

Mount Saint Vincent University

Department of Women and Gender Studies

Voices: Heard. Silenced. Ignored.
The Voices of Intimate Partner Violence against Affluent Women

by

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Abstract

Intimate partner violence (IPV) against women is a form of oppression that has received a great deal of interest and attention from feminists and other advocates for women's health and well-being. While IPV has been acknowledged as having the potential to occur at every income level, there is very little research dedicated to studying IPV against affluent women, which is the focus of this study. The researcher employed arts-based research methods, specifically autoethnography and constructivist grounded theory, to conduct and analyze semi-structured interviews with nine women from middle to upper-middle class households (five were one-on-one conducted by the researcher, three used author interviews through autobiography, and in one, the researcher herself was interviewed). Focused codes were clustered into themes, each of which became a scene in the findings in the form of an auto/ethnodrama script.

Findings identified three dimensions of the experience of IPV against affluent women: *Who I Was*, *Who I Became*, and *Who I Am Now*. *Who I Was* represents the life transition or vulnerable state the women were in when they met their partner as they describe themselves as “needy”, “vulnerable”, “lonely” and/or “alone”; *Who I Became* represents how the abuse impacted them as they describe themselves as “numb”, “weak”, “powerless” and “little”; and *Who I Am Now* is a celebration of the strength the women have embraced, despite the intensity of the physical violence they endured, after leaving their abusive partner as they experience themselves as “stronger”, “more confident”, “powerful” and “More Me”. These dimensions represent the thematic categories that emerged through constructivist grounded theory coding and analysis of interviews. Each dimension expresses the common words, phrases, and stories the women shared during their interviews. In addition, findings uncovered experiences that are unique to this socio-economic group, such as the lack of the traditional cycle of violence, lack of formal support systems, including transition houses, and little or no experience of IPV prior to the relationship. The third dimension, *Who I Became*, invites further study exploration, as the participants described themselves as stronger and more confident following their experience, even though most did not seek help through formal support groups. This, in itself, is contrary to current literature the researcher found on the recovery process from trauma. These results could inform new information on recovering from forms of trauma, such as IPV, and guide support services specific to women of affluence.

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I would like to thank the amazing women who shared their stories with me, trusting me with your voices, your emotions, and your secrets. Your voices shape the auto/ethnodrama and thesis findings and I am honoured to be the person you entrusted with your stories and to combine your voices with the voices of other women to raise awareness of IPV against affluent women.

I cannot imagine being at this point in my life without the support of my family. This journey really began seventeen years ago, when I had the courage to move my daughter and myself out of our house and away from my abusive husband. My children have been my guiding light – they are my world and I am so glad I was able to get us all to safety. This thesis journey has been a seven year adventure, and I am grateful to my partner Steven for his patience and understanding during this time. There were many times I thought I couldn't go on and he would get me back on track. And then there is my sister Kim. I know she hates this term, but she really has been my rock. I am alive because of you, and I love you.

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Glossary

Categorizing: “The analytical step in grounded theory of selecting certain codes as having overriding significance or abstracting common themes and patterns in several codes into an analytical concept” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 341).

Coding: “The process of taking data apart, defining, and labeling what these data are about. Unlike quantitative researchers, who apply *preconceived* categories or codes to the data, a grounded theorist creates qualitative codes by defining what he or she sees in the data. Thus, grounded theory codes are emergent. Researchers develop codes as they study and interact with the data. The coding process may take a researcher to unforeseen areas and research questions” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 342).

Constant Comparison Method: “A method of analysis that generates successively more abstract concepts and theories through inductive processes of comparing data with data, data with code, code with code, code with category, category with category, and category with concept” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 342).

Ethnodrama: “A word joining ethnography and drama, is a written play script consisting of dramatized, significant selections of narrative collected from interview transcripts, participant observation field notes, journal entries, personal memories/experiences, and/or print and media artifacts such as diaries, blogs, e-mail correspondence, television broadcasts, newspaper articles, court proceedings, and historic documents” (Saldana, 2011, p. 14). “Characters are usually the research participants who may be portrayed by actors or they themselves may be cast members” (Saldana, 2003, p. 218). When the ethnodrama includes the researcher/playwright the piece becomes an auto/ethnodrama.

Ethnotheatre is taking the written script (ethnodrama) to the stage. Ethnotheatre employs traditional craft and artistic techniques of formal theatre production to “mount a live performance of the research participants’ experiences and / or researchers’ interpretations of data for an audience” (Saldana, 2003, p. 218).

Focused Coding: “A sequel to initial coding in which researchers concentrate on the most frequent and/or significant codes among their initial codes and test these codes against large batches of data. Researchers can take those codes demonstrating analytic strength and raise them to tentative categories to develop. When the researcher’s initial codes are concrete, the researcher can code them by asking what analytical story these codes indicate, and thus arrive at a set of focused codes” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 343).

Incident with incident coding refers to comparing incidents from one transcript to another to discover patterns in the interview transcripts and secondary sources of data (Charmaz, 2014, p. 133).

Initial Coding: “The early process of engaging with and defining data. Initial coding forms the link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to understand and account for these data. Through coding you *define* what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 343).

In vivo codes: “Codes that researchers adopt directly from the data, such as statements they discover in interviews, documents, and the everyday language used in a studied site” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 343).

Line-by-line Coding: “A form of initial coding in which the researcher assesses what is happening in each line of data and what theoretical ideas it suggests. Line-by-line coding is a *heuristic device* to encourage researchers to think analytically about their data and to generate

fresh ideas about them. This type of coding encourages active engagement with data and enables researchers to see their data from new standpoints” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 343).

Memo-writing: “The pivotal intermediate step in grounded theory between data collection and writing drafts of papers. When grounded theorists write memos, they stop and analyze their ideas about their codes and emerging categories in whatever way that occurs to them. Memo-writing is a crucial method in grounded theory because it prompts researchers to analyze their data and to develop their codes into categories early in the research process” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 343).

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a form of violence against women that has been the focus of attention from advocates for women for decades and has been a part of Statistics Canada's General Social Survey (GSS) since 1990. Every five years Statistics Canada conducts a General Social Survey (GSS) on victimization that captures information on people's experiences of spousal violence regardless of whether the incident was reported to police. According to Statistics Canada (2011, 2015), over 50% of self-reported victims of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in 2009 occurred in households with an income of over \$60,000¹. These numbers are partially supportive of feminist and gendered resource theory on domestic violence, which says that domestic violence does occur in middle to upper-middle class households even though there is little attention paid to this demographic. The majority of the research in the area of IPV focuses on low-wage low-status women victims of IPV and therefore it has focused on alleviating poverty, welfare, and homelessness to combat IPV (Kwesiga, Bell, Pattie, & Moe, 2007). Some of the research, including that by Anderson² (1997) and an ecological analysis conducted by Carlson³ (1984), supports the belief that violence is largely restricted to people who occupy low economic status positions. As a result of this belief, many existing centres for supporting women in abusive relationships in Nova Scotia (and elsewhere) focus on providing shelter and transition services to those for whom "poverty, lack of supportable affordable housing, lack of childcare, literacy, education, transportation, and court support are frequent barriers that prevent our service users from moving forward in their lives" (THANS, 2008, 2017). While these conditions are not an eligibility requirement for accessing support from transition house services, the focus for education and resources is focused on women from low economic status. In addition, shelters have served as a convenient source of participants for

conducting research on the topic, and while the data collected is reliable, the validity of shelter-based findings is questionable (Sev'er, 2002). Frequently, the women and children seeking support to escape IPV are young, unemployed or in transient jobs, from lower-economic status, and located in urban areas (Sev'er, 2002). This does not mean that women from middle to upper-middle class households do not experience IPV but rather that they are less likely to seek help from shelters and transition services, which may help to explain why there is so little research on IPV against affluent women.

Failure to attend to the realities and repercussions of IPV is costly, in numerous ways. The estimate of the monetary cost of spousal violence against women in Canada, assessed in various ways, including but not limited to, the cost of criminal and civil justice, medical expenses from physical injury and mental health issue, productivity losses, damaged property, shelters and transition houses, were conservatively estimated to exceed 4.8 billion per year (Zhang, Hoddenbagh, McDonald, & Scrim, 2012). It is important to note that these estimates are based on the calculations of tangible immediate and long term costs that are possible to estimate based on actual use of services (i.e. treatment in hospitals and lost time at work), while some intangible costs of the pain and suffering of the victims of IPV and loss of life are more difficult to measure (Zhang, et al., 2012). The cost would be much higher if all women who sustained injury or required support services such as transition houses accessed the healthcare system.

Many women from affluent households do not seek medical treatment for injuries sustained from a violent episode with their partner, access services through police / criminal justice, and/or obtain support of transition house services. Often they may feel they have “less access to help than women less privileged” (Weitzman, 2000, p. 7). In addition, researchers have concluded that IPV against women at the hands of wealthy and powerful men rarely lead to

police intervention, and, as such, abuse against “well-to-do women has gone unnoticed” (Weitzman, 2000, p. 8). Susan Weitzman (2000) states that more than 50% of the upper income level women in her psychotherapist practice were “enduring emotional and physical abuse at the hands and whims of their powerful and well-educated husbands” (Weitzman, 2000, p. 6). The existence of these men is largely ignored in policy and research on IPV. Imagine the cost of abuse against women if this socio-economic group did access the services they need.

My exploration into the topic showed that there is little existing research on the existence of IPV in middle and upper-middle socio-economic households, on the impact of domestic violence on women from these situations, or on the support systems needed to help these women improve, survive, or leave their abusive partner. Susan Weitzman, (2000) author of “*Not to people like us: Hidden abuse in upscale marriages*” is considered to be a pioneer authority on the subject of “upscale violence”. Her work as a clinical social worker/ psychotherapist provided ground breaking research on the differences in how women from low socio-economic and middle to upper-middle positions experience domestic violence.

What little research that does exist on the topic of domestic violence in middle to upper-middle class households finds that women in high socio-economic households face challenges that differ from women in lower socio-economic households (MacDowell, 2009; Weitzman, 2000). For example, the abused woman herself does not always recognize her experience as being domestic violence, nor does she understand the cycle of violence (Weitzman, 2000). Also, she is faced with overcoming the stigma relating to IPV and those who experience it, and has a need for network and support systems that are empathetic to her needs (Kwesiga et al., 2007). In addition to the stigmatization that women employees face as being less dependable than their male counterparts, they note that the “victim” stigma puts women with high wage and high status

at risk, as the term implies a level of helplessness and inability to manage themselves without help, which leads to the risk of being seen as unable to perform effectively in her career and the requirements of her occupational role if she cannot take care of her own family problems. Similarly, she may be reluctant to access health benefits for fear of being perceived as unable to manage her own affairs (Kwesiga et al., 2007). Padavic and Reskin (as cited in Kwesiga et al., 2007) note that gendered organizational structures reward those who act in traditionally masculine ways and set aside family issues while at work. Women who have achieved high status do not want to appear weak, fearful, or in need of assistance, as this behaviour could be seen as a sign of vulnerability and a lack of competence.

In my thesis project I explored the dimensions of the experiences of middle to upper-middle class women's experiences with IPV and aimed to understand it more fully as well as to highlight areas that are unique to this group. The project has provided an avenue, a forum, for women who have experienced IPV to tell their stories, for me to tell my story, to create language that will speak loudly and clearly so we can reach that crescendo of voices, of noise, that cannot be ignored. The resulting auto/ethnodrama, a play script, brings together a collection of all the participant's voices – a cacophony of women's voices that aims to create an uproar that demands attention and facilitates understanding.

My personal experience with IPV informed this work. During my relationship with my former husband, including a three-year marriage, I was unaware of the impact it had on my family, my employees, and me. I lived in a world that was foreign to me, full of verbal and physical violence, yet I did not really understand that I was experiencing IPV. I was ashamed of my home situation and did not want my employees and employers knowing about it. I also experienced the fear that they would question my ability to lead a team and a business if they

knew. I had no prior experience with domestic violence, either in my family of origin or within my social networks. I easily believed my abuser's accusations that I was responsible for his actions, and that he was justified in classing me as an abuser because I occasionally struck him in self-defence.

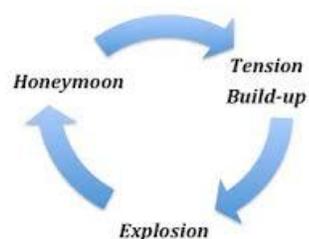


Figure 1

Cycle of Violence [Image]

Retrieved from
<http://www.mchenrycountyturningpoint.org/cycle-of-violence/>

Through conversations with a counsellor for women escaping IPV, I found out that the life I was living with my husband was fairly typical of most domestic violence situations. One exception to the traditional cycle of violence that I found in my own experience, and is supported by my thesis findings, is the lack of what is referred to as “the honeymoon period” following an episode of violence.

Psychologist Lenore Walker, one of the pioneers in research on domestic violence and author of *The Battered Woman*, described a three-stage cycle of violence to explain a husband's pattern of abuse (Weitzman, 2000).

Following a period of tension, an explosion of abuse would occur. This would then be followed by a period of tenderness towards the woman being abused. My husband did not show any remorse, make apologies, or promise me he wouldn't hurt me again, as is considered typical in most domestic violence situations (see Figure 1: Cycle of Violence). In addition to typical descriptions of IPV, Weitzman (2000) has identified behaviours of “upscale violence”, including the abuser's “narcissistic rage, a grandiose sense of self-importance and sense of entitlement, and fantasies about his achievements, success, and power” (p. 236).

I feel that this research project has opened a new door for my recovery from my IPV experience as well as for the women who participated by sharing their stories with me. Tamas (2011) inspired my approach to this project in the published version of her PhD dissertation

“Life after leaving: The remains of spousal abuse”, in which she wrote her entire paper using autoethnography in play script format. She claims that her doctoral work was a test to the claim that autoethnographic writing can get us to places where we can find those stories that we can’t quite remember; the hope is that in doing so they may pave the way for recovery from abuse.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

As a background to the issue of IPV against affluent women, I conducted a literature review that included an extensive exploration into IPV, grounded theory, and arts-based research. I followed the approach to the literature review suggested by Charmaz (2014) when using grounded theory, by analyzing significant and relevant material, tailoring the literature review to fit the purpose and argument of the research proposal, and using the review as an opportunity to set the stage for the project. It was important to understand intimate partner violence and the various theories relating to IPV in order to determine the direction for this research project. Therefore, I will briefly discuss a few of the existing theories on IPV that led to my decision to use grounded theory. I will then outline the types of intimate partner violence and discuss the findings of research on IPV against women from middle to upper-middle class households. The final section will focus on arts-based research to explain the methodology I chose for this research project, specifically how arts-based inquiry has the potential to reach multiple audiences while addressing issues of social injustice.

Intimate Partner Violence against Women – Theoretical Approaches

In this section, I will discuss three of the current theories on IPV that I explored in the literature review process as I searched for a theory that might explain IPV against affluent women and subsequently led to my decision to use grounded theory methodology.

Feminist-Informed Theory. Domestic violence, or spousal abuse, which can show up as systemic oppression, has garnered a great deal of interest for many feminists, beginning with second wave feminists, who brought spousal violence to public attention as early as the 1960s (Brock-Utne, 1992). The issue of domestic violence has continued to be on the feminist agenda

with third wave feminists who say that there are serious gender inequalities in the world today and feminists are continuing to challenge the inequalities (Redfern & Aune, 2010).

There are numerous feminist explanations of men's violence towards women that seek to understand the roots of violence in social structures, including traditional Marxism, radical feminism, and socialist feminism (Sev'er, 2002). Critical feminist theory also attempts to explain IPV by building on existing currents in social theory by, for instance, promoting equality between women and men (Rhode, 1990).

Regardless of the branch, feminist-informed theory is a body of writing that attempts to describe, explain, and analyze the conditions of women's lives and then propose strategies for action to improve the conditions in which women work and live (Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2000). One basic issue that has concerned feminist theorists is women's inequality, subordination, or domination by men and their theories both examine and attempt to explain the causes and conditions in which men are seen as being more powerful and as having higher value and status than women (Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2000).

Anderson (1997) states that "feminist scholars argue that domestic violence is rooted in gender and power, and represents men's active attempts to maintain dominance and control over women" (p. 667). Regardless of income, men's desire to dominate women exists. While there are groups of women who are deemed more at risk than others (Aboriginal, young, disabled, and immigrant women), "violence against women happens in all cultures and religions, in all ethnic and racial communities, at every age, and in *every income group*" (emphasis added) (Sauvé & Burns, 2009, p. 4). Feminist theorists also argue that, in a patriarchal society, those with greater power - males - must resort to violence when their position of dominance is threatened and that

violence against women can be explained in terms of a struggle for power by men (Tracy, S., 2007).

Family Violence Theory. While feminist-based theory contends that violence is part of a system of control through which men maintain dominance over women, family violence theorists, who focus on an individual's position within the structural environment and how the environment influences tendencies for domestic assaults, have found strong relationships between domestic violence and age, cohabiting status, and socio-economic status in America (Anderson, 1997).

Family violence researchers contend that violence is linked to sociodemographic position: individuals (both men and women) who occupy low status position within the economic structure of society (e.g. non-White ethnicity, low levels of income and education) will be more likely to perpetrate violence. (p. 659)

Family violence theory may explain the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia's (THANS) mandate to assist women and children facing poverty and other lower income related conditions. While family violence theory states that both men and women of low income are more likely to perpetuate violence, this also means that women of low socio-economic positions are those most likely to experience domestic violence. As such, they may also be deemed as having a higher need for support from organized associations and institutions to find shelter and counselling. I believe that this theory may explain why the middle to upper-middle class abused woman is invisible and thus unsupported in society. Generally, people don't believe that women of affluence can experience domestic violence because of the dominant belief that it is a lower class issue. My findings call this into question and suggest the need for further exploration into IPV against all women.

Resource Theory. There are numerous theories, and supporting research, that are based on economics and availability of resources to explain domestic violence. They include, but are not limited to, work done by William J. Goode (1971) on resource theory. Resource theory and relative resource theory suggest, "...that the level of resources is the primary predictor of wife abuse" (Atkinson, Greenstein & Lang, 2005, p. 1137). Resource theory is based on married men with few material resources; relative resource theory is based on men with fewer material resources than their wives. Both theories suggest that violence is used as compensation for the husbands' lack of material resources and those men with fewer resources are more likely to use violence than men who are resource rich (Atkinson et al., 2005). Goode (1971) believes that violence is one of the resources that men use, much like material resources, to gain obedience and compliance in relationships and "consequently, it is a general rule that the greater the other resources an individual can command, the more force he *can* muster, but the less he will actually deploy or use force in an *overt* manner" (Goode, 1971, p. 628). Thus, according to Goode (1971), men from middle to high economic status use material resources as their source of power and are therefore not as likely to resort to violence (Goode, 1971). Essentially, resource theorists predict that men from low socio-economic positions are more likely to abuse their spouses than men from middle to high socio-economic locations as a means of control and power.

Power and Control Model of Violence. Another exploratory model used to explain physical and sexual IPV, although not sufficiently conceptual to be called a theory, is based on Pence and Paymar's Duluth Project as cited by Sev'er (2002). Kelly and Johnson (2008) draw on their work to make distinction amongst three forms of IPV against women in heterosexual families and argue that it is important to distinguish between the forms of violence because the

implementation of public policies, development of educational programs, and further development of theories relating to IPV are different for each type.

Violent Resistance refers to violence that occurs as a reaction to an assault in order to protect oneself or others from injury, and does not typically lead to involvement by police due to its short-lived nature (Kelly & Johnson, 2008). Another type of violence that usually leads to minor forms of violence when conflict gets out of hand is Situational Couple Violence. It is considered to be the most common type of physical aggression amongst married and cohabitating partners, and is committed by both sexes (Kelly & Johnson, 2008). Unlike other forms of violence, this type of IPV is intermittent, episodic, and is not usually based on a power and control dynamic.

The third type of violence, Coercive Controlling Violence, is a form of control by a male partner involving systematic use of violence, threats, isolation, financial and other forms of control. Coercive Controlling Violence describes a pattern of power and control that is represented in the Power and Control Wheel (Figure 2) and is commonly used as an organizing framework by community agencies addressing IPV (Kelly & Johnson, 2008).

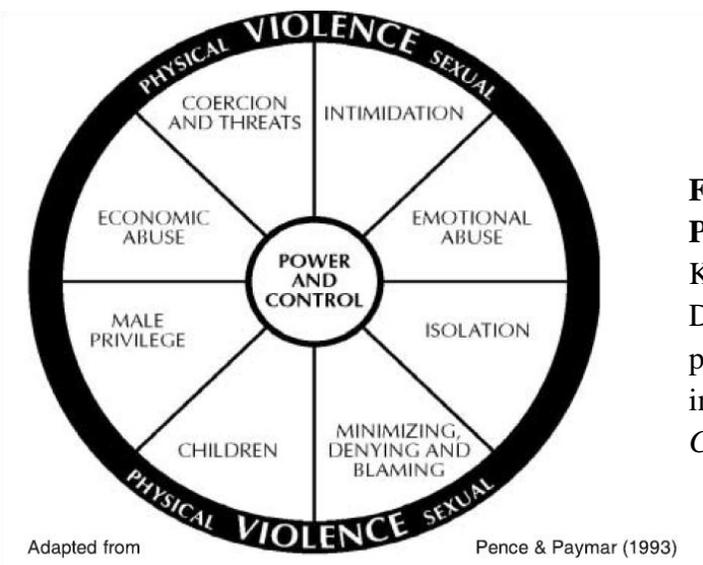


Figure 2
Power and Control Wheel [Image]
Kelly, J.B. & Johnson, M.P. (2008). Differentiation among types of intimate partner violence: Research update and implications for interventions. *Family Court Review*, 46(3), p. 479.

I believe that all of the elements of The Power and Control Wheel are means through which oppression against women by their husbands or partners can occur. The very simple, yet explanatory definition of oppression, noted by hooks (2000) is “Being oppressed means the absence of choices” (p. 5). Male privilege, which includes the male making major decisions, treating his female partner like a servant, and defining the male/female roles by adhering to traditional expectations, are all examples of how one would experience a lack of choices and, therefore, oppression. Other elements, such as isolation and using economic abuse, take the power of choice away from one partner and gives more power to the other.

As cited in Kelly and Johnson (2008) numerous studies have shown that although Coercive Controlling Violence does not *always* [emphasis in original] involve frequent violence, “on average its violence is more frequent and severe than other types of intimate partner violence” and becomes incrementally more violent over time (p. 482). Additionally, there are elements of the Power and Control Wheel that are often reported as having a more enduring impact than physical effects as they may result in major psychological effects including fear and anxiety, loss of self-esteem, depression, and posttraumatic stress (Kelly & Johnson, 2008). For this research project I explored the *types of abuse* and *the impact of physical versus psychological IPV* on the women I interviewed.

Rationale for using Grounded Theory

Existing theories that I reviewed did not seem adequate to address the research focus of this study, therefore I decided grounded theory was a better choice for my method of analysis. Similar to Lempert (1997), who chose grounded theory for her research on the help-seeking process of abused women because she found that most of the existing research on abused women’s help-seeking centred on community shelters, with a focus on police and/or medical

responses, I questioned the data on IPV in affluent households as I believe that women from middle to upper-middle class households rarely seek help from shelters or report IPV to the police. Fitting women's experiences into the predefined codes of previous research by feminist theorists (such as Dobash & Dobash, 1979) "limits theorizing on the range of variations of women's experiences, and reduces the complexity of the situation in which it transpires" (p. 292). Because grounded theory methodology stresses the discovery of the development of theory "from the ground up", Lempert (1997) employed grounded theory methodology in her research and analysis of data on abused women seeking *informally* structured help that centred on *how* women in violent relationships interpret their experiences and *how* those meanings affect their help-seeking processes. Lempert (1997) concluded that a "failure to account for the perspectives of the women results in assistance built on theory, ideology, and/or prior conceptualizations that are not consonant with battered women's lived experience" (p. 306), and suggested that rethinking and conceptualizing "help" would aid in the development of more effective programs and solutions for the issue of IPV. Similar to Lempert's (1997) work, I focused on *how* women experience IPV and what meanings come out of that exploration.

Creswell (2007) adds that grounded theory is of value when 1) either a theory is unavailable to explain a process, 2) when existing literature models base the research on samples other than those of interest for a project, or 3) when existing theories are incomplete because they don't address "potentially valuable variables of interest to the researcher" (p. 66). I believe that my research project fits all three of these reasons which informed my choice to employ grounded theory: 1) I have not found a theory on IPV that adequately explains IPV as I experienced it; 2) the existing research that I have uncovered focuses primarily on lower income

households and 3) existing theories do not address the phenomenon of IPV against women from middle to upper-middle income households.

Definitions of Intimate Partner Violence against Women

“Abuse is also called family violence, domestic violence or intimate partner violence” (Cottrell, 2015, p. 2). Nova Scotia’s Domestic Violence Action Plan define abuse as “deliberate and purposeful violence, abuse, and intimidation perpetrated by one person against another in an intimate relationship” and that it can occur in any relationship, while “women are primarily the victims and men are primarily the perpetrators” (Cottrell, 2015, p. 3).

Intimate partner violence can occur in many types of relationships and can be experienced by women against women, women against men, or men against women. For the purpose of this study the focus was only on IPV against women by men. In addition, the area of focus was narrowed to women who lived in middle to upper-middle class household. I chose this focused demographic because I personally experienced IPV and was compelled to undertake a Masters degree in Women and Gender Studies to study IPV against affluent women.

Intimate Partner Violence against Affluent Women. Despite careful and thorough review of literature on IPV, i.e. academic journals and reports, autobiographies, and books written on the topic of IPV in search of theories or explanations of middle to upper-middle scale IPV, I found very little research on women from middle to upper-middle class households and their experience with IPV. As mentioned previously, some feminist researchers have stated that domestic violence can, and does, occur in every socio-economic location (e.g. Atkinson et al., 2005; Kwesiga et al., 2007; MacDowell, 2009; Sauv , J. & Burns, M., 2009).

Dr. Susan Weitzman, a clinical psychotherapist, is considered to be the first person to publish work on “Upscale Violence”. Her work is cited in numerous journal and newspaper

articles, including Elizabeth MacDowell's (2009) investigation and report on the media coverage of a domestic violence-suicide case in an affluent community in Los Angeles, California. (See also Bellow, 2005; Hattery, 2009; Horner, 2005; and Luthar, 2003). Weitzman (2000) puts forth several possible reasons for the lack of research on the topic of IPV against affluent women, including the pressure women felt, both internally and externally, to remain silent about the abuse; injuries sustained from an abusive assault are either overlooked or ignored by professionals who are unaware of IPV against affluent women (or are afraid to intervene); lack of support from the academic community to pursue research on the topic; a misunderstanding of "need" and "oppression"; and/or the belief that affluent women have their own resources and therefore don't need the same support systems, social policy, and assistance as "poor" women.

I believe that all women are in danger of experiencing domestic violence and need support and help, regardless of their income. Furthermore, abuse of women from middle to middle-upper socio-economic levels needs to be better understood so that they too can obtain the support needed to overcome their oppression to live in security and safety with an assurance of well-being.

Types of Intimate Partner Violence. Intimate partner violence can take the form of physical, verbal, emotional/psychological, financial, sexual, and spiritual exploitation. It can be experienced individually or in combination with others forms of abuse (Cottrell, 2015; Sev'er, 2002). They explain that physical abuse can include, but is not limited to:

- Being punched
- Being slapped
- Being pushed
- Being kicked

- Being physically restrained or prevented from leaving
- Being threatened with an object or weapon to injure or cause to injure a person.

In the Nova Scotia's Advisory Council on the Status of Women's publication *Making Changes* (a book for women experiencing intimate partner violence), Cottrell (2015) outlines the forms of abuse as including some of the following actions:

Verbal

- Threatened verbally (stop crying...or else)
- Being called names
- Being blamed for ...
- Being yelled, shouted, or raised voice at
- Being insulted, using sarcastic or critical language

Emotional/Psychological

- Intimidation and harassment
- Threats to harm a person, a pet, or property
- Isolation
- Intentionally damaging property
- Hurting or killing pets
- Following or stalking, or online stalking and harassment
- Being jealous of friends, family, or accomplishments
- Putting down, ignoring
- Embarrassing in front of others
- Denying partner's feelings
- Lying

Financial

- Keeping a person from having control over their own finances or from making their own decisions
- Controlling by not paying the bills
- Spending all the money on thing he wants (including gambling)
- Taking money or pay

Sexual

- Being forced to perform sex with the partner or others
- Being forced to watch pornography
- Accused of having sex with other men
- Treated as a sex object
- Being compared sexually to others

Spiritual abuse can be harder to define and identify, yet is no less harmful than other forms of abuse as a person's spiritual life is deeply personal. Hotline (2015) states that spiritual abuse consists of:

- Being ridiculed or insulted for one's spiritual beliefs
- Being manipulated due to one's beliefs
- Using religious texts or beliefs to rationalize abusive behaviours

Interviews and research with women who have experienced intimate partner violence indicates that the impact of emotional/psychological abuse is deeper and more disturbing and longer lasting than the physical abuse they endured (Mihorean, 2005; Sev'er, 2002). Sev'er (2002) wrote, "What I want to acknowledge here are the powerful effects of the psychological degradation that women suffer, leaving them emotionally crippled for long periods, maybe even

scarring the way they see themselves for the rest of their lives” (p. 19). The participants of this study experienced one form, or a combination of forms, of intimate partner violence. As the findings show, all forms of IPV have had a significant impact on the participants, including emotional/psychological abuse.

Arts-Based Research

McNiff (2008) defines arts-based research as a methodology that makes use of the artistic process as a way to understand, examine, and express experiences of both the researcher and those involved in the research. Arts-based inquiry can be used to advance “a subversive political agenda that addresses issues of social inequity” and is extremely useful for research that exposes oppression (Finley, 2008). It also has the potential to reach multiple audiences by making scholarship more accessible (Knowles & Cole, 2008). As my research project addresses the issue of social inequity and oppression in the form of IPV, I felt that using an arts-based research method would provide a means of connecting with a broader audience (i.e. not exclusively academic) in a way that can potentially enhance their understanding of IPV in middle to upper-middle class households, and may impact a cultural transformation, even if only on a small scale.

I incorporated the arts-based approach using autoethnography which is an approach to research that describes and analyzes (*graphy*) personal experiences (*auto*) so we can better understand a cultural experience (*ethno*) (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). A relatively new research method, autoethnography has the power to provide an opening in the self for honest and deep reflection, an exploration into better knowing ourselves and our relationships with others (Holman Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013). Neyman (as cited in Denzin, 1989) “...argues that auto-ethnographic research is embedded in the researcher’s most important events of life, and brings to the surface hard to solve provocative problems that can be interpreted through thorough

examination and analysis” (Neyman, 2011, p. 7). As part of this project I was motivated to further my own understanding of my experience, as well as how other women in similar circumstances experienced IPV. Brooks (2011) states that autoethnography “provides an outlet for individuals to find their voice and value in their subjective experience” and that a person may come to know and understand themselves in deeper and more profound ways through the autoethnographic process (p. 15). I knew that I had packed away many memories of my relationship with my abusive husband and felt that it was important that I open the space to process my experience instead of continuing to hide from them.

I also explicitly acknowledge the value of the autoethnographic process and the insights it unearths for readers. Chang (2013) states that autoethnography’s primary source of data is the researcher’s personal experiences; its intent is to expand the understanding of a social phenomena. The processes it takes are variable and can result in different writing products, such as short stories, poetry, novels, and auto/ethnodrama.

Sometimes researchers question the methodological weight to assign to an individual case. In the early days of qualitative social sciences, researchers were required to make the argument supporting the validity of isolated cases. Today the value of qualitative work is widely recognized; however, the same cannot be said for autoethnographic methods. Researchers who employ these methods, including Carolyn Ellis who began writing, teaching, and defending autoethnography in the 1990s, occupy similar space as qualitative researchers did several decades ago, that is, in establishing the value of an individual’s story.

As my research project addresses the issue of social inequity and oppression in the form of IPV and I include more than my voice in the project, I wanted to find an arts-based research approach that would include my experience along with the experiences of other women. There

are a number of ways to incorporate the arts into research methodology, including poetry, visual art (such as photography, painting, and collage), creative nonfiction, dance, theatre, and music. The arts-based method that I used is called auto/ethnodrama and I chose this form with the intention of eventually producing auto/ethnotheatre (which is not part of this thesis) that can increase awareness of IPV against affluent women.

