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Mothering in the Context of Intimate Partner Abuse: A Discourse Analysis

by

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Abstract

Intimate partner abuse (IPA) is a devastating experience for many Canadian women who are also mothers. These mothers are often evaluated based on the tenets of intensive mothering (Arendell, 2000; Hays, 1996). This study adopted the theoretical framework and methodology of discourse analysis (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) to explore mothering in the context of IPA. The sample consisted of 19 participants from the Healing Journey research project (Ursel, 2004). Abused mothers consistently drew upon the intensive mother interpretive repertoire to position themselves as good mothers. The protective mother subject position was particularly salient to the mothers identity constructions in this context and worked to maintain their subject positions as good mothers. In contrast, the single mother subject position was constructed as incompatible with being a good mother and used to justify actions taken by the mothers which could be construed as bad mothering. Therapeutic ramifications and recommendations are discussed.

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For many Canadian women, intimate partner abuse (IPA) is a devastating experience. Incidents of spousal violence represent 15% of all police reported violent incidents, in which 83% of the victims are female (Statistics Canada, 2008). Since 1974, nearly 2,600 spousal homicides have been recorded in Canada, of which the majority entailed male perpetrators and female victims (Family Violence in Canada, a Statistical Profile, 2001). In addition, 7% of women who were living in a common-law or marital relationship reported to the 2004 General Social Survey (GSS) that a spousal partner had physically or sexually assaulted them at least once during the previous five years. Unfortunately, many abused women are also mothers. Sauve and Burns (2009) reported that, on a snapshot day in April 2008, nearly half of Canadian shelter residents had children; 69% of the women were mothers, the mother status of the remaining 31% was either noncustodial mothers or unknown. Despite this, research has focused primarily on the impact of IPA on the abused woman or on her children and has neglected the contextual impact of being a mother. This study adopted the theoretical framework and methodology of discourse analysis (DA) to explore mothering in the context of IPA in order to better understand the social context of abused mothers and how they position themselves in relation to cultural discourses of mothering. It involved a secondary analysis of interviews conducted as part of the Healing Journey project (see Appendix A).

Discourses of Motherhood

Cultural discourses of what constitutes a *good* mother inform judgements about the quality of a mother and her mothering and create challenges for all mothers. Arendell (2000) has concluded that the current, prevailing ideology in North America is that of

―intensive mothering" (Hays, 1996, p. 8), which deems mothering to be exclusive, wholly child centered, emotionally involving, and time-consuming. Current cultural ideals and images of mothers and ―good mothering", such as intensive mothering, are born of a particular socio-cultural history, which has shaped their development, but there are multiple ways to define a good mother. Kaplan (1992, p.17) identified three major ―economic/political/technological eruptions" each influencing and associated with a ―master" mother discourse or narrative, the most recent being the postmodern mother, which evolved in the mid- to late-20th century. The postmodern mother is the cornerstone of the nuclear family and responsible for her children's well being, however she must also achieve success in the labour force without sacrificing her identity as a mother. Kaplan notes that the postmodern mother informs our current conception of a ―good mother" and suggests it has become an ideology, divorced from the historical conditions which gave rise to it (See Hays, 1996; Joniken, 2004; Lynch, 2005 for similar historical descriptions of good mother ideals that parallel intensive mothering).

These ideals of the good mother are taken up in various contexts, such as the media, professional conversations about mothers, as well as women's talk about their mothering (Bell, 2004; Stoppard, 2000). For example, to evaluate their mothering experience, avoid being judged inadequate and to preserve their identity as mothers, new mothers draw on such ideals in portraying themselves as the ―supermum, superwife, and supereverything" (Choi et al., 2005, p.177). As intensive mothering demands enormous amounts of time, energy, and resources, and remains the normative standard for evaluating mothers (Medina & Magnuson, 2009), it is especially problematic for disadvantaged mothers (e.g., by social class, ethnicity etc.), and puts them at risk of prejudice and/or being labelled as bad

mothers. Abused women constitute an additional marginal population who, are frequently subject to mother blaming through being classified as deficient or unfit.

The Deficient Mother Perspective: Mother Blaming

Jackson and Mannix (2004) define mother blaming as mothers being ―held responsible for the actions, behaviour, health and wellbeing of their (even adult) children‖ (p.150). This includes blaming them for poverty and single motherhood, thus burdening mothers and ignoring the actions (or lack thereof) of other caregivers. Examples of mother blaming in the context of IPA are pervasive. For example ―failure to protect‖ laws hold mothers responsible for their children‗s exposure to IPA and put them at risk for being labelled unfit parents and having their children removed and placed in foster homes (Ewan, 2007). ―Monster-mothering‖, that is, references to mothers who abuse, neglect or otherwise harm their children, dominates public representations of mothering (e.g. the news coverage of the 1997 starvation death of an infant named Jordan Heikamp in a shelter in Toronto; Robson, 2005), and, in a more covert manner, positive versions of mothering are neglected in Canadian policy, media, and women‗s own accounts of their experiences (Greaves et al., 2004). Even in the context of women‗s shelters, when mothering is discussed, frequently the focus is on the intensive mother ideal, thereby minimizing the challenges abused women face (Krane & Davies, 2007).

At the theoretical level, Walker‗s (1984, 1991, 2009) conceptualization of the impact of IPA on women, i.e., the battered woman syndrome/learned helplessness, which is still used in court cases as a defence for domestic homicide (see Rix, 2001), is consistent with the view that abused women are unable or unwilling to protect their children. A more contemporary version of this conceptualization is the spillover hypothesis, which suggests

that conflict in the marital relationship system negatively influences the parent-child relationship system (Levendosky et al., 2006). The proposed mechanism for this negative influence is through the psychological damage abused women suffer, (e.g., post traumatic stress disorder and or depression), which results in mothers who are less ―available and involved with their children‖ (Levendosky et al., 2006, p. 545). Nevertheless, the research findings related to the link between maternal psychopathology, IPA and parenting have been mixed (Renner, 2009) which suggests that the problem with mother blaming lies in the assumptions made about mothers which are based on biased generalizations.

Analyses of the problem of mother-blaming link it to motherhood ideals and the focus on IPA‗s effect on children with mothers being relegated to the periphery (Lapierre, 2008). Nixon (2002), for example, noted that in their case reports social workers often included statements about abused women‗s inadequacies as mothers, but neglected to mention positive points about the women‗s parenting or the unique challenges they faced. Furthermore, mother-blaming has been identified as a problem when substance using, mentally ill, and abused mothers, i.e., those who do not fit motherhood ideals, are being assessed for their ―fitness to mother‖ (Ladd-Taylor, 2004, p. 7). In addition, Irwin, Thorne, and Varcoe (2002) argued that women internalize images of the ―good‖ and ―bad‖ mother and then compare their actions and experiences to this standard. Thus, abused women may position themselves as bad mothers and attribute blame to themselves when giving accounts of the impact of the abuse on their children. Finally, when researchers and service providers use motherhood ideals as standards to evaluate mothering in the context of IPA, it is virtually assured that abused women will be identified as problem mothers. This in turn reinforces their abuser‗s efforts to damage their self-worth and independence (Radford &

Hester, 2006). Thus, how motherhood ideals get taken up in social discourse may be a problem for abused women in shaping how they evaluate themselves and how others evaluate them.

The Proficient Mothers Alternative

In light of the unique situation abused women face, other researchers have argued against the deficient mother perspective and proposed an alternative perspective, that is, that most abused women are proficient mothers. From this perspective, those adopting the deficient mother perspective overlook the sometimes subtle actions abused mothers take to counter the abuse they and their children experience. Furthermore, the legal system and social welfare policies may actually deter mothers from taking action to protect their children. For example, upon deciding to leave an abusive relationship, many mothers face potential further abuse when fathers have visitation rights, being labelled unfriendly for requesting sole custody or restricted access for the abusive partner, or being charged with child snatching and losing custody for attempting to flee the abusive partner (Jaffe, Lemon, & Poisson, 2003). Consequently, abused women may fear that taking action will only make their situation worse, and thus, inaction may be a way to protect their children.

A growing number of studies support this alternative view. For example, Palker-Corell and Marcus (2004) reported that a helpless/hopeless attribution style was no more common in abused women than in non-abused women. In addition, abused women reported a unique sense of control over their actions, for example, ―If I do not make requests and acquiesce to his demands, he is less likely to hit me" (p. 446). Those who favour the proficient mothers perspective recognize that this may be a survival strategy aimed at protecting both the woman and her children and regaining a sense of control. In addition

Sullivan, Nguyen, Allen, Bybee and Juras (2000, p. 51) reported that both mothers and their children agreed about the mothers being ―emotionally available", and the abuse did not affect the mothers' discipline tactics and their level of parenting stress. Furthermore, where abused mothers abuse their own children, evidence suggests that the mother's history of abuse as a child is the critical determining factor and not the experience of IPA (Coohey, 2004).

A small number of studies have begun to explore women's experiences of mothering in the context of IPA in order to clarify the unique and positive qualities of mothering in this context. In some studies, although abused mothers voiced concern over the negative effects of IPA on their parenting in some areas, they also cited positive effects on parenting effectiveness and attachment (Levendosky et al., 2003); increased empathy, caring, and sensitivity to childrearing practices; and active intervention in protecting their children (Levendosky, Lynch, & Graham-Bermann, 2000). In addition, Irwin, Thorne and Varcoe (2002) reported that although the abuse experience was challenging and central to their participants' identities as mothers, the mothers acted as buffers and sources of strength for their children, and vice versa. Furthermore, some abused mothers reported directly discussing the violence with their children, increasing their protectiveness toward their children, and teaching their children that abuse is not acceptable (DeVoe & Smith, 2002). Despite the extreme challenges they faced, the women remained ―deeply concerned about their children" and committed to breaking the cycle of violence (DeVoe & Smith, 2002, p. 1097). Similarly, Hilton (1992) reported that mothers were very aware of the effect of the abuse on their children, and 55% reported leaving their abusive partners due to the risks such relationships presented for their children. Finally, on a snapshot day in April 2008,

25% of the women residents in a Canadian shelter reported being there to protect their children from witnessing abuse and/or being abused (Sauve & Burns, 2009). Taken together, these studies suggest that many abused women are *good mothers out of necessity*.

