, I don't know if she dint have her own dog at the time or whatever but it was something like that and I just remember my Dad being really just real mad and just like proper shouting, like.....irrational shouting over something small and I can remember him being drunk and I know, I know that I

can remember that because it was always like, when I'd grown up and I got older and the things that I'd associate with when he was, in that state, although it was really early memories, I know he was like that and he was pissed up.

Yeah

So that's like thee....one of the earlier ones, and around about the same time, I can remember my Mam, coming into my room to kiss me goodnight, and then him, fighting her on top of me...

Wow

And then he hit her with this, it was like a... it was like a little rocking chair that I had at the bottom of my bed with like my teddies on, and he hit her with that and like broke it, I mean it was like real big and heavy or owt, it was just like a little....it was made for humans to sit on, it was like for teddies but..... and that was late so I'm imagining that'll have been like a weekend night cos he only ever really used to drink on a weekend night anyway. I think they'd been out together, erm..... But I think Angela lived with us at the time then, so....there was everybody, there was everybody at home then.

With the time with the rocking chair, was Helen born too then?

Yeah, I think so because I was in a bedroom with, erm....I was sharing a.....I can't remember cos I was so young, I can't remember if Helen was there or not. Erm, but I was in a bedroom with Mandy and our Angela had moved back home, because she was pregnant, my Mam must have been pregnant because Angela was pregnant with Terri and that's why she'd come back home whilst they were waiting for somewhere to live; so Angela, and Eric, her partner, were in one room, that's why I was in a bedroom with Mandy and then I think Steven was in a cot in my Mam's bedroom. So quite a house full of people including adults when that was going on but, Eric was pretty much like, I think he was either scared of my Dad and was a bit of a wanker himself so...he just like....no-one really, I think there was onetime that he tried to intervene and got put in his place, not physically but I think he was just a bit scared. Cos he was a coward as well and I think another man, I don't think he'd fight another man.

Yeah

So they were like the earliest memories and like I say, they were about the same time, when we lived down Jason Garth when I was about 5.

And were things like that consistently associated with your Dad being out and having a drink?

Yeah, he was never like that when he'd not had a drink, he was, erm.....quiet – ish I suppose, and then .... There are some parts of him that were real like, normal. And do like normal, you know, like normal stuff but, I always used to think of him as I got older, and I could associate him with things, he's like Jeckle and Hide sort of character, like two people and everyone used to always, people that, knew him, or that knew the family or whatever, they would be like 2oh yeah Jonny Carr, he's sound, he'll do owt for, you know just like when people talk of someone but they don't really know them, all they know of them is, oh they're a good for a laugh bloke that they see n pub.

Yeah

So everyone use to think that he was just spot on but then there was obviously other people like the neighbours and stuff, who would know, what he was really like but nobody ever said anything. I don't know whether it was cos it was in like the 80's, early 80's, and kind of people just either thought oh well what goes on between, behind closed doors or that's their business, nothing to do with me type thing; but a lot of the neighbours knew. More so for the fact that they saw my Mum with black eyes and god knows what all the time.

You were that young and that second story sounds so vivid....

They all are.

Can you remember where things went after that.....it started and your Mum got hurt and your Dad was shouting and stuff was happening, where did things go after that?

Well, because I was asleep, I was in my bed, they dint stay in the room, they fought, they fought on the bed and then kind of like onto the floor and then, I just, I don't really remember afterwards. I dint know before cos I was like asleep, like woke up and it was there, but then I don't really remember afterwards and I don't know whether that's because there was like adults, like our Angela was 18 then and I don't know, if maybe something was said, out of the bedroom, out of ear shot or whether I couldn't hear, I don't know, I just remember that happening and then, and then that's it, it's like a little snap shot, and there's no before and no after and it's just that. Which sounds odd, do you know what I mean? But there's bits that I can remember like it was yesterday.

It's as though the bits that you remember are the really intense violent bits, whilst it's actually happening. If the physical aspects of it all are really vivid, do you have any vivid feelings that are attached?



Erm, do you know when you were on about smells in there? If...I....it could just be somebody that, if I talk to somebody that I know that's a friend, or a stranger, but if there's a certain smell, a man smell, of like, stale beer, you know, like someone's been out on booze all night, combined with like, this sounds gross, but combined with a bit of a pissy smell, you know, as if someone's pissed up and they've like dribbled on their trousers. There's like this combination of a mucky, a bit of an old man-ish, alchy smell, that I'd smell quite often on various different people and it just reminds me of my Dad.

And where do you go when you smell that?

I just think oh fucking hell, reminds me of my Dad that. Minging, I just think gross. And, some, and sometimes I've smelt it on Matt and although I ant thought 'oh gross' at, like at him, it just reminds me of it and it's just not nice. I doesn't remind me of any particular incidents or something happening, it just reminds me of...him. And I just think urgh. Like just associate it with being, like horrible because that was all the times that he was like that; just manky, beer breath, you know and really drunk.

There's associations that you get because there seem to be clear patterns, your Dad would drink and that's when it would happen and when he wasn't drinking, that's when you said he'd do the 'normal' stuff so it's normal that you'll make links from things like smells. I'm wondering, when you were laid in bed and that fight happened on top of you, or when your Grandma came round and all that was going on, I'm wondering if you can remember, at the time, if you had any vivid feelings then, that you remember thinking, I remember feeling this...

Scared like, like, suppose I could liken it to like anxiety, like an anxious feeling now I'm older because, erm, even in the job that I do, I know I can be feisty myself if drunk, drunk men, I'm like on edge, like I'm, like I'm prepared, like I expect it or...

What is it you expect?

Just people to change like that (click fingers), be agro. Erm..... I just feel ner,I feel, I do feel like a bit nervous and I know I don't always show it but I think I just feel on-guard that, or like ready for something to happen....which, I think in turn sometimes makes stuff happen because I'm acting different do you know what I mean? I'm not relaxed....

Are you thinking that you almost kind of play a role in the change, is that what you mean?