Saldaña (2011) describes ethnodrama as a play script that is derived from interview transcripts, participant observation, field notes, journal entries, memories/experiences, and/or media pieces. When the ethnodrama includes the researcher/playwright, as it does for this project, the piece becomes an auto/ethnodrama. Ethnotheatre is taking the written script (ethnodrama) to the stage, and its “primary goal is to entertain – to entertain ideas and to entertain for pleasure. With ethnographic performance, then, comes the responsibility to create an entertainingly informative experience for an audience, one that is aesthetically sound, intellectually rich, and emotionally evocative” (Saldana, 2003, p. 220). Saldana (2003) says that writing for the stage using ethnotheatre not only employs conventions of theatrical production but that the criteria of entertaining differs from the criteria of ethnography written for articles or books’ goal, which is to “educate” or “enlighten”.

According to Saldaña (2011) there are several purposes for producing ethnodrama, including advancing social awareness, providing a public forum, creating a space for marginalized voices to be heard, and/or addressing an agenda for social justice or social change. I believe that the social awareness agenda, which helps audiences to become attuned to the issue of (IPV) and the space that this project created for middle to upper-middle class women experiencing IPV to tell their story of IPV, aligned with the overall goal of this research project– to inform community and instigate change. I believe there is value in the message and the

content these stories impart, and in increasing awareness that IPV impacts women from middle to upper middle socio-economic locations, as well as the unique dimensions and intricacies of the experience. The additional purpose of ethnodrama is to provide a platform, in the case of this study as an auto/ethnodrama that will later be taken to the public stage, hoping the public will meaningfully connect with the experiences of IPV against affluent women. In isolation, a single piece of art can do little to change social consciousness; however, opportunities to engage in such material are likely to arise in multiple settings. Collectively, through a shift in consciousness and awareness of this topic, social awareness can change such that there could be an enhanced commitment to recognize and combat IPV against affluent women. Examples of ethnodramas that are publicly accessible include *Street Rat* by Johnny Saldaña, *A Chorus Line* by Michael Bennett, and *The Vagina Monologues* by Eve Ensler (Nedashkovskaya, 2008). They are all unique in their subject matter yet similar in their desire to create space for voices to be heard.

The overall purpose of ethnodrama and ethnotheatre is to “*progressively advance its source participants, creators, body of dramatic literature, readers, audiences, and the broader communities they involve, to new and richer domains of social and artistic meaning*” (Saldaña, 2011, p. 33, emphasis in original). I believe that this methodology provides the space for enhanced understanding of IPV, especially against affluent women. As Mienczakowski (2009) states, “the purpose of ethnodrama or ethnotheatre/performance is to share the lived experience of our informants and influence change” (p. 327). White and Belliveau (2011) summarize research-based theatre (ethnodrama) as a way to enhance understanding of the experiences of groups other than one’s own while providing researchers the opportunity to present their research performatively and to create a viable means for others (the readers and the audience) to

experience the research context on a level that may not be achieved through reading the data exclusively. Mienczakowski and Moore (2008) note that:

Performing data is an immensely powerful way of presenting research. There is potential to reach within both the individual actors and individual audience members and elicit an emotional, potentially epiphanal response to the topic being targeted; thus, as a process it can be seen as possibly emancipatory and cathartic. (p. 452-453)

I feel that using auto/ethnodrama allowed me an outlet to find and express my voice, and also enabled the women who participated through the interactive interviews to find their own voice in expressing their experiences with IPV - a voice that others need to hear - and they need to be given the space to find their footing in gaining confidence in overcoming self-doubt and fear (Tullis Owen, McRae, Adams, & Vitale, 2008). The women who participated will also receive a copy of the auto/ethndrama and see their own voice among the other voices. I also hope that through future publications of this study, as well as staged productions of the study's findings, other women will find and share their voices.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Feminist Standpoint Theory

My research was conducted using feminist standpoint theory as a methodological approach. Feminist standpoint theory is based on the argument that feminist social science should use women's experiences instead of men's as the point of departure for research because women's lives and roles in society differ from men's so women hold a different type of knowledge (Jaggar, 2008). Feminist epistemology suggests that it is important to include women's voices so that a shift in perspective can occur, enabling women to participate in the practice of science and knowledge as well as for oppressed groups to describe experiences that are different from the norm and voice the value of this difference (Narayan, 2004). Jaggar (2008) explains that women's social location provides a perspective that is different from, and challenging to, male-biased conventional forms of knowledge. Sprague (2005) states that feminist standpoint theory privileges the standpoint of women who occupy diverse locations due to race, class, and other areas of social stratification, and recognizes that women may be oppressed in some situations, while at the same time, privileged in others. Additionally, creating knowledge that empowers the disadvantaged gives people an opportunity to see the problems and issues from a different viewpoint.

A reward of feminist standpoint theory is to liberate women from the dominance of their oppressions, or oppressors, regardless of their social location, via their awareness of that oppression and how it contrasts with the dominant viewpoints and perceptions of conventional society (Jaggar, 2008). Therefore, regardless of the perceived social status privilege my participants hold, feminist standpoint theory acknowledges that we can be oppressed through the IPV experiences that we share. I also believe that feminist standpoint theory recognizes that even

within a group that share a common location or standpoint, there are multiple narratives. Harding (2008) notes there are two types of differences that support standpoint theory's position of starting research projects from issues arising in women's lives: politically assigned locations (e.g. class, racism, imperialism, sexism) and culturally created locations (e.g. Chinese vs. Puerto Rican). The women who participated in this research project are seen as privileged by many. Coming from middle to upper-middle class socio-economic locations, and in some cases holding positions of power in a work environment (see Appendix I for employment status data), they might appear to "have it all". Feminist standpoint theory allows for the recognition of their privilege in this aspect, yet also supports that they may be oppressed in other situations, specifically in the case of this research project their experience with IPV.

Autoethnography

As noted in the literature review section, my thesis project incorporates autoethnography as a methodological approach to the research project. Autoethnography is a phenomenological approach to writing and research that begins with personal experiences and involves a back-and-forth movement between "experiencing and examining a vulnerable self and observing and revealing the broader context of that experience" (Ellis, 2007, p. 14). A phenomenological study includes rich description and seeks to draw meaning from it in order to describe the dimensions of an experience shared by several people. In the case of autoethnography, a phenomenological approach is taken to the study of the self, in this case the writer/researcher, to gain an understanding of the meanings that are embodied in those experiences (Humbert, Bess, & Mowery, 2013). By incorporating the constructivist grounded theory approach, I examined the transcripts of all interview participants with the intent of drawing meaning through the complexity of their narratives.

Through coding the interview transcripts, including my own, and writing the results, I dove deeper into my own experience with IPV and was comforted to know that I was not alone in my experience. As I have never consulted with a professional counsellor familiar with IPV and related trauma, I felt alone and embarrassed by my involvement in an abusive relationship. I discovered many similarities between my story and that of other women and was able to reflect on it and gain further understanding of my own experience.

Combining Feminist Standpoint Theory, Autoethnography, and Grounded Theory

I expect that with any chosen method and methodology, the question of compatibility can arise. It certainly arose as I made the decision to marry feminist standpoint theory, autoethnography, and grounded theory in my research project. I saw an alignment between feminist standpoint theory and autoethnography in that the standpoint or social location of the research participants, including myself, informed the autoethnographic work. Standpoint theory recognizes the unique situation of a group and autoethnography provides an opportunity to express experiences that arise from that specific standpoint.

Additionally, autoethnography and standpoint theory both provide space for silent voices to be heard. One theme of standpoint theory concerns areas where power is erased and voice regarding the oppression is silent (Collins, 1997). Smith (1974), in speaking of the women's movement commitment to find voice for those who are marginalized and silenced, said that women need to speak from their experience so they can gain knowledge on an issue where it has not previously existed. According to Smith (1974) "the only way to know a socially constructed world is knowing it from within. We can never stand outside it" (p. 11). Autoethnography provided an avenue for me to explore IPV from the inside with feminist standpoint theory as the

starting point and the phenomenological approach of ethnography/autoethnography through which, I believe, a depth of understanding the experience of mid-scale IPV emerged.

The combination of feminist standpoint theory and autoethnography formed a whole that provided an overarching umbrella for my research project, with grounded theory serving as the supportive stem or root. Constructivist grounded theory and autoethnography both allow for researcher involvement, as the focus of study (autoethnography), and for co-construction with the research participants of lived experiences in the findings. It was important that I be able to tell my own story, and to combine my voice with the voices of other women. The “marriage” of methodology and method can be explained in a number of ways. Charmaz and Mitchell (2001) claims that the strategies in grounded theory can help ethnographers and autoethnographers gain a more complete picture of the self and the setting and help the researcher to focus, structure, and organize data collected through a variety of sources. By using the grounded theory emphasis on comparative method, researchers are led to “1) compare data with data from the beginning of the research, not after all the data is in; 2) compare data with emerging categories; and 3) demonstrate relations between concepts and categories” (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001, p. 161). Grounded theory encourages the researcher to get involved in their research, supports the notion of constructivism, and allows researchers to become absorbed in the data (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001). I was not separate from the data and the project as I was a part of it.

Compatibility between autoethnography and grounded theory stems from similarities in the way that data is treated. Ethnography and autoethnography observe and analyze behaviour, and use thick descriptions in their notes and writing processes. Both aim to obtain information and description of a phenomenon, and use similar methods to meet this objective (Pettigrew, 2000). Rich, or thick, data is a term coined by Clifford Geertz in 1973 to describe his method of

doing ethnography. Since then, the term has been used in a variety of fields, including literature and in grounded theory. Rich data provides a detailed, often narrative, account of a person’s experience and includes the recording of circumstances and other details that characterize an event (Lin, 2013). This type of data is integral to grounded theory analysis as “thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings” (Denizen as cited in Lin, 2013, p. 1). I believe that by gathering and analyzing rich data using grounded theory methods, I was able to appropriately reflect the experiences of my research participants who experienced IPV.

Pace (2012) suggests that “autoethnographers who wish to take an analytic approach to their work may benefit from the analytic strategies that are used in the grounded theory research method” (p. 6). There are five key features of analytic ethnography as authored by Anderson (2006, p. 5). I incorporated each of them into the design and methods I followed in my thesis, specifically:

Key Features	What I Achieved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the researcher is a <i>complete member</i> of the social world under study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> as a survivor of middle to middle-upper class IPV, I was a member of the group I studied
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the researcher engages in <i>analytical reflexivity</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I recognized the need to analyze data and employed reflexivity (see page 36)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the researcher’s <i>self</i> is visible within the narrative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> through the autoethnographical aspect of my research project, I told my own story of IPV
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the researcher <i>engages</i> in dialogue with <i>informants</i> beyond the self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> incorporating intensive interviews with participants, extensive research and readings in the subject matter took the research beyond my own experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the researcher demonstrates a commitment to <i>theoretical analysis</i>, not just capturing what is going on in an individual life or socio-cultural environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I followed coding procedures (see Chapter 4) to analyze interview transcripts and developed focused codes, categories, and themes (Charmaz, 2014)

Theoretical analysis is performed when analyzing autoethnographic stories, journals, emails, memos, and other forms of literature by looking for elements that develop into meaningful units or themes (Pace, 2012). Some autoethnographers object to the term “analytic autoethnography” and have suggested incorporating analysis into an ethnographic study through “thematic analysis of narrative” (Pace, 2012). Ellis (2004) describes the process:

The author might or might not decide to add another layer of analysis by stepping back from the text and theorizing about the story from a sociological, communicational, or other disciplinary perspective... ‘Thematic analysis’ refers to treating stories as data and using analysis to arrive at themes that illuminate the content and hold within or across stories. (p. 196)

She further notes that by placing the emphasis on the abstract analysis rather than on the stories themselves, the researcher is incorporating the grounded theory approach by presenting the findings in the form of categories and theory (Ellis, 2004). Incorporating the thematic analysis approach and treating the stories as pieces of data, I developed focused codes and categories (described in the Methods Chapter 4) and thereby discovered themes evident in the in-person interviews and author interviews through autoethnography⁴.

I agree with Pace (2012) and Pettigrew (2000) that the combination of autoethnography/ethnography methods and grounded theory produced a level of detail and new insights that may have been unavailable from other methodologies, and allowed for “flexible, intuitive, practice-led approach to research in the creative...arts” (Pace, p. 13). I also add that feminist standpoint theory deepened the level of detail and provided insights into the findings. For these reasons, I believe that the combination of feminist standpoint theory,

autoethnographical methods, and grounded theory worked well applied to the study of IPV against affluent women.

CHAPTER 4: METHODS

There was one area of focus for this research project: To explore the dimensions of the experience of IPV for women in middle to upper-middle socio-economic situations. The nature and intent of the project naturally led to a qualitative approach. Sofaer (1999) wrote:

Qualitative research methods are valuable in providing rich description of complex phenomena; tracking unique or unexpected events; illuminating the experience and interpretation of events...; giving voice to those whose views are rarely heard; conducting initial explorations to develop theories and to generate and even test hypotheses; and moving toward explanations. (p. 1101)

It was imperative that I explored the stories I heard, read, or wrote myself with an intention to give voice to a phenomenon that is complex and rarely researched, heard, or understood. These stories were drawn from in-person interviews with my research participants, through autobiographical accounts of women who wrote books on IPV, and through my personal journals and poetry. These sources were supplemented by occasional media accounts of stories specific to IPV against affluent women.

Participant Recruitment and Selection

There were several criteria to be met by the participants in this study. They were required to be English speaking women over the age of 25 who directly experienced IPV and co-habitated with their violent partner for more than one year. They must have been out of the co-habiting relationship for a minimum of one year. These criteria were put in place to minimize potential risk for women participating in the study, and myself as the researcher, as the risk of IPV is high at the time of planning and immediately after a separation. In addition, they had a household income in the range between \$60,000 (middle income) to \$125,000 (upper-middle income) at the

time of the abusive relationship to fulfill the focus on women from middle to upper-middle class households (Appendix I and Appendix II).

Both qualitative method's and grounded theory's evaluation of sample size and adequacy centres on gaining an in-depth understanding of the phenomena under study and typically involves a relatively small number of participants with the goal of reaching saturated core theoretical categories (Bowen, 2008; Charmaz, 2014). My rough expectation was that I would need between eight to twelve women participants to reach saturation, which was dependent on information emerging through the interview and analysis processes. I was successful in recruiting five women through my social network, place of employment, informal word of mouth, and a volunteer transition house association in addition to three authors "interviewed" through their autobiographies.

To aid in participant recruitment, I designed pamphlets (Appendix III) with a short explanation of the research project and criteria. These pamphlets were circulated through my volunteer association, friends and family, and place of employment. Three research participants were successfully recruited through the distribution of the pamphlet. One participant contacted me through my LinkedIn profile, and two met the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) requirements for such contacts, both of whom I knew prior to this project (see the Ethical Considerations Section for details). There was only one woman I met with through a yoga class who chose not to participate in the research project.

Procedure

Women who presented themselves as meeting the criteria for inclusion in the study were asked to participate in one 1 ½ - 2 hour interactive/intensive interview. After each interview the audio file was transferred to my personal computer, which is password-protected and stored in

my locked home office. The file was also converted to a zip file with a unique password and the file was named with an alpha-numeric code and a pseudonym of the woman's choosing for her auto/ethnodrama character.

The zip file was hand delivered to a transcriptionist, who also signed a Confidentiality Agreement (Appendix IV) and the transcribed interviews were returned to me in the same fashion. The transcribed interviews, data analysis materials, and audio recordings were saved to a password-protected external hard drive to decrease security risks. It was not until I received the transcribed word file for the first three interviews that I began data coding. In keeping with grounded theory, I employed constant comparison methods to develop concepts from the data during collection, coding, and analyzing (Charmaz, 2014; Kolb, 2012). Following each interview I journalled my reactions, thoughts, questions, and reflected on my own experience with IPV. These journal notes as well as memos kept throughout the research process were a part of the analysis process and aided me in forging the direction and shape of the autoethnography.

I used MindMapping 4.5© to guide the timelines and components of the project, from initial planning stages to the coding and categorization process, and even with the discussion of the finding. Mind mapping is a creative way to visually organize information in a non-linear diagram form. Mind maps radiate from a central idea, in this case, Thesis, with branches representing sections of the project. Mind mapping takes a linear list of information to a colourful, organized diagram that also has flexibility and fluidity as branches can be moved, linked together, or re-structured. I used the scheduling option in MindMapping 4.5© to aid in the project management aspect of the project. The scheduler is essentially a Gantt Chart with timelines and colour for topics that come directly from the mind map (see Appendix V for picture).

In-Person Interviews with the Women

Six women, myself included, were interviewed using a semi-structured, interactive, face-to-face interview style. I was interviewed by my thesis supervisor and the other interviews were conducted by me alone. The interactive, semi-structured interview combines a pre-determined set of open questions (Appendix VI) designed to prompt discussion, with the opportunity to further explore themes or responses. Unlike structured interviews, the semi-structured interview does not limit interviewees to a set of pre-determined answers. Providing for interaction between the interviewee and myself created a space for women to share their stories and their memories in a safe, relaxed manner.

Interactive or intensive interviews allow for the researcher and participants to explore together the issues that transpire from conversations and open the space for expressing valuable stories. The focus in the interview is on the story that evolves as the researcher and participant interact and develop a relationship of trust, and is best used when both parties have had personal experience with the topic (Ellis, 2004). I wanted to hear the current construction of the stories and experiences that my research participants had to offer me and I needed to honour their stories as they presented them with respect and lack of judgement. Each story was as unique as the woman who lived it, and I found that employing an interactive or intensive interview style facilitated getting the rich descriptions I needed to produce a full and respectful representation of all the stories, including my own.

I arranged a pre-interview meeting with one woman who I did not know prior to this study before scheduling an interview. The purpose of the meeting was to explain the project, discuss her potential involvement, and to share some of my story with her. This pre-interview

meeting helped to establish my credibility and to create a space for us to connect with ease during the interview.

Four of the five women I interviewed invited me to their home to conduct the interview. It was important that they chose a place where they felt comfortable and safe and offered privacy and limited interruption. One woman chose to meet at my home office as it was difficult for her to have privacy in her home. I had already confirmed that all the women met the criteria and understood the nature of the study: together we went through the informed consent letter (Appendix VII), the permission to be audio-taped form (Appendix VIII), and the request to see the final auto/ethnodrama once complete (Appendix IX). I provided the informed consent form to the one woman I did not know prior to the study in advance of our meeting. I brought two copies of all consent forms to each interview and we both signed them prior to beginning the interview questions. Each woman was given a copy of the signed documents to keep. All of the women were university educated, four with a post-graduate degree, and they all had previous knowledge of the concept of informed consent. The women who participated in the project represented a wide age range (from 32–57+), varying lengths of relationship (20 months to 17 years), and marital status (both common-law and married). I used MAXQDA1 (a software program designed for qualitative data analysis) to create a Variable Matrix of the quantitative data collected to capture elements such as age, length of relationship, and income level. It was extremely useful to see a snapshot of the women's demographics to locate the sample of and to compare differences and similarities (see Appendix X).

I ensured that all of the women knew that they could stop the recording or the interview at any time and I provided an extensive list of counselling resources in the event the interview triggered emotional reactions and they needed to reach out to a professional for support. The list

of resources can be found in the Informed Consent Letter (Appendix VII) and the process is discussed in more detail in the Ethical Issues section. One woman did ask to pause the recording to share a name with me off record and then immediately proceeded with the interview. The other interviews proceeded without any interruptions.

It was imperative that each participant was comfortable telling me the intimate details of her experience with IPV. For the women who I knew prior to this project, trust was not an issue. However, I was surprised at how easily other participants shared their stories with me and trusted me to treat their accounts with respect. I believe this occurred because I am so open with my own experience and truly cared about hearing their account.

Cotterill (as cited in Lyons & Chipperfield, 2000) suggests that the status of “friendly stranger” is appropriate because the interviewer does not exercise social control over the interviewee, especially in a relationship that will end. It may be that because I was a “friendly stranger” women who I did not have a previous relationship with, other than casually through social networks or common place of employment, were able to open up and share intimate details of their experience with me.

Additionally, they all supported the idea of taking the auto/ethnodrama produced for this project to the stage in the future so the general public and community would have the opportunity to be exposed to IPV and gain fuller understanding. Corbin and Morse (2003) noted several benefits of qualitative interviews, including that interviews can a) serve as a catharsis, b) provide self-acknowledgement and validation, c) contribute to a sense of purpose, d) promote healing, and e) give voice to the voiceless and disenfranchised. I had conversations or received correspondence with all of the women after their interviews that indicated that they benefited in all of these areas.

My role during the interview was to guide the conversation and to listen to their story without judgement or inserting my interpretation of their stories. In the words of one participant, who sent me a journal entry she made post-interview:

In the role of interviewer, her job was to listen, not to interact with my story. After she left, I found myself at times weeping for no explicable reason. The tears just flowed. I am reminded of the power of just listening, not interpreting, not trying to put words in someone's mouth. It is a witnessing that can bring another person into being. Can surface what needs to be surfaced for healing.

I attribute my interview skills to many years of practice as a business and image coach, and as a facilitator in a variety of training environments. My skill set includes the ability to establish rapport and trust, to gather information without controlling the flow of information, authenticity, intuitiveness, and receptivity (Corbin & Morse, 2003).

Author Interviews through Autobiography

I applied the concepts of ethnographic data collection using secondary data, in this case published autobiographies in book form. Secondary data refers to using existing data for research purposes and can include personal and individual data such as journals, diaries, biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs (Mathias & Smith, 2016; Whitehead, 2005; Whiteside, Mills & McCalman, 2012). Secondary data analysis can be useful in “identifying gaps in what is known about particular research topics” (Whitehead, 2005, p. 3). Additionally, secondary data is useful to include when using grounded theory, as it can support or enable reaching saturation by clarifying or confirming the themes that emerged from the analysis of in-person interviews (Whiteside et al., 2012).

The use of secondary data along with data collected from in-person interviews can be viewed as adopting the framework of triangulation. While triangulation is sometimes referred to as using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, (Hesse-Biber, 2012; Terrell, 2012), Denzin (as cited in Mathias & Smith, 2016) said it can be the “combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon” and can be used to confirm findings, explore new insights and provide a more complete portrayal of the issue in question (Mathias & Smith, 2016).

Autobiographies can convey the author’s lived experience through their thinking and feeling and can generate new understandings about an experience. In the health environment, published autobiographies containing narratives of experiences with illness have been useful in teaching healthcare professionals (Power, Jackson, Weaver, Wilkes, & Carter, 2012). Other disciplines that incorporate the use of autobiographies include leadership/management (i.e. use of autobiographies to assess whether a president’s personality influences leadership effectiveness); entrepreneurship (i.e. use of biographies and autobiographies to examine the stories of entrepreneurs to gain understanding of them); and sociology (i.e. explore how narratives can lead to discoveries in scholarly fields) (Mathias & Smith, 2016). Given their array of content and breadth of individuals who may relate to an area of interest, autobiographies are uniquely suited as a primary data source for many research questions and can serve as an important source of data to confirm findings (Mathias & Smith, 2016). They provide a table titled “Prior Academic Research Using Autobiographies Ideas for Incorporation Into Organizational Research Designs” with over 25 examples of research studies and articles using autobiographies as a data source, including J. N. Hagemaster’s article “Life history: A qualitative

method of research”, published in the *Journal of Advanced Nursing* in 1992 (Mathias & Smith, 2016).

The autobiographies used for this study were books written by women who experienced IPV in their marriages. Based on their writings, I created transcripts that were similar to that of the of in-person interviews. The authors thus interviewed were:

Author & Position	Autobiography	Synopsis of IPV Experience
Charlotte Fedders: Wife of John Fedders, Chief Enforcement Officer, Securities and Exchange Commission	Fedders, C. & Elliott, L. (1987). <i>Shattered dreams</i> . New York: Harper & Row.	Her story of 16 years of marriage, and subsequent recovery from, an abusive husband in a powerful position.
Christi Paul: Anchor of CNN and HLN	Paul, C. (2012). <i>Love isn't supposed to hurt</i> . (A. E. Version, Ed.) Tyndale.	Her story of hope as she shares a story of coercive control with her first husband, her self-discovery, and recovery from IPV.
Leslie Morgan Steiner: Journalist, author and businesswoman	Steiner, L.M. (2010). <i>Crazy Love</i> . New York: St. Martin's.	A memoir of love and violence.

I treated the authors of the three autobiographies included in this study as interview participants and created interview transcripts by seeking answers in their autobiographical books to the same questions I covered in the in-person interviews. I also followed the same coding process as I used with in-person interview transcripts. As I was able to access additional personal information, mostly demographic, through the internet I was able to create a portfolio of information similar to that of participants whom I met face-to-face.

One of the research approaches that includes incorporating autobiographies is called pattern matching (Mathias & Smith, 2016; Walliman, 2011). Pattern matching is a technique in which themes and trends in the codes and categories are tracked and confirmed with

autobiographical materials. As the autobiographies used in this project were the last interviews I conducted, they were helpful in providing additional data and confirming previously created themes and categories originating from the six face-to-face interviews.

Another benefit of using author interviews through autobiography was that it expanded the demographic scope of the project. All three authors are American: Charlotte Fedders is from Maryland, Leslie Morgan Steiner is from New York, and Christi Paul is from Ohio. By including these authors in the project, I avoided one of the disadvantages of snowball sampling, which is the bias that can arise from oversampling a particular network of peers. Two of my in-person participants know each other and work for the same organization, two of the participants knew me before the project, and one participant was familiar with my work at a local transition house. While they did not refer each other to the project, there are similarities in their social locations that could have limited the range of their experiences. The additional author interview transcripts and coded analysis added breadth to the project, while confirming saturation.

Reflexivity in Research

A fundamental characteristic of autoethnographic and feminist inquiry, incorporated across a range of research data collection methods and applied in my research project, is termed “strong reflexivity” (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013). McCorkel and Myers (2003) introduced the term in making their case that researchers should subject themselves to the same level of scrutiny as they pursue with their participants. Charlotte Davis wrote (as cited in Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013) that “reflexivity expresses researchers’ awareness of their necessary connection to the research situation and hence their effects upon it” (pp. 72–73). To go even deeper, “strong reflexivity” involves an awareness between the researcher (in autoethnographer

role) and their settings, and participants and the reciprocal influence that may develop between them (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013).

I was influenced and affected by the stories of the women who participated in this research project and they may also have been affected by my story that I shared during the pre-interview and interview process. I agree with Hesse-Biber and Piatelli (2013) when they say that a methodology that is reflexive “can be a transformative process for researchers, participants, and the larger community of knowledge builders” (p. 560). I believe that through reflexivity, I and my participants gained a deeper insight into our experiences. Therefore, the insights gleaned through this process can form the basis for a auto/ethnodrama that has the ability to not only affect our lives, but the lives of those who experience our words.

Data Analysis Procedure

A tool that I found very useful in MAXQDA11⁵ was the logbook. Basically an electronic journal, the logbook time-stamped every entry and was useful in recording my actions, thoughts, and story ideas as I was coding, categorizing, comparing, and making links between the interview transcripts. The time-stamp allowed me to cross-reference the journal entry with the transcript or document I was working on while making the entry.

When all the in-person interviews and author interviews through autobiography had been coded and thematic categories established, I coded my personal stories, poems, and the journal entries I had made during and since the time of my marriage. These were the final documents that I coded, and I experienced a vast array of emotions as I processed the experience from my own eyes, that of my children’s, and my closest family members. I had letters from my daughter describing how she felt about my abusive husband and I had written in my journals the conversations I held with my sister and close friend during the time I sought refuge when I left

my husband the first time. I had forgotten the effect that my marriage had on others close to me, and was reminded of the overarching impact of IPV.

After completing my first pass through the in-person interviews, I decided to revisit the audio recording of each woman. I printed the code system for each interview and listened to the recorded interview as I reviewed the coding. Through listening, I was able to hear the vocal tones and nuances and through this I gained evidence to validate the themes for focused coded that I had created. I also heard additional variations of the themes and picked up more conversation that opened the space to explore new areas. For example, it was through listening to the in-person interviews that the Focused Codes “Rediscovering Self” and “Self/Soul Loss” developed.

Additionally, I was able to really pay attention to the implicit accounts in the stories, what I refer to as “the space between” what was said and what was really happening. In one interview, even though the transcriptionist had made note of the participant whispering, it was not until I listened to the recording that I was immersed once again in the strength and fragility of her story and could appreciate the deep impact her experience with IPV had on her.

Data Analysis Process

I incorporated Charmaz’s (2014) method of constructivist grounded theory to analyze the data I collected through (a) In-person interviews, (b) Author biographies, (c) My personal journals, stories, and poetry, and (d) First person accounts of IPV in popular and social media. Two examples of social media that I viewed are Leslie Morgan Steiner’s Ted Talk *Why domestic violence victims don’t leave*⁶, and Christi Paul’s videos on IPV posted on You Tube⁷, both authors I interviewed through autobiography (see Section Author Interviews through Autobiography on page 36).

Classic Grounded Theory versus Constructivist Grounded Theory.

Pace (2012) provides a comprehensive explanation of classic grounded theory as developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967):

The aim of this primarily inductive research method is to build theory rather than test it. Grounded concepts, relationships, and theories are suggested, not proven (Glaser 1978: 134; Glaser & Strauss 1967: 103). Grounded theory is formulated from data using a constant comparative method of analysis with four stages:

- open coding, which involves breaking the data down into significant concepts;
- theoretical coding, which involves reassembling the significant concepts with propositions about their relationships to each other;
- selective coding, which involves delimiting the analysis to only those concepts and relationships that are related to the core explanatory concept; and,
- sorting the theoretical memos into an outline and writing up the theory. (p. 7)

Classic grounded theory derives from positivism, in which the researcher is seen as a neutral observer and separate from the data. The goal is to use “an ongoing, systematic, and iterative process of data analysis that ultimately leads towards the generation of a substantive or formal theory” (Higginbottom & Lauridsen, 2014, p. 11). Mills, Bonner and Francis comment (as cited in Clarke, 2005) that Glaser claims the researcher must be “a tabula rasa, or a blank state” in order to develop legitimate theory (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006, p. 28). I was emotionally attached to my research project and explicitly included myself and my story in the research. I could not, and did not want to be, a ‘blank slate’; therefore, the classic model of grounded theory was not an appropriate research method for my project.

I chose to use the constructivist model of grounded theory rather than the classic approach. McCallin's article, "What is grounded theory?" (2009), introduced me to the constructivist approach to grounded theory developed by Kathy Charmaz (1983, 2006, 2014). McCallin suggests that the specific techniques of the classic model developed by Strauss and Corbin may be constraining, especially for the researcher who wants to place value on storytelling and an individual's interpretation of an experience, and suggests that Charmaz's (2006, 2014) constructivist model might be a model to follow (McCallin, 2009).

Kathy Charmaz developed the constructivist model of grounded theory in the mid-1990s as an alternative approach to classic grounded theory (Higginbottom & Lauridsen, 2014). She argues that researchers cannot separate themselves and their experiences from their research, nor can they remain objective from the data; rather that the researcher and researched are co-constructors in the creation of a theory (Higginbottom & Lauridsen, 2014). Subjectivity is also pivotal to standpoint theory and feminist perspectives.

Another key difference between classic and constructivist grounded theory is connected to the development of a theory. In classic grounded theory, one of the goals is to produce a theory and Glaser (2002) claims that the rigorous methods in grounded theory support the development of theory. Charmaz (2006, 2014) suggests that the researcher may open space for further research while not necessarily proposing a theory. As the researcher is enmeshed in the whole research process, using flexible guidelines and placing more emphasis on the views, beliefs, and feelings of individuals than on the precise methods of research, any conclusions that are developed are, for the most part, incomplete or inconclusive (Creswell, 2007). I did not seek (nor did I formulate) a theory from my research project so I found that the constructivist grounded theory principles were in alignment with my research approach and goals.