Studying Cultural Discourses and Mothering: The Importance of Language

Although studies have called into question the deficient mother perspective, they have not directly explored how cultural discourses contribute to abused mothers' identities and practices. In order to do this, methodologies developed to study language and discourse must be employed. For example, in studying abused women's accounts using feminist theory and cross-case analysis, Eisikovits and Buchbinder (1999) explored the metaphors used by abused women, still living with their abusers, in talking about their lives. Control was a pervasive theme in the women's descriptions of the violent events; metaphors were used to describe the violence as a struggle involving their partners' attempts to control themselves and the women as well as the women's attempts to control the violence by controlling themselves. This analysis of control metaphors enables us to better understand the way women construct their identities and abuse events as well as those of their partners. This in turn has implications for the women's ability to garner support and resources. For example, when she constructs abuse as due to both her own and her partner's struggle for self control, then she implies that she is at least partially responsible, potentially making it difficult to obtain support from others.

Discourse analysis has been used in a few studies of mothers outside of the context of abuse to understand how cultural discourses matter to mothers and how they impact their social lives. For example, Guendouzi (2005) analysed conversations among mothers to study how they constructed their daily mothering activities and domestic responsibilities.

The women drew on motherhood ideals (e.g., the "good mother" and "super mom") to evaluate and explain their mothering identities and activities. Bailey (2000) studied UK women's transitions into motherhood and reported that they did not necessarily experience a conflict between the discourses of work and mothering. In addition, Harp and Bachmann (2008) explored how newspapers make visible and reinforce the distinction between working mothers and stay-at-home mothers by drawing upon the ideals of good mothering in a way that constructs mothers as inadequate in either situation. Finally, Elvin-Nowak and Thomsson (2001) studied the meaning of everyday mothering in Sweden and identified three discursive positions related to gender equality and mothering: (1) children's wellbeing is dependent on their mother's accessibility; (2) women find healthy and positive meaning beyond being a mother and convey that meaning to their children in a positive way; and finally (3) women's work identity is independent of her mother identity and there are challenges in managing both identities. Taken together, these studies demonstrate how cultural discourses about mothering impact mothers' social interactions and societal image.

Discourse analysis has also been utilized in studies of women who have been labelled "bad mothers". For example, Croghan and Miell (1998) analysed the accounts of women who were identified as "problem mothers" by child welfare agencies. These mothers resisted the "bad mother" label by emphasizing their personal responsibility, their personal circumstances, and/or lack of support. They also accepted the "bad mother" label in part by emphasizing its applicability on a short term, or temporary, basis. Using these discursive strategies, the women were able to get help from child welfare agencies and establish the right to have a say in their child's lives. Additionally, Reid and her colleagues (2008) studied the discourses of substance-using mothers who participated in focus groups where

they discussed the actions of mothers and relevant authorities in various scenarios involving the rights of mothers versus those of their children. Four mothering discourses shaped the women's discussion: the bad mother; the good mother; the thwarted mother; and finally, the addicted mother. The mothers used these four discourses strategically to highlight the challenges they face in providing for their children and negotiating system practices and prejudices. Irwin and her colleagues (2005) studied five different positions taken up by mothers who smoke in order to maintain their image as good mothers: they (1) demonstrated knowledge of the health risks for their children; (2) confessed to feelings of shame/guilt; (3) worked to undermine accusations of neglect; (4) argued that smoking enabled them to be better mothers and so it was beneficial for their children; and (5) assumed an anti-smoking stance (especially for their children). Finally, Breheny and Stephens (2009) analyzed how health professionals in New Zealand constructed teenage mothers on welfare, who were seeking medical assistance. The health professionals positioned the mothers as immoral social actors, who were transgressing societal norms related to sexual practices and appropriate family structures. In order to counter such negative positioning, mothers on welfare must work hard to position themselves as good mothers who have rights to the same treatment as other mothers.

Finally, DA has been employed in a few studies of IPA. Evans (2001) concluded that newspaper articles represent IPA in a way that perpetuates harmful myths about IPA. They do so by blaming the victim, emphasizing that it is natural for males to be more aggressive than females, constructing IPA as a private affair, and describing cases of IPA as isolated incidents rather than a normative pattern of interaction. In analysing prosecutors' accounts, Leisenring (2004) noted that in the majority of cases, they failed to take into account the

context of the abusive relationship and judged the legitimacy of an abused woman's victimization based on whether or not she left the abuser or resisted or controlled his abuse in some way, in which case her claim to victim status was deemed illegitimate. Three victim discourses — (1) victims are culpable and can be blamed for the abuse; (2) victimization necessitates harm one cannot control; and (3) a victim is weak and helpless — served as standards that must be met before an abused woman can claim victim status. In their absence, she may be blamed for the abuse. Coates and Wade (2004, 2007) also analysed sexual assault trial judgements and concluded that the judges utilized psychological concepts/constructs to reformulate deliberate acts of violence as non-deliberate and non-violent, which ultimately served to (1) conceal violence, (2) mitigate perpetrators' responsibility, (3) conceal victims' resistance, and (4) blame or pathologize victims. In analysing women's accounts of their abusive relationships, Towns and Adams (2000) identified a perfect-love discourse, which dictates that love is all or nothing and endures hardship for better or for worse, thereby working to discourage women from talking about abuse and encouraging them to stay in the relationship and try to change their partner. Similarly, Power and her colleagues (2006) concluded that abused women justified their continuing investment in an abusive relationship by arguing that a woman is not whole without a man and that jealous reactions are a sign of the abuser's love for them.

The above studies make clear that DA can provide valuable insight into the cultural resources that constrain how abused women and professionals alike account for IPA. Consequently, adopting such an approach in the study of abused mothers is likely to be fruitful. There are however several versions of DA, and in the next section, I outline the version used in this study.

Discourse Analysis

Discourse Analysis (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) provides a framework for studying ―issues of identity, the nature of mind, constructions of self, other and the world and the conceptualization of social action and interaction" (Potter & Wetherell, 1995, p. 81). Language is viewed as performative, that is, we use language to make sense of our lives and to accomplish certain things in our social interactions with others. Nevertheless, DA does not directly concern itself with the underlying mechanisms and cognitive reasoning (thoughts, ideas and emotions) of a person, but rather how these things are ―played out in action" (Potter & Wetherell, 1995, p. 83).

There are three key concepts that are important in the analysis of discourse. First, ―discourse" includes ―all forms of spoken interaction, formal and informal, and written texts of all kinds" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 7). Second, interpretive repertoires (IR's) are defined as ―broadly discernable clusters of terms, descriptions and figures of speech often assembled around metaphors or vivid images" (Potter & Wetherell, 1995, p. 89) which are ―drawn on to characterize and evaluate actions or events" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 138) . They are the building blocks of talk and informed by culture (e.g., the intensive mother IR may drawn upon in part or whole as a mother talks about her relationship with her children). Third, subject positions are the representations that individuals create of themselves and others. Because multiple accounts and subject positions are possible, discourse has a rhetorical or argumentative nature (Potter &Wetherell, 1987) (i.e., in working up one version of events or one subject position, individuals ―counter real or potential alternatives" (Potter & Wetherell, 1995, p.82)).

Discourse Analysis involves analysing both the structure and function of talk. For example, an abused mother may use a disclaimer ‒"I'm not a bad mother but…", which anticipates criticism or judgment and consequently, makes an accusation of bad mothering more difficult. Notably, language use is occasioned in that, for example, an abused mother will interact with a social worker who is evaluating her mothering in ways that maintain her stake in the conversation (Potter & Wetherell, 1995). Stake however, is fluid and can fluctuate even within a given conversation. This fluctuation alerts DA researchers to a change in the action orientation of the discourse. Thus, individuals construct a version of events and take up a particular subject position (the structural characteristics of talk) in ways that depend on the context of a specific conversation (the functional characteristics of talk). In summary, DA has a ‒"triple concern" with action (what language is doing), construction (how language is doing it), and variability (how speakers reposition themselves and construct alternative versions for varied purposes). The subject matter, content, and social purpose of the discourse in the given context are all used to inform this focus of the analysis (Edwards & Potter, 1992).

Research Questions

Discourse analysis was used to study abused women's constructions of themselves as mothers. The research questions included: To what discourses of mothering do abused women orient in constructing accounts of their lives? How do cultural discourses of mothering operate to restrict or enable how abused women make sense of their mothering? What do they work up as normal and legitimate?

Method

Sample

Of the 30 participants in the Healing Journey research project (Ursel, 2004; see Appendix A for a description) who lived in Alberta and participated in the open-ended interviews, 19 qualified for this study based on their being mothers with children under the age of 18, with at least one child who lives with them.

The demographic data reported here to describe the sample was collected during Waves one, two and three to ensure they reflect the women's situation at the time of the open-ended interview. The mothers' ages averaged of 35.37 years ($SD = 5.36$; Min = 25, Max = 46). Ethnic classifications were self-identified with the majority of the women, 12, identifying as Aboriginal (63.2%) as well as one Caucasian (5.3%), one East Indian (5.3%), one Portuguese (5.3%), two Canadian (10.3%), one Chilean (5.3%) and one American (5.3%). The minimum level of education was completion of Grade seven, while the maximum was completion of a Bachelor of Arts (six women had completed post-secondary, one had technical training, four reported some post secondary study, three had completed Grade 12 and five had less than a Grade 12 education). The women represented a broad range of geographic locations in Alberta (four from Peace River, seven from Edmonton, five from Calgary, and three from Lethbridge). The mothers' mean annual income was $28,793.33 ($SD = $25, 810.81$; Min = $600, Max = $100,000). Four of the women reported no paid employment, 13 reported full-time and two reported part-time employment. The majority of the women reported no longer being in a relationship with their most recent abusive partner (nine ex-common-law, one ex-boyfriend, two separated, three divorced), one reported being friends, one a common-law relationship, and two married. The majority (17 women) self-identified as heterosexual, with one woman identifying as bisexual and one as two-spirited. On average, the women had 2.95 children

(*SD* = 1.31, Min = 1, Max = 6) with the mean age being 9.51 years (*SD* = 5.72, Min = 2 months, Max = 24). Eight mothers had at least some children living elsewhere (three with grandparents, one with a friend, one with the ex-partner's sister, one with the father, one adopted and one apprehended by child welfare) and 11 mothers had all of their children living at home. Consistent with the inclusion criteria of this study, all 19 mothers had at least one child living with them at the time of the qualitative interview.

Procedure

Ethics approval was obtained from the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board. As my project entailed secondary analysis of data, the primary risk for participants was breach of anonymity. This was managed by use of participant code numbers and ensuring that excerpts did not include details of possible use in identifying the participant. Furthermore, the sample was described in terms of summary statistics. Potential benefits for the participants include an understanding of mothering in the context of intimate partner abuse that highlights the challenges they face while avoiding mother blaming.

