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THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING THROWN BACK IN ENCOUNTERS  
FOR ADULTS WHO WERE PHYSICALLY ABUSED AS CHILDREN  
BY A PARENT OR CAREGIVER:  
AN EMPIRICAL-PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Jean A. Risko

December 2011

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Jean A. Risko

2011

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Jean A. Risko

Approved November 16, 2011

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# ABSTRACT

THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING THROWN BACK IN ENCOUNTERS  
FOR ADULTS WHO WERE PHYSICALLY ABUSED AS CHILDREN  
BY A PARENT OR CAREGIVER:  
AN EMPIRICAL-PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

By

Jean A. Risko

December 2011

Dissertation supervised by Constance Fisher, Ph.D.

This study examined the lived meanings of the experience of being thrown back to, or reliving, the past in encounters with a stranger for adults who were physically abused as children.

Flyers were posted in public locations seeking adults who had been physically abused as children. Six participants, four females and two males, volunteered to participate in the study. Five participants submitted a written description of an encounter in which a stranger looked at her/him and she/he was reminded of being physically abused as a child. One additional participant responded via an interview. Follow-up interviews were conducted by asking open-ended questions that served to clarify and to

deepen the written description. One participant was eliminated when it became clear that she did not meet the criteria for this study.

The written descriptions and interview data were integrated to create master texts. From the master texts, an empirical-phenomenological method was utilized to analyze the data. Results included Individual Narrative accounts as well as a Summary of Participant Accounts that together offer powerful life-world descriptions of the experience of adults' being thrown back to physical child abuse experiences in an encounter.

The results reveal that being thrown back to a physically abusive past in an encounter tends to unfold within the realm of everydayness, and reveals the past often with surprise and sometimes with shock, but always with a sense of familiarity. This re-experiencing was vivid. The look, with variations, was a significant finding in the study. All participants took care of themselves in some way while being thrown back to physical child abuse experiences. Most tried to make sense of being thrown back to a vivid past, while some continued to try to understand the physical child abuse they endured.

This study offers adults who were physically abused as children a meaningful explication of the experience of being thrown back to physical child abuse. Mental health professionals are provided with a greater understanding of the life world of adult survivors of physical child abuse, as well as with a suggestion for group or individual psychotherapy. Suggestions for future research are offered.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is adults who have endured physical abuse in their childhood at the hands of a parent and/or caregiver. In order to access the everyday life-world of these adults, this study delves into encounters with strangers in which the adults were thrown back to their past of being physically abused as a child. Through these encounters, we can begin to grasp the meaning and complexity of the experience of being thrown back to childhood physical abuse as well as meaning of the continuing impact of the physical abuse in the adult's life.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The physical abuse of children has occurred since antiquity and remains a prevalent problem in society. Statistics for the United States reported that 123,599 children were physically abused in 2009 (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2010). It is important to note that this data includes only the number of *reported* cases of children who were physically abused. Some experiences of physical child abuse are deemed unsubstantiated due to lack of physical evidence, and thus are not reportable. Other victims of physical child abuse never report being physically abused due to fear, shame, or lack of knowledge regarding protection.

However, whether or not the physical abuse was reported, the fact remains that in addition to the potential everlasting physical impairments an adult might endure, childhood physical abuse profoundly shapes lives. Yet research shows that minimal attention has been given to understanding the world of survivors of physical child abuse.

I have discovered through that research as well as my clinical experience that physical child abuse has an enduring impact in the lives of many adults.

The goal of this study is to explore the participants' experiences of being thrown back to childhood physical abuse in an encounter with a stranger, as a means of investigating everyday situations with others in which these individuals find themselves reliving that past. Unlike remembering, being thrown back to the past occurs with an abruptness and creates a rupture in daily life. Living in the present may become challenging and future possibilities may be limited for adults who were physically abused as children when thrown back to their abuse. It is my hope that this study will aid survivors of childhood physical abuse by providing a meaningful acknowledgement of their experiences of being thrown back to their abusive past. Additionally, I hope that mental health providers will also gain an understanding of the complex phenomenon of being thrown back to childhood physical abuse.