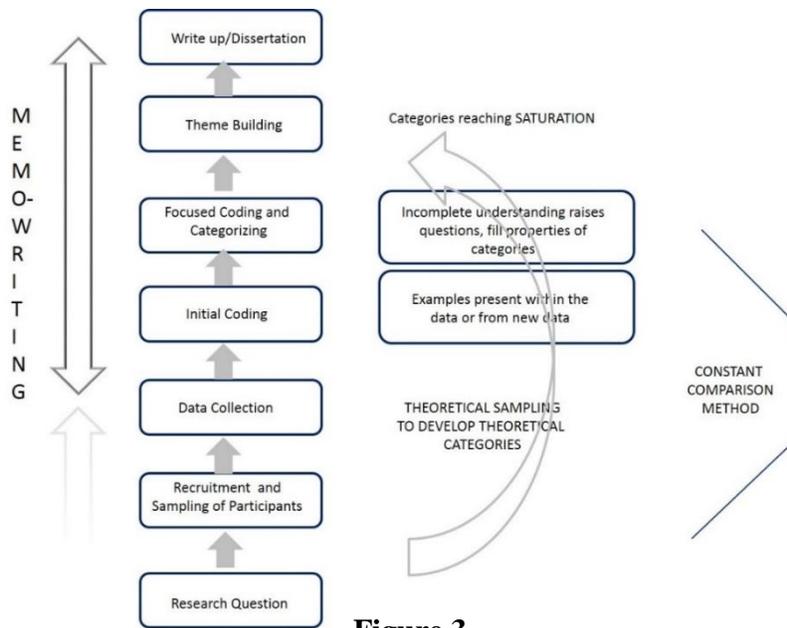


Figure 3
Charmaz (2014, p.18)

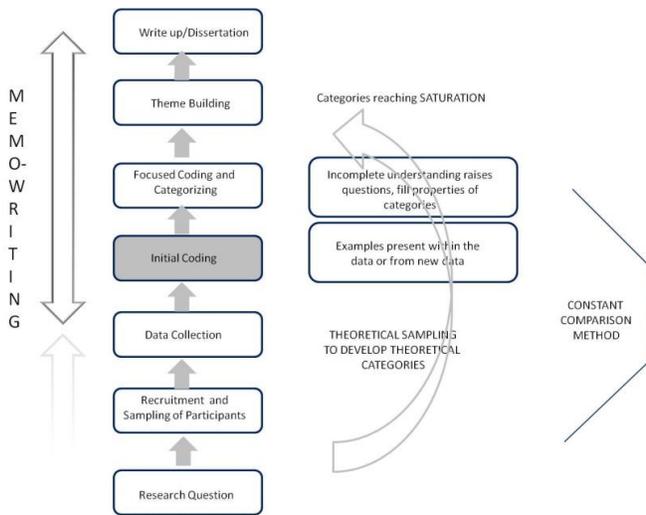
The visual representation of constructivist grounded theory, shown in Figure 3, illustrates that grounded theory research does not follow a linear process, as an insight or realization may happen at any time (indicated, for example, by the Memo-Writing done throughout the

process and the Constant Comparison Method during coding, as shown in Figure 3). I will explain how I used each step of the process in the section that follows.

Analysis of the in-person interview transcripts, author interviews through autobiography transcripts, my personal journals, stories, and poetry, and first person accounts of IPV in popular and social media, followed coding processes associated with the constructivist process of grounded theory using a cyclical method of data collection, coding, categorization, and theoretical sampling (Higginbottom & Lauridsen, 2014).

I used MAXQDA11 to assist me in analyzing, coding, organizing, and making sense of the data collected in the in-person interviews and author interviews through autobiography as well as the stories, poems, and other personal data I had collected.

Initial Coding Process. I started the analysis process through initial coding of each in-person interview, which meant studying “fragments of data—words, lines, segments, and incidents—closely for their analytic import” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 109). In this stage of analysis I



used line-by-line or coding with gerunds⁸ (e.g. searching, describing, explaining), as suggested by Charmaz (2014), as a way of bringing me closer to the data and delving deeper into the data by studying each fragment of our conversation.

It was important that I show care and commitment to the coding process as outlined

by Charmaz in remaining true to line-by-line or incident-with-incident coding (see Glossary) to guard against “imputing my motives, fears, or unresolved personal issues” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 133) to my collected transcripts and secondary data. By maintaining focus on individual lines or incidents, I had to “listen” to their account or reflections of their experience which kept me from creating my own story of the experience or from interpreting their accounts to fit into my own preconceived ideas. I referred to examples of initial coding in Charmaz’ book frequently when I worked on the coding of the transcribed interviews to keep me on track and to ensure that I was true to her process. Below is an example of initial coding from Charmaz’s *Constructing Grounded Theory, Second Edition*.

Table 1 Segment of Initial Coding, Charmaz (2014, p. 126)

Excerpt - Ruby, age 31, rape prevention specialist:

Initial Coding	Interview Statement
<p>Conveying multiple viewpoints Distinguishing between viewpoints Attributing responsibility to men Evaluating men’s increasing involvement Distinguishing between viewpoints Conveying multiple viewpoints; claiming men have elevated status in movement Critiquing reactions to men’s involvement Claiming men activists are romanticized Claiming inequity; claiming sexism Identifying and critiquing male privilege Perceiving men as “elevated,” “higher” Comparing men’s contributions to women’s Critiquing reactions to men, casting me as undeserving; comparing responses to men with responses to women.</p>	<p>I have a few different trains of thought about men’s involvement. One is, why in the hell wouldn’t they be involved? The overwhelming majority of perpetrators are men. It’s also about time more men are doing this work. So, that’s one thought I have—that they should be involved. But, at the same time, I’m sure not going to put anybody on a pedestal. I’ve seen that happen way to often... ‘Oh wow, look at this man. And he’s involved in the anti-sexual violence movement and isn’t that great!’ ‘Wow, he’s dreamy!’ There’s all this sexist stuff in this movement, ‘Oh well, it’s a man and men are better, so we will elevate them on this great pedestal...’ Even though what they’re saying is the exact same thing that Ida B. Wells said back in like 1824. I think it’s great that men are involved because they need to be, but I do not agree with putting men who are involved on a pedestal because women certainly haven’t been.</p>

To show the care I put in honouring Charmaz’s practices in coding transcripts, and therefore showing consistency in the manner I treated my participants’ descriptions, I include a segment of initial coding for one of my in-person interview stories.

Table 2 Segment of Initial Coding

Excerpt from Participant

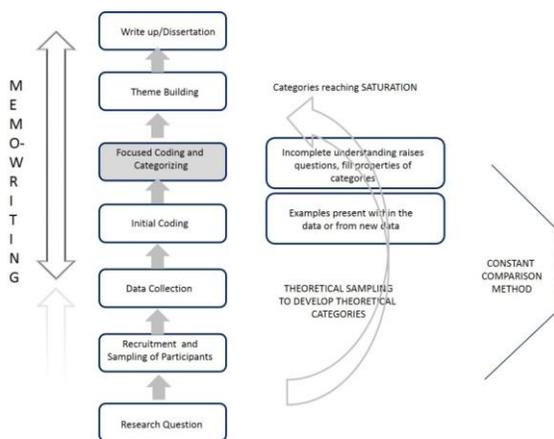
Initial Coding	Interview Statement
Stumbling through healing process on her own	I—In looking back, I wish that I had been in a place that I did take advantage of some kind of a support group or some kind of a talk place or something, so that I would have had a better understanding than my own stumbling through the healing process. Because I didn't. I, I was not, I was just, I couldn't, and so I, I, I think that I would have done that, but if I had been in a—I needed to be with people like me. I needed to be with people like me. And so, and
Feeling that talking/support group would have been helpful	
Needing to be with other women of similar circumstances	
Needing to be with people “like me”	
Realizing her story is significant	recognize that my story was significant even though I had never ended up in a hospital and I had never had a broken bone, or I had never had a black eye, or any of those things, that my story wasn't less significant. And I think that would have, if I'd talked to other women in similar circumstances, that, that would have helped me maybe really go, like, “Wow. This really is important, and it was not just me, and it wasn't all these things. I think I probably would have been—I think I would have been better moving through it.
Recognizing importance of her story, her experience	
Regretting not talking to others in similar circumstances	
Thinking talking to others would have helped her move through it, helped her heal	

Initial Coding Results. Sentences and paragraphs of transcribed text varied in length for each participant's in-person interview transcript. Some participants' answers were short and specific to the question asked while others expanded in the telling of their experience, or repeated themselves in the conversational style of the interactive interview. Due to the focused

nature of the data collection using the autobiographical materials, as well as the lack of conversational dialogue, autobiographical text yielded fewer lines of text and, therefore, coded segments. It took me approximately six hours to perform the initial coding for each in-person interview transcript (36 hours), and two hours for the author interviews through autobiography transcripts (six hours) for a total of 42 hours. Due to the concentration required to code using line-by-line and incident by incident processes, I worked on this stage of coding in 2-hour stretches, typically early in the morning. Table 3 summarizes the results of the Initial Coding Process.

Table 3 Initial Coding Results

Data Type	Initial Coding	
	# of sentences or paragraphs (transcription)	# of coded segments (lines or sections)
In-person Interviews	330 - 960	226 - 416
Author Interviews	90 - 100	158 - 178
My personal writing	460	42



Focused Coding Process. The next stage in

Charmaz’s process is focused coding and categorizing. Focused coding is using the most significant and/or frequent codes discovered in the initial coding process to categorize the codes into themes and patterns (Charmaz, 2014). During this stage, I made decisions about which initial codes made the most analytical sense in order to create

clear, direct, and complete categories. Often more conceptual than the initial line-by-line coding, they provide direction to analyze, synthesize, and conceptualize larger segments of data (Charmaz, 2014). The focused coding process took approximately two hours per transcribed interview (18 hours total).

I knew that I was at saturation, the point “when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of these core theoretical categories” (Charmaz, 2014 p. 213) when I found myself moving to focused coding during the process of initial coding of the fifth and sixth in-person interviews. Similar to Lancaster and Palframan (2009), who sought a “meaningful degree of saturation with the number of participants (six) who met the criteria” (p. 262), it was clear from the ongoing analysis of the transcripts that no further formulation of new categories was required. Once I had completed the focused coding using the interview transcripts I determined that I needed to listen to all the interviews to aid in the focused coding process. As I had remained very true to Charmaz (2014) process of line-by-line coding, I was concerned that I had missed the “space between” the words. As Charmaz (2014) noted when listing key requirements for intensive interviewing, it is important to follow up on the hints and implicit accounts in stories. I refer to that as the “space between” what is said and what is really happening, the pause or hesitation, the “oh, I didn’t really mean to say that”, the words that come out when you think no one is listening. I believe that is where the truth of experiences lives and where emergent understanding can happen.

Each in-person interview took approximately two hours to listen to and make notes; one additional hour to expand on the focused code system I had created based on initial coding and to create new focused codes based on the notes I had made. Prior to listening to each interview, I printed a copy of the code system on tabloid size (11 inches x 17 inches) paper with a wide

column beside the coded text. This allowed me to make notes, draw links between various coded segments, and aided in the process of refining focused codes and categories.

The focused coding process led me to a set of key words that showed up in numerous interview transcripts and other data sources. Examples of key words are: shame/embarrass (18), fear (22), gaslight (6), anger/angry/rage (22), idiot (19), and crazy (24). Table 4 shows the number of coded segment or lines of text, key words, and thematic focused codes or categories.

Table 4 Focused Coding Results

Focused Coding		
Coded Segments	Key Words	Thematic Categories
303	36	24

To ensure I remained true to Charmaz’s coding process, I again followed closely the tables she uses as examples in *Constructing Grounded Theory, Second Edition*.

Table 5 Segment of Focused Coding, Charmaz (2014, p. 145)

Focused Coding	Interview Statement
Going against medical advice	And so I went back to work on March 1st, even though I wasn’t supposed to. And then when I got there, they had a long meeting and they said I could no longer rest during the day. The only time I rested was at lunch time, which was my time, we were closed. And she said, my supervisor, said I couldn’t do that anymore, and I said, ‘It’s my time, you can’t tell me I can’t lay down.’ And they said, ‘Well, you’re not laying down on the couch that’s in there, it bothers the rest of the staff.’ So I went around and I talked to the rest of the staff, and they all said, ‘No, we didn’t say that, it was never even brought up.’ So I went back and I said, ‘You know, I was just talking to the rest of the staff, and it seems that nobody has a problem with it but you,’ and I said, ‘You aren’t even here at lunch time.’ And they still put it down that I couldn’t do that any longer. And then a couple of
Suffering as a moral status	
Making a moral claim	
Having a devalued moral status because of physical suffering	
Making a case for legitimate rights	

Seeing injustice Making claims for moral rights of personhood	months later one of the other staff started lying down at lunch time, and I said, you know, ‘This isn’t fair. She doesn’t even have a disability and she’s laying down,’ so I just started doing it.
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“Note that the interviewee, at no point in her testimony, says anything about either suffering or moral status. That was the terminology the researcher determined from interpreting the data and piecing together implied meanings to make them visible and occurred after coding numerous other interviews” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 146).

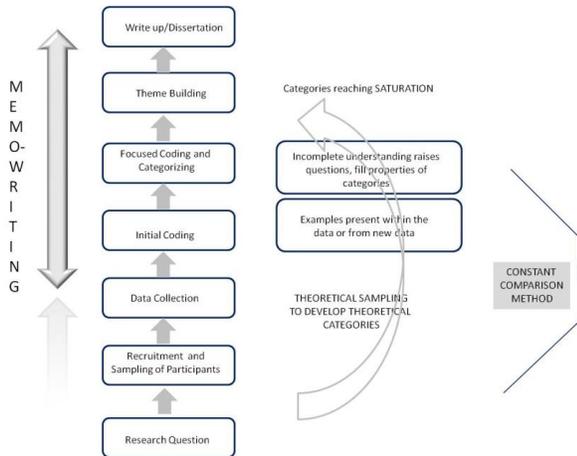
One of the codes I unearthed through the process of focused coding was “Rediscovering Self”. This was not language that was used by any research participant but a common theme that appeared when I was in process of focused coding. The following illustrates this focused code in several transcripts:

You know, I did -- I found out a lot about myself. I was able to develop all new friends and strengths through that that I didn’t even know existed. So just a much more, a much -- I’m me. I have got my own power back. I have my power. I have my power in my current relationship. That is never at stake, my power in my relationship. In fact, it’s more like I’m encouraged to own my own power, right, you know, so. Yeah. Just, it’s completely, completely new person. Completely different person. (Trish)

And then I remember the day when I kind of looked, sort of figuratively looked up and realized that all around the edges things were shifting and changing, which meant that something at the core also had to be shifting and changing. Otherwise that wouldn’t be, it wouldn’t be happening. It wouldn’t be all around me. And it was a while after that. I don’t know when, but a while after that, when I guess it landed

deeply enough in me, grounded deeply enough in me that I could actually take the steps to do the separation. (Mary)

Memo-Writing and Constant Comparison. In addition to coding, Charmaz (2014)



encourages the use of memo-writing, which are notes that prompt the researcher to analyze data and codes early in the research process, and to encourage constant comparison of the data during the analysis and coding process. Examples of memos I created in MAXQDA11 were notes attached to initial codes that suggested other interview transcripts to look at for recurring

themes, or a memo to link the line of code to a category, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Example of memos

Line of coded text	Memo
And I have, I've been different places getting e-mails from him where he has raged at me, where I am literally shaking. (Mary)	Still full of rage. Rage with others? RAGE
But I don't think I knew anything about the cycles and how they, it happens over time and, and how to see the warning signals in the beginning. (Kat)	Slow and steady – tie to Trish, Mary, Leslie...

I found the memos that I created in MAXQDA11 extremely helpful when sorting through the data. They helped me compare and link together the stories, ideas, and codes and initiated the process of categorizing stories for scene ideas for the auto/ethnodrama. Lillemor Hallberg (2006) declares that the process of making constant comparisons is the “core category” of grounded theory in which:

...every part of the data, i.e. emerging codes, categories, properties, and dimensions as well as different parts of the data, are constantly compared with all other parts of the data to explore variations, similarities and differences in data. The constant comparison method of grounded theory is strict enough to be helpful to the researcher in exploring the content and meaning in the data, but not saddled with so many strict rules to be too rigid for a grounded theory researcher. (p. 143)

Creating the Auto/ethnodrama

Tamas (2011), who used autoethnography in play script format, wrote of the process she used when digesting the interview transcripts for her research project in the book that inspired me to use auto/ethnodrama for this project. She said that she literally chopped up the transcribed records, saying, “I’ll leave a few stories intact – longer bits where we hear one voice, like an aria or solo passage – but most of it will get chopped up...I’ll sort and tape them back together, clustered around themes and tensions, to see what lines emerge” (Tamas, 2011, p. 97).

Clustering Focused Codes into Auto/ethnodrama Scenes. Like Tamas (2011), I cut up my spreadsheets of coded segments of text and stories based on the focused coding categories, hoping that by organizing them into themes and scenes of importance to the story, I would “combine voices to call out the tensions and harmonies...like a piece of choral music” (p. 97), to create the *Voices of IPV Against Affluent Women*.

Once I had the lines of text from the interviews relating to each focused code cut into strips, I attached them to the panes of glass in my French doors which gave physical form to each category or theme. It felt like an art installation, which I titled *Giving Light to their Voices*. As I was attaching each line I acknowledged the woman who had gifted me with her story, softly

saying her name with deep reverence. Often, when placing the lines of text on the panes of glass, I would add a note to explore a theme or link to another focused code.

This method is akin to what is referred to as clustering and is used as a prewriting practice for memo-writing. Gabriele Rico (as cited in Charmaz, 2014) explains that clustering gives you a non-linear, visual, and flexible technique to understand and organize your material. I took pictures of each pane of glass (Appendix XI) and wrote memos relating to the category or focused code. These memos became the narrator's speech prior to each scene, often using the participants own words (*in vivo coding*) to name each scene. Saldaña (1999) suggests that monologues composed of field notes, journal entries, and memoranda (memos) may be one role the researcher has as a character in the ethnodrama, much like a "Brechtian narrator" (Saldaña, 1999). This is one of the ways that my voice shows up in the auto/ethnodrama.

Incorporating Brechtian Narrator in Auto/ethnodrama. Epic theatre, or *presentational theatre*, is the term used to describe Brecht's theory and techniques for playwriting where the action is a disconnected montage of scenes with the overall purpose to represent reality and comment on the political, social, and economic elements that affect the lives of the characters ("Epic theatre and Brecht", 2017). He used several techniques that resonated with me as I sought avenues for my voice to appear in the auto/ethnodrama while at the same time connecting with the audience to evoke meaningful experiences and emotional responses to the play.

Bertolt Brecht, playwright and theatre director in Berlin between 1918-1945, wanted to assign the audience an active role in the theatre and hoped that he would lead the audience to relate what they "saw on stage to the social and economic conditions outside the theatre; ultimately, he wished the audience to apply its new perceptions by working for changes in the

social and economic system” (Brockett, 1987, p. 602). He devised several techniques to achieve his goal including:

- Techniques to break down the fourth wall, making the audience directly conscious of the fact that they are watching a play.
- Use of a narrator. Because this character is outside the character framework, they change the relationship with the audience.
- Use of songs or music. Songs and dances are likely to provoke a more objective viewing, particularly if what you’re watching is serious and not the schmaltzy environment of a typical musical.
- Use of technology. If you project ideas onto a screen in a slide show or even have a still image there throughout each scene, it makes the audience analyse more thoroughly.
- Use of signs. If an actor starts each scene with a placard naming the scene or you have a board which is changed at the start of each scene, you’re reminding the audience about the fact that they are watching a play (“Epic theatre and Brecht”, 2017).

The fourth wall is the imaginary wall that separates the audience from the actors on stage (“Epic theatre and Brecht”, 2017) which not only “blunts the critical attentions of the audience but also obstructs the drawing of connections between the plot of the play and events in the real world (Davis, 2015, p. 89). Brecht hoped that by breaking down this imaginary wall, he might foster thoughtful and critical audience attitudes. Davis (2015) comments on Brechtian technique and the fourth wall:

In order to be able to pay attention to the dramatic action in its full complexity –
to be able to observe the social conditions of the characters, their relations, the way

the story is constructed by the author, or the manner in which the story is presented by the actors – an audience cannot let itself be absorbed by the fantasy of the realist Stage. (p. 87)

As stated earlier, the overall goal of this research project is to inform community of the phenomenon of IPV in affluent households and to instigate change. It was only as I was organizing the lines of transcribed text on the panes of glass and writing the memos that I realized how I would use the memos as narrated introductions to each scene. My daughter, a stage manager for live theatre, looked at what I had created and told me about Brecht and how well she thought his techniques would work for this project.

In addition to incorporating narratives created through memo-writing into the auto/ethnodrama, I have added my own short stories and poetry, either read by the narrator, projected on the back wall of the stage, or read by my characters to mimic Brecht's technique of using songs or music. I also used audio technology to project all male character's voices and visual projections as theatrical backdrops to explain the scene in more detail with the intent of engaging the audience more deeply and thoroughly.

Composing the Script. Another technique I used when creating the auto/ethnodrama was to organize the individual lines of transcribed text into conversational dialogue and then wrote each scene. Saldana (2003) states that:

Dialogue occurs when two or more characters exchange thoughts or confront an interpersonal conflict. Dialogue in data can be found in a transcript's conversational interviews between the researcher and participant, a focus group interview, or participant observation field notes. Artistry enters when dialogue is artificially constructed from several sources of data gathered from different sites, from different

participants, and across different time periods. Participant voices from two or more data sources can be interwoven to (a) offer triangulation, (b) highlight disconfirming evidence through juxtaposition, (c) exhibit collective story creation through multiple perspectives, and / or (d) condense “real-time” data for purposes of dramatic economy. (p. 225)

I found that the story of IPV against affluent women came together easily and I was amazed at the flow of conversation that resulted from piecing together the “bits and pieces” of focused codes. It was powerful to take strips of paper that I had attached to a glass pane, organized by categories and themes, and suddenly find conversational dialogue, as if the participants had been in a focus group interview rather than in one-on-one interviews. This validated my belief that the story of IPV against affluent women is real and fairly consistent amongst women who have had the experience of abuse. I estimate that 85 – 90% of the written script is quoted directly from the transcribed interviews, including lines from my own interview, and remained true to the spirit of democracy where every voice is included and counts equally, which is one of the merits of autoethnography. The resulting auto/ethnodrama is a collective piece with the voices of all of the research participants. The dialogue takes the topic to a non-academic level using an everyday conversational tone so that a broader audience will gain a better understanding of the issue of IPV.

Wrestling with Preconceptions

“Grounded theorists like other researchers, may and do unwittingly start from their own preconceptions about what a particular experience means and entails” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 156). Researchers hold preconceptions that may influence what they pay attention to when coding and how they make sense of the data. Therefore, it was important that I was aware of my

preconceptions as I became immersed in the process of coding, memo-writing, and collecting supportive data. An example of a preconceived notion of mine, based on my own experience, the conversations that I have had prior to this study with other affluent women who have experienced IPV, and through the extensive literature review process I have completed over the past seven years, was that middle to upper-middle class women do not enter the shelter system, nor do they access legal services provided at low to no-fee. I was challenged in my belief and preconceptions by a research participant who moved herself and her children to a shelter to escape her IPV experience. This provided me the opportunity to explore my own preconception in more depth and to gain a better understanding of why these, or similar, services need to be available and accessible for all women experiencing IPV.

I found that the constructivist grounded theory process of line-by-line coding using gerunds helped me to interact with the transcripts and through studying each fragment I gained perspectives I would not have necessarily discovered using thematic coding. Employing this practice prevented me from coding at too general a level, identifying topics rather than actions, coding out of context, or using codes to summarize rather than to analyze, all of which guided me from getting caught up in my own preconceptions (Charmaz, 2014). By analyzing the transcripts using line-by-line coding, I had to separate the whole story into small fragments and could not make assumptions or presumptions about what I thought a participant was sharing with me.

An excerpt from an in-person interview script demonstrates how I followed this process (Table 7). The table includes the interview statement in Column 2 and the initial coding results describing actions in Column 1. Column 3 shows the focused coding that emerged by using the constructivist grounded theory analysis process.

Ethical Considerations

Marilyn Guillemín and Lynn Gillam (2004) suggest that there are two dimensions of ethics: procedural ethics and “ethics in practice” (p. 263). Ellis (2007) adds a third dimension, relational ethics which she relates closely to an ethics of care as noted in Gilligan’s work *In a different voice* (1982).

Procedural Ethics

Procedural ethics is the ethics that is mandated by the University Ethics Review Board (UREB) to ensure procedures relating to informed consent, confidentiality, deception, and mitigating risk are adequately managed (Ellis, 2007). Given the sensitive nature of this research project, it was imperative that I gave great attention to the ethical considerations surrounding this project. Potential participants were fully informed of the nature of the project, told that the interview may cause some discomfort as they recalled events of their experience, and briefed on the informed consent process. Additionally, all participants were able to choose the location for their interview, provided a copy of the informed consent letter, and given a list of resources for consultation if they wanted to talk to a professional counsellor following the interview. My project was reviewed and approved by Mount Saint Vincent University’s Research Ethics Board.

The women who participated in this project did so voluntarily, understood that the interviews would be audio-recorded and the interviews would be transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. As mentioned earlier, I knew two of the women who I interviewed prior to receiving research ethics clearance. As required by the UREB, both women’s IPV experience was more than 5 years before the interview and I did not and do not know their past abuser. One of the women I interviewed I had no prior connection with and two women I met through work.

There can be ethical areas of concern when undertaking secondary data analysis relating to both use in qualitative research and when applying grounded theory methods (Whiteside et al., 2012). In respect to qualitative research, areas to consider are whether informed consent needs to be obtained in order to use the data and how current and relevant the material is. I determined that informed consent was not required as all three autobiographies are widely published in print format and two women additionally have websites and videos on the internet describing their experiences. The third woman has numerous interviews published in journals and on the internet, in addition to her published book. As their accounts are publicly known, protecting their identity and maintaining confidentiality surrounding their experiences was determined not to be of ethical concern.

In response to the relevancy based on the time of the autobiographical accounts, I determined that all accounts were appropriate and relevant. One woman's abusive marriage ended over thirty years ago yet she continues to actively share her story and has an audience who finds her accounts and insights of value and interest. Both of the other autobiographies were published within the past eight years, timelines that are consistent with the IPV experiences of my other research participants. In addition, as these were the last interviews that I coded, I found the pattern matching as noted in the Methods section consistent with the author's stories as they supported the codes, themes, and categories I had formed from the transcribed interviews.

Whiteside et al. (2012) question whether "the use of secondary data limits the use of methods associated with this approach, and therefore, the possibilities for theory construction" (p. 506). They suggest that data saturation of some categories may not be possible and there may be gaps in the final theoretical construction (p. 507). As previously noted, the author interviews

through autobiography transcripts were analyzed after the in-person interview transcriptions and, while they were briefer, they were specific to the questions asked of all participants.

Ethics in Practice

Situational ethics, or ethics in practice, are those that deal with the unpredictable and often subtle ethic moments that may arise in the field (Ellis, 2007). Examples of ethics in practice would include someone disclosing they were unsafe or afraid for their safety, asking for help, or expressing discomfort with a question or their response (Ellis, 2007).

There were two interviews where I found myself needing to navigate my way through in relation to ethics in practice. In one interview, the woman said that she has been asked by close friends if she thought her child was in danger when spending time with her ex-husband and that she sometimes questioned if her child was in danger. I gently queried further to determine if she felt the child was in danger and we discussed her relationship with her ex-husband and her child and their co-parenting situation. While I knew I had an obligation with the UREB to report to police or child protection if I knew that someone was in danger and the participant refused to report the abuse, this did not present itself in such a clear manner. I paused the interview questions, and expressed care and concern for her child and the relationship with the father. Looking back on it, I acted in an ethical manner and felt confident that neither she nor her child was in danger.

The other interview that related to ethics in practice involved a woman whom I had no knowledge of or relationship with prior to our interview. My logbook entry following the interview notes the level of uncertainty and possibly discomfort she was feeling during the interview:

This was my first interview with someone I did not know either from a reference or personally. I think we were both somewhat nervous. I didn't want to take her somewhere uncomfortable and she (I sensed) wanted to provide good "information" and "data". The interview was held at her home, the same as other interviewees. Perhaps knowing her adult daughter was home also played into this, although her daughter certainly knew of her story.

What was most important to me during this interview was that she felt that she was helping me with my project, that I understood her desire to help other women (she is involved in another project in the Arts community to inform people of IPV), and I valued her input and her story. I impressed upon her that I was not looking for my story, I was looking for hers. In the end, I believe that she was comfortable with what she shared with me and we have had subsequent conversations about her progress in her project and her own recovery.

Relational Ethics

Ellis (2007) states that "relational ethics requires researchers to act from our hearts and minds, to acknowledge our interpersonal bonds to others, and initiate and maintain conversations" (p. 4) and asks what are our ethical responsibilities to our "intimate others" when we write stories about ourselves. I had to consider this question, particularly as I neared completion of the project as I knew that I would be sharing intimate stories of not just my own experience with IPV but also the eight other research participants.

When we write about intimate others, as I did in this project, we have the opportunity to talk and discuss with them what we should tell and what we do tell (Ellis, 2007). My closest family members, (my father, sister, brother, and children), had known that I was pursuing my MA with a thesis topic of IPV against affluent women. They also knew that I would be writing

about my experiences with IPV and that I was interviewing other women who had also experienced IPV. They were also very aware that one of my ultimate goals is to take the resulting auto/ethnodrama and turn it into an auto/ethnotheatrical piece for public viewing. Yet knowing and discussing are two very different things.

I have been open with some members of my family about my experience with my second husband, and my sister has been an important support person for me throughout my marriage and my recovery. She has also attended talks I have given on the subject. Yet I know, as Ellis (2007) poses, that I was not completely open with these important people in my life about my experience and I feared that telling my whole story would hurt them or they might not think I had been telling “the truth” at the time. I have only my memory to write from, and many of my memories I have kept secret, locked up in my version of Pandora’s Box. I found the courage to open that box 10 years ago and have been slowly releasing the memories and untold misery it had contained. Fortunately, hope also emerged from that box and it is that hope that has been my source of energy and determination to see this project through to completion.

Poulos (2008) speaks of the challenge of ensuring we are practicing relational ethics when he was writing his family’s secrets. “If we could just crack a code of ethics to cover every situation confronted in research! But of course, life – like the memory of the secret and story I am tracing here – is too complex for all-inclusive covering laws” (Poulos, 2008, p. 131). Instead, we are left with making decisions using our memories, flawed as they may be, about how to tell our story and the story of those around us. I have done my best to record my memories and honour those of the women who participated in this project.

In the seventeen years since my relationship with my second husband, I have tried to protect my father and my brother from seeing inside my Pandora’s Box. I have had to resolve

how and what to tell my family about how they have been included in my story (Ellis, 2007) and, perhaps more importantly for me, how to tell my children that I have made references relating to my marriage to their father, not just my second husband. It was not until I was deep into this project that I finally acknowledged to myself that I had been emotionally /psychologically, verbally, and financially abused by their father, especially after I had left the marriage and the community we had lived in.

Gratefully, my children are now adults and understand why I need to tell the stories of IPV. My daughter has read most of the findings and provided direction and ideas that led to my discovering Bertolt Brecht's approach to theatre. My son and his wife have also read the findings and have told me they are proud of me "for my hard work but also for giving a voice to women who have suffered from IPV" (personal correspondence, June 5, 2017).

Poulos (2008) says this about writing our family stories and secrets:

In a sense, these are not stories of particular people but rather of all of us. All families have secrets; all families feel pain and loss and trauma. If we can open our hearts to the power of the story and begin to read the clues that stories offer in our quest to follow the mystery of human life, we may well transcend the dark powers that threaten to buckle our floorboards. And, in that sense, to tell the story may well be the only ethical thing to do. (p. 133)

My family has opened their hearts to the power of my story and the stories of the women who participated in this project. They understand the importance of giving voice to women who were silenced by IPV and they know that by remaining silent when you know the story "you become an accomplice" (Nemat, 2008). Indeed, telling the stories is the only ethical thing to do.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

Voices: Heard. Silenced. Ignored.

The Voices of IPV Against Affluent Women

Act I: Voices: Heard.

Narrator: What is Voice?

Voice is the sound produced using the lungs and the larynx when people are speaking, singing, and making a variety of other vocal sounds. People express their thoughts, ideas, feelings, and opinions orally to others by using their voice. Voice can be loud or soft, incorporating tone, pitch, and speed to communicate to others.

A person hears sounds, including voices, by detecting vibrations and changes in pressure through the ear: Hearing is one of the five traditional senses. The words we hear carry enormous weight and can impact us for decades, either building us up or crushing us to the core.

In 2007, after seven years of secrecy, silence, and voicelessness, I decided to start telling my story of intimate partner violence and in 2010 I started the journey of pursuing my MA with the intent to gain a deeper understanding of my own experience and that of other women affluent households who experienced IPV. Eight courageous women have added their voices to the project and shared their stories with me. They told stories of the words they heard, from their partners and themselves; stories of their experience of IPV.

A number of years ago a mantra evolved that has guided me along the path that brought me here. I kept it inside for years – it is now time to speak so you can hear the stories.

I came to dance across the stage
To tell the stories in song
Each note a voice to heal the wounds
And bring the soul back home

This is our song...

Scene One

Trish¹ is in her bedroom, books and journals spread out on the floor, standing on a yoga mat as she tries to learn yoga poses. The time is 1998 and the “yoga craze” has not hit their community yet. Note: All male voices are broadcast through a sound system and they are not physically present on the stage. Most scenes are introduced via the narrator and comments, Act Titles and Scene Titles are projected on the back wall of the stage.

Him: *(yelling to her)* Where the fuck are you? Your dirty slut of a daughter cooked and didn't clean up the kitchen. You know I can't eat after she's been in there.