A semi-structured interview guide was used to provide participants with the freedom to describe their healing journey in their own terms (see Appendix B). The interviews, which lasted between one and two hours, were recorded and transcribed verbatim by a paid research assistant. I then re-transcribed those portions of the interview relevant to my analysis, according to the conventions set out by Potter and Wetherell (1987; see Appendix C). All identifying information (e.g., names of individuals, services, and place names) was stripped from the transcripts to maximize the protection of the women's identities.

Analysis

Discourse analysis involves four steps (Potter & Wetherell, 1987): Reading, Coding, Analysis, and Writing. I read the verbatim transcripts carefully to get a general sense of the interviews. Next, I selected for in depth analysis any sections in which the participants discussed topics relevant to their identities as mothers (e.g., discussing mothering, stories about their children, etc.). Third, I analyzed the text in terms of both the constructive and functional dimensions of the discourse. Finally, in writing this thesis, the analysis was clarified.

At each of the four steps, I aimed to ensure the quality, integrity and rigour of the project. During the initial reading step, I focussed on getting a sense of what was most prominent for the participants, and therefore did not attend to the research literature or my research questions. Additionally, the demographic information was not reviewed/analyzed until after the analysis was complete. Throughout the reading, coding and analysis steps, I attempted to maintain a reflexive stance by being aware of the topics raised in the interviews (both survey and open-ended), my assumptions about good mothering and reactions to the data, the sensitive nature of the mothering topic in the context of IPA, and the familiarity shared by the interviewer and participants. I took notes as I carried out my analysis and these were reviewed periodically to assess the rigour of the analysis. Furthermore, I transcribed the interview material with sufficient detail to allow analysis of the interactional nature of the interviews. During the analysis and write up stages, in particular, I paid attention to any deviant cases that challenged my developing analysis; attempted to provide excerpts that would enable the reader to assess the quality and accuracy of the analysis; tried to avoid the common problems identified in the literature (i.e., Antaki et al., 2003); and took into account the interactional and contextual nature of

the interviews, especially in relation to the women's past interactions within institutions and how these may have constrained the mother's talk (Potter & Hepburn, 2005). However, in response to criticisms of interviews as data collection tools in DA research (Potter & Hepburn, 2005), I took the position that, when the context of the interview is adequately taken into account, interviews are simply another context in which discursive interactions unfold.

Analysis

The analysis resulted in two points of interest which relate to the women's orientation towards the intensive mother interpretive repertoire (IR) as a standard for good mothering. First, all 19 of the mothers consistently positioned themselves as good mothers by constructing their mothering identity and activities in line with intensive mothering (Arendell, 2000; Hays, 1996). However, they did so in unique ways that make sense within the context of IPA. The specific subject position that enabled these mothers to position themselves as good mothers despite their being abused was that of the protective mother. Second, the mothers frequently engaged in discursively navigating the bad mother subject position during the interview. In several cases, the single mother subject position was utilized to legitimate and explain inconsistencies with the intensive mother ideal. Each of these points will be discussed in turn below and examples of each will be provided.

Aligning with the Intensive Good Mother

As mentioned above, all 19 mothers consistently aligned themselves with the intensive mother IR, i.e., they positioned themselves and legitimated parenting practices in ways consistent with intensive mothering as it has been previously described (Arendell, 2000; Hays, 1996). Three specific elements of the intensive mother ideal were topicalized

as the women positioned themselves as good mothers: (1) their children's needs and how

they were meeting them; (2) their children's needs as more important than their own; and

(3) their being mothers who protect their children. Although in this way their accounts are

similar to those one might expect from mothers who have not been abused, there were

some unique topics and discursive moves. Transcript excerpts can be found in Appendix D.

What children need. The women provided detailed descriptions of what their

children need and how they, as good mothers, are meeting those needs. Here, they drew on

the intensive mother IR (i.e., the requirement that mothering be wholly child centred). For

example, Participant 3131 (Appendix D, Example #1) described ―giving" her partner access

to the children because the kids ―need to see their dad" (lines 13-14) even though he did not

request it. She marked this as unusual by noting that the lawyer remarked on it. Discussing

her children's needs and how she responded to them, she then positioned herself as the

superior parent by providing a contrasting description of her partner (lines 15-19). His

failings involve lacking the qualities associated with the intensive mother ideal, which

values talking to children, spending time with them, and being interested in them even

when it is inconvenient. Thus, she positioned herself as a good mother via describing her

knowledge of what her children need and her willingness to provide access to their father

―despite his failed parenting and beyond legal requirements.

Similarly, another mother (Participant 3081, see Example #2) positioned herself as a

good mother through describing her concern for and focus on her children, another element

of child centred mothering. In lines 14 to 15, she described herself as taking responsibility

in first questioning what she is teaching her children when they see her being abused, and

then responding to her daughter's experience of dating violence. Notably, she positioned

herself as the one who understands that her daughter has picked an abusive boyfriend because that is what she sees at home as ―normal" (lines 21-22). In responding to her daughter's plight, she oriented to the intensive mother ideal and described her decision to ―do something" (line 23) as an actively child centred mother. Her account of her daughter's situation, however, created a problem for her as an abuse survivor or, as Wetherell (1998) would say, she troubled her identities as both an intensive, good mother and a victim of abuse. That is to say, if it is so straightforward to understand and do something about her daughter's situation, why did she not leave her abusive relationship sooner? In lines 22-26, she addressed this question even though it was not asked explicitly, describing her situation as ―different". No details were provided, nor did the interviewer request any, indicating that both interviewer and participant took for granted the meaning of this difference and accepted it as reason for the implicit contradiction. This example illustrates how in positioning herself as a good mother, an abused woman may simultaneously create trouble for her own identity as a victim of abuse and must then navigate this contradiction in order to bolster her good mother subject position. In this case, the woman was able to maintain her good mother subject position and her victim subject position by emphasizing the circumstances of being an abused woman.

These examples demonstrate that, within the context of a supportive interview conversation, abused mothers can successfully position themselves as good mothers, in line with the intensive mother ideal. In the examples provided, they accomplished this by claiming knowledge of their children's needs; explaining their actions as mothers, some of which might seem to contradict good mothering (e.g., allowing an abusive ex-partner to have access to the children); and emphasizing the father's failings. These findings are

contrary to the mother blaming literature that positions abused mothers as unaware of their children's needs—instead, the mothers emphasized being aware and acting to meet their children's needs despite the challenges of IPA.

Children Come First. Putting children's needs first is also one of the characteristics associated with intensive mothering. Participant 3092 positioned herself as a good mother through emphasizing her efforts to put her children's needs before her own (Example #3). Before this excerpt, she had been discussing her efforts to pursue a career with the police force, her ―dream job", which she constructed as a ―huge" ―crazy" ―Interesting" and an ―amazing" process (lines 6-7). Here, she justified ―stopping" her pursuit of this career because she would ―never be <u>home</u>" (lines 7-8) and bolstered this by noting that they were ―short staffed" at the time, leading to ―insane hours" (line 8), and providing third party confirmation that she needed to be home to sleep and spend time with her ―unit" – ―her family" (lines 9-10). Thus, spending time at home with her children was constructed as something her children need that was more important than her career. She then described the job she took instead, which has fixed, limited hours and provides ―benefits" and an ―adrenaline rush" – ―everything" that she ―<u>wanted</u>" (line 15) and ―I'm home for my kids" (line 16). Moreover, her boss is supportive, allowing her to leave work when her kids need her (lines 17-18). Her emphasis on the positive aspects of her new job underscored her good fortune in being able to put her children's needs before her job, while still deriving some personal benefits from her work. She concluded by positioning herself as a single mother, who struggles in ―managing a household of four kids" (lines 18-21).

In the following example, a participant maintained her subject position as a good mother by undermining the societal requirement of children needing a father and

emphasizing her son's need for a conflict free home and claiming that she and her son are ―fine". Participant 3050 (Example #4) concluded that a boy's need for a father came secondary to having parents who are not happy, potentially violating the cultural requirement that children's needs come first. However, this required extensive discursive work which constructed happy parents as a means to the end of happy children. In lines 61-62, she wrapped up a conversation about her son's disabilities and behavioural problems and then moved to an account of a time when she was thinking about getting back together with her ex-partner (lines 63-64). She attributed this to her son's ―right to have a dad" (line 64), an argument she attributed to her abusive ex-partner (lines 65-66). The first line of contrary evidence she identified was the consistent message in popular media that children are better off with ―two happy parents separate" rather than ―two parents together and miserable" (lines 69-70). She also then gained footing for her claim by describing how her parents had stayed together ―for the kids" despite being ―miserable" (line 71), which she bolstered by referring to the physical abuse she would have endured had she not left the relationship (lines 73-76). Here, she used maximizing language, ―getting her ass kicked every night", and minimizing language, ―just so my son can have a dad", to strengthen her claim. Then, at lines 77-79, the interviewer supported the woman's claim that the ―children need a dad" discourse is problematic, calling into question why she would have even considered returning to her abusive partner. The mother responded by contrasting how she was raised with what she came to know through education and having to determine ―which is crap" (Lines 80-89). Finally, she wrapped up the story by positioning herself as ―fine (.) It's just been me and my son" (lines 94-95), making clear that she successfully resolved the dilemma. This also repositioned her as a good mother who has rejected the ―crap" societal

view of children needing a father. This allowed her to sidestep the potential violation of the intensive mother IR of providing what children need by rendering the father figure as not needed by children.

Finally, one mother justified her attempted suicide based on putting her children's needs first. Participant 3174 (Example #5) began by discussing her struggles with mental illness, medication and suicidal tendencies (lines 56-57). She then declared that she was angry with the person who prevented her most recent suicide attempt (line 58) and that her kids "would be better off without her here" (lines 59-60). Her use of maximizing language, "really really believe" (line 59), served to make clear that this was no call for help. Her explanation centred on the children and the conflict between their parents, which she described as a "constant fight" (repeated in lines 60, 62, 64 and 65) which involved her ex-partner's attempts to "pull her down" (line 61). This established that it was a prolonged and serious situation and positioned her as the victim. Nevertheless, she described herself as "trying so hard" (line 61), wanting the fighting to stop (repeated twice, line 62), and "trying to stay strong" (line 63). Thus, she positioned herself as a responsible mother who had tried and a good mother who hid the conflict from her children when she was in the marriage, which contributed to their "shock" when she left (lines 64-66). However, to maintain this good mother subject position, the participant then had to account for why she left her children behind (line 67-73). She initially did so by retelling a conversation with her ex-partner where she clarified that the only thing she needed her children to forgive was that she left instead of "fighting" to get him to leave. A further consideration was to not split the siblings up (lines 69-72), again orienting to her children's needs; for her, on the other hand, living apart from the children is "hell". Here, the woman worked to realign herself with the

intensive mother ideal and resist the bad mother label, which is consistent with the discursive accounts provided by other non-custodial mothers (Bemiller, 2010; Kielty, 2008). It is important to note the lengthy pauses, crying and sniffing throughout this passage as an indicator that this is a sensitive subject. Despite this, she skilfully maintained a good mother subject position despite violating the requirements of the intensive mother—namely, being the exclusive provider of time-consuming and child-centred care. She achieved this discursive positioning by emphasizing her sensitivity to her children's needs as a justification for her leaving them behind.