Erm, I suppose so cos I think I'm expecting something to happen and because I'm.....I don't like it. It's different if I 've had a drink as well and it's...but if I'm sober, or if I was in a pub and

I was sober and there as something going on, and do you know when you can just feel that anxiety...do you know what I mean?

Yeah I do...so how do you think it changes your behaviour?

Because I just think I get pissed, I get pissed off when, I'd say when, with Matt, even if he's not, he's not being an arsehole or he's not being a dick, he's just drunk but it's just.....I don't know, erm.....yeah probably I act arsey, I acted pissed off because I don't like it.

And by acting like that, what kind of message do you think you are wanting to give to the person that you're dealing with? And why I ask you that is because it comes from of, you started talking of the expectation of a drunken man and expecting them to change, like your Dad, and that although you'll be handling a drunken man in one state, that could easily change. It has historical connections for you hasn't it and I'm thinking, in the current day, the here-and-now, when you make the link and you change your behaviour, what message are you giving the other, the drunken man, for example a warning.....

Yeah I suppose like, being, I've always said I'd never, never ever let what my Mam, what my Dad did to my Mam, I'd never let someone do that to me and I just...I think (almost laugh), I'd rather kill someone than be subjected to that; all the time. And I do think I try and give out, and it's not always a conscious thing, but, give out the message like, you're not fucking doing that to me even if it's not a real threat but it's a possibility that I think it could be, like.....I don't know, it's really hard to explain...but.....

What I understand from it is like, when you're in that situation, you put your guard up, which you say comes across as arsey, and you mentioned like when you're at work, and I don't think you said contribute to it, but that you do this to protect yourself and to warn them, that you're not one of those women that you can do that to....

It's something that I don't like because it.....(clears throat) Matt comes in really happy drunk, he's not horrible drunk, and when he comes in happy drunk..... I think it could be something like little that I'll be just like 'oh you're fucking pissed and, and your getting on my nerves...you're getting.....you're in a bit of a.....a state where he's behaviour and actions have changed because he's drunk.....so I get like 'oh just give over and go to bed' or I just think go to bed or shut up or whatever.....

You don't have much tolerance for it?

No. And that....I don't, I don't even like that cos it spoils it, cos it's like well...why can't he go out and have a drink, and me be sober at home, and him come home and everything be fine and,

but I'm.....and I get nervous about how drunk he's going to be when he comes in, if he's going to be like, really like, do you know like fall over drunk, you know the drunk where people can't remember anything.

Was you're Dad drunk like that?

(Quick response) Oh yeah, he never did nowt 'I dint do that black eye', he was that sort of...or whether, whether he really thought that or....whether he was just deny he must have known he did it, but whether he could remember doing it.

If you get scared of that, that people get into that state.....what did it mean for you then when that used to happen; when you knew that he had done it and he used to say 'no I haven't' or 'I cant remember'. What did that mean to you?

He never actually, he never actually said that to me, because I was too I was...young and I'd never, I wunt.....I can remember never.....it was like everyone acted in the house, as if it ant happened

Right...

But it had...there was things like smashed up and holes in the walls and..... my Mam was normally with a black eye or fat lip. And everyone knew what had gone on but no-body....it was like it wasn't....it dint carry on the next day

Yeah

It was like a big kick off...and then that was it, everyone carried on; like the normal day to day stuff, and that was it, until like next time again, so it was NEVER (big pause) it was never discussed or...I know from...like being an adult now and talking to my Mam about it, she tells me my Dad was like 'oh I ant done that' or like 'what you done? I never did that...no I never' or when she said to him....something had happened and she said 'you did it', it was always like 'no I never' and then.....that was it. I don't ever remember any like, discussions, so whether that went on between them, where we couldn't see or hear...I don't know but I don't ever remember.....

That being said?

(Nodded)

So what was it like living in the aftermath, where nothing was said and nothing was ever able to be resolved? And I guess you were never able to voice how you felt about stuff?

No. I don't remember ever talking about it until I got....a bit....until I probably got to the age where my Mam and Dad got divorced and he used to come round and kick off, that was probably the only time that I spoke about it and I felt like I could because my Mam was like...like I suppose like detached from it and it was like two sides then, because he want living with us, and it was like us and my Mam, and it was like all spoken about then, like the reasons why they were divorced and....because I was like 11 then, still too young (slight laugh) to be talking the way that I remember.....happen but, but never, but never still really fully, spoke about it until we were all like adults, you know, sort of like, I suppose recent years, over the past 10 years, of speaking like to Mandy and Angela and my Mam about it; and that's only when other things have like come out, but we dint know cos it dint, it dint get spoke about, it was like a taboo it just...and I think people, like I said earlier, I think people just accepted it, that....either, I don't know what they thought... 'well, it's his missus' or 'she probably deserved it' or you know, the other things that you hear people...and because it was quite....I know it want quite the year dot but it was quite a long time ago int it and I think people just accepted domestic violence then; the police did!

Do you think you did? As part of your family do you think it was normal or were you always aware that not all families are like that?

(Big pause) Erm.....I don't think I was, when I was really young I don't, I don't think I was aware that not all families were like that cos I can remember the next door neighbours were like it as well

Wow

Erm....and I knew Eric was like it with Angela and she was only like 18 then, so when I was real young, I dint, I don't think I....I don't think I thought about it that....that deeply in that way, it was just what it was. Erm.....but yeah, as I got older sort of like towards like, I'd say about 8, 9, 10ish, when I was going to like friend's houses and stuff, I saw how other people were and I'm hearing people in the street talking about my Dad kicking off, like the older kids, and being embarrassed and knowing that it's not normal.

What did it feel like to realise?

Ebarrassing. And.....just shit, like why can't ya just be like a nice Dad (sarcastic laugh, one breath).

Yeah.....

Although it want direct.....directly towards us, just used to think.....the times when he was sober and he was nice....and then he'd turn like proper evil, nasty. But yeah, I suppose embarrassing was one of them cos I just used to feel like, we were like a freaky family and everyone was talking about us.