### **Motivation**

My interest in the area of child abuse began in my adolescence as I was appalled by the traumatic stories of the physical abuse of innocent children by parents or caregivers. Later, working in a therapeutic preschool with children who had been physically, sexually, and/or emotionally abused and/or neglected, I began to wonder about the future of these children. Memories of one child in particular, a three year old girl who had been severely physically abused by her mother, with the worst injury occurring when her mother bit her, will forever remain with me. One question I pondered was how this child as an adult would perceive and understand herself in relation

to others when the primary person who was to unconditionally love and nurture her as a child instead severely physically abused her.

My motivation in this study also stems from my experience in a community agency providing psychotherapy to adults and children who had been abused – physically, sexually and/or emotionally – and/or neglected in their childhood by a parent or caregiver. My clinical experience with physical child abuse has been primarily with children and adolescents. Most adults who sought therapy at the agency had a history of sexual child abuse. I recalled one client who had a history of physical child abuse who felt that she simply did not fit in and could not relate to a group whose other members were all sexually abused as children. I began to wonder about this woman's experience.

In addition to my clinical experience, in an advanced research course, I conducted a pilot study, *The Long-Term Effects of Physical Child Abuse in Adulthood: An Empirical-Phenomenological Investigation* (1999). Participants for the pilot study were sought via several online message forums for child abuse survivors, with one forum directed only to survivors of physical child abuse. For the method of this pilot study, I was broadly guided by several steps of the empirical phenomenological research method described by Giorgi (1985). The research request was *Please describe in as much detail as possible how being physically abused in childhood has affected your life as an adult*. Nine adults consented to participate in the pilot study, and four adults provided a written response to the request. After carefully reading each participant's response, I identified themes, that is, seemingly essential aspects of the long-terms effects of physical child abuse in adulthood, within a phenomenological framework. My focus was on the life-world of each participant.

The findings, which are relevant to encounters with strangers, included lack of trust, along with fear, anger, and vulnerability, and could be compared to the results of the current study. Two women discussed their fear of and “intimidation” by men, which they related to the repeated physical violence they experienced during their childhood and adolescence, inflicted by their father or stepfather. Specifically, one woman who was physically abused by her stepfather said that she found herself “moving out of the way of angry men, even if I should be able to walk by them.” Her brother was also physically abused by their stepfather. He stated that he was repeatedly beaten with a belt in a humiliating manner during their stepfather’s drunken rages. He described himself as hypervigilant, suspicious, and angry, and added, “I’m always looking for that next blow.”

Another man who was the object of “ripping and crushing blows...[and] perpetual acts of violence” throughout his early childhood by his father stated that through the violence, he came to understand himself as “a rejected, dejected and shameful person...[which] frame[s] the outlines of my adult self.” He remains guarded when encountering strangers, careful to be “invisible” because “visibility... ultimately made [him] vulnerable and exploitable” when caught in a stranger’s “odd and precarious” gaze.

An additional account was given by a woman in her late 20s who reported experiencing repetitive physical abuse in her childhood by her mother. She described an incident in which her mother threatened her with a chainsaw. The woman commented that this terrorizing incident “only” led to a cut on her hand that is now a scar – a constant reminder of the malicious act. In her adulthood, when near others, she “erect[s] a ‘shield’...I am a watcher inside my body,” and then she flees the situation. Although she did not speak specifically about being seen, I imagined that her readiness to dissociate, to

seek protection by diminishing her presence to others, might intensify when a stranger looked at her.