The above excerpts illustrate how the mothers described putting their children's needs first to both position themselves as good mothers and to legitimate and normalize their actions. Particularly interesting is their drawing on the intensive mother IR to legitimate actions which would normally be construed as in violation of the good mother subject position (e.g., leaving children behind). This demonstrates their discursive flexibility and abilities to maintain their good mother subject positions in the face of challenging conversational circumstances. The mothers constructed themselves as actively making decisions in terms of what will benefit their children the most, thereby drawing upon knowledge of what their children need, as well as acting to meet those needs before any others.

Protective Mother. Finally, the protective mother subject position fits with the ideal of intensive mothering and, within the context of IPA, was particularly salient. Eight participants positioned themselves as protective mothers, primarily when discussing custody and visitation issues as well as accounting for their decisions to leave their partners.

Importantly, they positioned themselves as knowing the impact of the abuse on their children and often used this knowledge to account for why they left their abuser. For example, in response to the interviewer's question about parenting when no longer in the abusive relationship, Participant 3025 (Example #6) emphasized her children's safety ―it was good because I knew they weren't gonna get hurt anymore" (line 39), something she described in dramatic language as a ―glorious time" (line 40). As another example, Participant 3029 (Example #7), positioned herself as a good mother through leaving an abusive relationship when her daughter's safety was compromised. In response to the interviewer's requests for an explanation (lines 14, 16 18, 20), the mother eventually explained in detail what the ex-partner had done and how the relationship ended. Initially, however, she provided simple responses (line 15, 17, 19), which emphasized her quick and decisive action (―that was it", line 17; ―it was over after", line 19). The more detailed account (lines 23-32) continued similarly – she left work immediately, did not pursue him, and when he called ―told him to ―F off and don't call me" (line 32). Thus, she positioned herself as a strong, protective mother who simply ended the relationship when her daughter was put at risk. Again, we see an emphasis on putting her child's needs before her own and keeping her daughter safe as more important than her own safety.

Interestingly, even though the intensive mother IR includes being a protective mother, such a mother sometimes had to defend herself against the criticism that she is over-protective, even in the context of IPA. Participant 3131 (Example #8) began her account with a description of the pressure to document everything in order to gain custody of her children and the difficulties she faced in doing so (lines 72-78). She then stated that her efforts were ―dismissed" and she was called a ―hysterical", ―over protective" mother

(lines 78-80). The remainder of her account detailed how, when they return from staying with their father, her children's behaviour has deteriorated due to ‒mental and emotional abuse" (line 92) and how it then improves with time after they are home with her. The children's teachers provide third-party consensus (lines 83-89). The account concluded however with her assertion that despite protection of one's children being a ‒primary role" for mothers and the documentation from herself and the teachers, she was dismissed as ‒hysterical" and ‒over-protective" (lines 115-116). Here then, the mother provided an account of how the intensive mother IR can be used discursively against mothers—not only can they be criticized as falling short of being a good mother, but they can also be positioned as extreme good mothers who should not be taken seriously. In this way, she positioned herself as a thwarted good mother who, in her attempts to protect her children, is blocked by a system that dismisses her as over-protective and hysterical.

The above examples illustrate how the abused mothers positioned themselves as good mothers through noting the impact of the abuse on their children and describing their efforts to protect them. In so doing, they oriented to discourses of the good mother and the good father. Although these stories do not always have happy endings, the mothers positioned themselves as agentic mothers who are resourceful and strategic—the ones who have the children's best interests at heart and know best how to protect them despite a flawed system.

In this section, I detailed how the abused mothers oriented toward the intensive mother IR thereby positioning themselves as good mothers. They accomplished this by demonstrating knowledge and provision of what their children need, putting their children's needs before their own, and positioning themselves as protective mothers. However, the

abused mothers also had to frequently navigate the threat of being positioned as a bad mother.

Navigating the Bad Mother

Given the requirements of the intensive mother IR that can be drawn upon to position abused mothers as bad mothers, it is not surprising that 15 of the participants negotiated the criticism of being bad mothers in defending their good mother subject positions. Mothers navigated the threat of being positioned as a bad mother 1) when interviewers questioned them about not conforming to the intensive mother IR; 2) by questioning their own mothering as a way to bolster their good mother subject position and; 3) when negotiating the single mother subject position, which they constructed as incompatible with the intensive mother IR.

*Questions Posed to Mothers. A*lthough the interviewers were explicitly instructed to be supportive, they frequently inquired about elements of the women's accounts that did not fit with intensive mothering, putting the women at risk of being positioned as bad mothers. For example, Participant 3021 (Example #9) was asked about being a parent in the context of her addictions and abuse (lines 43-44) and, when she responded that it is hard because her children ―don't know what to expect" (lines 45 – 47), the interviewer interrupted with a question about how she ―deals with that", an invitation to talk about her mothering (line 48). The mother however ignored the question and instead elaborated on her point about expectations by describing how her children routinely ask whether she is drinking, the answer sometimes being ―no" and sometimes being ―yes". The interviewer interjected with ―wow" twice, an implicitly disapproving response, as the mother worked to position herself as a good mother, who is honest with her children in admitting when she is

drinking or drinks in locations away from home (lines 49-54). The interviewer again challenged her positioning as a good mother by asking if the children know when she has been drinking (line 55) and how the mother deals with that (line 57). Again, the mother worked to discursively reposition herself as a good mother, who does not come home drunk and does not go to the bar (lines 58-59). The interviewer continued however, moving on to asking whether her drinking upsets the children, re-positioning her as an addicted mother who is harming her children. Here, the mother used minimizing language to downplay the impact (lines 60-63) saying ―sometimes just‖ and specifying that it is one child, the son, who reacts in this way. By noting that, she‘ll ―accept‖ her son‘s silent treatment and ―it‘s fine‖, she acknowledged the appropriateness of his reaction. Throughout, then, the mother had not denied that alcohol abuse is a problem, and had tried to position herself as minimizing the impact on her children. The interviewer however did not stop her line of questioning until the mother explicitly acknowledged how ―sad‖ the situation is that her drinking is at odds with her ability to parent (line 64-69), thereby acknowledging her inability to meet the intensive mother standards.

Another mother, Participant 3025 (Example #10), navigated the bad mother subject position in a conversation about her abusive partner‘s abuse of their children. Initially, she was discussing her own experience of abuse, but when she mentioned threats he had made toward the children, the interviewer requested an explanation (line 14). After the elaboration, the interviewer positioned the mother as responsible by turning the focus back on her and asking how it made her feel to be with such a partner. Notably, this participant first described her efforts to be ―more what he wanted her to be‖ and to make her daughter ―perfect‖ so that he would not hurt her or the children, a common strategy for abused

women that professionals in the domestic violence field do not consider ideal as is evident in the interviewer's critical and supportive interjections, e.g., ―wow‖ and ―hmmm‖ (lines 18-21). The interviewer's question about the success of this strategy worked to create further troubles for the participant, who then explicitly acknowledged that she could not control her partner's abuse in this way and worked further to position herself as a good mother (lines 22-41). By claiming that her strategy worked to keep her daughter safe, i.e., aligning with being a good mother, and that the ultimate solution was to ―get out of it‖, she satisfied the interviewer. Note, however, that it required considerable discursive work for this participant to successfully circumvent the bad mother positioning.

The above examples demonstrate how, even in the supportive context of these interviews, the women were frequently called upon to account for inconsistencies between their mothering and intensive mothering. They responded by minimizing the importance of such differences, emphasizing the other ways they are consistent with the standards of intensive mothering, and their efforts to meet those standards. Nevertheless, they were sometimes unable to position themselves as good mothers.

Questioning One's Own Mothering. Some mothers also employed a discursive tactic of questioning their own mothering, setting it up for debate and then undermining the arguments supporting a bad mother subject position, thereby bolstering their positioning as good mothers. For example, Participant 3081 (Example #11), began by describing her experience of abuse, introducing the topic of her mothering by labelling ―it‖ as ―sad‖ (line 10). ―It‖, an ambiguous pronoun that distanced her from responsibility, turned out to be her leaving the children with her abusive partner when she went to work. First, she relegated the question of her mothering to the past (i.e., the questions she posed to herself and her

claimed awareness that it was dangerous were put in the past tense, lines 10-11). Furthermore, she noted that ―the shelter" and ―children's social services" contacted her (lines 12-13) but wanted to talk to the children about ―him"—third-party consensus of her innocence. This was a before-and-after story—she confessed to ―not doing what's right at the time" and accounted for this through her fear that she would lose her children (line 15). Similarly, she confessed to not being ―the best mother" at the time (line 16), but then doing a number of things to deal with the situation that would be considered appropriate strategies within the social service community (lines 17-19). Here she demonstrated knowledge of the intensive mother ideal and positioned herself as a good mother in relation to it. Unlike the previous examples, the interviewer neither interjected nor questioned the participant's positioning.

The above example shows how the mother was resourceful in maintaining her good mother positioning by questioning her own mothering and then undermining this question through such discursive tactics as relegating any concerns to the past, positioning her abusive partner as a poor father, demonstrating knowledge of her lack of conforming to the intensive mother ideal, emphasizing other ways in which she aligns with it or strategies she has engaged in to do so, and constructing third party support for her claims.

Single Mother. Finally, 12 of the mothers negotiated the single mother subject position, which poses a dilemma for abused mothers in the context of dealing with abuse— either they leave their abusive partners and become single mothers or they stay with their abusive partners and become passive victims. In each case, they run the risk of being positioned as bad mothers for not meeting intensive mothering ideals. This highlights the dilemma mothers face in light of the professional discourse of the domestic violence field

which encourages mothers to leave their abusive partners and become single mothers. Some negotiated this dilemma by orienting to characteristics associated with the good mother (i.e., the standards of intensive mothering) and positioning themselves in line with those characteristics. Others used the problems of being a single mother to justify returning to an abusive partner.