Do you feel like it restricted you in any way, either when you realised or the unpredictability of the violence and things like that.....do you think you never did things that you would have like to have done because of that?

Having friends round, I dint really invite my friends round to sleep over cos it was only, the time when you only could was on a weekend, so, and it was always like, he'd start on a Friday afternoon.....and finish on a Sunday afternoon, it was like it all weekend so yeah I don't ever, I dint ever like have any friends sleeping over. And I don't know if that was something, I don't know if that was conscious but I know, I just know I never had any friends, I never had any friends over.....

Did Steven or Mandy or.....

No. Not until, the only we time we had like friends staying over night was just when we lived with me Mam. (25.24)

When your Dad had left?

Yeah, erm.....I don't ever remember any of Mandy's friends staying over either and she's like 8 years older so....she would have been a lot older even when we were little; like teenager. I don't even know if me Mam maybe, protected, well I wouldn't say protected but, stopped it from getting out, more, to the outside, well I didn't want more people to know or whether it was a case of I don't want anyone else's kids here, while that's happening; but, no-one, no-one ever stayed over, or really came round.

They say that domestic violence, until it's out, and generally until the woman's got support, that it is like a family secret; did you feel that it was a bit like that?

Erm.....yeah, from the point of view that my Mam never told anybody, even when.....and I know that doctors and people must have noticed, I mean she had bloody 6 kids for god's sake, there was always going to be a mid-wife or a health visitor, or someone involved that will have asked questions....erm.....and I know now that she did, she told me that she used to say that she'd bumped it on something or she did this that or the other, she never told anybody.

Obviously I never told anyone cos I was embarrassed, even when people would say things about it in the street when they'd heard something or the racket coming from the house, I like, denied it....I think my Grandma was in denial about it cos she knew, cos he'd had a pop at her a couple of times.

Erm.....and the couple of people that did know...I...I know, never said anything because it was as if.....it was like, a bit like taboo, well.....what it's got to do with anyone else kind of like behaviour, no one really....brought it up....or they'd be looking and pretending my Mum hasn't got a big swollen eye, like crazy.....like today you just wouldn't do that! You'd be like 'fucking hell, what happened to ya...' So yeah, I suppose, so yeah it was a secret.

Do you ever wish that someone had have said something, do you think it would have made a difference?

I don't think it'd, I don't think it would've made a difference because there wasn't.....the police didn't give a shit in them days, he used to get arrested and they'd take him away until he'd sobered up and then he'd come back the next day, it was like, it was like, he was never arrested for....an offence or whatever, it was just like 'oh.....put him in the cell until he sobers up' kind of...taking him away. And then he was allowed to come back home and do it the next weekend again and.....erm.....obviously doctors never did anything, they could have....I think, I think about how that situation was, that family life was then, compared to now, today, you know kids, erm....like going to school like, you know, knackered, crying and upset, my Mam going to the doctors with fucking black eyes and the neighbours hearing it; people would intervene now-a-days, where as before it was almost as if it was just accepted so I think even if she did tell anyone, I don't think anything would have happened....I don't think anyone would have done anything about it because it was almost as if, what could they do? And there wasn't the things in place to do anything I suppose.....especially without my Mam having the strength herself, to say 'I don't want this, I aren't having this'.

Yeah.....Did you have any feeling about your Mum for not leaving and saying that she didn't want to be part of it anymore? Or any thoughts?

I used to resent, I used to resent her for like, I suppose for letting that go on for all those years and for us to see that and I got....I can remember being mad at her as well and feeling like 'do ya like it?' And that sounds; I don't like hearing myself say that but I kind of used to think that 'oh do you like, like, like being the victim and all the bad stuff happens but then, like as if you kind of like feel sorry for yourself....do you know like feeling sorry for yourself' and.....I do kind of like still feel a little bit like that about my Mam today because she's the sort of person that she does have quite a lot of self pity; and that sounds really horrible and I don't mean it in a horrible way, but that's how I think she.....kind of like gets attention....from.....being the victim....does that make sense?

Yeah, almost like, I mean....to make it sound a little nicer I suppose, but some people get their needs met by needing help or needing things done for them or people feeling sorry for them or their situation.

(spoke over me) But I think she felt sorry for herself.

Yeah

But....

And I think, that as you speak in adult head, knowing what you know about domestic violence, and the job that you're in, you know that it isn't as black and white as that....

But I know how I can remember feeling...like.....

As a little one?

Yeah. But then I know the other side of it, like how could she leave? She....he was the bread winner, she dint have a job, she had 5 kids, she was, she was like effectively stuck, there was no immed....there was, there want like the help for her to say like, you know just go, with 5 kids, go to a refuge, and like I said, she dint have the strength herself to do that so; I know there was two sides of it but remember feeling, like resentment towards her.

Do you think it affected your relationship?

Erm.....she was like emotionless...

What did that mean for you?

Like when she was pissed of with ya, or in a bad mood, or....you'd done something wrong. Instead of like telling you off and then, getting over it and being fine, she'd like be in a mood with ya and it felt like forever, and you just wanted her to say 'right this is what you've done, bla bla bla' and that's is, and be done. But it dint, she'd carry it on, she'd be like....atmosphere and pissed of with ya; and really as a kid, I can remember like wanting her to go 'tut, come here' and do ya know when ya get upset when you've been told off as a kid and you're crying, and then just.....and I suppose even as an adult as well, when you're upset and you want someone to go 'come here' and put their arm around ya; I can remember wanting that all the time and that turned into a pattern of bad behaviour for me.....trying to get.....you know, seeing how far you could go; what does it take cos.....and really wanting her just to go tut, like 'forget it now, come

here' like as if ya like sort of almost getting upset and crying, for the sympathy vote yourself.....so OK, that's enough...but she dint. She was like 'oh for fuck sake get out me sight'. Just like, you know, get more annoyed with ya.....so I don't know whether she just was either pissed off, cos of what was going on, with my Dad, or pissed off at that situation or she just seemed to just have no, emotions....do ya know.....