Trish: *(to herself/audience)* Can't I have just a half hour to myself without Him yelling at me, just a little time to myself?

Trish: *(responding to Him)* I told her I would clean up so she could babysit the boys next door. I will as soon as I'm done here. I didn't expect you home yet.

Him: *(yelling)* I am hungry, so get your fucking ass down here and clean up her mess! Now!

Other Him: Bitch.

Trish: *(gathers up books and journals so He won't yell at her again about how stupid she is trying this “yoga thing” and leaves the stage to clean the kitchen.)*

Scene One, Part Two

Trish is in a yoga studio with several other “yogis”. It is a large space typically used as a dance studio so it has mirrors on the walls, great for checking one's alignment in a pose. It is quiet and peaceful.

Note: References in Chapter 5: Findings are in footnote format to facilitate the coherence of the data and dialogue
¹ Trish, Grace, Kat, Mary, Merry, and Sarah are pseudonyms used to protect the identity of the research participants, including the researcher's

Trish: *(to herself/audience)* I am so glad I found the courage to attend these sessions. I am forced to be still and focus on the pose instead of Him. The group will go out after for tea, always fun. I am prepared for my “welcome” home.

When she arrives home, the house is dark. He doesn't leave lights on when He is furious with her for going out.

Him: *(yelling when she comes in the house)* Where the hell have you been? Class was done hours ago! You're having an affair with your teacher, you slut!

Trish: *(resignedly)* No, I told you the group was going for tea after class. I wish you would believe me when I...

Him: *(cutting her off and yelling)* Why should I believe you? You're lying again, just like you lied about your boss. I know you were fucking him too.

Trish: *(knowing this will never end, He will never believe her)* I can't continue this arguing. I am going to bed. *(Trish exits the stage, hearing Him yelling, and cursing Bitch, Psycho Bitch as she walks away)*

Trish *(to audience):* This was not the first time in our marriage that He has accused me of having affairs. In fact, He was so convinced that I was having an affair at work that He attempted to follow me to a conference I attended with 12 staff members on the other side of the country. As He couldn't afford to go, He had security track me down one evening in the hotel because I wasn't answering the phone in my room. We had only been married for six months. If He hadn't met me at the airport, I would not have returned to our home. But I did.

Scene Two

The group of nine women meet occasionally and informally to discuss their experience with IPV. All nine of the women were in middle to upper-middle class households at the time of the relationship, ages range from 30 – 70, and eight of the women were, and continue to be, active in a professional career, all with post-secondary education, several with graduate degrees.

Narrator: How did it all start?

In her research on Upscale Violence, Weitzman (2000) found that her research participants, while well-educated, failed to recognize their accomplishments, strengths, and abilities to find solutions to their abusive situations. In fact, many of her participants discounted their achievements and had little faith in themselves at the time they met their abusive partners. The women interviewed for this project echoed the language which women use to describe their location at the time of their IPV experience.

These are the Voices Women Heard as they Describe Themselves When it All Began...

Trish: I've been reading a book by Judith Herman and she says that many women "become involved with their abusers at a time of temporary life crisis or recent loss, when they are feeling unhappy, alienated, or lonely".² Do any of you relate to that idea? What life crisis were you experiencing when you met Him?

Christi³: I know that I was in a very vulnerable place when I fell into his life. I was far away from my friends and family and still trying to get acclimated to a new place just months after moving. I was feeling alone and insecure. A good friend of mine had recently committed suicide and I was raw – I just wanted to hold on to people that mattered to me. And He did.

² (Herman, 1997, p. 142)

³ Christi, Charlotte, and Leslie are their real names

Grace: Me too. I was just trying to establish myself. I had just moved here to a new province, knew nobody, had no family here. So naive and I trusted everyone, I mean that's what the town I had come from was like. I was really just starting my life – and in came this charming man who did everything to make me feel comfortable and giving me random gifts, like flowers for no reason.

Charlotte: Really, you too? I was so young, so insecure, so unaware.

Sarah: I had just moved to a new town, I was young and felt so alone and insecure. I'll be honest, I was very needy. I really needed love and attention and instead, He made fun of me. He'd call me a boy because I have small boobs: He laughed at me.

Leslie: Wow! I had just graduated and moved to a new city for my dream job. I was trying to make it on my own but was feeling very insecure at the time. I was spoiled materialistically, but I would have traded all of that just to have felt loved by my parents, to not have to worry about whether my mother would be drunk when I came home, or brought friends home. I wanted, needed, to feel wanted, needed.

Trish: When we met I was a year out of leaving my first husband and I had two children with my first husband, so I was really - I was just coming out of - basic recovery mode. I was exhausted. I was vulnerable. I was incredibly vulnerable. And this man shows up, younger than me, and He finds me attractive when the last thing I felt was attractive. I had been through a divorce that was not easy and I was trying to deal with my children not living with me. My ex-husband had really made that difficult at the time we separated and continued to make that difficult. And here was somebody who was paying attention to me.

Charlotte: He convinced me I was worthless. That I had no skills (even though I was a nurse), and that I couldn't make any money even if anyone would ever hire me.

Trish: Oh my god. My first husband, and let me be honest here, I had never thought about Him being abusive until after I left Him, tried to convince me that I would never be able to get a job if I left Him and the town we lived in, that I had “no skills”. That my only worth was being a stay-at-home mother. We fought for years over my working and He refused to use the money I made for the household expenses. He was embarrassed and thought that the town people would think He couldn’t support a family – so He belittled my worth.

Christi: I used to question my worth too. He would come home and start pushing me around, calling me worthless and that I wouldn’t have made it in the industry without Him. I had turned down a great job and chosen Him over the job and yet I listened to Him calling me a whore and that He was the dumb one for marrying me.

Words heard through sound system and projected on the back wall of the stage.

Blind. Insecure. Vulnerable. Weak. Naive. Needy. Alone. Worthless.

Scene Three

Narrator: Words Heard

The Floor

She stares at the floor.
Wishing she could dissolve into
its cracks and pores.

Words, slapping her face
their jagged edges slicing
her arms and legs
as they fall, each letter shattered,
to the floor.

He can't see
the cuts inside.
The ones
that hurt the most.

She stares at the floor.
Knowing she'll have to sweep
the broken pieces
under the rug.

IPV can show up in a variety of ways and the verbal slap is no less significant than a physical punch. The rhyme “Stick and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me” should be changed to “But words will cut me deeply”. Verbal abuse can show up as name-calling, yelling, threatening, ridiculing, humiliating, demeaning, taunting, and even the silent treatment. Words can also wound in less obvious ways such as “correcting” your mistakes, disapproving your decisions and motives, even “suggesting” things that would be “better” for you.

Patricia Evans, author, says that “words can be as damaging to the mind as physical blows are to the body, the scars from verbal assaults can last for years”.⁴

These are the Voice of Women Experiencing Verbal Abuse...

An assault of words through sound system

Idiot. Stupid. You're no good. Cunt. Bitch. Slut. Whore. Selfish. Retard. Nutcase. Psycho. Fat.

Get out. Crazy. Ugly.

Trish: He called me an idiot. We lived on a cul-de-sac and our townhouse was at the centre, and there were two other townhouses on either side, so it was fairly small area. He would start a fight

⁴ (Brynie, 2011)

with me and then go down into the garage, open the garage door, knowing that I would follow Him because this was our pattern. He would stand at the garage door and call me an idiot. Repeatedly. The whole neighbourhood could hear Him.

Christi: Rancid words were hurled at me – it was like they were slicing me open.

Sarah: He went through the whole alphabet of bad. And He openly criticized me and my appearance.

Trish: Sounds like we all went through a lot of verbal abuse. That you just wanted to stop that energetic verbal attack.

The women all agree.

Mary: He was so good, still is actually, at flipping what is supposed to be a dialogue into an accusation and an attack.

Christi: Eventually, I learned that there is no justification for ugly words, name calling, threats, shoving, or screaming. That is wrong, it is abuse, and no one deserves that. Not even me.

Kat: I am grateful for the other voices I heard –the voices of my children. That’s what kept me going. I knew, just seeing my children, I knew that if I didn’t, that they were - had enough sense to know that they were either going to be abused, or be abusers. And that’s what just kept me going and working towards leaving - Because I didn’t care about myself. I know that. When I think of the voices I heard, I think of my children’s voices.

Merry: At some point, I heard my own voice, and put that out into the world. That was, that was one of the life lines back.

Scene Four

Narrator: Blaming Self

Why do women blame themselves for being abused and believe that they did something to deserve it? No one deserves to be hit, slapped, beaten, used for sexual pleasure, or taken advantage of financially. No one deserves to be belittled, called names, or sworn at – just for being alive. No woman should question “what did I do to be treated like this?” Living in fear of what they had done. Living in fear of doing it again. Living in fear of how to avoid it. LIVING IN FEAR.

Realizing, at some beautiful point of escape, that she didn't do anything to initiate or instigate the abuse. Realizing that His behaviour has nothing to do with her. Nothing she did made Him hit her. Nothing she did made Him stop.

These are the Voices Women Heard When They Were Blaming Themselves for the Abuse...

Charlotte: I was afraid that people would think I did something to deserve being treated so badly. Did anyone else tell themselves that?

Mary: Oh yes. At some point, I realized that part of the reason that I had attracted this into my life and why I was being treated so badly was because a part of me felt I deserved to be treated badly.

Sarah: There was one night that we had a fight because He woke me up by biting me in the ass. He picked up a beer bottle and next thing I know the bottle is flying at my head. I've lived through this many, many times in my head, to think if I could do something differently. And I probably shouldn't have; I got pissy with Him and tipped over His beer – that's what started all of this. It ended up in such a big fight that I ended up calling 911 because I thought He was going to attack me with a butcher's knife. But I kept thinking that if I hadn't tipped the beer... maybe I

could have prevented all of that. And when He came back the next day He said it was all my fault, that I shouldn't have tipped over His beer, that I shouldn't have defended myself when He hit me. That I made Him do it.

Trish: Sarah, do you still feel that way? Because it sounds like He started it by biting you. I used to buy into that story too, that because I defended myself that I was also abusive. He was great at convincing me I was no better than Him. He was manipulating too, telling me that I was the cause of all of this. That was part of His story. That was part of His - That's part of the process; to get you to the point that this is your fault.

Kat: Because you always wondered, "Oh, well, if I didn't say this, or if I didn't do that maybe He wouldn't have done this and that." Right? And for a while I thought maybe I was, I was the one that was abusive, or crazy. Because that's how they make you feel. You're right, Trish, it is a part of the process of manipulative abusive men.

Trish: Another book I've been reading is Lundy Bancroft's *Why Does He Do That?*⁵ He says that one of the traits of abusive men is getting you to blame yourself, or they blame other people, for their actions. Nothing is ever his fault, and increasingly the target of his blame becomes you.

Projection on the back wall of the stage

Nothing I did made Him hit me. Nothing I did made Him stop.

⁵ (Bancroft, 2002)

Act II: Voices: Silenced

What is Voice?

One can temporarily lose their voice through illness and colds, such as laryngitis, or through misuse or overuse. It is also possible to lose one's voice permanently through vocal cord damage, cancer, and other throat related illnesses. "Judith Herman in *Trauma and Recovery* and Bessel van der Kolk and his colleagues in their neurological and psychological studies of *Traumatic Stress* identify loss of voice as the psychic core of traumatic experience: the loss of the ability to tell one's story".⁶

"Both love and democracy depend on voice – having a voice and also the resonance that makes it possible to speak and be heard. Without voice, there is no relationship; without resonance, voice recedes into silence".⁷ Through her work Carol Gilligan (2003) has repeatedly discovered that people do not lose their voices; they lose the desire or the courage or the will or the ability to use their voices to tell their stories. Women silence their own voices in fear that, in speaking, her voice will not be heard.⁸

Christopher Poulos (2008) notes that "to achieve my humanness, I must find my voice to penetrate the dark shroud of secrecy".⁹ It is time to find the Voices of IPV and welcome them from the shroud of secrecy that has silenced them.

⁶ (Gilligan, 2003, p. 221)

⁷ (Gilligan, 2003, p. 229)

⁸ (Gilligan, 1993)

⁹ (Poulos, 2008, p. 17)

Scene One

Narrator: Silencing Self

Hiding: from others - at work, at home, with family. Hiding: from themselves - perhaps if they hide the truth, the truth of the abuse they are experiencing in their homes, it will not be real. Maybe no one will discover the truth about their abusive relationship. The necessity to hide from others is huge, the embarrassment is acute. Why share the horrors of their home life if they don't need to expose themselves? They even hide the truth from themselves, until one day they realize they can't hide any longer, that people know their secrets, and that it is time to come out of the prison they hide in, full of fear, shame, and denial.

These are the Voices of Women Silencing Themselves...

Trish: Every Christmas my first husband looked forward to my losing my voice through laryngitis; in fact he would ask when to expect his Christmas gift. I put a lot of pressure on myself, and sustained pressure from Him, to be the “perfect” hostess, cook, decorator, wife, mother. I worked so hard to create the “perfect” Christmas – I have made sugar plums, twelve layer gingerbread trees complete with candy figurines representing the characters from “The 12 Days of Christmas”, homemade tree decorations, gifts, the list goes on and on. For years, I would succumb to the pressures and I lost my ability to communicate. Now I know that I was hiding my humanness from myself.

Kat: For me being silenced in IPV, or domestic violence, I just see chains and, like, almost a muzzle over my face. I really felt like I was bound. Until we are ready to leave, we're not going to tell anybody, because you know it's wrong, even though...we really do. We can see that it's wrong, but we just still live through it.

Grace: (*little voice*) I silenced me. Silenced is how I felt.

Merry: I felt that I silenced my values, silenced choices I was making. He used to tease me for wearing high heels, that they weren't "feminist". His teasing was trivializing me, my own humanness. I felt silenced all the time. At every turn.

Trish: Yeah, I definitely silenced my own voice. I silenced my voice in, "I don't wear pleated little mini-skirts and I don't wear that, and I don't wear that" and you know, and I - Yeah, so I definitely silenced me, my voice.

Mary: Silence for me is best expressed with an image, actually, of - It's like this oppressive aura of weight and then the word diminish, diminishment. Um, and alone.

Christi: Yeah, that is a good image for me too. I felt diminished and silenced.

Sarah: I silenced myself. Friends. Family. Supports. I silenced my own knowing of what was happening to me, that I was being abused. I tried to rationalize his behaviours. I silenced my strengths.

Charlotte: I definitely silenced my own voice. Remember, in 1968 no one talked about domestic violence – it was a private matter.

Merry: Thankfully that has somewhat changed. Yet here we are talking about keeping silent, keeping IPV silent. We are still fighting our way through the silence.

Trish: Because we were silencing our voices, did we hide what was happening. I mean, I know I did, but what about you?

Leslie: The only person I was hiding it from was myself. I really did hide the truth from myself. I bought into the "Love Story". You know – "I love him, He loves me. He didn't mean to hurt me". Somehow, I convinced myself that love made it okay. Didn't it?

Christi: Yeah, until one day you can't hide it anymore. When your body takes over and tells you something is very wrong. One day I started trembling uncontrollably, my muscles tensed, my jaw was clenched. Telling me what my mind had been ignoring.

Trish: I did everything I could to hide it at work. I did not want them to know what was going on at home so I tried to act like it was nothing. I was terrified that if they found out that I couldn't manage my own personal life they would question if I could manage their business interests. I found out after I left the marriage that they knew. They just learned how to function around me so that I could feel like I was hiding it.

Christi: Me too. But eventually I had to start sharing at work because it was just too hard to hide anymore. They were very supportive but it was hard to tell them. It was scary.

Sarah: My boss came by one day after a particularly bad episode with Him and she was so supportive. They knew at work, I had arrived at work with bruises on several occasions - they knew but I just wouldn't admit to anything. Sometimes I still look back and think, "Was it really, though". Sometimes.

Charlotte: Not only did I hide from others, I also used to hide in the closet. It was terrible, a human being huddled in a closet like a prisoner of war. I wasn't hiding because He was yelling at me, or because He had threatened me. I'd usually hide when He wasn't responding at all. It was quiet, and I couldn't see Him. But most importantly, it was dark enough that I couldn't see myself.

Trish: *(to audience)*

I sit trying to hide my presence in the bedroom closet. I know that He knows where to find me – this is not a new hiding place – but this time I am trying to hide from myself.

Crying, silently, as if being quiet will prevent Him from finding me. I plead for all of this to end.
“How did I get here?” “How will I get out of here?”

I feel ...alien. My body doesn't belong to me; my mind processes thoughts as if someone else is in charge of it. As though someone else has captured the controls and I function, like a robot, at their demand. So, I hide on the floor of my closet, the pants and dresses on their hangers doing the best they can to conceal me from discovery.

“You promised...you promised.” These words echo in my head. So many times I've heard these words, only to be let down again. This time I made the promise, and I cannot let the promise crack, break, and crumble into pieces of dust like the dust-bunnies I suddenly discover in the corners of my closet. Like me, trying to find a space where they won't be swept away upon discovery.

This morning: the promise. My daughter, my dearest daughter, I am so sorry that I brought you into this...this horrific life with an alien mother. I sensed this morning that you were making excuses for not going on your school camping trip. Fourteen, such an exciting age, so filled with possibility. A new school and you were asked to go as counsellor to grade 7 students. You felt so proud to be invited.

“Mom, I don't feel good. I think I'm getting a cold.”

“Mom, maybe it would be better if I didn't go. They have enough without me.”

I encouraged her to go, sensing it was fear rather than illness. Ah, I was right. But not fear of going. Fear of returning.

“Okay Mom. I'll go as long as you promise to be here when I get home.”

She knew. My closet hiding hadn't fooled her. She knew of my despair and hopelessness, no matter how much I tried to hide it from her. She knew her mother was "an alien", pretending and putting on a mask and a bodysuit that wasn't her own.

Sitting on the floor of the closet, curled up with my knees under my chin, I knew I couldn't break my promise to her. I had to be here when she came home. I had to open a space inside of me for hope. She planted a tiny grain of hope in me, her love, and her trust in me. She found a way to hold up her image of me so I could see the real me. So hope would be nurtured and encouraged to gain strength.

Every time my husband and I fought, or He called me names, or He hit me, I called upon that grain of hope, that space between all the hurt, until it grew large enough to take back the controls and make my own decisions. To step out of the closet, once and for all, and step fully back into the real me that sat and watched from the sidelines holding her own grain of hope for me.

Scene Two

Narrator: Whose Life Am I Living? Oh my God, who bought these clothes?

How did we get here? Educated, intelligent, resourceful women who wake up one day, look around, and ask, "How did I get here?", "What was I thinking?", and "What did I get myself into?". Women who realize that they are miserable and have been blindsided by the life they see themselves living. Eventually realizing that they are being abused.

These are the Voices of Women asking "Whose Life am I Living...Because it Sure Doesn't Feel Like Mine".

Mary: It was probably five years before I actually named it, named that I was really being abused. It was such a shock – how on earth did that happen to me?

Trish: Shock. Absolutely. Opening my closet doors and finding clothes that I would never have picked out for myself. I felt such pressure – He would insist on shopping with me for everything – groceries, clothes, household items – and picked out short, pleated skirts and tops that I would never have picked out for myself. I am very self-conscious of my legs, yet I wore these outfits to avoid His displeasure, His wrath if I didn't.

Merry: I remember one day thinking, "I feel like wearing something red". Because I love red. I mean, it's a great colour - and so I went in my closet and there was nothing red in there. And I remember thinking, "Oh my God, who bought these clothes?" Seriously. That was literally what I thought.

Sarah: The stuff He would buy me. It was just like; I'm not this ghetto skank. Like, why was He buying this for me?

Christi: One day I woke up, looked around, and wondered, where am I? Whose life am I living, and how did I get here? Little pieces of the real me kept flitting away in someone else's wind until the me that I've always known had disappeared.

Merry: I just felt like a piece of furniture. I felt squished and erased. I remember thinking that this was no way to live.

Mary: For me, it was the moment that I realized that I had replicated the patterns of my mothers – my birth mother and my adopted mother. Even without really knowing their full stories I feel somehow that my story has touched theirs. And I wonder how I got here. I am educated and resourceful, yet, I too was in an abusive marriage.

Christi: Don't blame yourself. It happens so gradually you didn't even notice it at first.

Merry: You get so invested in the relationship that you don't allow yourself to see what is happening until you are over your head. And then it's like, "Ho, ho! Hold it, hold it! This is bad! Whose life is this? How did I get here? Just how did I get here?"

Mary: So true – I had many moments of "Oh my god, I can't believe that happened".

Narrator: Grace Cirroco (2001) says that knowing who you are is a question we must ask ourselves "again and again in order to begin the inner dialogue that leads us on a conscious journey – the way out of self-alienation. This is how we reconnect with our authentic selves. This is the way home".¹⁰ For these women, recognizing that the life they were living was not who they were or where they belonged may have been the first step in asking, over and over, "Who am I?" Their first step to finding their way home.

Scene Three

Narrator: It's hard to admit to yourself. I was embarrassed.

Brené Brown (2008) says that "shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging. Women often experience shame when they are entangled in a web of layered, conflicting, and competing social-community expectations. Shame creates feeling of fear, blame, and disconnection".¹¹

Women, over and over, talked about their shame of being in an abusive relationship. Why didn't they pay attention to the "Warning Signs"? How did they get there in the first place? Afraid of being judged by others, feeling less, weak, taken advantage of – physically and emotionally beaten.

¹⁰ (Cirroco, 2001, p.4)

¹¹ (Brown, 2008, p. 30)

These are the Voices of Women facing Shame...

(The group of women is at a wine bar for support night.)

Trish: I was ashamed to tell my father about what was happening to me. He wasn't around because he's a "snow bird" so I figured "why tell him?" No need to share what he didn't need see. The fact that I was recently divorced and made a choice to marry again - and found myself saying, "What the fuck is going on in my world?" It was totally foreign to me and I was so ashamed of my choices.

Grace: I think for me, it's always been the embarrassment. I couldn't tell my mother that I had just moved into a house with this man. What would someone say? Or, why can't I make this work, I'm engaged so I should know Him. Or, you know, they'd say, "Oh my God, she's been engaged twice. What's the matter with her?" I just kept things to myself because I didn't want to be judged.

Charlotte: I was embarrassed, beaten both physically and emotionally. I was ashamed to go to a doctor because He had hit me. I didn't tell him - I said that I had blown my nose and suddenly heard ringing in my ears.

Grace: I think I'm slowly starting to change my view of myself, but I felt very, very stupid and embarrassed.

Kat: I had such a period of self-blame and feeling of worthlessness. Like Brené said, flawed and unworthy of belonging. But I was also ashamed that I had put up with so much for so long. For a while I actually thought that maybe I was the one who was abusive, or crazy. He was good at putting that on me and shame helped me buy into it.

Merry: I remember being surprised that I felt ashamed. Because I remember my mom is divorced, and it happens to people all the time. But it felt like a failure. And I wasn't even aware

of that as something I cared about. Maybe that's why I am still not divorced although we've lived separately for years.

Mary: I'm not sure that when you're in the situation you can get rid of the shame, I think there is a lot involved in that. We need to be kinder to ourselves – we need to forgive ourselves for being there. We need to love the person we have known and embrace the person we are now. And be grateful for the lessons we learned.

Narrator: According to Brené Brown (2008) “when we find the courage to share our experiences and the compassion to hear others tell their stories, we force shame out of hiding and end the silence”.¹² “When we don't reach out to others, we allow them to sit alone in their shame, feeding shame the secrecy and silence it craves”.¹³

All Women: (*raise their glasses*) Cheers to us. We are Courageous Women. Proud to end the Silence of Shame.

Scene Four

Narrator: Oh good, I found a weakness

Everyone has a weakness, something they care about, love, or feel self-conscious of. It might be their physical appearance, their insecurities about their performance at work, their parenting skills and abilities, their children, their pets...themselves.

Loving men support and comfort their partner when they feel weak or unsure. Loving men build their partner up. Abusive men – they seek a woman's weakness and drive the knife deeper, right to the hilt. Making her weak makes Him strong, He feeds on driving her down.

These are the Voices of Women whose Beauty was Silenced...

¹² (Brown, 2008, pp. 127-128)

¹³ (Brown, 2008, p. 129)

Grace and Sarah are meeting for coffee and find another common thread in their stories of IPV)

Sarah: Well, He used to make fun of the things that I was the most insecure about. No matter how much I told Him that I'm insecure about my size. I'm small, but, you know, every woman is insecure about their size, no matter what size you are. I felt so negatively judged.

Grace: Mine would tell me things that I HAVE to do to lose weight or things like that. I tell myself that I didn't take it to heart but the things He would say about my appearance - I guess I still am impacted by it.

Sarah: He made fun of anything He knew I was insecure about, my boobs, my nose. He would do anything to try to make me feel bad about myself. He'd belittle me if I didn't go to the gym and then grab the skin around my waist and say, "What's this, what's going on here". So I felt so ugly, you know what I mean.

Grace: Oh Sarah, you are so beautiful, tiny and petite – what a horrible thing to do to you.

Sarah: So instead of feeling loved and cared for, I felt uncomfortable and was always being judged. And not only about my appearance but also my intelligence and abilities. He did a great job at making me question myself – I know I am not stupid but He sure made me feel that way.

Grace: I remember Kat saying, "It's like they all go to school together to learn exactly the same techniques". I think she could be right - He would talk to me as if I was stupid. You know, like, "Well, you wouldn't understand anyways."

Grace: And He would not only try to destroy my confidence in myself, but also anything that was important to me. He was never physically abusive to me but He would take things out on my pets, and break things that had a lot of sentimental or personal value to me. He just ruined or destroyed – things. I see now that He was destroying me. Silencing me.

Sarah: Even though I screamed and yelled, I felt silenced too.

Narrator: Grace Cirocco says that “when we feel loved to the core, we feel understood and liberated. That when you can see and feel that you are loved with the eyes of your heart and your soul, you can connect with the light inside yourself. And when we are not seen for who we are, we disconnect”.¹⁴

Abuse, in whatever form it takes, is one way in which we are not seen. When we are belittled, destroyed, and silenced for who we are, our inner beauty is destroyed. It takes a long time to look in the mirror and see the beauty that was there all along, hiding in a corner waiting for the eyes of your heart and soul to bring it back to surface.

Scene Five

Narrator: I felt like I was supposed to help Him

Painfully sad men show up to strong women, to women who want to help them. Women who feel powerful, filled with pride, and sometimes fear, and the incredible need to be better than any woman on earth for Him. They think they will take away his pain but they end up taking on his pain. The pain of his past, his addictions, and his retaliation against her.

These are the Voices of Women Silencing Themselves by Taking on His Pain...

Leslie: He had an abusive childhood, He told me so many horrible stories of His growing up and I put my own struggles with an alcoholic mother and my past anorexia struggles aside for Him. I thought I was helping Him resolve the problems of His childhood. I thought, I knew, He was my soulmate and I was going to save Him.

Christi: I wanted to fix His pains, to fix our relationship! I became so filled with fear and stubborn pride to make things work that I ignored the signs of anger and inflexibility in Him.

¹⁴ (Cirocco, 2001, p. 25)

I felt sorry for Him, I wanted to prove to Him that He could count on me and that I loved Him and wouldn't abandon Him.

Leslie: I really thought I could help Him overcome the years of abuse and neglect and pain of His childhood. I thought I could make Him whole again and we'd be one person. That He'd be mine forever.

Kat: I felt that if I left Him, He was going to either kill himself, overdose, lose His job, all of the above. I thought that I held that kind of power.

Leslie: If you're anything like me, you became powerless instead of holding power. I didn't think at the time that I was powerless, but do know that I became powerless, had it sucked out of me due to fear.

Trish: I was like you Kat. He had so many issues, physical health and now I see mental health concerns, and I really thought He would either hurt himself or not take care of himself. When we were first dating He lived in an apartment building with big glass windows by the elevator. One night I decided I wanted to go home, probably after an argument, and He didn't want me to go. Reluctantly He walked me to the elevator and while we were waiting for it to come, He threatened to jump out the window. He actually ran at the window!

Grace: That must have been scary!

Trish: It took me a long time to learn that they were idle threats. He was too much of a narcissist to really hurt himself. If I look at Weitzman's traits of narcissistic personality disorder, I'd say "bingo, gotcha"!

Kat: What are the traits? 'Cause I'm pretty sure I'd say "bingo" too.

Trish: Let's see – a grandiose sense of self-importance; believes they are 'special' and unique; requires excessive admiration; has a sense of entitlement; lacks empathy; takes advantage of

others to achieve their own ends; is envious of others or believes others are envious of them; shows arrogant, haughty behaviour or attitudes; is preoccupied with fantasies or success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love.¹⁵

Kat and Sarah: Oh yes, that was Him to a T.

Grace: Would that also lead them to play “the victim card”?

Trish: From what I’ve read, some narcissist’s get their ego stroked by playing the victim.

Grace: Then it’s “bingo” for me too. And the mental health piece. He didn’t tell me He was diagnosed bipolar until after we bought a house and moved in together. He stopped taking medication, which again I didn’t know, and then played the victim card, blaming His mental health for His behaviours and I felt like I was supposed to help Him, that I had to help Him and just kept getting dragged back into the relationship even though I knew it wasn’t safe and I was being silenced. And just when I’d get strong again and would stand up to Him, He’d throw another card at me, “Well, I was adopted, and my mother didn’t want me, and you can’t leave me too”.

Trish: Sounds like we all silenced ourselves, that we all silenced the warning voices in our heads to fix, save, and help Him. That He fed on our vulnerabilities and insecurities to pretend to give us power, only to know they had it all along.

Scene Six

Narrator: I Became Less

Women, losing the very essence of who they are. Losing their voices, becoming numb to the abuse, to the daily crap they live in, and the “pretending all is good” to the outside world – at

¹⁵ (Weitzman, 2000)

work, with their family and friends, even with themselves. Numb. Hollow. Weak. Functioning – not living. Lost. SILENCED.

Kat: In the beginning I was very strong. It was over time that I became less. Weak and weak and weak.

Christi: Slowly, I started to feel my soul turn numb, an empty shell of who I used to be. I was too afraid to let myself feel anything.

Kat: It's almost like you're living outside of yourself. I can't describe it any other way. You see it all happening but just can't figure out how to get out, or back to yourself.

Trish: It was like I wasn't even my own self. That there was some other body. It was like I was looking down and watching this functioning of me by a stranger but knowing that stranger was me. I was lost, I had snuffed out who I am.

Kat: You're not alone. I think you have to separate yourself. Otherwise, you have to admit what's happening.

Mary: It was surviving. It wasn't coping or managing. It was just surviving.

Kat: Even when I looked at my children, I was not seeing them, but I was there. I was just living through the motions. Living outside myself.

Mary: Oh God, I was losing myself. I realized and I don't know when it was, but I realized that I never laughed anymore. And I couldn't remember the last time that I laughed. And I remembered a number of years before that, when I was going through a hard time, but I had sent out a note to a bunch of people and said, "What do you think my unique ability is?" And people responded back with all kinds of things, including a number of people who said, "Your joie de vivre". And I thought, "I don't have that anymore. Oh my God, where did it go?" I had stopped

making new friends, in fact, I pretty much stopped socializing with people I knew because it was just too hard. I was always on edge because I never knew what would trip the wire.

Trish: I stopped socializing too. It was just easier. It was easier not to go out with my sister or a friend because if I did go out and wasn't home when He thought I should be there would be hell to pay.

Mary: I still feel sometimes like I have no voice with Him because I can't explain anything.

Merry: I dissociated from myself. My mom would say I just stopped being. I was less and less Merry. I couldn't feel anything. I ended up quite ill and while I try to blame it on work, it was also from my marriage and the fact I had no control over my life. I couldn't even decorate my house, or buy furniture. He sucked all of that out of me.

Sarah: Oh wow. I stopped smiling. I felt like I couldn't be myself; that I lost myself in that whole situation. And I stopped smiling.

Mary: I came to a point of awareness that I hated who I was, or who I was becoming. I felt like I had poison running through my veins. I hated how He made me react, because He would keep at me until I yelled and screamed or threatened or whatever, and I did not like being that person. It's not the essence of who I am.

Trish: *(to audience)* The essence of who we are; the soul. Grace Cirroco (2001) says, "Your soul has a special destiny. It wants to fly, but it can't if the emotional wounds of the past are not healed".¹⁶ I have tried to forget what I went through. For seven years after I left my abusive husband, I tucked everything away, inside my own Pandora's Box. What I have found is that forgetting wasn't working. The experience, what I went through, what I LIVED through, is in my soul. It is etched on my cells, in the memory of my body, like the tiny letters written on

¹⁶ (Cirrocco, 2001, p. 210)

grains of rice. There, tiny, yet significant in their impact. I cannot, as Brené Brown (2010) says, “selectively numb emotions because when we numb the painful emotions, we also numb the positive emotions”.¹⁷ Instead, I had to open my Pandora’s Box so I could see myself in my totality.