Participant 3140 (Example #12) introduced the topic of being a single mother in response to a general question from the interviewer about whether she had anything to add about being a parent. She first described it as being ―very hard" (line 111) because there is no other parent to help you decide what is right or wrong, a self-positioning that could potentially lead to criticisms of being a deficient mother (lines 111-114). At line 113, she changed from referring to herself specifically (―I') to referring to the generalized ―you", which included her as sharing a common experience with other single mothers. Next, she offered a three-part list of clichés that could apply to anyone, acknowledging deficiencies associated with this subject positioning and undermining potential criticism by the claim that no one is exempt: ―you're just trying to do your best but", ―sometimes you make mistakes too", and ―nobody's perfect" (lines 114-115). She concluded however by positioning herself as a good mother who teaches her daughter moral values, a practice that is in line with intensive mothering (lines 116-118). This provided a stark contrast with her opening story of hardship, making her claim to being a good mother convincing. Thus, she positioned herself as a single-but-good mother.

Participant 3168 (Example #13) justified returning to her abusive partner based on the challenges of being a single mother. In this case, the interviewer asked about the return to her partner, but supported the woman's claims and even blamed social services for

failing to change the woman's life circumstances. At line 2, the woman positioned herself as not being able to ―make it without him‖, elaborating in lines 4-6. The interviewer summed up her claims as needing ―financial support‖ (lines 7-8), but the participant produced an additional list, including the abusive partner's claim that she was a bad mother (lines 9-11), her children's pressure to return to him (line 10), and she ―just .hh (4) couldn't handle it anymore‖. Going back was constructed as the only option—she ―had to go back to him‖ (line 13) (i.e., in order to give her children what they want and need, she had to go back, as the system had not enabled her to provide what her children needed). Thus the woman was able to convincingly justify returning to an abusive partner and deflect blame elsewhere (i.e., leaving the abusive relationship left her without the needed resources), and the discourse of the single mother served as a useful resource in accomplishing this.

Related to the above example, many of the mothers identified not wanting to be a single mom as a deterrent to leaving their partners. Participant 3194 (Example #14), for example, justified not wanting to leave him because she did not want to become a statistic (―single mom‖, ―low income‖, lines 17-18). On the other hand, she positioned herself as poised to leave if he became physically abusive again (lines 18-19). Participant 3055 (Example #15) constructed a similar dilemma. She provided a fairly lengthy account of moving back and forth between being in the relationship and out, and at lines 87-89, summed it up as follows: ―I was torn because I didn't want to be a single parent (3) but I didn't want to be in an abusive relationship‖. Notably, in both cases, the meaning of single mother is largely taken for granted with neither the participant nor the interviewer providing much elaboration. Furthermore, neither interviewer interjects or criticizes the

woman for staying in the relationship, seemingly accepting the dilemma of the single mother as reasonable justification.

Here then, we see the single mother subject position being constructed as incompatible with intensive mothering. Thus, the women were able to justify returning to or remaining with their abusive partners based on avoiding the single mother subject position. Interestingly, the single mother subject position was not often elaborated on or questioned, suggesting that both participant and interviewer took for granted that they shared an understanding of its meaning.

In conclusion then, these abused mothers had to navigate the threat of being positioned as bad mothers when the interviewers questioned them about inconsistencies between their own mothering and that of the intensive mother. They did so by minimizing the discrepancies and emphasizing the consistencies. Some raised questions about their own mothering as a way to undermine the bad mother position. In so doing, they emphasized their knowledge of the standards of intensive mothering and their strategies to achieve this ideal, noted third party consensus of their good mothering, and relegated mistakes to the past. Finally, the mothers constructed the single mother subject position as incompatible with the intensive mother ideal as a means to legitimate and normalize their actions, particularly in accounting for staying with or returning to an abusive partner.

Discussion

New Insights. First, the protective mother subject position was constructed as central to the abused mothers' identities and was used to sustain alignment with the intensive mother ideal (e.g., mothers positioning themselves as protective to account for why they left their abusers). The mothers also constructed authorities as using this subject

position against them to delegitimize their efforts to gain sole custody or supervised visitation. To the extent that judges, lawyers, or other professionals adopt this strategy, it is problematic for mothers and their children, as the literature clearly documents that visitation often places them at risk of further abuse (e.g., Harrison, 2008). Despite this, Pond and Morgan (2008) have outlined the use of similar discursive strategies employed during court proceedings. Thus, abused mothers face a dilemma—to be positioned as good mothers, they must be able to claim that they are protecting their children, but if they contest the access rights of abusive partners, they risk being positioned as over-protective mothers or alienating parents (see Jaffe, Lemon, & Poisson, 2003). The mothers in this study positioned themselves as agentic mothers, who are resourceful and strategic in protecting their children.

Second, the mothers frequently navigated the bad mother subject position during the interviews. The interviewers frequently questioned the mothers about areas of their lives that are inconsistent with intensive mothering, and the mothers responded by minimizing such differences and/or emphasizing consistencies and efforts to realign with intensive mothering. Given that this occurred in such a supportive interview context, and that mother blaming is so prevalent in our society (Medina & Magnuson, 2009) it is relatively safe to imagine that abused mothers also face such questioning in other conversational contexts (e.g., with service providers or family members). Importantly the women were sometimes unable to position themselves as good mothers when facing such questioning. Nevertheless, the mothers sometimes successfully troubled or questioned their own mothering and then undermined the bad mother subject position in order to maintain their good mother positioning. They accomplished this through undermining the credibility of their accusers

as well as constructing third party support for their good mothering. Thus, the mothers were resourceful, but not always successful, in defending themselves against the criticism that they are bad mothers.

The third insight is in regard to the single mother subject position, which was constructed as incompatible with the intensive mother ideal and a specific challenge which abused mothers face when navigating the bad mother. The mothers constructed a dilemma in not wanting to be a single mother but also not wanting to be abused. Most often, this occurred at points in the interview where they were talking about making the decision to leave an abusive relationship, accounting for the length of time the decision took, or accounting for their return to an abusive relationship. They were able to successfully reposition themselves as good mothers by emphasizing the ways in which they met or were working towards meeting the requirements of intensive mothering. Interestingly the single mother subject position was not often elaborated on or questioned, but rather simply accepted as problematic.

Theoretical Generalizability. As reported elsewhere, the mothers in this study consistently drew upon the intensive mothering IR (Arendell, 2000; Hays, 1996) to evaluate and explain their mothering activities (i.e. Guendouzi, 2005) and there was no strong evidence of an alternative discourse in their talk. Further, consistent with other research where abused mothers demonstrated sensitivity to childrearing practices (Levendosky et al., 2003), the mothers in this study claimed knowledge of, and sensitivity to, what children need. Also, consistent with Devoe and Smith (2002), they claimed to be aware of the impact of the abuse on their children and emphasized their efforts to protect them. Furthermore, several of the women legitimated the decision to leave their abusive

partners as a way to protect their children from harm, a move that has also been documented in the literature (Hilton, 1992; Suave & Burns, 2009). One mother who left her children behind when she left, thereby violating the intensive mother ideal, emphasized the other ways in which she met this ideal, a result that is consistent with other studies (e.g., Bemiller, 2010). Thus, abused mothers, much like other mothers, draw on the intensive mother IR in constructing themselves as good mothers. In navigating the risk of being positioned as a bad mother, the findings of this study were consistent with similar studies on ―bad mothers‖ (e.g., Croghan & Miell, 1988). In this navigation, the women frequently constructed themselves as thwarted mothers (Reid et al., 2008), unable to meet their children‗s needs or protect them adequately given the difficulties inherent in the system (e.g., police, custody agreements, court etc.). Finally, like the mothers who smoked in Irwin et al.‗s study (2005), these mothers claimed to know that they did not meet the intensive mother ideal and voiced concerns about their function as role models for their children.

Several of the results are inconsistent with other research, and most obviously, they contrast with the claims of the mother blaming literature that abused mothers are unaware of their children‗s needs. Instead, the mothers in this study constructed themselves as aware of their children‗s needs and actively seeking to meet them. Second, they constructed accounts where they put their children‗s needs before their own. Finally, in contrast to the research of Elvin-Nowak and Thomsson (2001), the mothers in this study did not construct their work identities as separate from their mothering identities but, rather, evaluated them based on the fit with intensive mothering.

Proficient vs. Deficient Debate. From a discursive perspective, any mother can be positioned as either a good or bad mother within a social interaction—thus the debate can

be redefined in rhetorical terms. A mother can position herself as proficient, if she can convincingly construct herself as such within a conversation, rather than being either proficient or deficient in some fixed, unified sense. Beyond that, a mother can be good or bad at any particular point in a conversation, over time, or simultaneously depending on the discursive resources drawn upon. Ultimately, this research has outlined some of the ways mothers can position themselves as good mothers, hurdles or discursive challenges that must be overcome (such as navigating the bad mother), as well as the difficulties in overcoming these hurdles even in the context of a supportive interview. In light of this, several points can be garnered from my analysis.

Dominance of the Intensive Mother IR. As noted, the mothers consistently drew upon the intensive mother IR to construct themselves as good mothers, and the interviewers similarly drew upon it to formulate their questions—regardless of any demographic categories—which suggests its dominance in the domain of cultural discourse. This is a concern in the context of IPA, because intensive mothering is an especially difficult ideal for abused mothers and thus, places them at considerable risk of being positioned as a bad mother. The consistency with which the abused mothers oriented to this ideal may reflect their interactions within the shelters and other service organizations from which they were recruited (e.g., counselling, encounters with child welfare, legal system, etc.). In other words, they would have interacted with professionals who drew on the intensive mothering IR and also encountered it in various practices and policies of these agencies. Consequently, they would have come to ―know‖ that one must draw on the intensive mother IR to successfully position oneself as a good mother, and that any attempt to deviate from this ideal would be met with criticism.

Single Mother Subject Position. As mentioned above, the mothers and interviewers, when navigating the bad mother, rarely elaborated on what it means to be a single mother. It was simply accepted or offered as an explanation. This is a dilemma of particular interest for abused mothers as many are single mothers. In effect, the women in this study who positioned themselves as single mothers took up a ―bad mother‖ subject position in order to justify or excuse their reported actions (e.g., choosing to be a single mother rather than being abused) as a matter of circumstance as opposed to some personal failing or by choosing to be a bad mother. However, the downfall to this is that as single mothers they are nevertheless positioned as bad mothers. Thus, an abused mother is a bad mother whether she stays with the abuser (thereby not protecting her children) or leaves him (thereby accepting the single mother subject position). As a result, abused women may need to do considerable discursive work to position themselves as a good single mother.