It kind of runs in line with, the way that the violence and the abuse never go spoken about, and if there was a ruckus between you and your Mum, or your Mum and Steven or Mandy, that doesn't get spoken about.

Hmm (agree)

So it seems to be like you were living in a house where nothing ever got resolved....

Well it dint, it'd just like kind of I suppose...disappear into fucking...(laugh) wherever, until the next time but then stuff always got brought up, again, do you know like....

So they would get brought up but....

But only in argument, not as a resolving, like an argument type thing, or is something happened, it's another situation but then things would like, get brought up again 'oh well you did this and you did that'. Like that sort of thing, not a conversation, not a resolving....'oh well this happened yesterday'.

So they weren't really processed at the time....

(same time) Just things weren't resolved.

.....but held (yeah), for another time, to prove somebody's point (yeah) about....

But that was when we were kids, we were just little, so.....

Yeah. And that's where we learn our lessons isn't it. And it's almost like, when there are children that are supported to deal with their feelings and nurtured in how to deal with conflict, you were kind of inhibited by those people that modelled behaviour to ya; so your Mum who you described as emotionless, and your Dad who would never take responsibility for stuff because nothing was ever spoken about.....and when things happened, and don't get spoken about at the time, but get stored, and thrown at you another time, it's almost like; you were all in conflict and you all had your own sides, your own back to watch (hmm).....does that sound how it was or.....



Its weird because, it don't remember.....because of the age gaps, in, between like, it always felt like it was me and Steven (yeah), when we were little, he's the person that I can remember, being there the most.....cos it was that, when I was like 5, our Mandy was like early teens, so she wouldn't have been in the house a lot of the time, obviously on the nights she was. Erm.....and then Helen was just a tiny baby, so, it was almost as if, there was a house full of people....but.....most of the memories, I can just, I remember Steven being there. But I don't really know where anyone else was. (hmm) If that makes sense, and it wasn't like, I mean it sound like we were a big family (yeah definitely) but I don't remember.....people being there.

Yeah..... So with your Mum, you didn't feel that she was there emotionally, that you resented her a little bit (hmm) and you feel that your behaviour got difficult.....as a way to get....something from your Mum, from your Mum really (yeah). I mean we can call it attention but then people want attention for a reason (yeah) and it sounds like it was because you didn't feel like you were getting anything from her...

It felt like I got closer to her when they were going through their divorce, cos he wasn't there, and it was, like...in the very early days, literally as they were just going through their break-up, and he moved out, because I can remember the day that he went...but as they were leaving, as they were breaking up, he kept coming back but not.....again when he was drunk but it felt safer then because it was like it was us, against him. And them times, I remember my Mam, me, Steven, Helen, all being like together (right) against him, so then when she got with, like....she had a boyfriend first called Dave, and I felt like really jealous, and I felt like...I resent.....I resented her having any....I know.....I know now I didn't resent her having happiness, but I resented somebody else coming along and kind of like.....it was as if we'd just got her, like the person that was always inside her, she was happier and it was relaxed and it was nice but it was real short lived and then she got a boyfriends and I, that's when I, like I know that's when I started playing up.

When we're younger, we think differently to how we do as adults and we make decisions based on our experiences about ourselves and others.....and I can imagine you sat there thinking about how it seems you only have your Mum when there isn't a man around.....is that how it was?

Yeah, and its not as if.....there was always another bloke, and another bloke, and another bloke cos it was always my Dad (yeah)...but yeah.....and it totally was cos this Dave guy, I mean I was only 11ish but.....and.....he was a nice guy, I don't have anything against him personally but I dint like him cos he was just somebody else that, he'd come in and was like taking, I suppose my Mam's time and attention....when we really needed it, and wanted it (yeah) and it was like the only time got it and we loved it, I loved it.

At a time like this, when you're going through all the emotions related to your Dad, your Mum isn't really there and you feel as though you have to go to extreme behaviours to get some kind of reaction.....then your Dad leaves and your family feels as though it comes together and is more cohesive (and it was just more happy and relaxed) yeah....but then it gets taken away from you when Mum has another interest?

Yeah. But I know....now that I'm an adult, that she needed, she needed that as well, she needed.....someone to treat her nice and you know like, a new relationship and you know she would have been feeling on top of the world at that time then....but I resent her for the fact that she dint realise that we needed her, after everything that we'd been through....and I don't think...I don't think she thought about that; she just thought that it was all directed at her and it was just her that had been through this horrible time and that it ant, it ant, it dint affect us and we were alright cos he was gone; so....she dint have to worry about that.

Almost like that was the cure.....your Dad leaving?

Yeah....it's alright now, they're fine, and she just like carried on.

Do you think this now or do you remember thinking this when....

Nah, I just remember being, nah, I think this now but just remember being, mad and really pissed off with her at the time and thinking fucking, don't you care.....about us.....and feeling like rejected and like left out, as if we're just....as if we're just there and we just go along with what ever she does...without any....oh well actually you've had like..... yeah I can remember then cos I was obviously about 11/12ish then....these feelings went from being about 11 to about 15....and I used to, I can, and I did think...well what about us, what about me, what about my feelings...and I just thought she was selfish, cos it was like, kin of like, it was about her needs, then....and not about us like....we were just there.

Did your Dad leave when you were 11?

Yeah....probably just before I was 11 cos I'd not start, I want at high school, but it was coming up to the end of primary, just before high school, I know I'd not started there but it was just around that time, so....between like 10 and 11.

How old were you when Mandy left?

She was 17....so 9?

So you had 9, 10, 11....a couple of years where Mandy was there on a night time.

Yeah. It was real, it was really close, from, Mandy leaving.....to my Mam and Dad splitting up....because there want, there want that much of a time, that I remember, or felt like, I was alone, alone without anyone else in the house; as like the oldest, with him there.