You too may have lost your balance and in order to regain equilibrium you attract people and experiences into your life that reflect the aspects of yourself that you have disowned.¹⁸ These women took their own steps in regaining their soul, this support group being one of them.

¹⁷ (Brown, 2010, p.70)

¹⁸ (Cirocco, 2001, p. 212)

Act III – Voices Ignored

What is Voice?

Narrator: To ignore something means to refuse to take notice of or acknowledge; intentionally disregarding or failing to consider something as significant. How often have you ignored another's actions, ignored the stop light as you race through the yellow light, ignored the good intentions of the person who tells you to be careful as you drive on a rainy night, to go to the doctor when you are sick, or not to eat that second helping of fried food?

Sometimes, we may ignore what is happening around us because we either don't believe it or don't want to believe it. I think IPV in affluent households fits into that area of "ignorance". We question how an educated, intelligent, professional woman could end up in an abusive relationship. Media has ignored it or made light of it in the past. Weitzman shares the story of Darryl Hannah's 1992 filing of domestic abuse charges against her partner Jackson Browne. Her beating was not considered as a criminal act but rather a cute "down home couple's feud".¹⁹ Author Don Miguel Ruiz says that we believe so many lies because we aren't aware and we ignore the truth. We can put up a wall of fog that doesn't allow us to perceive the truth, what really is.²⁰

Actor/Director (and ex-wife of boxer Mike Tyson) Robin Givens commented on the 2014 publicized video of football player Ray Rice assaulting his then fiancée Janay, saying, "The release of this new video is a watershed moment. It's very difficult for people to wrap their minds around the concept of a man actually balling up his fist and hitting a woman. They don't mean to dismiss it, it's just too hard to take in. But the video forces you to take it in. There's no escaping. You can't dance around it, you have to deal with it. That's why video really becomes

¹⁹ (Weitzman, 2000)

²⁰ (Ruiz, Ruiz, & Mills, 2010)

crucial for this cause, the fight against domestic violence. No matter what people are told, it's hard for anyone to believe that a man could do this kind of thing unless they actually see it. People say: 'That guy is so nice when he's with me. What did you do? What did you say to him? He's cool. I play golf with him. I can't imagine him doing this.' Women are simply not believed.

But if there's video, you can't unsee it. It is so deep to actually see what happens to women. And we will see it now because there are cameras everywhere. I remember being dragged down a hallway in a hotel in the Bahamas on a night I thought I was really going to die. Today there would have been cameras in that hall. Someone would know. I would be believed. Now the story gets to tell itself."²¹

Narrator: "Because I completely didn't see them".

Women either don't see the signs, they fail to recognize His behaviour as part of IPV, or they ignore the signs. Looking back, realizing that the indicators of IPV were there from the beginning – from the first date when He had already eaten when she arrived for dinner; the anger and inflexibility; the refusal to take part in their preparation class before the wedding; rolling His eyes or discounting her opinions; even how He treated other women in his life.

Never having experienced IPV, these women didn't make the connection between his behaviour and IPV or, for some, they thought his neediness, jealousy, and control would ease when they were married, when he would know that she wasn't leaving but rather committing to the relationship and to him. Yet in all the stories, the abuse didn't end – it got worse.

These are the Voices of Women Ignoring the Warning Signs of IPV...

²¹ (Givens, 2014)

Scene One

Kat: I just ignored the signs, now that I've had time to look at the whole relationship I see the indicators that started right away. They really did start right away. I just didn't see them. I ignored them because I thought He needed me.

Trish: My first "sign" that I completely ignored was on our first "real" date. I told myself that I must have misunderstood the invitation, and I was reminded how people who knew Him told me He was "a really nice guy".

Kat: What happened?

Trish: He had invited me to His place after work, which was around 7pm. He knew that I would not have eaten dinner. When I got there, He had already eaten and offered me what He had left – a bowl of strawberries.

Carole²²: Yeah, "nice guy", huh. How many times have I heard, "Oh, He's such a nice guy"? If only they knew what he was like behind the closed doors of our home.

Grace: It really was the little things that I ignored, you know, rolling His eyes, discounting everything I said. At first, I really didn't see those little, disrespecting things.

Kat: I should have listened to my mom because she said to me, "how a man treats His mother..." Well, He treats His mother like crap so that should have been enough right there.

The Wedding Day (picture of a wedding projected on the back wall of the stage)

Christi: Believe it or not, the very first inkling was at our wedding. I knew that the man I was walking toward was not someone who made me feel safe or cherished or authentically loved. I

²² Carole is a composite character, expressing thoughts, feelings, and emotions of a number of other characters.

think I just convinced myself of that for as long as I could because it was what I wanted to believe...whether it was real or not. While the photographer was taking pictures, he asked my new husband to dip me so he could take a shot. My husband gritted His teeth and hissed at me, “When is this going to be fucking over?” That was the first time, just 2 hours after the ceremony, I thought, “Dear God, what have I done?”

I also wish that I had paid attention to a Red Flag warning before the wedding when He refused to take the class to prepare couples for marriage. I wondered what He was so afraid of and if He had pains from His past He wouldn't acknowledge.

Charlotte: At the wedding, He ground the wedding cake into my face after we cut it. Some people thought it was funny, but I now know it was a sign of power and control. I was embarrassed. I just wish I had known more about IPV then - I really knew nothing. I didn't know that people who loved each other would ever hit or hurt their partner. I kept blaming myself. Remember, this was 1968 and no one talked about domestic violence – it was a private matter. There was still the belief that the husband, as head of the household, had the right to quell a hysterical, shrewish woman.

Leslie: I think I must have known something wasn't right the day of our wedding. I remember thinking “maybe this was the way out” when friends told me He had disappeared before the wedding ceremony. Maybe He wanted to dodge the wedding as badly as I did. He came back with my father 15 minutes after the ceremony was to begin and 25 minutes later we were married.

Janice²³: (*pouring coffee for the women*) May I tell you my own wedding story? I remember walking down the aisle and telling my father that I didn't think I should be doing this, marrying

²³ Janice is a server at the restaurant/bar/coffee shop where the women meet.

the man at the end of the aisle. He told me that was what women did, they got married. So I did. I recited my vows to His feet.

Merry: In our wedding video, He is looking at the crowd most of the time and not at me. I remember Him noticing that when He watched the video and He felt bad but said (and this is a quote) "I didn't know where to look". Now that I think of it, it didn't even register with me - I wasn't annoyed or anything, not even hurt. He was always absentminded. And I am still making excuses for him – Wow!

Trish: I was walking to the service thinking, “If this doesn’t work, I know how to get divorced now”. When I looked at our wedding pictures I saw a bruise on my hand from a fight a couple of days before the wedding. Completely ignored that.

Narrator: Hiding the Truth from Themselves

Women hide the truth from themselves. They are desperate to keep their IPV a secret from others and do not want others to see the abuse they are experiencing and for them to learn what is happening in their private lives. They make excuses for their partner, they deny and ignore what is happening to them. According to Weitzman, one of the traits unique to the upscale abused women is that there is “little or no history of abuse in their family of origin or previous relationships”.²⁴ It is no wonder that they fall into the trap of an abusive man. “They buy into the myth that domestic violence affects only the underprivileged”²⁵, veiling themselves from the truth – IPV can and does happen to any woman regardless of income. They try to justify their situation as a “milder” form of IPV if they haven’t experienced physical violence.

The women who added their voices to this project had little or no prior experience with IPV either personally or through family/friends. One woman had a prior abusive relationship and

²⁴ (Weitzman, S., 2000, p. 234)

²⁵ (Weitzman, S., 2000, p. 8)

thought that enough time had gone by and she had “done the work” to recognize IPV early (she didn’t) and avoid another abusive relationship (she didn’t). Another woman didn’t recognize her first marriage as psychologically abusive until after she left, although she knew that if she didn’t leave her (first) marriage, she would shrivel up and die emotionally, that her voice would become silent.

Not only was their exposure to IPV limited but their awareness and knowledge of the full range of types of IPV was narrow. They just didn’t associate what they were experiencing as IPV. Because they were not familiar with the cycle of abuse, the types of abuse and the gradual nature of IPV, they either ignored, denied, or dismissed His actions as something other than IPV or abuse. They got caught up in the stereotype or belief that psychological / emotional abuse isn’t “real” abuse.²⁶

These are the Voices of Women Who Denied their IPV

Leslie: I didn’t even know I was being abused, my denial was that powerful. Somehow I kept believing in us. I couldn’t leave Him, even though I had no hope that He would stop beating me down, even though my voice shook when He walked into a room. I had chosen Him.

Sarah: I would never once have said, “This is abuse”. Never once would I have said that. I just didn’t realize that it was, I just didn’t see it.

Trish: I really didn’t know anything. I really didn’t consider it to be abuse. I didn’t know anything about the pattern of abuse. That was something that the Outreach program taught me was the pattern of it. I just had no knowledge. None at all. No family history that I knew of. No friends. No nothing. Zippedy-doo-da.

²⁶ (Lachkar, 1998, p.xii)

Merry: I didn't see a violence. I just blocked that entirely, I repressed it until I was ready to hear it. Until I felt strong enough - because I couldn't feel. I still tend to discount it a fair degree.

Sarah: I just never admitted to anything. And I still look back and think, "Was it really, though?"

Grace: Yeah, I mean, you know it happens, and you know, it is abuse. And that's one of the things I felt so "duh" about. I went to school in the medical profession and we're told to watch for these things and these are the signs of abuse, and then not even recognizing that it was me – I didn't realize it at the time... as it was happening. But I, I just didn't see that as me.

Leslie: It took a long time, years, to realize it was IPV.

Mary: So it really was, you know, something that happened to other people. Not to people like me. Because I know some situations are, like, it's very clear there's separation, there's a restraining order, you know, whatever it needs to be. A case like mine, it's not so clear cut.

Trish: I remember now, I remember thinking that, um, once we're married and He knows that I'm committed to being with Him, that this will stop. I was recently divorced and made a choice to marry again and it was, like, what the fuck is going on in this world, because it was totally foreign to me. I had some conversations with an outreach program at a transition house that were mostly around learning about IPV. I still hadn't put the term of 'domestic violence' on it. Or, or 'spousal abuse' or any of those terms. So that was kind of like, oh, wow. I hadn't put all the pieces together before that.

Scene Two

Narrator: So many women justify why they didn't leave immediately or recognize that they were actually being abused – if it wasn't physical then was it really IPV?? That they would have left earlier if they were being physically abused. Yet, seven of the women interviewed did admit

to having been physically abused – just not “as bad” as the stories we hear of women being beaten to the point of broken bones, hospitalization, etc. And because it isn’t what we hear in the media and through academic research, it can’t be “that bad” or asking themselves, “Am I really being abused?” Slowly they begin to recognize the impact of verbal, emotional/psychological, and financial abuse they experience on a daily basis.

These are the Voices of Women Exploring their Own IPV Experience...

Kat: My cousin was in a highly toxic very abusive very, very, very abusive relationship for twelve years. So I did see that. But I always said, “Well, mine’s not as bad as hers.” Right?

Mary: I wasn’t physically threatened so I didn’t need to deal with it right away in the same way that someone would if they were being physically threatened. And I don’t know that for sure, but you know, everything I hear or read about physical violence suggests that it ramps up and it gets worse, and so at some point I, I do think, had there been physical violence, I would have had to flee. Like, it would have been hard to know because that wasn’t my circumstance but - I don’t know if I could have done it that way, though, if it, if there was physical violence. I feel like I would have had to get out.

Merry: Because it's not, because it's not physical. Is that it? You know, because in our society we have this, this sharp division between physical abuse and all the other kinds, and you know. There’s reasons for that, but you know, then that’s colouring my own thinking, too. I don’t see it really as serious as physical violence, but in terms of the impact on my life, there’s nothing frigging mild about it. Right?

Mary: And I would say in my mind, and I think that, it’s again a story, because I’d have no way of knowing if it would be true or not, in my mind, if He’d have hit me, it would have been more clear cut, and of course I wouldn’t have put up with that. But I don’t know that that’s true,

knowing how people get lulled into that, and knowing how I got sucked into this. There's a time I would have said it never would have happened to me. And now I actually don't know that it wouldn't have happened to me, because maybe I was just "lucky" that He wasn't physically violent.

My understanding is that the physical violence always comes with the emotional and psychological violence as well, and, and I know that that's just as damaging if not more than the physical violence. And so I'm aware that that's what I experienced and I know that that's why when He has been in a rage since then, and most of it has been in e-mail because I'm less likely to want to talk to Him, but I know that's why I get the reactions that I get.

Christi: That was how I rationalized it – that I needed to absorb a punch to be convinced that this kind of treatment was not acceptable. Somehow, I thought that it wasn't abuse until a hand smacked my skin.

Narrator: What is IPV?

There are six kinds of intimate partner violence, yet women of influence don't associate what happened to them as IPV, believing that unless they are physically abused it isn't IPV – that it isn't happening to them, that it is not clear that they are or have experienced IPV, and that it certainly isn't "as bad" as other women without money or resources experiences. Yet, the impact on their lives is huge, and access to money may be limited by a controlling partner.

Somehow, they excuse the experience as though they need to find a way not to make it real, not a "clear cut" case of IPV. As if it couldn't have happened to them. But it did.

These are the Voices of Women's Experiences of IPV...

Trish: So, am I right in remembering that seven of us experienced physical violence? That even though some of us didn't recognize it as IPV then, and maybe even today, most of us experienced physical abuse. Was it so subtle that we really didn't see it?

Leslie: There was nothing subtle about my experience, although it took me five years with Him to actually see it and get out.

Sarah: After one fight, the one that ended up in my calling the police when He threatened to attack me with a butcher knife, I thought I had broken ribs He had punched me that hard. It hurt to breathe.

Kat: It really was the "big" physical attack that opened my eyes. Which is funny, because I had actually had a miscarriage the first time He physically attacked me. But it was after that when my eyes were opened.

Trish: Oh Kat, I am so sorry. My experience wasn't nearly as violent – I had bruises and walked on eggshells, but never anything that...violent.

Kat: Yeah, there were so many brutal periods in my life with Him, but that doesn't discount what you experienced. Being hit, slapped, punched, physically violated in any way is just...wrong.

Sarah: He punched me and kicked me on numerous occasions and it took me awhile to admit it or show others. Eventually I had to. At work they could see the bruises and knew I wasn't myself.

Trish: Leslie, would you share your experience with us?

Leslie: Okay, but please don't judge me for what I am about to share.

All Women: Of course not. I hope we are in a space now that we can be open and honest in our experiences and sharing.

Leslie: I know, it's just that it is really big stuff. The very first violent act was before we were engaged. We were having sex and suddenly He placed His hands around my neck and slowly tightened His grip around my throat. I could hardly breathe and I filled with panic. I remember His words, "I...own...you".

When we were on our honeymoon I got lost on our way to ride horses and He punched me on the side of my face. My head hit the window and I just kept driving, there was no way I was going to let Him "get to me". The worst part was my lack of surprise.

On the drive back from our honeymoon, I was pulling over to allow a driver to pass when He woke up from a nap. He accused me of doing something to make the driver mad and then threw the remains of a cold Big Mac at me. I had bits of onion and sauce in my hair, in my ear, over the steering wheel – I just left it there and continued driving.

Carole: Oh Leslie, how horrible. You told us you knew something was wrong on your wedding day and to have that confirmed so soon after – and adapting and learning so quickly to forge on as if nothing had happened.

Leslie: I did realize that nothing I did made Him hit me, and nothing I did made Him stop. I remember when I started to question who this man I loved really was – He had decided He needed to have a gun. He ended up getting two, one of which he put under His pillow and one in the car. It was one summer night during a fight that I can't remember how it started that He held the Colt .45 against my temple and threatened to pull the trigger. For some reason, I wasn't afraid, that somehow I didn't believe he would actually do that. I had a perfectly circular bruise for two days.

While I wasn't afraid that time, I sure was by the time I filed for the restraining order. We had planned a trip to Paris to celebrate His birthday and Christmas. He decided we weren't going

– I think because I had arranged it and He didn't have the control. When I told Him I was going, even if without Him, He attacked me. He broke a picture over my head and small bloody slits like paper cuts sprang up across my forehead and cheeks from the shards. Then He kicked me in the ribs and punched me, grabbed my neck and pulled me onto the bed where He lay on top of me with His hands around my throat and squeezed until I passed out.

Charlotte: The first physical attack came two years after we were married. It was early spring of 1968. I swear we were just talking. But I think it was the first time I disagreed with Him and was sticking to my guns. I was arguing my point calmly, but I was holding to it. I got His right hand to the left side of my face. That's how I always got it. He is right-handed.

Afterwards, my ear kept ringing, and I couldn't hear well. I was ashamed to be going to a doctor because my husband had hit me so I didn't tell Him. Instead I said that I had blown my nose and suddenly heard this ringing. But I was mortified. I was convinced that he could look into my ear and know that it had been caused by a slap to the head.

I was three months pregnant with our first child when He hit me again. I don't recall the exact circumstances; I think we fought over moving to a new house on a busier street. But it could have been a little thing like not unplugging the iron. I was verbally fighting back, stating my opinion, which He called "open defiance". I remember His fist coming at my abdomen. He slugged me probably five times. The next day I went to the doctor because I was scared about the baby. This time I told the doctor what had happened. He too told me to leave Him, but because I had talked back, I felt I had provoked the attack.

Christi: My experiences weren't nearly as horrific as yours – I feel now like I should be grateful that He didn't punch me or treat me that bad. That I am lucky His venom was more verbal

attacking and yet, He did grab me and I was conscious of needing to cover the bruises on my arms after His attacks.

Merry: I don't think of my IPV experience as very physical either, although He did use force to try to get into my house after we separated. I feel lucky too – but I know that the other types of IPV have a strong impact and perhaps we need to think about them too...being abused is being abused.

Narrator: Aysan Sev'er (2002) says “through my research on IPV, I honestly can say that the damage done by non-physical abuse never ceased to startle me. The powerful effects of the psychological degradation that women suffer, leaving them emotionally crippled for long periods, maybe even scarring the way they see themselves for the rest of their lives, is something that we need to acknowledge”.²⁷ Additionally, Bancroft says that the scars from mental cruelty can be as deep and long-lasting as wounds from punches or slaps but are often not as obvious. In fact, even among women who experienced violence from a partner, half or more report that *the man's emotional abuse is what is causing them the greatest harm*.²⁸ And yet, according to Lachkar (1998), even research is not focused on emotional abuse.²⁹

Trish: Judith Herman says that the common denominator of psychological trauma is a feeling of intense helplessness, loss of control, and threat of annihilation.³⁰ It's a good explanation of how I felt. I lived in fear every day. I think we all did.

All the women agree.

Charlotte: The physical stuff was bad enough, but I think the silences were worse. They were psychological torture. I could never predict what would send Him into one of those silences. Or

²⁷ (Sev'er, 2002, p. 19)

²⁸ (Bancroft, L., 2002, p. 8)

²⁹ (Lachkar, J., 1998, pp. xv, xxix)

³⁰ (Herman, 1997, p. 42)

how to get Him out of them. Even when we were dating He just disappeared for 2 months – I didn't hear a word from Him and when He came back He acted like nothing had happened.

Mary: Would unpredictable be a word others would also use?

All women "oh yes".

Trish: Weitzman refers to that as *shifting sands*. He sends out conflicting and contradictory messages and changes His mood and emotional positions frequently and unpredictably so you have no clear idea of what is coming next or what you have done to evoke such behaviours.³¹

Mary: I realized that I was trying to aim for a target, like a goal, that He would say was where I needed to be, and whenever I got close to the goal, the goal shifted. So it wasn't good enough. And nothing, I realized, nothing I ever did was good enough. And then I realized that He was unpredictable. And I didn't know what He was going to say next. Or do. Um, because He would rage for three or four days at a time. And He would spin in His mind, the story. And so if we stopped, then He would go away and spin it and come back even angrier. And it was somewhere in there that I, I had the insight or realization that I was actually being psychologically and emotionally abused.

Charlotte: The best way I can describe Him is Jekyll and Hyde. It really was as if He was two people – one generous, admirable, affectionate, easy to love. The other was harsh, manipulative, and belittling. The kind man could dissolve into the oppressor so suddenly and leave me bewildered.

Sarah: You only think of physical abuse, and, oh He only pushed me once. Well, that's nothing. But if they're belittling you every single day, it's the same kind of thing.

Trish: He was so good at spinning His story, manipulating me into believing His story. He told

³¹ (Weitzman, 2000, p. 84)

me that if I ever tried to say that He was abusing me, I wouldn't get away with it because I hit Him back to defend myself. He had me convinced that I was abusing Him.

Kat: Are you familiar with the movie *Gaslight* with Ingrid Bergman? It's about a woman whose husband slowly manipulates her into believing that she is going insane. Gaslighting is a form of persistent manipulation and brainwashing that causes the victim to doubt her or himself, and ultimately lose her or his own sense of perception, identity, and self-worth.³² The term has been used to relate to the confusion and self-questioning women, particularly professional and educated women, go through when trying to deny and then understand their IPV.

Trish: Yes, I've seen the movie and always somehow related to it. His need for control over me and my children, and His efforts to destroy my confidence, my every action really. He would track my mileage so I was terrified to go anywhere after work except right home.

Kat: He had little tactics to make me think I was losing my mind. Just little things like, our picture hanging on the wall. He would take it and hide it. Little things like that. I would come home and drawers would be taped up with duct tape. Stuff like that. Things to make me think I was losing my mind. I came home, I remember, another time, and there was a movie playing about a woman that wasn't taking her medication and she lost her mind and lost her son. I could see what He was doing, but I couldn't connect it all. I really did feel like I was losing my mind. But I could see the tactics that He was using. It's funny. It's almost like you're living on the outside of yourself - I can't describe it any other way. (*Laughs*) You see it all happening, but you can't make sense of it.

Merry: He would use our young child to try to emotionally manipulate me and He still does today, even years later. I didn't see the psychological abuse as serious as physical violence,

³² (Ni, P., 2017)

even though the impact it has had on my life has been huge. It still is.

Projection on the back wall of the stage

“White-collar women are like all other women in terms of getting sucked into the psychological and emotional abuse that traps them”.³³

“Psychologically, He’s been calling you names so much, you begin to wonder, maybe He’s right. Maybe I deserve this”.³⁴

“Then came the name calling and the mocking, the complaints about her cooking and her housework. Eventually – right on schedule – ‘He had gobbled in my face and punched me.’ Depression, self-doubt and hopelessness followed”.³⁵

“Nancy told police ‘both emotional and physical abuse has been an ongoing problem.’ In a recent interview, she said she did not seek help earlier because she was afraid her husband would become more violent and that He would win custody of their children”.³⁶

³³ Carol Arthur, Healthcare Training Institute, *Battered professional women and domestic violence*

³⁴ Ian Brown, Globe and Mail, September 12, 2014

³⁵ Ian Brown, Globe and Mail, September 12, 2014

³⁶ Kim Horner, Dallas News.com, April 9 2005

Grace, who missed the first part of the meeting, joins them for coffee.

Trish: Hi Grace. Glad you could join us. We've just been sharing our stories of the kind of IPV we experienced. I know that you have told me you didn't experience physical violence...is that right?

Grace: That's right – He played on my insecurities as we've talked about but He was not physically abusive. He abused me financially – I still avoid thinking about money.

Sarah and Leslie (*simultaneously*) Me too.

Grace: I am proud of myself though, I just applied for a credit card – I was terrified to apply, I was so afraid to get rejected.

Trish: Can you share your story? I am sure others would benefit from hearing it.

Grace: As you know, I was new to the city and very naive and vulnerable. I trusted Him when we found the house and I gave Him money to help with the down payment, but I didn't want to be part of buying the house. I found out later that only half of that money was used for the house and that He had opened credit cards in my name. I was served with the papers from the bank – that was how I found out the mortgage was in my name.

Somehow, He was excluded from it. He had forged my signature, and I couldn't deny that it was mine. And when I went to see the lawyer, He said, "There's nothing you can do" because to fight it would cost a lot of money, and would probably put me more in debt. He had declared bankruptcy so He was "untouchable". I had very little personal debt and yet I had to claim bankruptcy too. It's taken a long time to get over.

Trish: Oh, Grace. I'm so sorry. Unbelievable He got off and you were burdened with his debts.

Sarah: I had money that I got from my dad's death that basically went into bailing Him out when He kept going out west and getting fired. One night He called me and told me He wasn't

going to get on the plane home, that He wasn't coming home then. I had bought the plane ticket, the second one because He didn't get on the plane the night before either, which cost me more money.

Leslie: All of our debt was in my name, the house, even His business school loans. I ended up paying Him to settle the divorce. Financially, it took six years to get out of debt attributed to Him.

Charlotte: Four years after leaving Him, I had to file for bankruptcy and sell the house I was living in with our five children. When I wrote the book "Shattered Dreams" the courts ruled that He was entitled to 25% of the earnings because I wouldn't "have the story" if not for Him.

Trish: Oh my god, really? How incredibly degrading.

Charlotte: Justice finally prevailed, and the ruling was overturned a year later.

Sarah: Fortunately, my financial losses weren't that big. He got three cell phones through me. Um, the last cell phone, the collectors called me for \$800.00 and that was after paying off two other cell phones that went up to, like, \$400 each. Um, I paid all the bills in the house. I paid all the groceries. If He needed smokes and He didn't have money I bought Him smokes. Everything.

Trish: I don't think it matters how "big" the loss is Sarah. We were all taken advantage of for our financial standing and our commitments to paying off debt. When I left Him, I still paid for half the mortgage and utilities for six months before He agreed to sell the townhouse. I was paying for a small 2-bedroom apartment with my daughter while He was living in a 3-bedroom, 3-storey townhouse that I was paying for so we wouldn't default on the mortgage. Yet, we all came through it and are here today to talk about it. There are two other forms of IPV we haven't talked about yet: Sexual and Spiritual. Does anyone have something to share?

Grace: (*timidly and quietly*) He forced me to watch pornography.

Charlotte: I had thought mine was psychological abuse but maybe it was sexual – I was afraid to deny sex because He became furious if I ever told Him I wasn't feeling well or didn't want to.

Trish: Yes, that would be sexual abuse. I often felt “forced” to have sex with Him to avoid the psychological crap that would come with saying no. And you already know He accused me of having affairs – that's a form of sexual abuse too.

Kat: For me, there was big time spiritual abuse. We have the same faith and it was a lot of the spiritual beliefs that held me in the relationship for so long. You know, I felt that He did love God and wanted to do the right things, and I thought that over time and with help, it would change. But I had to let that piece go. I really did. And it was a hard one, because I was raised in a strict religion. That's where it stems from, the kind of mind control through spirituality and, and scriptures that were used against me to, to make me feel that I should be putting up with this, you know. There are scriptures that say love is unending and puts up with all, basically puts up with everything. So He used that against me and He knew that it was used against me as a child as well. That was what He used and He still tries to.

Trish: How are you doing with that now?

Kat: Good. I know that it's not acceptable. I haven't stopped believing in God because of it but I can see how He used it out of context. I can see how my parents have used it out of context, the Bible, to manipulate or get what they want, or have you behave in how they want.

Mary: I hadn't known that spiritual was a form of IPV. Can anyone explain the ways to me – I think it might have happened to me too.

Trish: Spiritual abuse can be harder to define and identify, yet is no less harmful than other forms of abuse, as a person's spiritual life is deeply personal. Spiritual abuse consists of being

ridiculed or insulted for one's spiritual beliefs, being manipulated due to one's beliefs, and using religious texts or beliefs to rationalize abusive behaviours.³⁷

Mary: Fascinating. Yes, I think my experience fits here. He claimed to be very spiritual and had lots of spiritual practices. Not traditional spirituality like you, Kat, but I guess what we'd call alternate or contemporary spiritual practices. I went on a very deep spiritual journey myself and became aware of my strengths and powers in a spiritual practice. And He kept jumping from one practice to another, always seeking "the answer". But really, never getting anywhere past His anger, His personal demons. And while He pretended to support me, I think He always thought He was "above" me in His practice.

Trish: Ladies, we have had a full evening. Our stories certainly have proven that IPV does happen to "people like us". I know that I have learned a lot tonight, not just about IPV but about all of you. And how grateful I am to have all of you in my life.

(The women all agree and hug each other as they prepare to leave the meeting)

Scene Three

Narrator: Hoping He Would Change

Even when they realize they are experiencing IPV, they hope for change. They hope that He will change. They hope that if she can love Him enough, that if He will believe in her and them as a couple, that He will stop abusing her. They hope that His promises to change will be true – that He means his promises and commitments to her. They hope for their future, hope for the future. They hope that somehow her love will be enough. But it isn't. Rarely does the abuser change. He didn't change for these women.

³⁷ (Hotline, 2015)

These are the Voices of Women Hoping for Change...

Sarah: I think a part of me always knew that he was abusing me, but I was convinced that He could change. I was just convinced, and I didn't want to be alone. I thought that if we had a house He would have more responsibilities and more expectations to maybe pay the bills.

Grace: I kept hoping that if He went and spoke to the right person, or hoping that if He had the right medication that He would change. Or hoping that, you know, I could get Him to talk to somebody, or you know, like. But I felt the pressure of the hope by myself. Like, I need to get Him help, I need to help do this. I need to. And I couldn't just walk out when I thought I would be leaving Him in a bad place. So I kept hoping for change.

Kat: I thought that if I just loved Him enough and cared about Him enough and took enough and showed Him that He, you know, that I was there for Him that He would change. I really thought that.

Sarah: I was just convinced that He would change. I needed Him to change because I needed Him so much.

Leslie: I was like you, Sarah. I was convinced that I needed Him, and that He needed me too. That He would change for me.

Kat: Like a lot of women, I thought that if I were just enough, I could change this man. If I could just become exactly what He felt I was missing, that He would change and treat me better.

Trish: He was very good at providing the answers and doing what He thought would get Him what He wanted. He made some promises to me about how things would change, how He would change. He convinced me by telling me what He thought I wanted to hear.

Grace: And wasn't that smoke and mirrors? I stayed in the relationship a lot longer than I should have, hoping for it to change.

Trish: Grace, I expect we all did. I had left for six months, found a new place to live, everything to make a new start for myself. And then I let Him convince me to go to counselling with Him. He told me He had started seeing a counsellor and He was “different”. So I went. Be clear, abuse never came up in the sessions – it was “marriage” counselling. And He made promises that I believed and I moved back into our house. It took me two years to get out after that.

Narrator: Bancroft says that there are no shortcuts to change, no easy ways out. In his experience, “the majority of abusive men do not make deep and lasting changes even in a high-quality abuser program”.³⁸ Hoping for change, as was the experience of these women, does not by itself cause abusive men to change their behaviour. He needs to acknowledge that his behaviour was wrong, to understand the impact his behaviour had on his partner, and to accept consequences and accountability for his actions.³⁹ Knowing this, I am not surprised that abusive men have continued their patterns of abuse with other women, as Kat’s, Sarah’s, and Trish’s ex-partners have, after these courageous women have awakened and found the strength and courage to leave Him.

Scene Four

Narrator: Affluent women, some who have never experienced IPV when growing up or in other relationships, some who misunderstand what IPV is and how it shows up, some who ignore the warning signs, and some are ignored by the support services for women experiencing IPV.

Ignored: The image of a woman wailing without being heard; the sense of almost being a ghost with no mechanism for expression. It’s silent. Anguished.

³⁸ (Bancroft, 2002, p. 335)

³⁹ (Bancroft, 2002)

Edvard Munch's "The Scream" projected on the back wall of the stage

These are the Voices of Women Ignored by Family, Police, Society...

Sarah: His family kind of knew, but they supported Him, no matter what. They knew that He was violent. They knew that He threatened me, my life, and things like that. And it was just like, "Oh, it's just, it's just Him."

Charlotte: I remember calling the police after one of my children saw their father pushing me over the stairwell railing, holding me by my hair when I managed to fall to the floor. They didn't ask if I was alright, or where He was. They didn't tell me to leave, or give me any telephone numbers or hotlines or counselors to call. All they said was that I could go to the police station or the courthouse and swear out a complaint. How could I do that knowing I would ruin His career. There was no legal safety net in place for victims of IPV at the time. And I didn't know that what He did to me that day was against the law.

Grace: I felt like I wasn't being taken seriously when I did contact the police. I had moved out and moved twice because He kept finding out where I lived and I felt threatened. I was being stalked and they told me there was nothing they could do.

Leslie: I ended up calling the police after a particularly bad fight when the neighbour came pounding on our door and told Him to stop, that He was going to kill me. I heard the sounds of my own screams as if there was some other woman in our apartment screaming her head off. I filed a restraining order the next day.