Therapeutic Ramifications and Recommendations. Within the research community, there has been recent interest in what a therapy that takes language and its social context seriously would entail (see Couture & Strong, 2004; Harvie et al., 2008), and several researchers have begun to flesh out the focus and theory of discursive therapy (see Avdi, 2005; Avdi & Georgaca, 2007; Corcoran, 2007; Leahy & Walsh, 2008; McLaughlin, 2009). Based on the discourse analysis presented in this thesis, implications for therapy with abused mothers would include taking into account how mothers are restricted by the intensive mother IR. In particular, therapists can explore women‗s varied understandings, constructions and positionings of being abused, protective, or single mothers. In these ways, the therapist can empower mothers in constructing and understanding their identities as effective mothers despite the IPA context, and in resisting being positioned as bad

mothers. In particular, given the likelihood of being encouraged to leave the abuser in interactions, the single mother should be explored to provide mothers with the resources to maintain a good mother subject position. Therapists could then provide a social context in which mothers can practice navigating the bad mother subject position and constructing a convincing account of their good mothering. Importantly, therapists also need to be aware of how they position mothers in a therapeutic context, and what discursive resources they draw upon in their policies, procedures and interactions with abused mothers. This reflexivity is crucial to working with abused mothers, especially given the cultural ideal of intensive mothering and it's pervasiveness in discursive contexts.

Conclusion. This study has provided some insight into the difficulties of being an abused mother at risk of being positioned as a bad mother when good mothering is constructed as intensive mothering. What matters most for abused mothers in their social interactions with others where access to crucial resources (e.g., child custody) is at stake is their ability to negotiate a good mother subject position in that context. In the context of IPA then, adopting the protective mother subject position may be most strategic but negotiating the dilemma of the single mother subject position remains a challenge. Both abused mothers and service providers may benefit from understanding how discourse shapes their social interactions.

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Appendix A

Healing Journey Research Project Description

The Healing Journey research project (Ursel, 2004) is a longitudinal study with an initial sample of over 600 women from the Prairie Provinces. Between October 2005 and April 2007, participants were recruited from shelters and other service providers in each province. In Alberta, 231 participants were recruited from Peace River (including Fairview), Lethbridge, Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Drumheller, Lloydminster, Calgary, Leduc, Cochrane, Okotoks, and Edmonton. In order to participate in the study, women had to meet several criteria: (1) the minimum age to participate was 18 years; (2) the most recent experience of IPA could not have occurred before January 2000; (3) the women had to be in relatively good mental health, and; (4) they could not be currently experiencing a crisis (i.e., their most recent violent incident of IPA must not have occurred within three months of the study). Otherwise, the researchers aimed to recruit women from several target groups that are less often the focus of research (i.e., aboriginal women, lesbian/bisexual, seniors, women with no children, women living in northern and rural regions, seniors, immigrant women, and women with disabilities).

The research design combined qualitative and quantitative methods. Two survey instruments were developed. The first included two questionnaires, one assessing Demographic Information and History of Abuse and the other assessing General Functioning and Service Utilization Questionnaires. The second also included two questionnaires, one assessing Health and the other Parenting. Altogether, there were seven waves of data collection with a single survey being administered at each wave. Wave 1 began with Survey 1 and was followed by Survey 2 in Wave 2. Thereafter, the surveys

were alternated, ending with Survey 1 in Wave 7. The waves were approximately six months apart. Between Waves 3 and 4 (between May, 2007 and February, 2008 in the case of the Alberta sample), a sub-sample of women were selected to participate in an open-ended interview, the source of the material for this thesis. This sub-sample included women from the target groups.

Trained interviewers with experience in the field of IPA or relevant expertise administered the surveys in person or, in a few cases, over the telephone when necessary (i.e., if a safe, accessible meeting location could not be secured or travel was not possible). The majority of interviews were conducted in person however. In order to minimize the impact of varying literacy skills and to facilitate rapport between the interviewers and participants, the interviewers read the survey items to the participants and recorded the participants' responses directly on the questionnaires. Interviews took place either in the participant's homes or at organizations providing services to victims of IPA (depending on safety and convenience for both the interviewer and the participant). At the beginning of the first interview and after reviewing it with the interviewer, participants signed an informed consent form. The interviewers reviewed the informed consent form with participants at the beginning of each subsequent interview. Typically, the interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 3.5 hours. Participants received a $50 honorarium for each interview. Unless an interviewer left the study, participants were always interviewed by the same interviewer in order to minimize participant attrition. Only the open-ended interviews were audio-taped.

Appendix B
The Healing Journey: Revised Interview Guide
February 2007

Introduction: This project is called the Healing Journey, not because there is any expectation that you are healed or will be healed soon, but that you are on a journey from intimate partner abuse or you have a story to tell of the abuse you experienced. This interview is to give you a chance to share your journey in your own words, including what is important to you. You may have told me parts of your story earlier, but for our time together today, please tell me as though I haven't heard any details before.

We'd like you to begin where you think your journey/story of intimate partner abuse starts. But, we'd also like you to tell us about where that journey/story is at today and where you think it is taking you in the future.

IF NEEDED, the interviewer can use the following probes to assist the women.

1. How did you meet the partner that abused you? When did he/she begin abusing you?

2. Have you changed through having been abused? If yes, how?

3. You haven't said anything about whether the abuse affected your health or mental health (either positively or negatively). Is this important to your journey? If so, tell me more.

4. You haven't said anything about how you dealt with or coped with the abuse (either positively or negatively)? Is this important to your journey? If so, tell me more.

5. Were any people/programs helpful to you in your journey? If yes, who were these? (i.e. friends, family, religious leaders, programs? the police?).

6. You haven't said anything about parenting or your children. Was this important in your healing journey? If so, how?

7. Where do you see your journey going in the next year/the next five years? If things go well what will you be experiencing next year? Five years from now?

8. What is the one thing you'd like other women to know about your journey?

Probes for Aboriginal/Immigrant Women:

You haven't said anything about whether being Aboriginal/a woman of colour/ an immigrant/refugee was part of the violence you experienced. Is this important to your journey? If yes, tell me more.

You haven't said anything whether being Aboriginal/a woman of colour/ an immigrant/refugee affected you getting services (facilitated or been a barrier). Is this important to your journey? If yes, tell me more.

Probes for Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgendered and Two Spirited Women:

You haven't said anything about whether being lesbian/transgendered/bisexual/Two-spirited was part of the violence you experienced. Is this important to your journey? If yes, tell me more.

You haven't said anything about whether being lesbian/transgendered/bisexual/Two-spirited affected you accessing services (facilitated or been a barrier)? Is this important to your journey? If yes, tell me more.

Probes for Northern/Rural Women:

You haven't said anything about the remoteness of living in a Northern/Rural area being part of the violence that you experienced? Is this important to your journey? If yes, tell me more.

You haven't said anything about whether living in a remote community affected your accessing services (facilitated or been a barrier)? Is this important to your journey? If yes, tell me more.

Probes for Women with Disabilities:

You haven't said anything about your disability being part of the violence that you experienced? Is this important to your journey? If yes, tell me more.

You haven't said anything about whether your disability affected you accessing services (facilitated or been a barrier)? Is this important to your journey? If yes, tell me more.

Probes for Older Women

You haven't said anything about your age being part of the violence that you experienced? Is this important to your journey? If yes, tell me more.

You haven't said anything about whether your age affected you accessing services (facilitated or been a barrier)? Is this important to your journey? If yes, tell me more.

Appendix C
Transcription Conventions - Potter and Wetherell (p.188-189, 1987)

Extended spacing in the interchange between speakers marks overlap between utterances,
e.g.:

      A: Right so you
      B: I'm not sure

An equals sign at the end of a speakers utterance and at the start of the next utterance
indicates the absence of a discernable gap, e.g.:

      A: Anyway Brian =
      B: = Okay, okay

Numbers in brackets indicate pauses timed to the nearest second. A full stop in brackets
indicates a pause which is noticeable but too short to measure, e.g.:

      A: I went (3) a lot further (.) than I intended

One or more colons indicate an extension of the preceding vowel sound, e.g.:

      A: Yea::h, I see::

Underlining indicates that words are uttered with added emphasis; Words in capitals are
uttered louder than the surrounding talk, e.g.:

      A: It's not <u>right</u>, not right AT ALL

A full stop before a word or sound indicates an audible intake of breath, e.g.:

      A: I think .hh I need more

Round brackets indicate the material in brackets is either inaudible or there is doubt about
it's accuracy, e.g.:

      A: I (couldn't tell you) that

Square brackets indicate that some transcript has been deliberately omitted. Material in
square brackets is clarificatory information, e.g.:

      A: Brian [the speakers brother] said [ ] it's okay

Appendix D
Transcript Excerpts

Aligning with the Intensive Good Mother

What Children Need

Example #1: Participant 3131, Section 5, Lines 11-19

11.   (.) of the separation (2) I Think it was about a month after (2) when we went in (3)
12.   .hh to the courts (.) about the restraining order (1) I I gave him the access (3) and
13.   the lawyer said ―he never requested access" And I said ―well the kids need the
14.   access (.) they need to see their dad" (1) Like I know there's a bunch of other stuff
15.   going on but they do (2) need that time with him (3) He's had phone access since
16.   then (2) He's never once called them (.) he's always called for me (4) [I:
17.   mmhmmm] He doesn't like (.) he doesn't call to sa::y you know how was your day
18.   at school? (2) He doesn't call to wish them a good-night (1) nothing like that Like
19.   it's just (2) .hh the kids are (.) his kids when it's convenient to him (2) and that's it

Example #2: Participant 3081, Section 1, Lines 12-26

12.   (4) .hh umm During these ten years we lived on and off together when we lived
13.   together it was bad (1) umm .hh My children (.) I have two girls and a boy (3) my
14.   children would see what's happening and seeing me being treated so bad (.) and
15.   that would make me (.) think what am I teaching them? Is it ok for them to see me
16.   going through this and (1) .hh I remember my daughter (.) she was probably
17.   fourteen or fifteen at the time (.) and ah (2) she was dating this boy (2) She told me
18.   about it (.) when it got to worse but he was threatening her and he had apparently
19.   treated her really bad in school (.) And I thought (.) this is already happening she's
20.   only fourteen and (.) she's already picking somebody who's abusing her (.) .hh
21.   She doesn't know it but this is what she sees at home that's what she's finding
22.   outside as is (.) as the normal (2) .hh And I think that's when I decided ok (.)
23.   enough enough I got to do something about this but what do you do? (.) You know
24.   you (2) .hh umm I remember me (.) thinking and telling women or thinking
25.   (.) why can't she just walk out and leave? (1) .hh But when I was in that situation
26.   (2) it was very different you can't just walk out and leave (3) .