So before she left, Stephen was your significant sibling that was there, what was your relationship like with him? Did you ever speak about it together and what were your roles with each other? I'm thinking care taker as he was younger?

I kind of see it as, as the most normal part of the whole family, cos I feel like..... we were, we were close; we used to like play out together or, we used to mess about, having a laugh, play fight, used to have him fucking dancing and learning dance routines and try and get him to do stuff that he really didn't want to do but he'd go along with it but then also we used to scrap, we'd still argue. Cos we were just, cos we were closest, erm..... I kinda see it as normal and was really protective over him cos he's my little brother, erm.....yeah.....nothing real significant, just, it was just nice and normal. What I'd consider now, as an adult, what you'd expect a brother and sister to be like. No weird issues or....kinda feel like I did bully him a bit but I think that's normal as well (laughs) as from like an older....you know getting him to do stuff. Just like daft stuff, not anything horrible or...

Like a winding up?

Yeah and vise versa, he used to wind me up as well...but yeah, nothing....n, nothing real significant...erm.....just.....yeah, just nice. I don't know what else to say about...that, I suppose that's why we are like we are now (yeah), like out of everybody, we're like the closest still.

What about Mandy? Obviously there's a big age gap, you said she wasn't there often but she was there on a night, so was she often there when stuff used to happen?

Yeah and he'd start.....the reason why she moved away from home was to move away from him cos he started with her. It's like he never hit, he never hit.....he never hit us as kids; I can remember him hitting me one and that was.....I.....he want drunk.....I'd done something to Sephen, and he was mad at me and he slapped me..and I remem.....he hit me quite hard cos I like, I ind of like doubled over in the sense that it was a wack around the head and I remember like....but he, he never used to hit us, like perse, like abusively...

Like in the same sense as he did your Mum?

Yeah but it was like, it was as you were getting older you were game for a fucking fight, or whatever, or do you know the back chat, if you answered back...whereas when we were kids we were scared so we dint, but as Mandy got older, I can remember the night; that actually, I think she left. She could...she was working then, she used to work at a shop down wifryergate, and it must have been a Friday because Fridays were always the same; he was a labourer and he used to finish work about 2, with his wages and go to pub (yeah) so he he'd probably be in pub for around 2, come home at tea time, we'd all be in the kitchen, Mam was doing tea and we were all sat at the table waiting for tea and he come in, and you could just tell...straight away, soon as he come in, he was in one of them fucking moods, that it was gona start. An we were all sat, we were all sat at the table, I can remember where everybody was sat, and I can remember just, it was quite, and there was an atmosphere, cos you just knew it was gona kick off. And, Mandy must have previously, in that week, like I said about things not getting spoken about at the time, but getting like...stored to...fucking cause an argument with (yeah), she must have said that she wanted to move out, or she was gona move out, because, while we were sat at the table there want a conversation like 'oh Dad I'm thinking of moving out' or anything, it was just like...he started basic...he started on her, like 'oh'...just agro and said 'so when you fucking moving out then?' just, having a go...erm...and it just, it kicked off, I remember he...he banged his knife and fork that hard on his plate that it split in half, food went all over and, he threw his...he threw his cup of tea, and it went all over Stephen. It was like hot cup of tea and he was like sat...at the end of the table. And then as that...as that happened and he threw his tea, Mandy got up and went up stairs, like, probably to get her stuff or what ever but she got up and ran up stairs and I all I hear is bum bum bum bum bum (made noise on the table) up the stairs, her and him chasing her...all the banging up stairs....then coming down again, screaming, shouting I an.....get off me and then he had her at the bottom....she'd managed to get down, to like the back door, to go....we were....like....frozen in the kitchen and Stephen was crying cos he'd got tea all over him, erm, and he got...he had Mandy in like a bear hug, on the stairs...he had his arms and his legs wrapped round her and was squeezing her like....she was trying to get out the house and he wunt let her go...and she managed to get away from him, and she ran into the street and one of the neighbours came out, a bloke, from across the road, cos she was holding onto his fence cos my dad was trying to get her off the fence, to get her back in, and, him in the street....he was like....come out, apparently; this is what our Mandy's told me now cos we were still in the house but...that he'd come out and said 'oh what's going on' and my Dad had basically said 'oh you can fuck off back in'; and he did, dint help or anything. This is what I'm saying about nobody helping or anything, even the people that knew. And that's, that's the last memory I've got of Mandy being...at, at...living with us, cos I think she was gone after that; after that night.

Blimey

So that's how she left, and that's while she was, you can understand her, what with her now, I would never fucking go back; there was no way she was coming back to that house. And the first

opportunity she got to leave Hull she did and she never came back. I kind of like...again, like abandonment, like...feel like again, what about us but I know she was only a kid herself, you know, she was old enough to leave home but she'd been through all that .

But as a child, you wont have been able to put it into the same context as you just did and know that she was just a child herself, how did it feel?

Just sad, just she'd left us, like with him...I can...I can remember thinking 'oh, I'm gona be next'. I knew it want imminent, I knew it want then, cos he'd, he never hit us but I knew as I got older, that I'd be next.

That must have been frightening....

I was scared in a way but (big pause)....I don't know at that time...I probably just, probably just scared but just at that time cos as I got older I thought 'oh I'll just fucking kill ya, I'll knife ya if you do that to me, cos I think I, I don't know, I just think I got stronger and thought you aren't doing that to me, or my Mam anymore. But that was only when I got in my teens.

That's twice that you've mentioned the extremes that you feel you could go.