Trish: I had a restraining order too, but it was about a month after I left. At first, I don't think the police took my calls very seriously. He was calling me all day at work, hanging around the office

where I worked, and then started calling again when I got home and started making threats to smash my car, go to my daughter's school dance to find her, and to "make" me move back into the house. When I went to take my daughter to the dance my car was running. He had told me He lost the car's remote starter but my car was running and empty. I was terrified so called the police again. They ended up charging Him with threats to myself, my daughter, and my property. I was relieved when they offered a restraining order because I really didn't want to face Him in court. To date, I have only seen Him a handful of times since I left.

Charlotte: I was told by one priest that I should give Him more time to sort things out and just to love Him. I thought I had been doing that.

Carole: My understanding is that few affluent women do seek help from police or other help. In her research, Weitzman found that middle and upper-class women, usually well-educated with successful careers of their own, are perceived to have enough money and power to get out of abusive relationships. She also says that they tend not to report the abuse to police or access services for women experiencing IPV.⁴⁰ Only one of us went to a transition house for shelter. Most of us kept the experience pretty quiet. Until we share our experiences, until we tell our personal stories and bring our voices to the world, IPV in affluent households remains silent. And what is silent is usually misunderstood and ignored.

Scene Five

Narrator: That's Just How It is Here

The Webster dictionary defines normal as "conforming to a type, standard, or regular pattern". So normal is what you experience on a regular basis and it may be different for

⁴⁰ (Weitzman, 2000)

everyone. The life that you lead on a daily basis is normal, it is *your* normal. That's why, when people say, "I'm on a diet", I think "of course, everybody's on a diet". Some people's diet is high fat, some people's diet is high salt, or high sugar - It's what you eat on a regular basis. So this was what we lived, what was normal for us. Chaos becomes normal. Fear becomes normal. Because that's what you live every day. Somehow being mistreated and abused becomes normal because it is a part of a regular pattern – it's just how it is here.

These are the Voices of Women Experiencing How it is Here...

Trish: It's like I wasn't even my own self. There was some other body. It was like I was looking down and watching this functioning of me, but looking and going, "Okay, but that must be normal, because that's what happens every day. So it's normal." I had to step outside of that and see that it was not normal. That this way of living isn't normal. I recently read an article by Robin Givens, ex-wife of boxer Mike Tyson. She said, "It's just amazing what becomes your normal. One day you wake up with a knife at your throat. Another day, your shoes are all torn up".⁴¹

Grace: I just couldn't imagine I'd put myself in that situation. And I felt like that's what I did, after the fact. And while it was going on I didn't see it. The abuse seemed so subtle. Today it was this, and tomorrow it's this, and it's just a little more, so it didn't seem much different than the day before. Like, it was so gradual that it was, like, it didn't even recognize what was happening.

Leslie: I hadn't realized how much fear I lived in until a work friend of His told me that my voice trembled every time He enters the room. That I shake. That was when I realized that I was

⁴¹ (Givens, 2014)

terrified of Him. Being afraid become my normal state. I was always tensed for my next mistake, His next attack.

Trish: I got caught up in the “this is my life. And it doesn’t matter. This is my normal” stuff.

Grace: And you know, if you think of it, too, is like, an abuse - Like, the stereotype would be, you know - Or I guess, like, the - What’s the word I’m looking for? You know, you think of abuse as something that is, like, has an immediate effect, almost. Like, that person receiving it is feeling that abuse. I guess you get used to it because it is so gradual, and not realizing what is happening. That’s how I’m spoken to here. It’s my place around here. That’s just how it is here.

Kat: One time friends were over and some of them saw Him choke me one time and they just acted like it was nothing. They just sat there. And so I think that this must be normal because everyone around is okay with it. They hear how He’s speaking to me. They saw Him lunge at me and not one person said anything.

Trish: That was normal for so many of us. That’s who we were, just for that time period. I look at that time period as if something else invaded my whole world, my life, my body. I functioned for that time period, and then one day it just went, “Poof! I’m gone, and oh, and you have a bunch of shit to clean up.” And that’s what it felt like to me.

Christi: Another strong message to tell women – that abuse is not normal and it is not her fault. I’ve read about two forms of violence against women: one form is considered to be a common type of physical aggression amongst married and cohabitating couples, and is committed by both sexes, called Situational Couple Violence.⁴² I suspect that many couples experience some form of this form of this – an argument that escalates on occasion into a mild form of physical violence. The other type of violence, and the one we have all experienced, is referred to as

⁴² (Kelly & Johnson, 2008)

Coercive Controlling Violence where the husband systematically uses violence, threats, isolation, and other forms of control.⁴³ Lundy Bancroft (2002) describes different types of abusers and some of the reasons why they are abusive, and there are many. One of his quotes that I know we understand now, and I wish more women would accept is, “There is nothing wrong with you. Your partner’s abuse problem is his own”.⁴⁴

(All the women agree) Amen sister.

Scene Six

Narrator: Seduce – Isolate – Abuse. Repeat.

There are a variety of methods He uses to isolate her from her support systems. They are often disguised as caring for her, looking out for her happiness, and wanting to spend more one-on-one time with her. Bancroft says an abusive man who isolates his partner does so for two primary reasons: He wants her life to be totally focused on him and his needs and he doesn’t want her to develop sources of strength that could contribute to her independence. “An abusive man commonly attempts to keep his partner completely dependent on him to increase his power.”⁴⁵

Aysan Sev’er (2002) suggests that his isolation tactics may include psychosocial tactics, such as being rude to family and friends, picking a fight in front of others, and repeatedly embarrassing her in front of others so that she wants to avoid company and end up contributing to her own isolation.⁴⁶

Affluent women often isolate themselves from others so they can keep their IPV a secret. It is difficult for any woman to admit to being in an abusive relationship. Women from affluent

⁴³ (Johnson, 1995) (Kelly & Johnson, 2008)

⁴⁴ (Bancroft, 2002, p. 48)

⁴⁵ (Bancroft, 2002, p. 74)

⁴⁶ (Sev’er, 2002)

households may find it harder to understand or admit as it is not “expected” or “common” and she fears she may not be believed. The victims isolate themselves because they are embarrassed about the abuse, believing the myth that this doesn’t happen to people like them or that they should know better.⁴⁷ The woman self-isolates due to fear, embarrassment, and believing the myth that abuse “doesn’t happen to people like us”. Even though her peers may be experiencing similar emotional and physical abuse at home, the veil of silence isolates them from each other, and continues the myth that it is not occurring.

These are the Voices of Women Isolated by IPV...

Leslie: I don't know for sure that He was deliberately trying to isolate me - at the time, He genuinely seemed to be seeking some kind of inner peace and happiness. But, now that I look back, His actions clearly fall into a classic seduce-isolate-abuse-repeat pattern.

Grace: He wanted to move away from the city and I wanted to stay in the city, close to work. Then took me to this lovely town and, kind of, charmed me. You know, it was very pretty there, and, you know, I could have my little hobby farm and that kind of thing. And, I was kind of, charmed that He wanted to buy a house there. And He wanted me to live with Him.

Christi: Oh, yes. That picture perfect love story. I heard that story too. We had dated, gotten engaged, and married fairly quickly as He wanted me to move with Him to a different city for a larger job. It was only two months after we were married that I experienced my first real fear of Him and called a friend from the bathroom floor, curled up in the fetal position on the floor.

Grace: We did buy a house in the town but I was removed from friends and anything I had, because I hadn’t lived here that long, so anything I had already established, I was, kind of, separated from. So looking back, I don’t know if that was intentional on His part. But in the end,

⁴⁷ (Weitzman, 2000)

that's one of the things I realized. Like, in order for me to go to a friend's house, I had to drive 45 minutes to get anywhere. And I had no family here.

Leslie: The isolation, moving to a town or city where we know no one, now I know that is a common tactic used by abusers. It may be setup as “won't it be romantic, just the two of us against the world”. It isn't romantic to be abused once you get caught in the trap, though.

Trish: He didn't isolate me in that way but did manage to isolate me from my family and friends. He would get home before me and erase any voicemail messages that were for me. I started to tell people to only call me at work – never at home. He actually moved the message machine into His locked “man cave” so I would not be able to retrieve any messages.

Leslie: I self-isolated, for sure. Anytime I spent time with friends, or even talked on the phone with a friend, I knew He'd hurt me. He was so determined to have His own way, including how I spent my time, that I became afraid of opposing Him. I became afraid to do anything “wrong”. I was afraid of Him.

Mary: Now that you say that Leslie, I can think of other ways I isolated myself. Yes, I stopped socializing and seeing friends, but I also isolated a piece of myself to make things okay in our house and in our work. But it was more than that – I modified my behaviour and worked so hard not to say anything to others that would put Him in a bad light or set Him off.

Trish: So by modifying your behaviour, you really isolated yourself from...yourself?

Mary: Yeah, in order to keep the peace I let Him be in the spotlight. I think it was like what Bancroft said – He wanted me to focus on His needs and His skills and did not want me to develop my own strength. I hadn't thought of it like that before. He found a way to isolate my power.

Trish: He tried to do that in a way with me too. He didn't want me to take a job offer that would take me to an office that He couldn't visit during the day. Then when I took a role managing an office He really flipped. I changed my language around work – He did not want it to appear to others that I had a more responsible job than Him. He was threatened by my power so He constantly belittled me and my authority at work.

Narrator: We have heard the stories of IPV against affluent women: we have heard their shame, their pain, and their sorrow. Yet, we know these women did leave their abusive partners, they have overcome the challenges, and are here now to share their stories. It is time now to learn how they got here.

Act III: Voices Heard: Hearing My Own Voice

Scene One

Narrator: I wasn't doing anything wrong

One day there is a switch that goes on, a “light bulb moment” when she reaches the “enough” point. When she sees that she doesn't deserve to be treated this way, that she stops blaming herself, the point when she knows that she wasn't doing anything wrong. That this isn't her; that it is time to say good-bye. That she is better than this. The moment when she begins to take herself back, and steps back into the world to reclaim her soul.

These are the Voices of Women Waking Up to Their IPV...

Trish: Can I tell you my story of the day I realized that it wasn't my fault, that I wasn't to blame?

Everyone: Yes, we'd love to hear it.

Trish: I wrote this for a literature class and I still remember the day in full detail. Here goes:

A Day, Almost Unlike Any Other

I can't believe that I am still here.

This was supposed to be easy. Updating software on our computer system – how hard can it be. Yet, I've been here for five hours and it still isn't working properly. I feel so helpless, so stupid. What I am discovering is that working with computers, like life, doesn't always go according to plan.

It is Saturday, October 7, 2000. Thanksgiving weekend. And I'm at work because the office is closed until Tuesday and this seemed the perfect opportunity to install the software update to all eight workstations in one fell swoop. No such luck.

The software support team can't figure out why it isn't working. In fact, they are starting to worry because we are the first, and largest, office to install the update and they are questioning whether there is something wrong with it.

The telephone rings. Damn, not Raj from support – it's Him. The second time today.

“Hi. How's it going?”

“Okay. Just checking the work stations.”

“How long you going to be?”

“I'll let you know.” I didn't want to tell Him the truth.

What am I doing wrong?

I did the back-up; support checked it before I proceeded to install new software. All was going well, until I rebooted the server and checked each workstation. And was met with...no client data! How could that be? Reinstall - that must be the answer. So, I did the process again. Reboot – and my heart sinks. Nothing.

I am sitting on the ceramic tile floor halfway between my office and the server room, with the phone at my feet. Support is checking again to see if they can detect the problem. Waiting. What am I doing wrong? Why isn't this working?

The phone rings. A client calling – I let it go to voice mail. At least if I'm here, I'm not at home.

The phone – please be Raj. It isn't. I answer on the third ring.

“Hi.” I hope my light tone disguises my despair.

“When are you going to be done?”

“I'm not sure. Support is checking the system. I can't leave until they're done.”

“Are you alone?”

“Yes. I already told you that everyone is on holiday. No one else is here.”

“Want me to come over?”

“No, you don’t need to do that.”

I try to sound confident so He won’t hear the plea in my voice. The one that is saying, “Please don’t come here. Please, just leave me alone, just for this little while.”

The office is normally bustling with activity, clients coming and going, phones ringing, the hubbub of conversations, the clicking on keyboards. Noise. But today, it is quiet. There is not even the hum of computers. Damn, no computers.

The ringing of the telephone shocks me back to the present, heart pounding.

Not him.

“Hi, Raj.”

“Hi, Trish. Just got word from the programmer – he can’t find anything to explain what is going on there.”

All I can hear are the words in my head saying, “What an idiot you are, you can’t even install a simple computer software update.”

“You might want to get your hardware support people in. Could be something there.”

“Thanks, Raj. I appreciate you’re looking into this. Will do. Happy Thanksgiving.”

Great! It is 3:30PM on Saturday of a long weekend. What are the chances he’ll be around? In desperation, I call and oh, relief, Shaun answers the phone. I explain the situation and he is on his way!

I pace the halls, retracing each and every step: all computers off – check: back-up - check; install software, one at a time – check; all computers off – check; reboot server – check; restart, one at time – check. And...No data on half of them. No client files, no invoices, no accounting files.

Nothing. What am I doing wrong?

It seems like hours but in reality is only minutes when Shaun arrives, calm and reassuring. After checking the server, he goes into the clinical area where two workstations reside, one of which is not happy with the software update. And walks back to see me in a matter of minutes, smiling.

How can he be smiling??

“There was a lightning storm last night.”

I remember. I had just left the office when the rain started and flashes of light surrounded the building. I was glad I had gotten out before the torrents of rain pelted the earth.

“Well, looks like you guys were hit. One of the outlets is black. It must have taken out one of the network hubs. I’ve got a replacement right here, can do it now if you’d like.”

I was standing on the same 15” x 15” ochre brown ceramic tile that I sat on earlier when a huge wave of relief came over me. I didn’t do anything wrong. I am not doing anything wrong.

Two days later, I made the decision to leave Him.

All Women: Nice, I love that. Knowing it wasn’t you, knowing it was time to leave.

Leslie: I wish my moment of understanding that I was being abused and that I needed to leave was more like yours. I remember the night He pushed me down the basement stairs. He was angry that I had spent time visiting a friend and hadn’t done His laundry. I fell onto the concrete floor and He left me there after turning out the light. He just left me on the floor.

Carole: Oh my god, Leslie! What happened after that? Were you seriously hurt?

Leslie: I just did what I did every time he hit me or threw food at me – I got up and acted like nothing had happened. I just carried on as best I could. No broken bones, no need to get medical help – act like this is normal.

Charlotte: My decision moment also included verbal and physical abuse. We had just finished shoveling after a big snow storm and when we got in, the snow fell off the roof. He wanted the

boys to go out right then and I thought we could wait a bit which led to him yelling at the boys. I picked up a wooden toy and threw it at him after He said, “go suck on your mother’s tit” to them. He hit me with a clenched fist in my eye, breaking my glasses. I packed up the boys, dropped them off at a friend’s place, and went to the police. They weren’t very helpful and I felt like a fool so I left.

While I did end up going back, it was short-lived and within a couple of weeks I told him I wanted a divorce. We lived in the house together for a few months and He started seeing a therapist at my insistence. Within 4 months, He moved out of the house.

Kat: Yeah, my “aha moment” happened after a violent episode too. I remember him saying, “What is it going to take for you to finally leave me?” I remember that moment. And then I just felt like, “You’re the one that’s been begging to stay.” And how I felt in that moment before the physical attack was so sad, and then I started crying, and instead of a normal person would try to console someone, He started to hit me. And then chased me up the stairs, and the whole - I mean, it was, it was pretty brutal. It was pretty brutal. I ended up in the hospital.

Carole: Jeez Kat, that is horrible. I can’t believe how some men treat the people they claim to love. What did you do?

Kat: I moved into a transition house for abused women and their children. Me and my kids. I really needed to be held accountable for my actions and my decision to leave Him. I had gone back before and couldn’t again.

Grace: I am so glad you were able to find a safe place for you and your children. I can’t imagine how you lived through that. *(Everyone acknowledges Kat’s story)*

Grace: My story, not to diminish the horribleness of what you went through, might lighten the space a bit. Would that be okay? *(The women all nod in agreement)*

I had just been home. My grandmother was palliative so I had flown home to see her. I was engaged to Him when I went home. I had my last few moments with my grandmother; I knew I wouldn't see her alive again. We always had a really close bond.

And for some reason I think, and I don't know how, but she knew something wasn't right. I remember her saying to me, "Now, when you leave here, if you're going to get married, if it's not fully for love, and you're not in love, you can't do this." And that was the last word she said to me. It was that week I ... left.

Mary: I remember the day when I kind of looked, sort of figuratively looked up and realized that all around the edges things were shifting and changing, which meant that something at the core also had to be shifting and changing. Otherwise that wouldn't be, it wouldn't be happening. It wouldn't be all around me. And it was a while after that. I don't know when, but a while after that, when I guess it landed deeply enough in me, grounded deeply enough in me that I could actually take the steps to do the separation.

Janice: *(stopping in at the table to check if anyone needs anything)* I didn't tell you – today marks five weeks out after eight years with Him. He used to drive me to work because He didn't trust me not to go anywhere else. Hearing your stories helped me gain the strength to leave. I have a really good counsellor, but you have definitely proved it is possible to move out and move on. Thank you.

Trish: That's wonderful Janice, congratulations. It sounds like we all have our memories of defining moments that will not leave us – perhaps moments that will guide us through the rest of our lives.

Poem, The Journey, projected on the back wall of the stage

One day you finally knew
what you had to do, and began,
though the voices around you
 kept shouting
 their bad advice –
though the whole house
 began to tremble
and you felt the old tug
 at your ankles.
“Mend my life!”
 each voice cried.
But you didn’t stop.
You knew what you had to do,
 though the wind pried
 with its stiff fingers
at the very foundation,
though their melancholy
 was terrible.

It was already late
enough, and a wild night,
and the road was full of fallen
 branches and stones.
But little by little,
as you left their voices behind,
 the stars began to burn
through the sheets of clouds,
and there was a new voice
 which you slowly
 recognized as your own,
 that kept you company
as you strode deeper and deeper
 into the world,
 determined to do
the only thing you could do –
 determined to save
the only life that you could save.

~ Mary Oliver

Scene Two

Narrator: Healing from Telling

Women who experience IPV need to shed the veil of secrecy and the ties that bound them so they can heal. Telling their stories and opening them to the air allows the healing to begin.

Regardless of income level, women need a safe place and someone who they can trust so they can take the risk to expose their fragility. To start on the path of feeling whole again.

These are the Voice of Women Healing from Telling their Stories...

Trish: A friend of mine once told me that the abuse can heal but not if it is kept secret. I didn't talk about my experience for a long time; I kept it on the back burner for years.

Merry: There's a lot of initial shock to it. You've got to get your body to calm down. At least for me.

Trish: Yes, I guess that is true. Just the shock of realizing you were being abused. Because I had no prior knowledge of IPV, it took time to process it. It took me seven years before I started talking about it publicly. I think the biggest thing for me was realizing that I wasn't alone, that I wasn't the only person who had this experience.

Mary: I think that being able to tell your story to someone who is important to you, someone who you don't fear judgment from, is important. To know that you will be met with compassion – that is a way to heal.

Kat: It wasn't until I heard other women's experiences that I realized that it wasn't something I deserved, or that I provoked it.

Merry: I don't know what I would have done without my lifeline – my friends and my Mom. I was used to doing everything on my own, but I could not have gotten here without being able to talk with my people.

Grace: You women are really the first people I have talked to about my experience. I don't even bring it up with others although I now know that it would have helped. Talking with you ladies has helped so much. I blocked so many memories and these conversations have really helped me remember things. Thank you for that gift.

Sarah: I don't think I ever would have identified at all what I was going through, if it wasn't for the people that I talked to. I agree, Mary, it is important to feel safe to open up to people who you're close to. I don't know what I would have done without my friends and "people".

Mary: I think circles of support, women who can meet with each other and have both intentionality and spacious around sharing stories, is huge in healing. That is why I think we work so well and have helped in our healing.

Kat: I know that I can always pick up the phone and call my friends. And I've had counselling, through a transition house and I continue to see a counsellor. I think I'm the only one of us who saw a counsellor specifically for IPV.

Mary, Leslie, Charlotte: We had "marriage" counselling. We didn't talk about IPV.

Christi: Our counselling sessions focused on His alcoholism. After, I had some counselling but not with a support group or with other women like me who experienced IPV.

Kat: I journal a lot too. I find it very helpful.

Mary: I think journaling is a good way of making meaning of what happens to us by the stories we tell, and the way we tell that story shifts and changes over time. As we engage with that story differently, I think that we heal.

Trish: In looking back, I wish that I had been in a place that I did take advantage of some kind of a support group or some kind of a talk place or something, so that I would have had a better understanding rather than stumbling through the healing process. Because I didn't. I couldn't.

But I think I would have benefited from being in a support group with other women with similar experiences. I needed to be with people like me. I finally recognize that my story is significant even though I had never ended up in a hospital and I had never had a broken bone, or I had never had a black eye, or any of those things, that my story wasn't less significant. And I think that if I'd talked to other women in similar circumstances, that would have helped me maybe really go, like, Wow. This really is important, and it was not just me, and it wasn't all these things. I think I probably would have been - I think I would have been better moving through it.

Kat: I really do think it is important to find someone you can trust to talk to – you have to start talking about it. Take time to heal, I mean, it takes time just to realize you haven't done anything wrong.

Merry: Hmm, I agree Kat. I think you to have to find the strength to leave and you have to honour your own systems and know what you can take on. And listen to your gut.

Sarah: You have to work through it yourself, no one can force you to do that. Talking to others is huge, I can't even imagine where I'd be if I hadn't talked to people about my situation, talking helped me work through it.

Mary: I think that women who are able to share their stories more publicly, if they can do that, helps other women see that they're not alone. So for women to be able to tell the story of "I didn't think it could happen to me" – I think it's important.

Charlotte: Standing up for yourself and your rights – that's what I had to do. I had to talk about it.

Christi: Talking about it, getting counselling, asking yourself powerful questions about the experience and how to learn from it.

Carole: We're here now and we're safe. I think the most important thing I have learned is to tell other women to pay attention to the signs of abuse, to talk to others about the experience, and not to hide in shame and secrecy. And to run like hell at the first sign of abuse!

(All women laugh) Yes, run away as fast as you can!

Scene Three

Narrator: Rediscovering Self

As I hear the stories from these courageous women, I want their words written on paper so I can touch them; experience the depth of their experiences, and to cry along with them. The power of these women who chose not only to survive but to thrive. They inspire me.

Somehow, without counselling or therapy specifically for IPV, these women found themselves again and became more “me”, more powerful. More. Did that come from experiencing IPV? Or from being challenged by their partners for being confident, powerful women despite the vulnerabilities they presented with at the initial stages of the relationship? Did their experience help them show up differently OR as their true selves? That is for our exploration.

These are the Voices of Women Getting Me Back...

Trish: I found out a lot about myself through that time in my life. I was able to develop all new friends and strengths that I didn't even know existed. So just a much more...I'm me. I have got my own power back. I have my power. My power in my current relationship is never at stake. In fact, it's more like I'm encouraged to claim my own power, you know so. Yeah. I feel like a completely new person. A completely different person.

Merry: Yeah, just the peacefulness from being free from Him. Like the, not having to battle ever-y-thing, you know? Huge. And that, and so then, when I had that energy, then I could just grow from, like, I could heal from my long term illness, and then I could just - just grow. And I just keep on. The sky's the limit. And I'm starting to get more comfortable that I deserve that, and I'm not going to end up on the street if I take a trip.

Grace: I had lived alone for a short period of time before meeting Him, but since then, I think one of the most comfortable times I can remember in my life is when I lived alone, and I did it on my own. I think that alone taught me that I don't need to put up with that. And I can take care of myself, and be happy with just myself.

Kat: I think I always had the strengths. I just wasn't using them. I used to think it was kind of a weakness because I would let people take advantage, but I'm definitely stronger now.

Mary: I'm stronger. I'm more powerful. More compassionate. I'm curious. I'm less afraid to be in a leadership role than I used to be, so another way of saying that would be: I embrace it more. I step into it more. Um, I no longer need to be guarded in the same ways that I used to be, when I'm doing work with a client or a group.

Grace: I realized that I didn't need to put up with it anymore. That I didn't need to be treated badly. That I'm worth more than that. I can stand on my own.

Mary: I found my own voice. I understand and embrace my strength and power.

Narrator: These women grew through their IPV experience. They become stronger, more confident, more powerful. They become MORE.

Projection on the back wall of the stage

“Stop looking for that person you were in the past. She has changed. Look for the person she has grown into. She is wiser and stronger than ever before. Don't go back to who you were. Cherish who you are.”⁴⁸

Scene Four

Narrator: A Conversation with the Experts

How do you know the warning signs of IPV if you have never experienced them or heard about them from others? For this, let's go to the experts for their input. We have Susan Weitzman, Ph.D. and author of “Not to People Like Us” and Lundy Bancroft, author of “Why Does He Do That?” on the phone today. Dr. Weitzman, your research focuses on IPV in Upscale Marriages. Could you explain what the term “upscale violence” means for the audience?

Dr. Weitzman: I applied the term upscale violence to married women who endured multiple or continued episodes of emotional and/or physical abuse within the marriage and also met at least three of the following criteria:

- *Income:* A combined marital income of at least \$100,000 per year.
- *Residence:* Marital residence in a neighbourhood ranked in the top 25 percent of its statewide area according to U.S. Census Bureau data; or, in some cases, neighbourhoods highly ranked according to commonly held reputation.
- *Class Status:* A self-perception of being upper-middle-class or upper class.
- *Education:* A minimum of a bachelor's degree.

⁴⁸ (Pepple, 2017, p. 168)

Narrator: Lots of similarities to the women in this group. What are some of the early warning signs of IPV against affluent women?

Dr. Weitzman: The man dominates the woman verbally, criticizing and belittling her, causing her to doubt her own worth and abilities. He can be hostile towards others as well as her: typical behaviours are unjustified rage, arrogance, controlling behaviours, and sudden coldness and rejection.

Narrator: Those sound like things our women talked about in their stories. Mr. Bancroft, your work is with the abusive man. Can you tell us more about that?

Mr. Bancroft: I have been working with angry, controlling, and abusive men for over two decades as a counsellor, custody evaluator, and child abuse investigator. Through my work I have learned the early warning signs of abuse as well as different types of abusive men. A few of the early warning signs, which are so important for women to pay attention to, include: He speaks disrespectfully about his former partners and is disrespectful towards you. As Dr. Weitzman pointed out, men who are controlling and intimidating are exhibiting forms of IPV. I have also found that adult male abusers may “put on a show” when in public with their partners, saving the abuse for behind closed doors.

Narrator: We did hear the “nice guy” explanation from these women.

Dr. Bancroft: One of the big signs is that the abusive man is attracted to vulnerability. It may show up as a significant age difference or a woman who has had a recent traumatic event or major change in their lives. And also remember, “A woman with no voice is the dream girl of many abusive men”⁴⁹

⁴⁹ (Bancroft, 2002, p. 327)

Narrator: Wow! That describes all of the women – Leslie’s husband was seventeen years older than her and all of the women were in life transitions at the time of the relationship. I’ve heard that alcohol or drug abuse, along with low income households, are often linked to abusive behaviours. Dr. Bancroft, I am curious what your finding show.

Dr. Bancroft: You are right, there are numerous research studies that link lower income and/or low education males with alcohol and other substance abuse who are abusive to their partners.⁵⁰ I believe the role that alcohol, drugs, and other addictions play in abusiveness has been greatly misunderstood – “a majority of abusers are not addicts and even those who do abuse substances mistreat their partners even when they are not under the influence”.⁵¹

Dr. Weitzman: I have reviewed studies on this topic as well. The “top five domestic-violence predictors in men are alcohol use, drug use, intermittent employment, low education, and a previous divorce or estrangement”.⁵² Yet, low status, low income, and low education levels were irrelevant in my research, and for these women who have shared their stories. And, if I remember correctly, only three had partners with alcohol or substance abuse issues: Kat, Sarah, and Christi.

Narrator: Dr. Weitzman, I am curious what your research showed that separates, or distinguishes, IPV in lower-income households to that of Upscale Violence.

Dr. Weitzman: Thank you for asking that question, as there are some major differences. I think there are two that need to be addressed in the short time we have today. He is self-absorbed and has a grandiose sense of self-importance and entitlement; and the lack of what is commonly called “the honeymoon phase” in the Cycle of Violence.

Narrator: Tell us more about the Cycle of Violence.

⁵⁰ (Rodriguez, Lasch, & Chandra, 2001; Stanley, 2012; Zahnd, Aydin, Grant, & Holtby, 2011)

⁵¹ (Bancroft, 2002, p. 191)

⁵² (Weitzman, 2000, p. 133)

Dr. Weitzman: Psychologist Lenore Walker, one of the pioneers in research on domestic violence and author of *The Battered Woman*, described a three-stage cycle of violence to explain a husband's pattern of abuse. First there is the tension-building stage where pressure mounts during daily interactions with his wife. This is followed by the explosive stage where the abusive behaviour occurs. In most research on IPV the third-stage, the honeymoon stage, occurs as he becomes loving, apologetic, and becomes emotionally attached to her again.⁵³ My research has shown that this stage doesn't happen in Upscale Marriages. I am curious to know what our women experienced.

Leslie, Christi, Sarah, and Trish come on the stage

Leslie: The night we moved into our first apartment, He got angry because I had talked to a male friend from school. He called me a slut and a whore and when I stood up for myself and told him I wasn't a piece of property He suggested that I leave. I did end up going out for a walk and came back because I didn't know where else to go. I cried myself to sleep and in the morning He told me never to disturb His sleep with my crying again. No apology, no anything.

Christi: He never apologized, while He often told me "it won't happen again".

Leslie: I started doing research on domestic violence. I remember being startled about the "honeymoon" period when abusers feel remorse, apologize for hitting her. He NEVER did that – It would be beneath him to acknowledge the problem was His fault.

Sarah: I would get "I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry, but...You made me do it". So no, no honeymoon stage in my world.

Trish: The story that holds the strongest memory for me was one night after I had picked him up from a golf event with His friends. He was angry at me for showing up when I did, I can't

⁵³ (Weitzman, 2000)

remember if I was too early or late – just that He wasn't happy. We were in the kitchen and I was swinging between the counter and the island. Suddenly, He jerked my arms out from supporting me and I landed flat on my back on the ceramic tile floor. I couldn't breathe and I remember looking up as He stood over me, laughing. No, He never apologized or showed remorse, either after that event or any other.

Narrator: I want to thank our guests tonight and to these courageous women for sharing their story here.

Ending Scene

Narrator: These are the voices of nine women who shared their stories, their voices, to this project. I, as the researcher, wondered whether I had “enough” material to tell the story of IPV against affluent women. I questioned whether I needed to talk to more women. Then, one night I had a dream in which I realized that even 100 participants would not be all the voices and that there would still be silence as there are so many more voices to hear.

Carole and her therapist/counsellor, Dr. Susan are in a counselling session

Dr. Susan: Hi Carole, how are you doing this week?

Carole: I am doing so well. I am more confident, I have my power back, I have an increased understanding of IPV. I have peace.

Dr. Susan: I have found that for women piercing the veil of secrecy, *telling the story*, sets them on the path toward freedom. In speaking her truth, she feels relief and a sense that her world has expanded, that she has options. And this allows others to help her. Breaking the isolation and

freeing herself from the burden of holding the silence she begins to trust herself again and reclaims her sense of self.⁵⁴

Carole: I know that I have gained so much, not only from our sessions but the informal meetings with “my women of strength”. That’s how I refer to them. I am so glad I listened to my own voice and learned how to speak about my experience. I am glad I stopped hiding behind the walls of shame and fear.

Susan: I wish more women would come out of hiding. I wish more women would add their voice to the song.

(While Susan is speaking, projection of mantra on the back wall of the stage)

I came to dance across the stage
To tell each story in song
Each note a voice to heal the wounds
And bring the soul back home

⁵⁴ (Weitzman, 2000)

(Stage goes black) Story of a dream projected on the back wall of the stage

I woke from a dream at 3:20 this morning. In the dream, there was a woman in a recording studio, seemingly self-directing the recording of a song. First she sang very deep and directed the music (piano, other singers) adding layers of music to the recording. At one point in the recording, she "shushed" the musicians I could see and pointed to an area unseen. There was silence...I kept waiting for "cut" as if something wasn't recording properly but then she started singing again, this time in a higher voice and the words "Recorded by XXX" was crossed out and replaced with letters AMSJ. Initials of performers? At first I thought it was a person with multiple personalities and all her "people" were recording the song. Then I realized that her multiple personalities (voices) were the voices of many and the silence was an unrecorded voice. It was at that point that I woke up.