Children Come First

Example #3: Participant 3092, Section 7, Lines 6-21

6. going it's a <u>huge</u> process (.) it's a <u>crazy</u> (3) (laughs) [I: Yeah] <u>Interesting</u> amazing
7. process to go through (4) um And ended up I stopped (4) Because I'd never be
8. <u>home</u> (2) um we're short staffed now (4) .hh that you're working (2) <u>insane</u> hours
9. And they said that basically you need to go home and sleep (4) you (1) Your unit is
10. your family (4) .hh An::d the chap that did the recruiting officers (1) and (.)   and
11. I'm <u>not</u> doing it now for a couple cause I <u>can't</u> (2) and Because I've done
12. accounting and <u>business</u> management back in that and ended up in a pretty good
13. position (2) where I'm working from nine to three-thirty Friday (.) in an office full
14. of <u>MEN</u> (2) I'm the only <u>woman</u> in <u>the entire office</u> (laughs) (4) um So that (.)
15. that's interesting (2) And uh (2) benefits and everything that I <u>wanted</u> (3) with
16. [name of place] <u>adrenaline rush</u> (3) um (1) I've got (.) and I'm home for my kids
17. (.) And it's (.) a I mean my boss is fantastic cau::se you know (.) if the kids call
18. and got to go I got to go (3) [I: yeah] period Family is first (3) .hh A couple more
19. years (3) see what happens maybe by then I'll be doing something else but (1) as a
20. single <u>mother</u> now I look at (.) you know (3) the struggles o::f (2) managing a
21. household of four kids by <u>yourSELF</u> (4)

Example #4: Participant 3050, Section 3, Lines 61-95

61.   P: Yah (.) so I was really concerned about that (2) you know just something (.) he
62.   learnt or (.) [I: mmm mmhmm] didn't you know and at first too you know (.) I was
63.   thinking about (2) strangely enough thinking about getting back together with his
64.   father cause of the whole (.) you know (.) he deserves the right to have (.) a dad (.)
65.   [I: Oh okay] I think it was part of his (.) his games[I: mmhm] at the time (.) [I:
66.   mmhmm] that [my son] deserved to have a you know (.) a <u>dad</u> and a mom together
67.   And it's <u>so</u> funny cause (.) everywhere I went on the radio you know watching TV
68.   shows flipping the channels or the radio station (.) they're always (.) have these
69.   talks about how it's better for a kid (.) to have two (.) happy parents and separate
70.   than two parents together and miserable (.) [I: O:::h) And with my parents (.) they
71.   they were miserable together (.) [I: yeah] They stayed together for us kids and I'm
72.   thinking you know that was the dumbest thing you guys ever did (.) Cause like (.)
73.   you know what they're right (.) [I: mmhmm] So (.) let's <u>get that</u> notion out of our
74.   head (Interviewer laughs) (.) Yah I'm gonna (.) live my life you know getting my
75.   ass kicked every night (.) [I: Yeah] just so that (.) [my son] can have a dad <u>No</u>
76.   <u>way</u>.
77.   I: That's interesting eh? (.) interesting thinking knowing on one hand that (.) that
78.   you would get hurt pretty consistently (.) and still thinking that it was a good thing
79.   for your son (.) It's a Its a struggle that we have eh? =
80.   P: = Well it's cause (.) of the old (.) just the way we you know (.) I was raised a
81.   generation where when you got married
82.   I: It's true
83.   P: or you had a kid with somebody you stayed with them no matter what [I:
84.   mmhmm yeah](.) right Whether it's (.) good or bad (.) you <u>stayed</u> (.) [I: mmhmm]
85.   But I also was also in that part where you also knew better (.) [I: Yeah] You <u>had</u>
86.   some education you <u>knew</u> that this was unacceptable and you <u>didn't</u> have to tolerate
87.   it (.) [I: Yeah] So you know you (.) you had that I was in (.) raised in that part where
88.   it was both (.) [I: mmhmm] so as a matter of you know trying to (.) determine okay
89.   which is (.) which is crap (.) [I: mmhm] The old you know (.) way you were <u>raised</u>
90.   (.) or the way that society (.) has started to <u>change</u> their mind about some things
91.   I: That's right that's right
92.   P: So yah a lot of views (.) you know
93.   I: mmhmm
94.   P: kinda (.) But Yah (.) well yah no I've been doing <u>fine</u> (.) It's just been me and
95.   [my son] for a while(.) umm Still can't really handle (.) men (.)

Example #5: Participant 3174, Section 4, Lines 56-76

56.   medication for m:y (.) panic attacks they come back and then (.) then it goes it's a
57.   vicious circle (2) an::d I do have a tendency for suicidal (.) ah tendencies and I have
58.   to stop that (3) I'm (2) (crying)I'm very angry at the person that stopped me the last
59.   time (6) Because I really really believe (21) my <u>kids</u> would be better off without me
60.   here (22) Because in a <u>constant fight</u> (sniff)(2) between their parents would end (.)
61.   because I'm trying so hard to (5) not let their dad pull me down (2) And I'm
62.   <u>constantly fighting</u> against it (3) and I want to stop (1) I want it all to stop (3)and
63.   I'm (.) trying to stay strong (3) And they (.) they all (.) (stopped crying) all they see
64.   is the constant fight (5) but if I just keep my mouth shut like I did mostly through
65.   the marriage (3) and they didn't <u>see </u>that constant (4) And that's why it was such a
66.   shock for them when I left (6) (sniff) but I just didn't let them <u>see</u> what was going
67.   on because you <u>always</u> feel you gotta keep it from the kids (12) (sniff) And I left
68.   them <u>behind</u> (.) and [my ex-partner] told me (.) my ex said to me that ah (2) he's
69.   fought <u>really</u> hard to make (.) have the kids forgive me (2) And I said (.) the only
70.   thing I need to be forgiven for is the fact that (crying) I left them behind that I didn't
71.   kick <u>his</u> sorry butt out of the house (4) (sniff) But they were all (2) I couldn't split
72.   the family up and I didn't take my youngest (.) with me (2) I didn't want to split the
73.   siblings up It was hard enough that I removed the mom from the home (4) But I feel
74.   that's the <u>only</u> thing that I need to be forgiven for (.) is I didn't fight for them hard
75.   enough (sniff) (12) um (.) (stopped crying) Other than that it's been (.) it's been
76.   <u>hell</u> (.) it continues to be hell (2)

Protective Mother

Example #6: Participant 3025, Section 4, Lines 37-50

37.   I: mmhmm How how (.)how was it um parenting them knowing that you're no
38.   longer in that abusive relationship?
39.   P: It was good cause I knew they weren't gonna get hurt anymore (4) [I: mmhmm]
40.   yeah It it was just[I: mmhmm] (laughs) I don't know a glorious time.
41.   I: Absolutely sounds like it.
42.   P: I (3) I don't know how like yah like I don't know how to explain things always
43.   like its hard hard to put into words =
44.   I: = Use your own words (.) Try (.) try and just do it the (.) the way that you can.
45.   P: (9) Like it's just like a freedom to love [I: mmhmm] love your children love
46.   people the way (.) just who <u>you</u> are not [I: mmhmm] you know not no [I: mmhmm]
47.   nobody else [I: mmhmm] <u>Nobody </u>else should be telling you how [I: mmhmm] you
48.   should just be doing it anyways right. But it's like (.) a great freedom.
49.   I: mmhmm How was it that you no longer had to have any rules about who to talk
50.   to?

Example #7: Participant 3029, Section 1, Lines 12-32

12.   I: mmm (2) And how how long were you in this:: second relationship?
13.   P: Ten months.
14.   I: Ten months ok (5) So what made you leave that (.) second abusive relationship?
15.   P: He threw a phone at my daughters head
16.   I: mmmm (4) and?
17.   P: He <u>missed</u> thankfully. [I: mmhmm] uh But that was it(2)
18.   I: That was it =
19.   P: = it was over after.
20.   I: = What did you do?
21.   P: .hh ummm (2)
22.   I: Like how did how did you end that? Like (.) What did you do?
23.   P: Well I was at work at the time when my daughter phones me [I: Oh] <u>crying.</u> [I:
24.   mmhmm] And (.) had told me what happened (.) [I: mmhmm] so I had to <u>leave</u>
25.   work go home. [I: mmhmm] And by the time I had gone home he was already
26.   gone.[I: mmm mmhmm] So I left it at that [I: mmhmm] I didn't chase him down
27.   [I: mmhmm] I didn't (.) .hh go to try to get revenge. [I: mmhmm] I was like ok
28.   he's gone [I: mmhmm] and he's gonna stay gone.
29.   I: mmhmm Did he come back?
30.   P: (3) H::e phoned um.
31.   I: What happened when he phoned?
32.   P: (2) I told him to "F" off [I: mmhmm] and don't call me [I: mmhmm] (4)

Example #8: Participant 3131, Section 4, Lines 72-110

72.   (2) [I: mmhmm] And you know I've got (2) it it's really frustrating because (4) .hh
73.   all the lawyers and that they tell you (.) document document document document
74.   (.) I don't have <u>time</u> to document (laughs) (5) Like I'm trying to raise these two
75.   <u>ki::ds</u> (.) trying to do <u>their</u> schedules (2) (sniffs) trying to get <u>my life</u> in order an::d
76.   (.) trying to do this <u>job</u> too and I was also still running my home business which
77.   was (3) .hh [name of service] and (3).hh ::It's (.) I don't have time to do <u>all</u> the
78.   documenting and it seems like all the documenting that I <u>did</u> do (.) was just
79.   dismissed and (2) put away (3) And (.) and it was dismissed as oh you're being a
80.   hysterical mom o::r (2) .hh you're too over protective as a mo::m (2) and stuff like
81.   that It's almost like .hh (4) almost like the courts and the <u>lawyers</u> (2) think that (.)
82.   oh you're just the mother (3) That You have no <u>real</u> (3) VALID opinions about your
83.   children kind of thing (2) .hh Like that's almost the impression that <u>I</u> get Like (2)
84.   .hh I tell them (2) about all of [my son's] behaviour::r it's all <u>documented</u> (.) in the
85.   pre-schools their behaviours (2) their <u>teachers</u> are to the point where (2) they <u>know</u>
86.   when they (.) come back from their dads (2) From a week-end at their dads
87.   because of <u>how</u> disruptive (.) they are and how their behaviour changes (.)
88.   .hh And then they settle <u>down</u> (3) and they seem to stable out and then they go back
89.   to their <u>dads</u> And then it's (.) more disruption and <u>I</u> deal with that here too Like
90.   the (2) .hh what I found to::o (.) is that because he can't have access to <u>me</u> (3)
91.   he's gone through the children (3) to get to me too (2) .hh An::d what I find is that
92.   my children are subjected to a <u>lo::t</u> of emotional (.) and mental abuse from him (2)
93.   .hh And there's not a damned thing I can do about it (3) The courts don't even (.)
94.   <u>acknowledge</u> mental and emotional abuse (2) an::d (3) to <u>m::e</u> (.) it's a lot an
95.   awful lo:::t (.) especially when you're changing bed sheets at two in the morning
96.   for three nights (.) in <u>a row</u> after visits (2) Because ah (.) my son <u>and</u> my daughter
97.   (.) they both went through that (.) where they were peeing the beds really bad (2)
98.   .hh umm My dogs got (.) beaten up all the time (2) every time they came home (.)
99.   got like (.) came home from their dads (1) There was <u>a::ll</u> sorts of behaviours and
100.   it's all documented in the schools There's (.) schools have <u>written</u> letters (.).hh
101.   the therapists have written letters But there just <u>dismissed</u> (3) like there (.) like it's
102.   nothing like it's so (3) .hh You're just a hysterical (.) <u>over</u> protective mother and
103.   you know (3) To <u>m::e</u> (2) being a mom <u>IS</u> (2) protecting your children (2) like that's
104.   (.) that's the primary <u>role</u> of a mother and when you can't <u>d::o</u> that (2) it's very
105.   <u>VERY</u> (.) very hard (3) [I: mmhmm] is what I find because (2) .hh you kno::w (.) I I
106.   keep tryi::ng (4) What I (.) what I've ended up resorting to is teaching my children
107.   (4) how to defend <u>themselves</u> against their own <u>father</u> (4) and I (.) Like against his
108.   abusiveness like he's (3) he's told them things […]
109.   S::o it's <u>that</u> kind of mental abuse that I <u>can't</u>
110.   defend my children against