I've dreamed about it, I've dreamed that I've stabbed him. That's only, not years ago, I'm only talking probably in the past, I do have dreams and I do dream about him often and sometimes their just weird and they're like an argument or and I dreamed about him the other day and it was normal, and I was sat, I was sat in his flat and Matt was there, and I, and I was sat there but everyone else was acting normal and being nice to him. And then in my mind I was thinking oh why don't you just...keep the peace, just talk to him and you know, don't be over the top but just be pleasant; in this dream and it was really weird and then I woke up and that was only last week but I do often dream but I have had dreams where I've stabbed him and he's chasing me and he got me like down this alley way, and I, I stabbed him, and I woke up, and I don't know if I killed him or whatever but....I have dreamed about like...you know, not, nice dreams or not, there were never any nice dreams, there's always some sort of weirdness or, like conflict. But I did used to think that...if you start with me..I used to think it with Trevor; that's why I was so argo with Trevor, when he used to come in pissed cos I just used to think 'go on, fucking start then' because....I kinda learnt I think to that age, when I was a teenager, not to be scared anymore...kinda almost like bring it on if you wana bring it on.

I got a feeling then, and I might be wrong but almost like when you were on about before when you said your behaviour changes and the role that you play....I feel like you're maybe inviting somebody to step up to your expectations so you can finish the story off (yeah) so you can....be the person....

To end...yea, to end it and just say you're not, you're not doing that anymore; you're not doing that to me (quietly said) yeah, it's weird. But Trevor never, haha Trevor never...Trevor never went that extra mi..there was no violence, it was the emotional side, he used to say some really horrible things and I jut used to think 'go on', I did!! Kind of like yea, inviting him, I used to goad him

Because what did you want to happen?

Prob...I think I wanted him to hit me, I think I wanted him to do something so that I could do something back.

And do you think that's because of your response to individual situations or an accumulation of seeing a man be more powerful and take advantage over women?

Probably both. Erm. You see my Dad, I was, I was more scare of my Dad...because....(big pause).....I dint think he'd hit me but there was other things that have gone on; he used to scare me. And...I think because I knew he could do it, he had the potential, that I was more scared of him that it was kinda out of control whereas with Trevor I think I knew his boundaries so I felt more...I was more empowered. If that makes sense...I could, I could stand up to him more, because I was older...(yeah I can understand age being a big factor), I think I knew deep down that Trevor would never, for al the gob he had on him, I don't, I don't think I ever thought or felt scared that he could ever hit me.

But you knew your Dad could be physically violent (yeah) and when you talk about other stuff too, that scares ya....

Yeah, that was like after they'd...after they'd...got divorced, we used to go to my dad's on a weekend and that went on for a few years...erm, up until I was like sorta like 14, 15...erm.....he see, he seemed as if he'd kinda simmered cos he had no-one to argue with, you know, he dint live with anybody..erm, and we only saw him on a weekend, and when we went to stay, he dint go out, obviously cos Steven and Helen were younger.....so....that was like I suppose the most normal we'd ever seen my Dad, as well but....I'd had a bit of a ding dong at home and at the age I was I was like 'oh I'm gona go and live with my...even despite everything every thing that'd gone on, I went and stayed at my Dad's, flat....and I don't know if it's kind of, you forget a bit in a way. You know when you know that kids play people off against each other, and this is the time you're talking when my Mam was with Trevor, and my Dad had seemed to simmer a bit because, he'd maybe go out on the Friday night and we'd go round on the Saturday, and he'd just stay in watching tele and he wasn't drinking, he would never, he never drunk at home, he was always a pub drinker, so that was probably the normalist time we had with my Dad as well; just

cos it was weekend, it was our time off school, he want drinking, and it was normal so I kinda like.....the dynamics change a little bit for a little while as well and I was resenting my Mam; at that time.....

For....

Being with Trevor and she was just happy for us to piss off at weekend to my Dad's.

Was she leaving you again?

Yeah...erm...but I stayed at my Dad's for a bit, I think it was probably only a week before I was back at my Mum's again but it was a week day, and I don't know if for some reason he had been at the pub, and when I got in, when I got in it was about 7 o'clock..... and there was only me and him in the flat...and he was in the bathroom. As you walk in the flat, as you walked in the front door, it was an up stairs flat as you walked in, front door, it was a long corridor at the end of the corridor was the bedroom, on the right was the bathroom and then at the end of the corridor but on the left was the door into the living room, so as you walked in the front door, I could hear that he was in the bathroom.....and I was was like 'oh hiya' and as soon as I heard his voice, I knew he was pissed and I can remember thinking, and my heart sinking and thinking 'oh no' cos I was like on my own, and he was drunk and it was just, you just dint know what to expect or....and he was like....I could hear water and that and he was getting washed or what ever and I went and sat in the living room....so I don't know, like 5 minutes or what ever and he came and sat in the living room, and he only had a towel on. And he was, and cos he was just that drunken, weird, unpredictable dameana...that he always had when he was pissed....and he just, he came in the living room and I just sat there and I dint even wana look at him cos I was thinking, what's he gona say or do or....have, what have I done wrong....and he sat down on the settee and started talking to me....and when I turned to look at him to talk back, he was sat there with his legs wide open.....with a hard-on, just like, fucking...just absolutely scared the shit out of me, like....I dint know where to look, what to say and he was still talking to me normal like it was a normal conversation sat like that....with a towel around his waster sat like that, basically he was fucking naked, totally naked.....erm...and aroused....and he started asking me if I was a virgin. And I was like (wow)...I wasn't at the time, but there was not time I was gona tell him that in that state cos I just dint know what....I just said.... uh, it's this bit that's a bit hazey cos I cant even really remember what I said back to him cos I think I was just thinking in my head 'oh my god, oh my god' (panic?) Yeah, wow what the fuck, what's he doing, what's he gona do? Am like...I need to get out, and I cant even remember how, how I left...or, I know I don't stay, I know I dint stay that night.....I left. But again, it's like, you know before, I remember walking in...cos as soon as I walked in, the trigger was I know he was pissed cos I could tell by his voice. And then afterwards I can't remember where I went or what I did afterwards, it's just that..... And like, and telling me, he also told me that...oh we;;...kinda like honest in a way, like....oh

well, I've slept with a 15 year old before.....and.....I dint ask.....and questions, I dint wana carry on the conversation or....but I remember the things he said to me....and how fucking scared I felt.