Woman standing in the spotlight: Speak, speak now, add your voice to the song. And forever may you find your peace. Namaste.

(Fade to black) The End.

Cast

Carole. A composite character who expresses thoughts, feelings, and emotions of a number of other characters.

Charlotte. Author and pioneer with creating awareness of IPV in affluent households. Fedders, C. & Elliott, L. (1987). *Shattered Dreams*. New York, NY: Harper & Row, Publishers Inc.

Christi. Author and new anchor. Paul, C. (2012) *Love isn't supposed to hurt*. (A.E. Version, Ed.) Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

Dr. Susan. A counsellor specializing in IPV.

Grace. A beautiful soul who has never shared her story prior to our support group.

Janice. A server at the usual meeting place of the women. Recently left her abusive husband.

Kat. Has amazing curly hair.

Leslie. Author and TED Talk speaker. Steiner, L.M. (2010) *Crazy Love*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Mary. A woman with insightful wisdom and a contagious laugh.

Merry. Has three cats and loves the colour red.

Sarah. A beautiful young lady with a black cat who has double paws.

Trish. A woman who is determined not to allow IPV against affluent women to be silenced again.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

Current literature has produced numerous theories relating to IPV in low-income / low-education households, including feminist-informed, family violence, and resource theory. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of middle to upper-middle class women's experiences with IPV to understand it more fully as well as to draw attention to areas that are unique to this group: minimal access to support services; diversion from the typical cycle of violence; experience with narcissistic partner; and lack of previous experience with IPV. The study has revealed three key dimensions of the experience through the analysis of six in-person interviews (including my own) and three author interviews through autobiography using grounded theory methods.

This chapter considers the outcome of the study and integrates the findings into the current literature on IPV. Additionally, the findings challenge the belief that IPV is primarily linked to people who occupy low economic status positions (Anderson, 1997; Carlson, 1984; Kwesiga et al., 2007). While there is research on IPV, there is very little that exists on IPV in affluent households. The findings show that there are similarities as well as significant differences in the way women of affluence experience IPV, as compared to women of low-income / low-education. The findings are important for consideration in planning support services as well as growing public awareness of the issue, which may assist women share their experience more openly with their employers and receive much needed support from them, as several women in this study were able to access. It is also important for employers to be aware of the issue so they can put structures and training programs, similar to The Working Mind⁹, into place to support women experiencing IPV.

This study is significant because it provides insight into an area of IPV that is under-researched. One possible reason for the lack of research focus on IPV against affluent women is that affluent women do not seek from support from transition house services, which are common sites for locating research participants. My findings show that only one woman moved her family to a transition house.

Some of the silence around IPV against affluent women is self-imposed. With the exception of the three authors (Charlotte, Christi, and Leslie) and one participant (Kat), the participants in this study have been silent about their experience. In fact, one participant (Grace) had only told parts of her story to a few close friends prior to our interview. Affluent women have achieved considerable success in their lives and that success may form a barrier to wanting to identify with members of a stigmatized group, which also contributes to their silence. Even as I was preparing to embark on this research journey, I was met with many questions as to why I would think IPV against affluent women existed and where I thought I would find participants. Perhaps a “catch -22” situation: IPV against affluent women is under-researched because people don’t understand or believe that it is an issue, and affluent women who experience IPV remain silent because they think they are alone and unsupported because it is not talked about.

The study provides information that can expand the awareness of IPV against affluent women because the findings have been presented in the format of a play script. If a play based on this work is performed as a public theatrical production it can challenge the audience to entertain new ideas and thinking around IPV against affluent women, while also increasing awareness. The findings, presented in the format of an auto/ethnodrama, have shown that educated women from middle to upper-middle class households do experience IPV even though they tend to keep

their experience secret and are silent in society. Following the discussion of the findings, I will discuss the limitations and suggest further directions for action.

Participant Information

The nine women who participated in this study, all from households with income between \$60,000 to \$125,000+, had experienced at least three forms of IPV and several had experienced five forms of IPV. All of the women had ceased cohabitating with their abusive male partner for a minimum of one year prior to their in-person or author interviews through autobiography with the researcher. Of the nine, six had sought police assistance during or shortly after their cohabitation, and one woman sought shelter in a transition house for women (and their children) escaping violence at the hands of their intimate partner. One woman has had on-going counselling specifically related to IPV, and one briefly consulted with a counsellor through an Outreach program. One woman worked with a therapist who guided her through a series of questions designed to help her move towards a life of gratitude that helped to release the power of the verbal abuse she experienced. Eight of the women are Caucasian and one woman identified as being of mixed race. (See Appendix XII for additional information specific to each participant.)

The Voices

The Voices explored in the auto/ethnodrama (Chapter 5) are significant in telling the story of IPV against affluent women. Through the women's voices, we learn who the women were and what they went through as they experienced IPV. We hear the stories of women opening their hearts to help others learn more about IPV against affluent women. We hear their weaknesses and their strengths, their tears and their laughter, we hear THEM.

Voices Heard: The women who participated in this study heard their own vulnerability and their male partner's venomous words of destruction towards them. They heard their own voices taking the blame for the way they were treated and questioning themselves about what they did to cause the abuse.

Voices Silenced: As if they lost their own voices, the women became silent. Wondering how clothes they would never buy are hanging in their closet, wondering how they became the person they were, wondering who they are. They hid their shame in secrecy, becoming small, weak, powerless. Silent.

Voices Ignored: These women, all affluent, intelligent, and educated, ignored the signs of abuse, hiding the truth from themselves and from others. Even those who experienced physical abuse questioned whether they were really being abused while those who did not dismissed their experiences because it was not physical violence. It was just "how it is here".

Voices Heard: Hearing My Own Voice: And then there is a fourth voice, the voice she hears when she knows it is time to leave and claim herself, when she steps back into the world to reclaim her soul. The fourth voice led to the next section Mapping the Dimensions.

In this chapter, I will explain the higher-levels themes and ideas that emerged from the grounded theory analysis and coding processes and I will include first-person quotes from the play script to support them.

Mind Mapping the Dimensions of IPV

In keeping with my method of using Mind Mapping to guide the initial planning stages and the coding and categorization process, I also used it to map the findings for this section. Initially, I used Saldaña's (2009) trinity concept to identify the three major categories or themes in the research findings. I discovered that all of the participants went through very similar

experiences and stages of their relationship, which I refer to as dimensions: Who I Was, Who I Became, and Who I Am Now (Figure 4: Code Trinity).

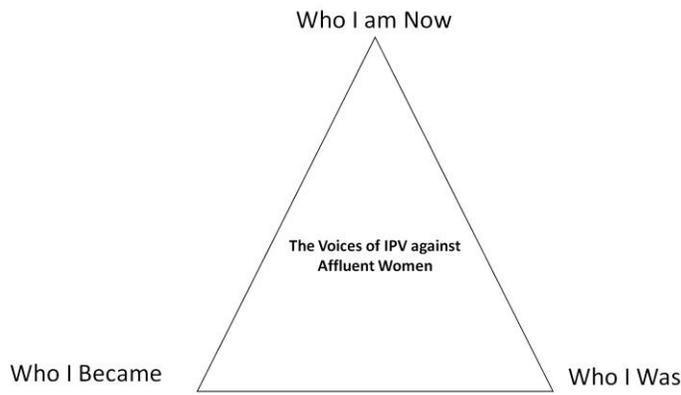


Figure 4 Code Trinity

All of the women were experiencing some kind of major life transition at the time they met their abusive partner and they described themselves as “needy”, “vulnerable”, “lonely” and/or “alone”. These codes informed the description of the first dimension: Who I Was. Sarah, Grace, Leslie, and Christi had all recently moved to a new town or city where they had no family and friends; Merry was preparing to relocate to a new job; Trish and Mary had recently gone through a separation or divorce and were still recovering from the impact of their previous relationship; Kat was felt that she needed and wanted family and a connection with someone who shared her spiritual beliefs, Charlotte was very young and inexperienced and always dreamed of being a wife and mother. She grew up in a patriarchal household and went to a patriarchal school, an attitude that carried over into her marriage.

The second dimension, Who I Became, emerged from the category code of “Self/Soul Loss”. When asked how they felt during the relationship, what they were experiencing, the participants described themselves as “numb”, “weak”, “powerless”, “worthless”, “small”, “little”, and “less”. Mary said, “I was losing myself, I never laughed anymore. I couldn’t

remember the last time I laughed.” Christi started to “feel her soul turn numb, an empty shell of who she used to be” and Merry felt there was “nothing left of her”, that she became “less and less Merry”.

The third dimension, and the one that led me to exploring recovery from IPV in more depth, is Who I am Now. Over and over, the women described themselves as being “stronger”, “more confident”, “powerful” not just being me again, but a “bigger me”, “More Me”, which I had coded as “Rediscovering Self”. I questioned whether they became stronger as a result of experiencing IPV or if it was from being challenged by their partners for being confident, powerful women despite the vulnerabilities they presented with at the initial stages of the relationship. Did their experience help them show up differently OR did they find their way back to their true selves? Figure 5, shown below, maps their story of IPV.

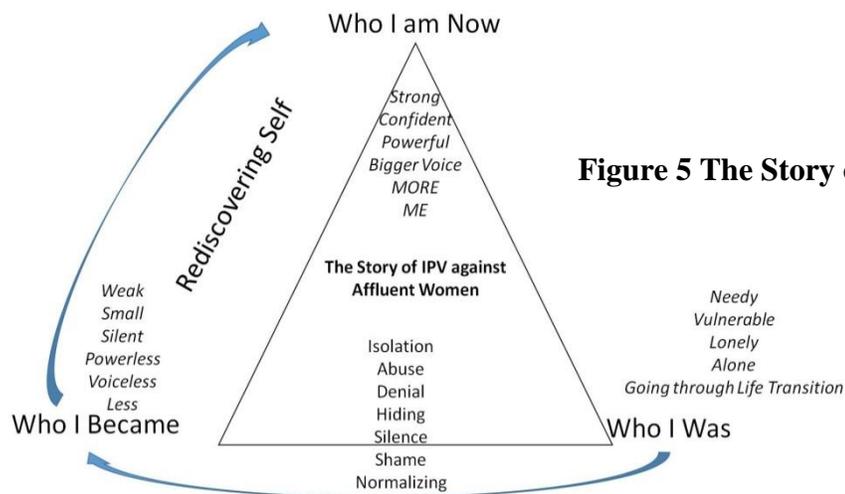


Figure 5 The Story of IPV

When I re-read some of the text from the focused category “Rediscovering Self”, I noted many of the women’s descriptions of themselves after their experience as having changed and grown into more confident and powerful women. They had an increased awareness of just how strong they are, with voices that need to be heard.

Kat: “I think I always had the strengths. I just wasn’t using them.”

Sarah: “But now I’m much more confident in myself. I’m a lot more confident than I’ve ever been.”

Trish: “I found out a lot about myself. I was able to develop all new friends and strengths that I didn’t even know existed. So just a much more, a much – I’m me.”

Mary: “If I’m truly as powerful as people say I am, and if I have been denying these gifts for as long as I have been denying them, then it took this level of intensity to get me to acknowledge how powerful I am and to acknowledge the gifts that I have.”

Grace: “Probably stronger than I give myself credit for a lot of the time.”

Christi: “Now I know that I am strong, intelligent, and valuable.”

Leslie: “I am so much stronger, so much more aware of IPV, the cycle, etc. I didn’t think at the time that I was powerless, but I do know that I became powerless, had it sucked out of me due to fear. I am now powerful.”

I believe that the experience of IPV actually did make them stronger. I know that it did for me.

Exploring the Impact of Intimate Partner Violence

For this research study I explored the types of abuse and the impact of psychological and physical abuse. Previous research on IPV (primarily with low-income, low education participants) has indicated that psychological abuse may result in major psychological effects, including fear and anxiety, loss of self-esteem, and posttraumatic stress (Kelly & Johnson, 2008). Others (Sev’er, 2002, and Bancroft, 2002) found that the emotional or psychological abuse can leave women emotionally crippled, perhaps even “scarring the way they see themselves for the rest of their lives” (Sev’er, 2002, p. 19).

Several women in this study who experienced physical abuse, one so severe that she had a miscarriage, talked about the impact of psychological abuse on them. Consistent with research literature, they also felt that psychological abuse was perhaps worse than the physical abuse. Charlotte, in speaking of her husband's extended periods of silence said, "The physical stuff was bad enough, but I think that silences were worse. They were psychological torture. You could never predict what would send him into one of these silences. Or how to get him out of them."

The women who participated in this study did have some of the psychological effects noted in the literature, including fear and anxiety, after leaving their abusive relationship. I went through a period of extreme fear of running into my abusive ex-husband and avoided areas of the city where I knew he worked and frequented. Sarah shared that she had been afraid to socialize with friends for awhile, but is now able to go out to movies, dinner, or a club with her friends. Grace talked about an experience in which she thought she saw her ex-partner: "I literally dropped the shopping cart. Started shaking. Went outside. Called my fiancé and said 'You've got to come get me now. Like, don't -- Like, just come.' I was hiding around the corner. 'If you don't get here, I'm going to be, like, on the front page of the news' because my anger -- I'd never been angry. And then, at that point, I was totally furious."

The fact that the women describe themselves now as strong, confident, and powerful is inconsistent with the literature previously noted in this section. Somehow, the women who participated in this study all overcame their fear and anxiety, and have not been crippled by their experience with IPV. Although the impact of IPV was significant, they not only survived, they thrived.

Methodology and Findings

It is important to acknowledge the combination of methods used for this study. Feminist standpoint theory, grounded theory, and arts-based research methods including autoethnography, ethnography, and auto-ethnodrama worked well for this project because they all start with the importance of understanding story. Standpoint theory recognizes the value and importance of the experience of this socio-economic group of women and allows their voice to be encouraged and heard from their point of location and view. Through autoethnography I was able to tell my story, my experiences with IPV; through ethnographical methods and interactive interviews, five women were able to tell their stories and experiences; and through an ethnographic approach to incorporating secondary data, three authors contributed their voices to the project.

By incorporating arts-based research methods, specifically auto/ethnodrama, the findings reflect the stories of the participants and present them in a platform that is rich with descriptions of their experiences in first-person voice. There is power in their collective voices that emerged in the script dialogue that is very dependent on the research method.

Constructivist grounded theory methods provided the detailed process to analyze the stories, to organize the data, and to discover themes that became the scenes of the auto/ethnodrama. Thus, the combination of approaches allowed for a blending of diverse perspectives and led to coherence of the narrative.

Expectations and Surprises

Going into this research study I had expected to hear stories of IPV that were in some ways similar to my own story and to be consistent with what is reported in the literature I reviewed. I found that all of the women did share similar experiences, which in part explains why the auto/ethnodrama came together with ease; we all shared some common experiences and

had similar responses to the experiences. As shown in Figure 6, the process of moving from Who I Was to Who I Became involved isolation, denial, hiding, silence, shame, and normalizing in addition to abuse (physical, verbal, psychological, financial, sexual, and spiritual).

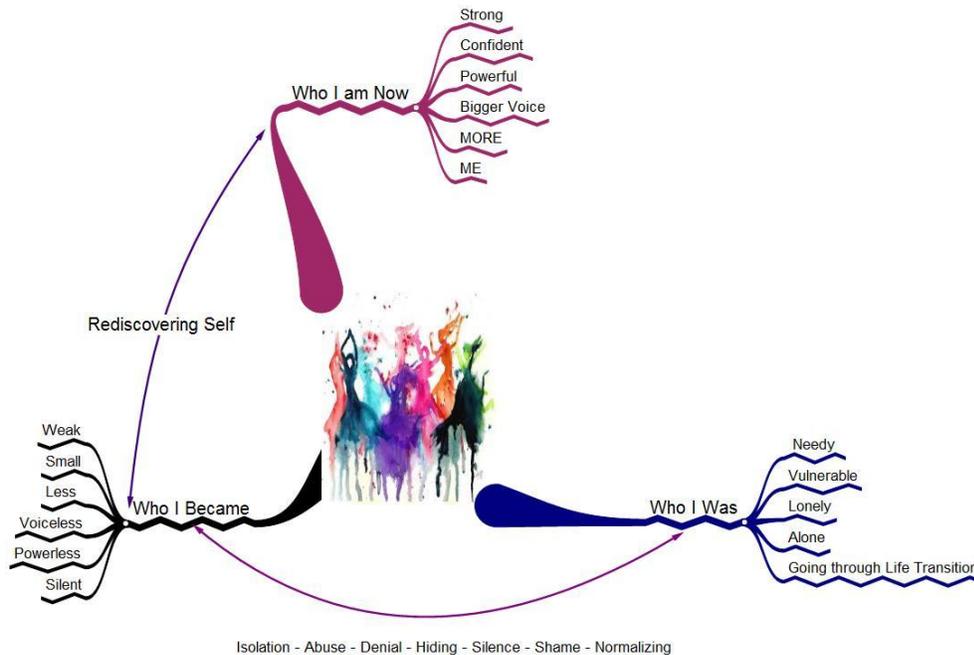


Figure 6 Mind Map of the Dimensions of IPV

I found two pathways of the experience of moving from Who I Was to Who I Became particularly interesting: Denial and Normalizing. From my own experience and my research on IPV against affluent women, including in-depth reading on Dr. Weitzman's (2000, 2008) research on Upscale Violence, I was expecting that some women would have had little experience with IPV prior to their abusive relationship which may have led them to being in denial of what they were living. What I was not expecting was the intensity of their denial that they were abused. It was through the inductive process of comparing data with data, data with code, and code with category that I became strongly aware of the denial the women held about their experience with IPV. A few comments related to denial of the experience as being IPV are:

Leslie: "I didn't even know I was being abused, my denial was that powerful."

Sarah: "I would never have once said, 'That's abuse'. Never once would I have said that." (About her own experience)

Mary: "But again, I would never have identified that with my situation."

Grace: "I just didn't see that as me."

Included in the thematic category of "Ignoring, denying, dismissing" was coding that related to the women dismissing or diminishing the experience. I knew that I had, at one time in my life, thought that my experience wasn't "serious" or "big enough" for my story to be credible for a thesis on its own, which is one reason I wanted to interview other women. So I did expect other women to have similar thoughts. What surprised me was that, even though six women did seek help from the police, they still diminished their IPV experience, either because there was not physical abuse or it was not as bad as someone else's. A few of the comments are:

Leslie: "I loved him, He loved me, He didn't mean to hurt me. That made it okay. Didn't it?"

Kat: "Well, mine's not as bad as hers." (Kat had a miscarriage as the result of a physical attack by her partner, yet she thought her experience wasn't as bad as someone else's that she knew.)

Merry: "Because, I didn't see a violence. I still tend to discount it to a fair degree."

Christi: "Somehow, I thought that it wasn't abuse until a hand smacked my skin."

The second area that I was not expecting was how women normalized their lives. I had been so manipulated and lived in fear during my relationship with my abusive husband that the way I existed became normal for me. I did not expect that other women survived their daily lives the same way, by making the absurdity normal. Robin Givens (2014), ex-wife of boxer Mike

Tyson, talks about normalization in her marriage: “I only left my marriage when I felt like I was going to die physically or die emotionally. It’s just amazing what becomes your normal. One day you wake up with a knife at your throat. Another day, your shoes are all torn up”. Several women in this study spoke of their own experience of normalization:

Grace: “It’s my place around here. That’s just how it is here.”

Kat: “And so the woman thinks that this must be normal because everyone around is okay with it. They hear how he’s speaking to me. They saw him lunge at me and not one person said anything.”

Trish: “I got caught up in this, ‘This in my life. And it doesn’t matter. This is my normal.”

Leslie: “Being afraid became my normal state.”

Another area that I had not expected was the number of women who experienced physical violence and the intensity of the violence for three of the women. Six of the nine women who participated in this study experienced physical violence in some form. For a few, the violence was in the form of a slap, a punch, or having their arm grabbed hard enough to cause bruises. Kelly and Johnson (2008) refer to violence that occasionally escalates to this type of violence as Situational Couple Violence (see p. 11). However, when the male partner systematically uses violence, threats, isolation, and other forms of control, as the women in this study experienced, it is referred to as Coercive Controlling Violence (Johnson, 1995; Kelly & Johnson, 2008). Three women experienced physical violence with a level of intensity that I had not expected. Kat not only experienced a miscarriage but ended up in the hospital after the brutal attack that led to her leaving her husband and seeking shelter in a transition house. Charlotte also visited the doctor on several occasions after her husband had hit or slapped her, once when she

was three months pregnant. Leslie experienced several brutal attacks including the following event:

We had planned a trip to Paris to celebrate his birthday and Christmas. He decided we weren't going – I think because I had arranged it and he didn't have the control. When I told him I was going, even if without him, he attacked me. He broke a picture over my head and “small bloody slits like paper cuts sprang up across my forehead and cheeks from the shards”. Then he kicked me in the ribs and punched me, grabbed my neck and pulled me into the bed where he lay on top of me with his hands around my throat and squeezed until I passed out. When I came to, a neighbor was pounding on the door, “Stop it! Stop it! Can't you see you might actually kill her?” He seemed to come back to reality and left – that was when I called the police. The next day I filed for a restraining order.

The experiences of abuse that led the women to becoming weak, small, powerless, and voiceless varied but they all ended up becoming less than they were before their abusive relationship. Many of the elements from the Power and Control Wheel (see Figure 2, p. 11) were experienced by some, if not all, of the women. As noted by Kelly and Johnson (2008), not all abusers use all of these tactics but rather they may use a combination that they feel is most likely to attain the power and control they seek. Additionally, Coercive Controlling Violence does not always include high levels of violence. While they are referring to violence as physical, my findings are consistent with research (Bancroft, 2002; Kelly & Johnson, 2008; Lachkar, 1998; Sev'er, 2002) that shows that other forms of violence, including isolation, coercion, and financial abuse, are significant in affecting the voices of women. All nine women talked about the verbal

and psychological abuse they endured and agreed that the emotional/psychological abuse had a long lasting impact on them.

The terminology that came up around psychological abuse was gaslighting, which is a form of persistent manipulation and brainwashing that can cause a person to lose her or his own sense of perception, identity, and self-worth. Several women shared their own experience with this form of psychological abuse that gets its name from the movie *Gaslight*:

Trish: Yes, I've seen the movie and always somehow related to it. His need for control over me and my children, and His efforts to destroy my confidence, my every action really. He would track my mileage so I was terrified to go anywhere after work except right home.

Kat: He had little tactics to make me think I was losing my mind. Just little things like, our picture hanging on the wall. He would take it and hide it. Little things like that. Things to make me think I was losing my mind.

It was the process of rediscovering themselves again, and *Who I am Now*, that was most unexpected and deserves more attention; therefore I will explore this dimension in the following section.

Who I am Now – Rediscovering Self. When I uncovered the third dimension of IPV against affluent women I realized that I wanted to do some exploration into existing literature on recovery from IPV. I had previously read Herman's (1997) work on trauma and recovery so I revisited her findings on recovery from violence. She says that recovery from trauma is based on the survivor's empowerment and creation of new connections, and that recovery "can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation" (Herman, 1997, p. 159). She believes it is critical to work with a therapist as one goes through the three stages of recovery:

establishment of safety, remembrance and mourning, and reconnection with ordinary life (Herman, 1997). As the majority of women who participated in this study did not consult with a counsellor or therapist specifically for IPV, I expanded my search. I found four studies specific to recovery from IPV in the academic literature. All four studies gained access to participants through shelter and social housing sectors, domestic violence support services for women, and/or peer support groups for women who have experienced IPV (Anderson, Renner, & Danis, 2012; Flasch, Murray, & Crowe, 2015; Humbert, Bess, & Mowery, 2013; Matheson, Daoud, Hamilton-Wright, Borenstein, Pedersen, & O'Campo, 2015). The women studied were predominantly from low-income households and had low levels of education.

The four studies looked at the support systems that their research participants found to be beneficial and noted that both informal and formal support networks were an essential part of the recovery process. Matheson et al. (2015) noted that, similar to participants of other qualitative studies, “talking about the experience, having someone who truly wants to know her story and the person behind the story...can be important on the journey to recovery” (p. 566). They also note that support and recovery program helped their research participants become “grounded and steady on their feet again” (p. 567). Anderson et al. (2012) found that central to women’s recovery from IPV were an informal support system such as family and friends, along with formal networks available through domestic violence services and mental health counseling. Similar findings were noted in Flasch et al. (2015) and Humbert et al. (2013): being able to gain a support system of people who understood their experience and who could relate to them was an essential piece of their recovery.

Of the nine women who participated in this study, only one woman had extensive counselling for IPV. She availed the services of a transition house for shelter and counselling and

continues to see a counsellor two years after leaving her abusive partner. One woman met with the outreach program of a transition house a few times and while she gained valuable information to help her understand that she was being abused, she did not continue counselling services with them.

Why is This Important? Somehow, the women who participated in this study overcame the experience of IPV. Not only did they overcome it but they became, in their own words, “stronger”, “more confident”, “more powerful”. “MORE”. While they managed to not only recover but to thrive without the assistance of formal support systems, they all told me that speaking of their experience to me in the interview was extremely cathartic. One woman (Grace) has since shared with me that telling her story has been incredibly healing and she has been able to start processing that part of her life. Another woman (Sarah) has also shared with me that she has been able to “let go and move on” as a result of our interview. Mary shared with me within 24 hours of our interview that she “found myself weeping for no explicable reason” and that my “just listening” to her story helped to “surface what needs to be surfaced for healing”.

Lawless (2001) says that “to tell our stories is to re-create ourselves. The power of the narrative comes in the act of telling our stories, breaking the silences, narrating a life, constructing a self” (p. 252). These women were able to construct a new self and I can only imagine who they would be if they had a strong support group of women who could relate to the experiences of IPV, women who they could share their experiences with and support each other. This alternate reality takes form in the auto/ethnodrama (Chapter 5) and is an area I feel is important for further study.

Experiences Unique to Women of Affluence

Weitzman (2000) noted that there are several differences in the IPV experience between women of affluence and those from low-income/low-education households. This research study has also discovered uniqueness of the experience for this group that are consistent with Weitzman's work. As noted in Chapter 1, there is a lack of "the honeymoon period" following an episode of violence which is common in other research on IPV, as shown in the Cycle of Violence (see Figure 1, p. 5). The interview (Appendix IV) did not include questions relating specifically to the Cycle of Violence or "the honeymoon period" but the emerging theme came up in several interviews. Leslie, Christi, Sarah, and Trish made particular note in their interviews of the lack of apology or remorse and note that he never promised not to "do it again".

Leslie: "...He told me never to disturb his sleep with my crying again. No apology, no anything."

Christi: "He never apologized."

Sarah: "I would get 'I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry, but...you made me do it'."

Trish: "He never apologized or showed remorse, either after that event [of physical violence] or any other."

As previously noted, another consistency with Weitzman's (2000) work was the experience the women had with a narcissistic partner. A number of characteristics that the women used to describe their partner included his rage, grandiose sense of self-importance and entitlements, belief that others are envious of him, arrogance, and preoccupation with fantasies of success, power, and beauty, and playing "the victim card" to entice the woman to help him or to not leave him.

These differences, along with the denial of abuse and dismissal or diminishment of the experience, highlight a few of unique characteristics of IPV against affluent women. Because women deny, dismiss, and/or diminish the abuse, and hide in shame or embarrassment when they realize they are being abused, their voices are silent or ignored. It is time for them to be heard.

How Far We Have (Not) Come

A few months after I had concluded the interview process and was writing the finding for this study, an article about a local prominent politician's story of IPV came out in a local paper and on-line. In the article, Ms. Michelle Coffin ((Rahr, 2017)) came forward with her story of IPV. She had been abused by her boyfriend, the premier's director of communications, and had kept her story quiet until recently. Her boyfriend pleaded guilty to assault and was fired from his job. Several months later, he was quietly rehired by the party and was promoted to his position as party spokesperson prior to a provincial election (2017). Ms. Coffin did not speak up at the time of the incident that led to her calling the police for help in 2014 because she thought it might jeopardize her career as a political science professor and media expert.

Why is this significant? In the past, many affluent women did not tell of their IPV experiences because they didn't want to harm their husband's career. Charlotte spoke of her fear of reporting her husband in this excerpt:

I remember calling the police after one of the boys saw their father pushing me over the stairwell railing, holding me by my hair when I managed to fall to the floor. They didn't ask if I was alright, or where he was. They didn't tell me to leave, or give me any telephone numbers or hotlines or counselors to call. All they said was that I could go to the police station or the courthouse and swear out a complaint. How could I do that knowing I would ruin his career?

So, how far have we come? Far enough that women have their own careers, that they are silent in order to protect their careers and their livelihood. I remained silent at my place of work for years until I could no longer hide it, as did Sarah, Grace, and Christi. So yes, we've come a long way, baby. Or have we?

The very fact that this research study was conducted is an indicator that IPV is still a very important issue. The most recent statistics on IPV conducted by Statistics Canada (2015) found that over 72,000 women were victims of police-reported violent crime at the hands of an intimate partner, a decrease of 7.65% from 2011. Seventy-two thousand reported incidents are far too many, and note that the statistics include only reported incidents. One-third of the women who participated in this study did not report incidents of violence to the police or any other support service. It is also disturbing to me that, since the time of completing the interview and analysis process and as a result of people asking about my thesis topic at work and in social settings, five additional affluent women have told me that they were victims of IPV. Our work is far from done in educating women, families, and society at large about IPV in general and that IPV occurs at all income and education levels.

Limitations of the Study

Affluent women who have experienced IPV are not accessible in the same locations as women who have participated in other studies on IPV. Typically, as noted earlier, researchers access potential participants through support services, transition houses, and organized networks for women who have experienced IPV, all resources that most affluent women typically do not utilize. Therefore, I relied on my own network to recruit participants for in-person interviews and the small number of participants could have narrowed the results of the study.

While the findings have been presented explicitly as a representation of women from middle to upper-middle class households who experienced IPV, the women primarily represent a heterosexual Caucasian population from a small urban community (population approximately 400,000). A similar study conducted in rural areas or in an area with a much larger urban population could potentially yield different results, as could a study of same sex couples or of women with diverse ethnicity.

Suggestions for Future Action

The findings of this study indicate the need for further study to continue to explore the phenomenon of IPV against affluent women with a focus on how women recover from their experiences and become more powerful without the support of formal networks, counselling, or other support services, and, in some cases, without a large informal support network. The majority of women in this study repeatedly told me they felt stronger and more confident after their experience with IPV and thrived even without the support of counselling or therapy specifically related to IPV. As previously noted, there are numerous studies that have studied the relationship between recovery from abuse and counselling or therapy that is specific to IPV. Researchers (Anderson et al., 2012; Flasch et al., 2015; Humbert et al., 2013; Matheson et al., 2015) state the key element of success was when there were formal networks and support systems for women leaving violent relationships. This study did not focus on the recovery process although the interview included three specific questions relating to receiving help from either another person or organization.

The majority of women did not seek formal support networks as is common with women from other socio-economic locations (see Appendix XII). Rather, they relied on the informal support provided by friends and family. Yet, they describe themselves as much stronger than

they were prior to their experience with IPV. Further study into the recovery process for women of affluence who have experienced IPV could clarify not only the process of recovery but also what formal support systems might be beneficial to women on their road to “Rediscovering Self”.

Conclusions

It is summer 2014. Sharon and Mary, her thesis supervisor, are sitting on Mary's deck discussing the approach to Sharon's thesis. Mary has recently finished reading a book she borrowed from Sharon: "Life after Leaving: The Remains of Spousal Abuse" which is the published version of Sophie Tamas' PhD dissertation written using autoethnography in play script form.

Mary: *(putting the book on the table)* So, now we know the approach you are going to use for your thesis.

Sharon: *(surprised)* I'm not a playwright!

Mary: You're not a playwright YET.

Sharon: Oh come on. I've never written anything like that.

Mary: *(smiling)* Sounds like a self-limiting belief to me.

Narrator: How did it all begin?

Isn't it amazing how one book can inspire a person to change their thinking about themselves? By looking at herself as a writer, a playwright, Sharon had to let go of her self-limiting beliefs and to allow herself to be open to the possibilities that unfolded. She had to trust in her listening and communication skills that she had developed through her consulting and coaching business, trusting that she would be able to establish rapport with women she didn't know so she could guide them through emotional memories in order to have meaningful conversations about their experience with IPV. The resulting auto/ethnodrama may inspire others to do the same and help them let go of their beliefs about IPV, especially against affluent women.

These are the Voices of Sharon's Experience Writing Voices: Heard. Silenced. Ignored...

It is Summer 2017. Sharon and Mary are reviewing Sharon's thesis paper, making some final edits to the Methods section and discussing how to write the Discussion and Conclusion sections. Sharon has started on the Discussion, but is feeling confused and anxious, as time is ticking away quickly and she wants to defend her thesis in early September.