Navigating the Bad Mother

Questions Posed to Mothers

Example #9: Participant 3021, Section 5, Lines 43-69

43   I: Ok, so how has parenting been for you with struggling with (.) your addictions
44   and and (.) experiencing all this abuse from him?
45   P: Well it's hard because ahh like the addiction especially is the worst thing because
46   .hh the kids don't know what to expect [I: mhhmm mmhmm] from one day to the
47   next .hh [I: mm hmm] =
48   I: =How do you deal with that?
49   P: = Like they're (.) everyday they're asking me, are you drinking today mom?
50   Are you drinking today mom? [I: wow] No[I: Wow] you know (.) no.
51   I: = yeah cause then their =
52   P: = Then when I <u>do</u> drink it's
53   kind of like, well <u>I'm</u> drinking <u>yah</u>. [I: mm hmmm] Or I drink before I get home and
54   [I: mmhmm].
55   I: Do they know that you've been drinking?
56   P: Yah usually, yah
57   I: Okay (.) and so how =
58   P: = I don't I don't come home <u>drunk</u>.[I: yeah] And I don't go to
59   the <u>bar</u> or nothing [I: yeah] unless I just (.), you know. But ah, they usually know.
60   I: Do they get upset with you (.) if they know you've been drinking?
61   P: They (.) [My son] will (.) just sometimes just (.) not talk to me anymore for the
62   rest of the night.[I: mm hmm] And I'll accept it [I: mm hmm] ok, then you're not
63   talking to me, it's fine[I: mm hmm] yeah.
64   I: mmm (3) Sad hey?
65   P: Yuh. [I: you know it's sad yah] When I think about it yah, [I: yah] yah I mean
66   he, you know I (.2) you know it was like, I don't know it (.) it was like that uhh
67   like choosing alcohol uhh [I: mm hmm] you know, over parenting [I: mm hmm]
68   type of thing.
69   I: mm hmm(8)

Example #10: Participant 3025, Section 1, Lines 11-42

11.   and all [I: mmhmm] always said (.) (Laughs) that if he went down then he was
12.   taking me down with him and (2) [I: wow]   yeah and just everything and <u>yah</u> he
13.   was threatening my kids and saying he'd hurt my kids
14.   I: What what do you mean by that = ?
15.   [Described abuse of children]
16.   I: = How did that how did that make you feel? [AB 3025: Ummm] being with
17.   someone that did that?
18.   P: Made me feel like I better (.) be more what he (laughs) wanted me to be .hh or
19.   whatever so he wouldn't hurt me [I: wow] and so he wouldn't hurt my kids and try
20.   to make my k- yah like try to make [my daughter] be perfect [I: Wow] Just like me
21.   [I: mm hmm] so that he wouldn't hurt us [I: mm hmm] and shit yeah it was hard =
22.   I: = Were you successful at umm=
23.   P: = ahh no =
24.   I: = at um doing
25.   the things that he wanted of you?
26.   P: ah no I (4) With [my daughter] she used to yah well yah I guess in a way it was
27.   successful (.) like [my daughter] too [I: mmhmm] she withdrew a lot [I: mmhmm]
28.   and she would just hide in her bedroom and
29.   I: Where did she hide in her bedroom?
30.   P: What's that?
31.   I: Where did she hide in her bedroom?
32.   P: She just would stay in her like would stay in her room (.) like at night [I:
33.   mmhmm] when she, like she used to come out [I: mmhmm] and she like (.) she
34.   wouldn't come out anymore [I: mmhmm] Cause he was yelling at me and stuff and
35.   she would just stay in her room or she'd keep her distance.
36.   I: Mm hmmm (3) and what about you?
37.   P: (2) ah (.) I just (4) open my mouth to speak if I was supposed to speak and if I .hh
38.   accidentally moved my lips when he didn't want me to talk [I: mmhmm] that I'd (.)
39.   I don't know
40.   I: oh wow
41.   P: (3) try to (laughs) get out of it cause (.) .hh it was.
42.   I: Ya::h (.) wo::w

Questioning One's Own Mothering

Example #11: Participant 3081, Section 4, Lines 7-19

7.   cause he would <u>always</u> threaten of shooting (2) ah He would shoot me he would the
8.   (.) he would shoot me (.) shoot the kids (.) and then shoot <u>himself</u> and then it
9.   would be over everything would be good (2).hh And I would always pray that
10.   angels would be protecting us (.) .hh It was really sad because I would leave the
11.   kids alone with him and go to work (2) and I would think why am I doing that?
12.   This is <u>so </u>dangerous (.) Am I a good <u>mother</u>? (3) I remember the (.) the um (.)
13.   shelter (.) children's social services contacting me (.) .hh wanting to question the
14.   children about <u>him</u> (.) whether he's a danger to them and (5) if I look back I think
15.   (2) I didn't do what's right at the time But (2) .hh um (.) I didn't want to lose my
16.   kids too at the time (.) I may not have been the best mother (.) at that time (2) But
17.   (.) um that was after the police came (6) (sniffs) As I kept going to the support
18.   groups researching on the internet (.) .hh I started talking to one or two friends who
19.   would <u>listen</u> (.) umm (.) without getting into details (.)

Single Mother

Example #12: Participant 3140, Section 3, Lines 107-118

107.   I: = Yeah (2) Good (.) Yeah I was going to ask
108.   you about (6) .hh how it's affected being a parent and (.) yah (3) Is there anything
109.   else you want to say (.) about being a parent and (.) [your daughter] an::d (.)
110.   anything about that?
111.   P: .hh Well it's (.) it's it's very hard being a single mom (2) you know sometimes
112.   you Feel li::ke (2) ok (.) that I'm (.) doing something right and I'm doing something
113.   wrong because (.) there's no one else <u>to tell</u> you right (.) [I: mmhmm] if you doing
114.   right or wrong right [I: mmhmm] And (.) and and you're just trying to do your <u>best</u>
115.   but sometimes you make mistakes too (.) like you never nobody's perfect right (3)
116.   [I: mmhmm mmhmm] An::d (3) umm with my daughter I just trying to (.) to tell her
117.   the values o:::f you know (.) the values the moral (.) moral values (3) [I: mmhmm]
118.   that she will need for life

Example #13: Participant 3168, Section 2, Lines 1-16

1.   I: So how did you end up getting back together with him?
2.   P: .hh (3) Because w::e (.) we stayed and I couldn't make it without him =
3.   I: = yeah yeah
4.   P: the kids (.) she wanted to play ringette and he wanted to play hockey I didn't
5.   have enough money (2) .hh and I didn't <u>know</u> where to drive them because I had
6.   (2) time to go back to work (3) [I: uh huh] Start working as he is part time =
7.   I: = mmhmm So you needed his financial
8.   support hmm =
9.   P: = Yuh and h::e (2) he (.) he told everyone (.) oh there's not enough food for
10.   my daugh::ter (.) and all these <u>things</u> (3) and the kids started crying for him (2) .hh
11.   It was just .hh (4) couldn't handle it anymore =
12.   I: = yeah (1)
13.   P: So I had to go back to him =
14.   I: = So even with (.) even though you went to shelters six times even
15.   though you had children's services involvement (3) .hh nothing seemed to really
16.   change things.

Example #14: Participant 3194, Section 3, Lines 14-19

14.   never seen it (2) but that's not the point The point is when I was growing up and I
15.   was a young adult I told myself that (2) I would never be with (4) an abusive
16.   husband (3) And I am (4) but I always felt I wa::s the strongest, anyway (.) And
17.   strong stronger than him (5) But I didn't want to be in a (2) part of the statistics
18.   either (4) single mom (3) low income (5) But if he <u>ever </u>hits me again I (3) I hope
19.   I'm strong enough to:: (4) pick myself up and (5) stop it (.) End it.

Example #15: Participant 3055, Section 1, Lines 78-92

78.   chang::e all this <u>BS</u> (4) And I just was so tired and drai::ned and (.) and one of the
79.   things I agreed to in the hospital was havin::g (.) his last name on my son's (3) .hh
80.   birth certificate (2) An::d that was just t::o (.) kind of appease him just so he would
81.   leave me alone (3) .hh But when I did get out of the hospital:: (.) I:: went back to
82.   welfare and they gave me my own (3) um (1) ah certificate (2) because I told them I
83.   had nothing (2) And h::e had been getting checks for us and (.) and he didn't get
84.   <u>anything at</u> all for the baby (.) So my auntie cam::e (2) um (3) I tried to leave a few
85.   times while I was pregnant and then after I had him (3) um And I know (2) my my
86.   family got sick of it (.) cause he had come back to pick me up with his relatives (2)
87.   whatever sister o:::r whatever truck vehicle (2) [I: mmhmm] An::d (.) I was just
88.   torn because I didn't want to be a single parent (3) But I didn't want to be in an
89.   abusive relationship (2) So my auntie ca:::me (.) this one time (.) an::d she helped
90.   me (.) I didn't have much (.) we just loaded it up in one vehicle and came back to
91.   my parents and then um (2) II got a place in [name of place] (3) and I went back
92.   t::o (2) um college.