Did you think that he was implying that he'd done that before, so it would be ok now?

Yeah. Yeah. So, hence what happened with Helen, as soon as she told me, I knew....that he'd tried. Fact. And...yeah, he's weird.

So, if you were kind of like, to take yourself back to your experience of your Dad, obviously there was physical and emotional abuse, and to a point that you feel that had things have been different, that there was possibility of sexual abuse too.

That's what scares me, the stuff that I don't remember, I dint know. Do you know when I was young young there was another night when I was, before that, before that coming out of the bathroom incident. I was drunk and it was a weekend and erm....but again, Steven and Helen weren't there or...I don't know if I....cos I'd got drunk, or I was drinking I'd like thought 'oh I can't go home my Mum'll go mad, I'll go to my Dad's'. And...I was, I was really drunk I was proper sick and everything and.....I don't remember him being really drunk this night...and I know there was somebody else there, like one of his mates was as at the flat, cos It was late...I dint know if he had someone staying there.....but when I got there and I feel asleep on the living room floor and he was like 'oh you need to go to bed'...and I can remember him taking me into the bedroom, and like putting me into bed, like what any normal parent would do, getting me undressed but then I cant remember anything and I woke up the next morning in just my underwear and cos I know what I know, he was like.....it scares me cos I was totally dunk and out of it and I dont....and there's doubt in my mind..what did he do something to me or....cos he obviously had potential. And I can't remember and that's the stuff...that I suppose freaks me out more the stuff that...I maybe don't remember, or even when we were little...I don't remember..... But yeah.....how he fucking dunt remember of it but.....you know, all these years...all these years that have passed, now non of us will speak to him.

What kind of thoughts do you think you developed because of your experiences.....as we grow up and out experiences influence what we think of ourselves, other people and the world..... You spoke about your Mum being emotionally unavailable, that was only there when there wasn't a man to take her attention, and he emotion. And your Dad that was abusive and the catalyst that lead to you feeling abandoned when your sister left.....your experience continued to be abusive and your whole being at points was in danger; you didn't feel safe with him. What kind of decisions did you think you came out of that situation forming? Was the world a safe place for you? Quite often if it isn't.....we form decisions about the world being a scary place or I can't trust anyone.....



I just felt, I just felt on my own I suppose, I had my own back, and I had to do what ever I wanted to do that.....like there want anyone there to look after me and I kinda like had to look after myself....and I think....my friends.....I got from my friends at the time, what I needed....you know part of being something, being wanted and being cared about as opposed to kind of like distanced myself from my Mam and my Dad then.... cos my Mama was doing her own thing and I dint, I stopped going round to my Dad's kinda like the same age cos obviously I wanted to be round my mates and..... I think, I just...I just.... I did, I kinda became more independent, I do think now....I think back like....as if you did that at that age, on your own, like I got a train to like Lincoln at 15 to go see this lad, that I dint even know where he lived, I jut knew he went to Lincoln university. I just got n the train to Lincoln one day and....He dint even know I was going, it was only be coincidence, it wasn't uni I was college, and I went, and I found my way to the college and just by coincidence he came out the door and I was there, I think back now like.....I got a train, to a city that....I'd never travelled to on my own before....and I had to change train at Doncaster n the way there as well, dint know this person.....I was like kind of like I suppose like risky and independent fuck you behaviour, just do...well I'm gona do it; but I dint think it was risky at the time....I just did it...cos.....I don't know, weird, I just did what I wanted to do.

Yeah, almost like the boundaries.....

There was no one to tell me I cant...really....no-one gave a shit....not dint give a shit, but....there was no.....there wasn't any discipline. As bad as this sounds, the disciplinarian in our family was my Dad and he'd gone and I was at an age where I said I don't wana go to your house anymore, cos I dint wana put myself there. My Mam dint, she never had it in her to tell us to I kinda did what I liked.....kinda like just thought yeah well....I'm doing what I wana do....a bit like a big fuck you.

Yeah..... The decisions you made definitely presented themselves as that when you were older....and I see you young, thinking how no-one has your back, the only time I have my Mum is when she hasn't got a man..... If you were to finish the sentence.....The only way to survive is.....

Just look after yourself and make your own decisions....and.....yeah....do what I wana do and not what anyone.....yeah....look after yourself.....just to lok after myself.

So would that to be not to trust anyone else, or that you can't rely on anyone else?

No, cos I did still trust people, then.....Erm, I do still trust people now, I think it's my subconscious that dunt lacks the trust, you know, the drunken man thing...I don't trust that

because....I just feel like even if you know a person, you don't know what they're gonna be when they're drunk...and they can be like a totally different person and that's what I don't trust, not the people, does that make sense? Cos I think I still...I was...after all that growing up I still really naive and still had a lot of trust in people that maybe I shouldn't have ....but I think I was looking for.....I was always looking for something, to a certain degree, to be loved, to be liked.....and was quite promiscuous in my early teens. But I think that was wan...yeah, wanting to be liked, wanting people to.....I dint see it as that at the time, I just did it...I dint think about it at the time. It was like a buzz, getting attention..... But it's bad, cos I was like proper young.

And again putting yourself at risk then....

Yeah, but necessarily thinking I was putting myself at risk....at the time.

You described a split.....that you can still trust a person until they are in drink.

Hmmm...I suppose that's...that's only, only way I can see it if I look at my Dad. All the, all the weird horrible things that he did.....violence, strange....just fucking...just all the ni...all the stuff that want nice was always when he was in drink...and then he was....I never, I never saw it when he was sober.

So you managed to have a relationship with him until he'd had a drink...so I suppose that goes with you describing Jeckle and Hide....that he is one person and in drink, is someone else.