Mary: You are so close – there really isn't a lot you need to add here. It's looking really good.

Sharon: Should I move the piece on Voices summary to the Discussion? Instead of the Conclusion?

Mary: Yeah, I think that would work. Kind of like the Narrator piece at the beginning of the Acts and Scenes.

Sharon: I have written a bit on that – I'll move it to the Discussion. What about the Conclusion? What goes there?

Mary: I remember you telling me about a song that you relate to the way you listen. What was that?

Sharon: "The Space Between" by Dave Matthews Band. Not only the way I listen but also a song that represents hope in me. Remember the story Trish told about her daughter – I think she said that she "called upon that grain of hope, that space between all the hurt".

Mary: Talk about that...

Sharon: Okay, here's some of the song:

The space between the tears we cry
Is the laughter keeps us coming back for more
The space between the wicked lies we tell
And hope to keep us safe from the pain

The space between what's wrong and right
Is where you'll find me hiding, waiting for you
The space between your heart and mine
Is the space we'll fill with time

I think of the space between as the space for hope, the space where truth can live, the space where our honest thoughts can reside. So when I am in a conversation, especially an emotional conversation or an interview, I listen for that space. I wonder, “What is happening in that pause, in that whisper, or that sigh? What needs to be explored here? Or what is hiding there?” I remember Grace’s whispering “I silenced me. Silenced is how I felt”. Even the transcriptionist picked up on the space between and noted: (little voice). Grace actually looked little when she whispered the words.

The other thing that resonates with me is that the space between is the place to keep safe from the pain. It’s like Trish said “the space between all the hurt” is where the hope that things will change, that the abuse will stop or you will find the courage to leave. It is also the space where you may find yourself again, just like the women in this study found themselves again.

Mary: Lovely, I actually downloaded the song after you told me about it. I love it. Now, for an appreciate inquiry question. What was the best thing, the most awesome experience, you had when you were writing your thesis?

Sharon: Most awesome? Piece of cake. The most awesome thing was how incredibly easy it was to take the transcribed interviews and create dialogue between the women that became conversations and scenes that just...flowed. Yes, it took a long time to cut everything and tack the strips of paper to the window panes but...wow the results!

Mary: Every time I read it, I am amazed at how it all fits together. Why do you think that is?

Sharon: I’ve thought about that – I think there are several reasons. First, I used the same questions for each interview, even those with the authors. While our experiences were all different, we all answered the same questions. Second, I’d say the methodology I used played a huge part in how everything fell into place.

Mary: Yes, I can see that but I am still hung up on it. Do you mean because you used arts-based research methods?

Sharon: Yes, in part. Also feminist standpoint theory – all the participants share a common location, or standpoint, of “privilege” due to middle to upper-middle class socio-economic position and all had the experience of IPV. So without knowing each other, they all had similar points of departure.

Also, by incorporating arts-based research in the form of autoethnography, participants were able to find their own voice and unpack some of their memories. While each woman’s story is unique, the emotions and strength that they convey runs through every story. I think that the resulting auto/ethnodrama creates the platform for their voices to be heard and it really is a cacophony of women’s voices that meets my goal. Voices that create an uproar that demands attention and facilitates understanding.

Mary: I think you are right. And I am honoured to have been a part of it.

Sharon: Thank you.

Sharon and Mary toast each other with a glass of wine and a warm hug.

The End...or just The Beginning?

Appendix I Demographics of Research Participants

Participant	Age	Income	Occupational Level
Christi	46-55	\$85-\$125	Journalist
Charlotte	56+	\$125+	Housewife
Grace	25-35	\$125+	Managerial
Sarah	25-35	\$60-\$85	Managerial
Leslie	46-55	\$60-\$85	Journalist
Mary	46-55	\$85-\$125	Business Owner
Kat	36-45	\$85-\$125	Administrative
Merry	46-55	\$125+	Educator
Trish	56+	\$60-\$85	Managerial

Appendix II CANSIM Table

Using CANSIM Table 202-0401 (Distribution of total income, by economic family type, 2011 constant dollars) I looked at the distribution of total income for economic families of two and more persons and propose the following breakdown according to quintiles.

Nova Scotia 2011	Income Range	Percent of families	Description
Quintile 1	Up to \$40,000	20.50%	Poor & near poor
Quintile 2	\$40 - \$60,000.00	18.80%	Lower middle to modest income
Quintile 3	\$60 - \$85,000.00	20.70%	Middle income
Quintile 4	\$85 – 125,000.00	23.70%	Upper-middle income
Quintile 5	Over \$125,000.00	15.80%	High income or well-off

For purposes of my research study, I define middle to upper- middle as earning from \$60,000 - \$125,000. (44.4% of households of two or more family members in NS.)

Appendix III Pamphlet

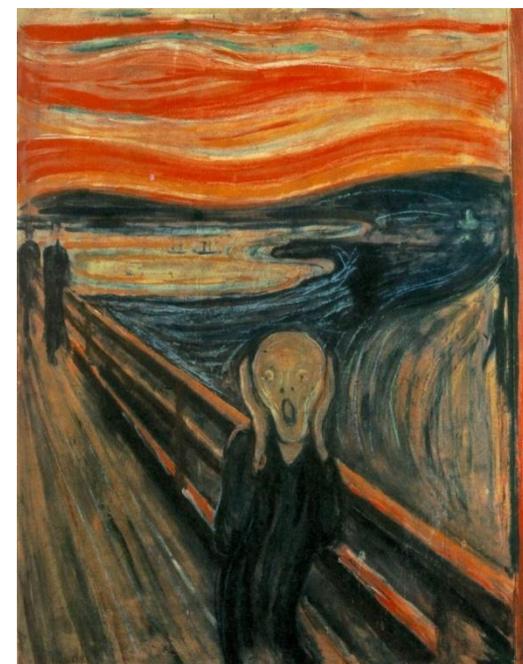
Sharon Skaling is a MA student at MSVU. Sharon works full-time as a Management Training Specialist and has over a decade of experience in training, professional speaking, consulting, and coaching.

Contact:

Sharon Skaling, Graduate Student
Mount Saint Vincent University
902. xxx.xxxx

Dr. Mary Delaney, Thesis Supervisor
Mount Saint Vincent University
Halifax NS
902.457.6559
Mary.delaney@msvu.ca

If you, or someone you know, meets these requirements and would like to know more please contact Sharon at
902.xxx.xxxx



55

A research project by MA-Women & Gender Studies student **Sharon Skaling** on spousal abuse against middle to upper-middle class women

⁵⁵ <https://www.edvardmunch.org/the-scream.jsp>

What is the Project About?

The aim of this project is to explore the experiences of spousal abuse against women in middle to upper-middle class households.

Through interviewing women who have experienced spousal abuse, I aim to discover experiences that may be unique to this income group and learn what resources and support they need to recover from their experiences.

Tell me more...

The project will combine the stories of participants, including the researcher's. The "voices" of all participants will form the thesis results and the identity of all participants will be protected.

I am looking for women:

- over the age of 25
- middle to upper-middle income⁵⁶
- personally experienced spousal abuse
- ceased living in the same residence as their partner at least one year ago

Interview Process

You can contribute to this project by engaging in a **1-½ to 2 hour** open discussion with me to explore:

- your experience with spousal abuse, including support services you may have accessed
- your ideas on helping others learn about spousal abuse

⁵⁶ At the time of the abusive relationship

Appendix IV Confidentiality Agreement

Transcription Services

I, _____, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audio-recordings and documentation received from Sharon Skaling related to her graduate study titled ***“Voices: Heard. Silenced. Ignored. The Voices of Intimate Partner Violence Against Affluent Women.”***

Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-recorded interviews, or in any associated documents;
2. To not make copies of any audio-recordings or computerized files of the transcribed interview texts, unless specifically requested to do so by Sharon Skaling;
3. To store all study-related audio-recordings and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession;
4. To return all audio-recordings and study-related documents to Sharon Skaling in a complete and timely manner.
5. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices.
6. To use provided pseudonyms in place of participant’s name and any other person that might be identified in the recording.

I will not reveal any identifying or personal information about the research participants to anyone.

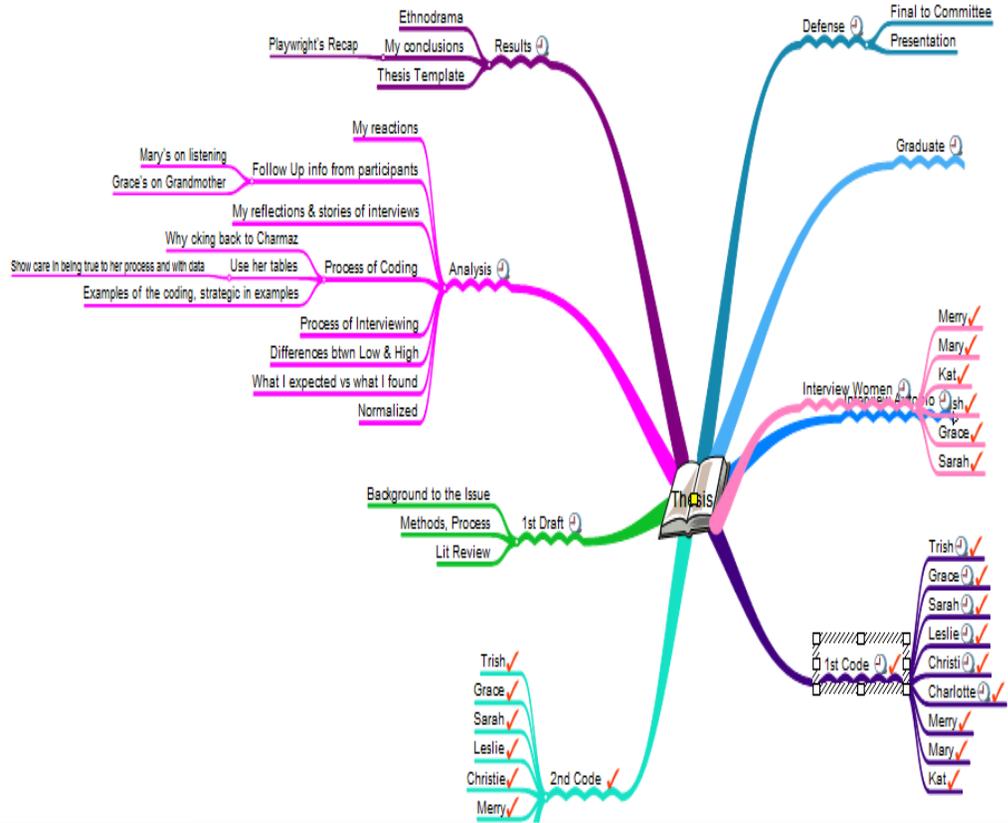
Transcriber’s name (printed) _____

Transcriber’s signature _____

Date _____

Appendix V Mind Map

	Time (day)	Final (hrs)	Final (hrs)	14	2011-11-1	14	9
Thesis	192	0.00	0.00				
Defense	4	0.00	0.00				
Graduate	1	0.00	0.00				
Interview ...	1	0.00	0.00				
1st Code	13	0.00	0.00				
Trish	4	0.00	0.00				
Grace	2	0.00	0.00				



Appendix VI Chart 1 – Questionnaire

Age	25-35	36-45	36-55	56 +		
Race	Caucasian	Black	Asian			
Household Income (at time of IPV)	\$60 – \$85K	\$85 – \$125K	Over \$125K			
Occupational Level	Administrative	Managerial	Business Owner			
Length of Relationship						
Length of Time Out of Relationship (OVER 1 YEAR)						
When abuse began	Before Marriage	After	1 – 3 mos.	3 – 6 mos.	6 – 12 mos.	+ 1 year
Support Sought	Transition House	Police	Friends	Family	Other	None
Type of Abuse	Verbal	Physical	Psychological	Financial	Sexual	Spiritual

Section II: Questions for Open-Ended Interview – Working Women

1. Did you seek help at work?
2. What type of help?
3. Did you access health care benefits provided by your place of employment?
4. If yes, what services did you use? Where they helpful? In what way?
5. Did you share your home life experiences with anyone at work?

Section III: Grounded Theory Interview Questions (Charmaz, 2014)

Initial Open-ended Questions

1. Tell me about what happened [or how you came to _____].
2. When did you first experience IPV [or become aware that it could be IPV]?
3. What was it like? If you can recall, what were you feeling then?
4. Could you describe the events that led up to _____?
5. What was going on in your life then? How would you describe the person you were then?
6. How would you describe [abuser] then?

7. Has your view of yourself changed? Of him?

Intermediate Questions

1. What, if anything, did you know about IPV then?
2. Could you tell me about your thoughts and feelings when you learned about _____?
3. If you recall, could you tell me about how you learned to handle IPV?
4. What positive changes have occurred in your life since then?
5. What negative changes, if any, have occurred in your life since then?
6. As you look back, are there any events that stand out in your mind? Could you describe it/them? How did this event affect what happened?
7. Could I ask you to describe the most important lessons you learned through experiencing IPV?
8. Where do you see yourself in two years [five years, ten years]? Describe the person you hope to be then. How would you compare the person you hope to be and the person you are now?
9. What helped you to manage then? What helps you now?
10. What problems did you encounter? Could you tell me about the sources of these problems?
11. Who has been the most helpful to you during this time? How has s/he been helpful?
12. Has any organization been helpful? What did _____ help you with? How has it been helpful?
13. Did you encounter people who did not accept or challenged your account? How did that make you feel? Were you able to help them believe your story?

Ending Questions

1. What do you think are the most important ways to _____ [‘teach’ others about IPV, heal from IPV, ...]?
2. How has your experience affected how you manage your life today?
3. How have you grown as a person since then? Tell me about the strengths that you discovered or developed.
4. After having these experiences, what advice would you give to someone who has just realized they are experiencing IPV? If you suspect and they don’t?

5. Is there something that you might not have thought of before that occurred to you during this interview?
6. Is there something else you think I should know to understand your experience better?
7. Is there anything you would like to ask me?

Voices Heard:

Voices Silenced:

Voices Ignored:

Pseudonym:

Appendix VII Participant Informed Consent Form

Voices: Heard. Silenced. Ignored. The Voices of Intimate Partner Violence Against Affluent Women

Introduction

My name is Sharon Skaling and I am a graduate student at Mount Saint Vincent University. Data collected in this research project is to be used in the process of completing my MA thesis. The results will take the form of an auto/ethnodramatic script. In addition to the information I collect from interviews, I will be including my own story and reflections in the data. An auto/ethnodrama is a play script that is derived from interview transcripts, my journal entries, memories/experiences, and/or media pieces. The work will result in a script that could be taken to the stage in the future.

What is this study about?

The study addresses the research focus “What are the dimensions of the experience of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) for women of relatively affluent households?” The general purpose and nature of this study is to explore the experiences affluent women who have experienced intimate partner violence with a goal towards creating better understanding of this phenomenon for the general population. My goal is to create awareness that IPV is not just a low-income problem.

Who can take part in the study?

You can take part in this study if you are a) English-speaking female over the age of twenty-five; b) middle to upper-middle class status [household income in the range between \$60,000 to \$125,000] at time of the relationship; c) personally experienced Intimate Partner Violence; d) cohabitated with your abusive partner for a minimum of one year; and e) have not been cohabiting with your abusive partner for a minimum of one year.

What kind of questions will I be asked?

For this audio-recorded interview I will ask questions to complete a data collection form to capture age, income level, occupational level, and the type of IPV you have experienced. If you were working at the time of the IPV experience, I will ask questions relating to support you may have sought through your employer or employee benefit plan. The majority of the interview will be an open discussion in which I will ask questions around your experience with IPV and I will close the discussion by asking you for your ideas on how to help others learn about IPV against affluent women.

How long will it take?

The interview is expected to last 1 ½ to 2 hours. If a second interview is requested, we will sign another Informed Consent Form.

What if I decide that I don't want to answer any of the questions or want to leave the interview?

You can refuse to answer any question during the interview, or choose to stop the interview and decide if any of the recorded data can be used in the project, or if you want all existing data (audio recordings, consent form, questionnaires) destroyed and not included in the research results. You can also choose to be interviewed at another date, or, alternatively, to submit poetry, an essay, or a drawing/painting of your own that reflects your experience with IPV.

What if I don't want to be audio-recorded?

If you prefer not to be audio-recorded I will endeavor to record our interview with notes and observations.

Can I withdraw from this study after my interview?

You can choose to withdraw from the project within 30 days of the interview and elect to have all of your existing data (audio recordings, consent form, questionnaires) destroyed and your information/data excluded from the research results. You also have the choice of having the results reflect your contribution to the data analysis and to be included as a composite character instead of a single character.

Are there any risks to me doing the interview?

There are no physical risks associated with your participation in this study. You may experience emotional upset as you tell, and reflect upon, your story. References to counselling services are listed in the "Referrals to Support Contacts" section so you can talk to someone any time after the interview should you need to.

You may also be at risk of being discovered as being a woman who has had this experience (if you have hidden it from others), and at risk of having your intimate partner or family members discover your involvement. I will make every effort to keep the risks at minimum by blocking my phone number when calling you and will not leave messages unless you indicate it is safe to do so. In addition, the interviews will take place in a safe environment of your choosing.

Are there any benefits to me if I do the interview?

Taking part in this study will not help you directly. You will have the opportunity to tell your story of IPV which may provide some therapeutic healing for yourself and may benefit other women with similar experiences. It may help inform and build awareness in the community about mid-scale IPV.

How will my identity be protected?

I will protect your identity in these ways:

- Pseudonyms (name you choose) will be used in place of your real name
- All personal identifiers will be removed from all data results and interview recordings

- I may use composite characters, further protecting your identity
- If you say anything that could identify you or your partner during the interview I will not include it in the transcript
- I will destroy the information used to contact you in three to five years from our initial interview
- I will store the signed consent forms in locked home office
- I will store all my paper records of this interview in my locked home office
- Anything stored on a computer will be password protected and stored in locked home office
- I will destroy records of these interviews five years after I have completely published the results

Will the researcher share the information from the interview?

The interviews will be transcribed by a third party, who will sign a confidentiality agreement. Research data will be made available to the research team, consisting of Sharon Skaling, Dr. Mary Delaney (MSVU), and Dr. Deborah Norris (MSVU). The team and the transcriptionist will maintain confidentiality regarding all data, with the exception of any information we learn of where we believe that you, or your children, may be in danger of harm or of harming yourself. I will encourage you to report it to the appropriate authorities and if you can't, I will report it.

Can I look at the transcript or auto/ethnodrama?

If you would like to look at your transcript please fill in the Request to Review Form, Transcript Section with your name and address form or contact me to make arrangements. If you would like to look at the auto/ethnodrama please fill in that section on the Request to Review Form.

Referrals to Support Contacts

In the event you would like to talk to a trained counsellor, the following resources are available for debriefing or other support.

- Sandra Pickrell Baker MS., MSW, RSW, CHTP/Life Skills Counselling & Psychotherapy, 902.252.3772, lifeskills@eastlink.ca

- Community Outreach Coordinator
Bryony House, 902-429-9003, www.bryonyhouse.ca
(Non-profit organization, not-for-fee for services)

- Avalon Counsellor, Avalon Sexual Assault Centre
902.422.4240, avaloncounsellor@avaloncentre.ca, www.avaloncentre.ca
(Non-profit organization, not-for-fee for services)

- Intake Social Worker, Halifax & Region Military Family Resource Centre
902.427.7788, www.halifaxmfr.ca
(Not-for-fee for services)

- Dr. Verona Singer, Dolly Mosher, Angela Jeffrey-Haynes, Heather Colquhoun
Halifax Regional Police (HRP) Victim Services, 902.490.5300,
<http://www.halifax.ca/police/programs/victimservices.php>
(Not-for-fee for services)

- Sarah Oulton, MSW(c), SWC, Clinic Coordinator
The Dalhousie School of Social Work Community Clinic, 902.494.2753, swcc@dal.ca,
<http://www.dal.ca/faculty/healthprofessions/socialwork/programs/field-education/dalhousie-school-of-social-work-community-clinic-.html>
(Not-for-fee for services)

- Intake Counsellor, Family Service Association
902.420.1980, intake@fshalifax.com, <http://www.fshalifax.com/>
(Not for Profit Organization, fees based on ability to pay)

- Intake Counsellor, New Start Counselling
902.423.4675, <http://www.newstartcounselling.ca>, newstart@eastlink.ca
(Not for Profit Organization, fees based on ability to pay)

Contact Information

Sharon Skaling, Graduate Student
Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax NS
902.xxx.xxxx

Dr. Mary Delaney, Thesis Supervisor
Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax NS
902.457.6559
Mary.delaney@msvu.ca

Dr. Deborah Norris, Research Committee Member
Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax NS
902.457.6376
Deborah.norris@msvu.ca

If you have any questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak with someone not involved in the study, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research Office, at 902.457.6350 or via email at research@msvu.ca.

I understand that, post graduation, the work may become an auto/ethnotheatre, which takes the written script (ethnodrama) to the stage. I understand that by signing this Participant Consent Form I am NOT consenting to my contribution in any resulting auto/ethnotheatre (publicized theatrical production) without signing a Consent Form relating to such a production.

I am providing my free and informed consent as the condition for agreeing to participate in this research project.

Research Participant/Date

Researcher/Date

The researcher, Sharon Skaling, may contact me at _____ and I (give/do not give) my permission for her to leave phone messages.

Research Participant/Date

Appendix VIII Permission to Audio-Record Interview

Voices: Heard. Silenced. Ignored. The Voices of Intimate Partner Violence Against Affluent Women

I agree for my interview with Sharon Skaling to be audio-recorded and transcribed by a third party transcriptionist who has signed a confidentiality agreement.

I understand that all identifying information will be stripped and not recorded in the written transcript.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix IX Request to Review

Voices: Heard. Silenced. Ignored. The Voices of Intimate Partner Violence Against Affluent Women

If you would like to review your transcript prior to having them analyzed by the researcher, please indicate your name and contact information below.

Name _____

Email Address _____

If you would like to review the auto/ethnodrama (results) prior to thesis defense please indicate you name and contact information below.

Name _____

Email Address _____

Appendix X Variables I

Participant	Age	Income	Occupational Level	Length of Dating	Length of Marriage	Cohabitation	Time out of Relationship
Christi	46-55	\$85-\$125	Journalist	4 months	4 years		15 + years
Charlotte	56+	\$125+	Housewife	1 year	17 years		30 years
Grace	25-35	\$125+	Managerial	2 months		20 months	8 1/2 years
Sarah	25-35	\$60-\$85	Managerial	0 months		2 1/2 years	2 years
Leslie	46-55	\$60-\$85	Journalist	1 year	4 years		20 + years
Mary	46-55	\$85-\$125	Business Owner	1 year	9 years		6 years
Kat	36-45	\$85-\$125	Administrative	2 years		7 years	2 years
Merry	46-55	\$125+	Educator	2 years	12 years		10 years
Trish	56+	\$60-\$85	Managerial	2 years	3 years		16 years

Appendix XI Windows and Wall



You know, I did -- I found out a lot about myself. I was able to develop all new friends and strengths through that that I didn't even know existed. So just a much more, a much -- I'm me. I have got my own power back. I have my power. I have my power in my current relationship. That is never at stake, my power in my relationship. In fact, it's more like I'm encouraged to own my own power, right, you know, yeah. Just, it's completely, completely new person. Completely different person.

I can stand on my own

I think that's the biggest part is really being -- trusting myself.

knowledge. Validation. Power and Strength.

And then trying to fit the pieces together of where, when I stopped caring about myself. You know? When did that happen? Where does it start from? And I was really determined to, through counseling, find out those missing pieces so that I don't take it in to another relationship.

I'm probably more independent and more stubborn, and all of those things, because I'm very, very aware that I'm not allowing anybody to ever have that kind of control over my life, ever. Ever.

I allow myself to do things for enjoyment, rather than produce, achieve all the time, which is what I was, um, what grad school and the early years on the job, that's, you know, if you weren't, you know, I'd feel guilty any time I took time off, pretty much. Although that's not entirely true, because sometimes it's one of the good things about the relationship years early on, is that you're kind of allowed to take time off if you're in a relationship. You know. That's society's sanctioned way of doing things. So I guess that's one of the things I've learned, is just to do that on my own.

But I compare how I was when I was married, to the way I am. Like, I used to call myself 'her.' You know? (laughs) You know, that woman who was married to [my husband]?

But now I'm much more confident in myself.

And so over that period of time, I was working on finding my voice and, um, understanding my own strength and power.

Stronger. More, more -- Stronger, obviously. Much more intuitive. Or trusting my intuition, maybe, more so. Trusting my intuition, trusting who I am. Believing in who I am. Having strength in who I am. Exploring who I am. Being who I am.

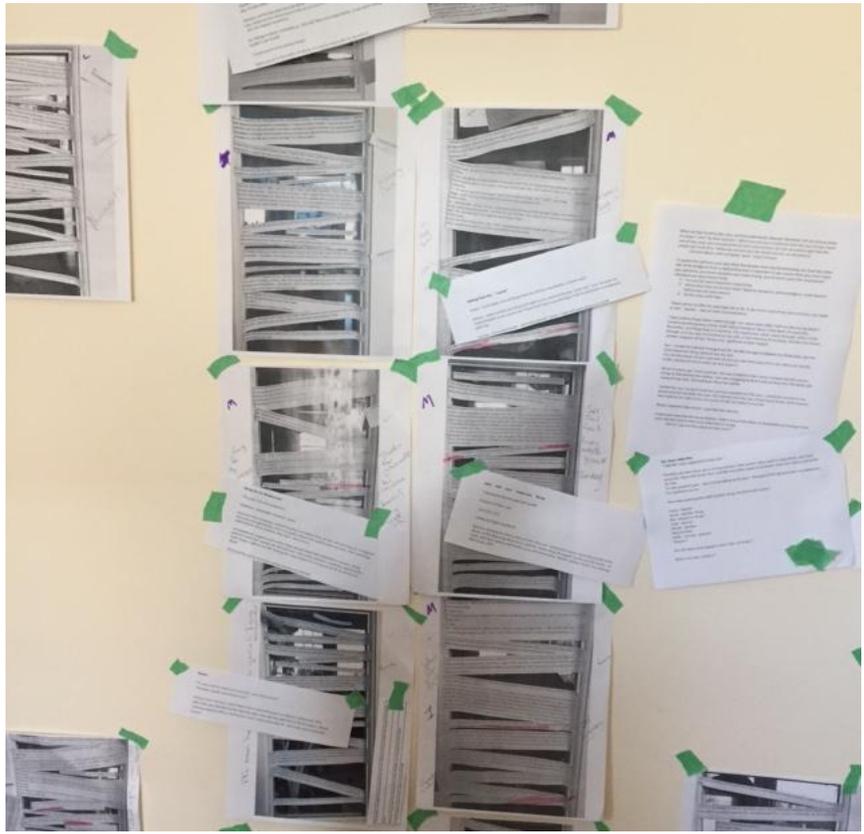
And, um, and at some point I had this realization: if I'm truly as powerful as people say I am, and if I have been denying these gifts for as long as I have been denying them, then it took this level of intensity to get me to acknowledge how powerful I am and to acknowledge the gifts that I have. And so some of these realizations were big turning points for me.

And then I remember the day when I kind of looked, sort of figuratively looked up and realized that all around the edges things were shifting and changing, which meant that something at the core also had to be shifting and changing. Otherwise that wouldn't be, it wouldn't be happening. It wouldn't be all around me. And it was a while after that. I don't know when, but a while after that, when I guess it landed deeply enough in me, grounded deeply enough in me that I could actually take the steps to do the separation.

Yeah, just the peacefulness from that, and the energy. Like the, not having to battle ev-er-y-thing, you know? Huge. And that, and so then, when I had that energy, then I could just grow from, like, I could heal from my fatigue, and then I could just -- just grow. And I just keep on. The sky's the limit.

Oh, it was just freedom. Oh, I remember having people over to my house and being able to talk to them, because I didn't have to shut him up to get the air time. Like, it was just that exhausting. And to be able to decorate the place how I wanted to. Because I'm good at it.

I think I always had the strengths. I just wasn't using them. So. Actually being able to talk about it and not be shamed, and willing to help other people through it. Not look at it as a weakness that I want to help people. Or that -- Because I feel like it was -- I used to think it was kind of a weakness because I would let people take advantage, but I'm definitely more stronger now. I, I like to help people but I won't let people take advantage.



**Appendix
XII** **Variables
II**

Participant	Age	Income	Occupational Level	Length of Dating	Length of Marriage	Cohabitation	Time out of Relationship	When Abuse Began
Christi	46-55	\$85-\$125	Journalist	4 months	4 years		15 + years	Before marriage
Charlotte	56+	\$125+	Housewife	1 year	17 years		30 years	Before marriage
Grace	25-35	\$125+	Managerial	2 months		20 months	8 1/2 years	1-3 months
Sarah	25-35	\$60-\$85	Managerial	0 months		2 1/2 years	2 years	Immediately
Leslie	46-55	\$60-\$85	Journalist	1 year	4 years		20 + years	Honeymoon
Mary	46-55	\$85-\$125	Business Owner	1 year	9 years		6 years	Before marriage
Kat	36-45	\$85-\$125	Administrative	2 years		7 years	2 years	Before cohabitation
Merry	46-55	\$125+	Educator	2 years	12 years		10 years	Before marriage
Trish	56+	\$60-\$85	Managerial	2 years	3 years		16 years	Before marriage
	Friends	Family	Police	Transition House	Other	Verbal	Physical	Psychological
Christi	Friends	Family			God/Spiritual	Verbal	Physical	Psychological
Charlotte	Friends	Family	Police			Verbal	Physical	Psychological
Grace	Friends		Police			Verbal		Psychological
Sarah	Friends		Police			Verbal	Physical	Psychological
Leslie	Friends	Family	Police			Verbal	Physical	Psychological
Mary	Friends				Counsellor	Verbal		Psychological
Kat	Friends	Family	Police	Transition House	Co-Workers	Verbal	Physical	Psychological
Merry	Friends	Family				Verbal	Physical	Psychological
Trish	Friends	Family	Police	Outreach		Verbal	Physical	Psychological

Participant	Financial	Sexual	Spiritual	Ethnicity
Christi				Caucasian
Charlotte	Financial	Sexual		Caucasian
Grace	Financial	Sexual		Caucasian
Sarah	Financial			Caucasian
Leslie	Financial			Caucasian
Mary			Spiritual	Caucasian
Kat	Financial		Spiritual	Mixed
Merry	Financial			Caucasian
Trish	Financial	Sexual		Caucasian

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Footnotes

¹ Statistics Canada collects information about spousal violence using two different, yet complementary, data sources: police statistics and victimization surveys. While police-reported statistics are useful for understanding the nature and extent of spousal violence that comes to the attention of police, we know through self-reported victimization surveys that less than one-quarter of spousal violence victims report the incident to police (22% in 2009). The General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization captures information on people's experiences of spousal violence regardless of whether the incident was reported to police.

All respondents who are married or living in a common-law relationship at the time of the survey, or had contact with their ex-partner within the previous five years, are asked a series of 10 questions about spousal violence. This includes legally married, common-law, same-sex, separated, and divorced spouses.

The questions measure both physical and sexual violence as defined by the *Criminal Code* that could be acted upon by the police. This includes acts such as being threatened with violence, being pushed, grabbed, shoved, slapped, kicked, bit, hit, beaten, choked, threatened with a gun or knife, or forced into sexual activity.

These statistics provide a lens through which to look at domestic violence. Experts suggest that the actual numbers are much higher than what is being reported. (Department of Justice) Some reasons for not reporting are feeling the incident was not important or was a personal matter, did not want the spouse arrested, feeling police could not do anything or would not help, and did not want anyone to find out/privacy.

² Data analyzed for this study was taken from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH1). 13,017 individuals were involved. All participants were either married or cohabiting with member of the opposite sex. A subsample of 2,459 men and 2,489 women completed a self-administered portion of the questionnaire. It is considered a rich source of data on domestic violence as both primary respondents and their partners were involved.

³ Domestic Violence, or spouse abuse, was analyzed using a four-part theoretical framework based on the ecological model of human development. A detailed case study is discussed and suggestions made for further research.

⁴ The concepts of ethnographic data collection using secondary data were applied to analyze three autobiographies. (See Chapter 4 for more information)

⁵ MAXQDA is software for qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research.

www.maxqda.com

⁶

https://www.ted.com/talks/leslie_morgan_steiner_why_domestic_violence_victims_don_t_leave

⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PiFVOBDA6c>

⁸ A form that is derived from a verb but that functions as a noun, in English ending in *-ing*

⁹ The Working Mind© is an education based program developed by Mental Health Commission of Canada to address and promote mental health and reduce the stigma of mental illness in the workplace.