Yeah, he was rea....he was proper like that...like you couldn't imagine how.....yeah really nasty.....he always seemed really jokey, laughing...either quite because he was tired and he'd come in from work, just watching tele...erm....and just have a laugh and joke with him, you know like play wrestling and having a laugh and h was always the one that was the joker when things were normal. And my mam'd be like 'oh stop prating about' but he was always the one that we could have a laugh with.....erm.....but yeah then it was like.....when he was on one, it was like we weren't even there, he dint care...he had one agenda...its like he alw....he always came in as if he was routing for an argument or...just trying to find something, you know, to fucking have a go about....like he's already made his mind up on the way home like 'right....I'm pissed off about something'. He'd kind of like start before we got in, when my Mam and Dad used to go out together. They'd come in arguing.....as they walked through the door they were already at it....something had happened at the pub, or on the way home or what eer....

Did this shape how you wanted to be in adulthood? Apart from not letting anyone do that to you. Did you have any ideas about your family, being a mother or how you'd be in relationships?

Yeah...yeah there were with Levi because....I'm really...I know I'm protective over him and I try and do...probably too much for him...to the point that he's a 14 year old.....and he's clever but he's got no common sense because he hasn't learnt things for himself; I've either shown him or done it for him; just because....I think that's what a parent should do, should be.

Is that the parent you needed or you wanted?

Yeah both...and I maybe would have hated it if I had that....but in my mind, cos I never had it, that is what I would have wanted. That's what your parents should be, you know.....your teacher, your protector, your, you know comforter....all the things that I, I feel that I probably still want today, would love today from my parents...never gona happen, I know that but.....

Have your parents ever achieved that parental status, the one that you work for with Levi, have they ever achieved that for you?

No. So.....(sigh) with the arguments as well, if I'm pissed off with him, even when he was little, I always tried to explain to him why I'm angry with him or...why I'm telling him off....and then.....get over it, forget about it...cos I still hate that feeling today, when someone's annoyed with ya, I'd rather them just say and have it done. And I really.....I'd, I'd hate myself if I ever made Levi feel like that....that sadness of....I remember yeah, feeling really sad and feeling like 'why are you so mad with me?' and just can I have a hug kind of thing.....I never said it but I would never want him to feel like that so I've always made sure that I never carry things on. If I'm annoyed with him for something, I'll tell him and then take a deep breath and then talk normal to him about something else and.....(big pause) and then yeah....not wanting him to live around...abusive....cos that was one of the contributing factors that lead to me leaving Gary, the way he behaved, and Levi was quite young then but he was getting to the age where.....he, he, was old enough to know stuff, he was 4.....just turned 4, he was 4 in the October and I left Gary in the December and I just remember thinking I aren't.....co it had been going on for 2 years already. So yeah.....a few conscious decisions where I have made where I've thought, no, it's not.....I'm not having that. I want Levi to have nice memories, and when he grows up, think he's got a nice Mum and I've been there for him and done everything that I can for him. I don't want him to feel, I suppose what I feel now. Sadness and resentment, and everything else that I still feel about...more so my Dad now, I kinda understand my Mam, now. I won't say kind of, I do; I know why she....you know did and the way she was, to a certain extent. But the weird feelings I've gone through about my Dad; like, feeling guilty as well for not talking to him and the fact that he's going to be an old man and he ant got, he wont have anybody; I've gone through those feelings, I don't really feel anything now, I don't...the only thing I really feel is like resentment, like why couldn't you just....why did you have to do all that or why couldn't you get help or even, to this day, why cant ya, even though you cant change the past, just acknowledge it and accept that what you did you did do, and it was wrong, and I know

it was your fault cos you had a choice. So I resent him for that but I don't feel like...sad, or angry, not no feelings like that anymore about it, it's passed now. If anything, I don't feel sadness, I'm not sad for him, I just think the situation is sad. He's sad, he's sad, cos he's just gona be, have nobody and I think for anyone, regardless of whether it's.....

Do you mean sad as in looser, that he's sad?

It's the situation that he's got himself now, is sad. I don't feel sad for him but I think it's sad that somebody's gone through their whole life, had 6 children.....(sad state of affairs?) Yeah, you've got...he had the potential to have anything really and he's end up with....and he had a family with children and he....he'll die a lonely old man; I think that's sad. He created that....and the fact that he could have done something change that and all these years it's gone on and he hasn't. And he any got it in him to just acknowledge it. And although it want gona erase anything or change the relationship status that when that happened with Helen, he still denied that anything ever happened and he cant just acknowledge it and say I'm sorry.

So he's in the state of consequence at the moment isn't he?

Hmmm. And this sounds bad as well but the only worry I have now is.....how am I gona feel when he dies? Do I need to do anything now before....that happens and it's too late? Do you know, for my own.....do I wana say anything to him or....I've thought about should I, when he dies will I write a letter....to him or.....do you know.....I don't know whether it's....cos I've never told him, no-body ever has and I think it's sumat that, probably should happen, don't know if it will but should, before it's too late.

When we think about our choices and actions, and we think about what we realistically think the outcomes going to be and what you want to achieve.....do you think you will achieve it? What would you want?

My own closure I think and just....I don't care how he perceives it or what he does with it or....just feel like I need to tell him so then I can go well this is how you've made us all feel, this is what you did, this is what I remember and this is why non of us fucking talk to ya. There you go. And I've and you know as if....all this that I'm talking to you about now..I don't know if he knows, what we feel or think,,,,,does he still really think I don't know why they don't talk to me?

Would you need nothing from him?

Don't want anything from him.

No response? No taking responsibility?

I've thought about this but I know it's never gonna happen because it never has. So why all of a sudden is he gonna do it now?

And I think what you've said is a big part of coming to terms with the situation; some people are just too far gone to change and I'm thinking age, set in their ways.

Yeah, that's why I've come to terms with my Mum like...gone from wishing, oh why cant I have the type of relationship where she goes ph do you wana go shopping on Saturday or do you wana go in town for lunch and...that's just not me Mam, she dunt do that so.....I went through a stage of really wanting that, thinking why cant we have a mother and daughter relationship like that, but we haven't and I know I cant change her....so I've let that be now.