Although the participants in the pilot study did not explicitly discuss the experience of being thrown back to their childhood physical abuse, I believed this was significant, thus warranted further investigation. In the findings, all participants were suddenly reliving their experiences of physical child abuse in relatedness with others. Each participant seemed to be caught up in her/his traumatic past, such that it shaped not only the present but also the future. An acknowledgement and understanding of the experience of being thrown back to childhood physical abuse in encounters with strangers may assist survivors of physical child abuse in learning ways to remember their traumatic past without being thrown back.

### **Presuppositions**

From my experience of providing psychotherapy to adults and children who had been abused – physically, sexually and/or emotionally – and/or neglected in their childhood by a parent or caregiver, I clearly bring to this study my perspectives on their experiences. However, in regard specifically to adults who were physically abused in childhood, my knowledge and experience of the ways in which their lives were shaped through the abuse has evolved also through unsolicited stories from acquaintances and strangers who survived the trauma of physical child abuse.

In casual conversations about career and daily life, people have freely disclosed what is often deemed a shameful family secret – having been physically abused. Although these stories are often overwhelming and terrifying, I have always listened with profound respect, care, and assured privacy. Furthermore, although surprised by the

sudden private revelations, which seemed out of context in casual, relaxed atmospheres, I believed that these individuals likely experienced a sense of safety and understanding in sharing a traumatic part of their past. These casually revealed stories of physical child abuse contributed to my expectations of what would be revealed in the written descriptions and in the following interviews with the research participants.

My pilot study, *The Long-Term Effects of Physical Child Abuse in Adulthood: An Empirical-Phenomenological Investigation* (1999), is a primary presupposition for this study. The participants described reliving physical child abuse experiences in their daily lives. As stated previously, I wondered if acknowledging and understanding their experience of being thrown back to physical child abuse would guide them in learning ways to remember the abuse endured without reliving it.

As I conducted this study of adults' experiences of reliving being physically abused in childhood in an encounter with a stranger, I realized that a basic assumption was that most if not all who were physically abused as a child would have several experiences of being thrown back to their abusive past. In being human, the past is ready at hand, available even when we are not fully aware. The past shapes our present. I also anticipated that an aspect of the ease and frequency with which an individual re-experiences her/his abuse and associated feelings would be related to the specific details of the physical abuse endured. For example, it seemed likely that the most severe physical abuse, the type that threatened the life of the child, would shape one's life such that this trauma would be easily relived and brought forth in everyday situations. This overwhelming type of physical abuse may be deeply imbedded in one's life, perhaps



leading a person to distance herself/himself from other people, always preparing for possible attack.

Although I believe that for most people who were physically abused in childhood there are a multitude of aspects of the abusive experiences that could take them back – including familiar locations and items, a recognizable scent, a particular color, and so forth – foremost, I expected there to be two primary aspects. That is, an encounter with at least one person and the way in which that person looked at the participant. Generally, I anticipated this look to be one of anger and rage, and be threatening – a look the abusive parent/caregiver directed toward the helpless child that powerfully spoke of what was to come. This, I believed, was a look that never required spoken language, a look that is burned deep within, never to be forgotten. I assumed that the look given by the other would be of such importance in the experience of being thrown back that it was initially the primary focus of the study; this assumption will be discussed further later.

Furthermore, I imagined that the participants would relive the fear, terror, helplessness, vulnerability, and sadness experienced in relation to the physical abuse. However, I assumed that unlike their childhood physical abuse experiences, the participants, as adults would safely escape the frightening encounter. I assumed that this escape might lead to a sense of empowerment. Along with a desire to protect herself/himself from further harm would be the strength, physical and emotional, to do so. Additionally, I believed that each participant's past would suddenly show itself, with each person having had no expectation of reliving her/his traumatic past. However, I anticipated that each participant would recognize her/his past as revealed in the present soon after the encounter began.

In addition, I imagined that with each encounter in which the research participants had relived their past, they would have gained greater distance from that past, and would have gained understanding and acceptance of themselves as strong, powerful, capable adults who could defend themselves from any further physical attack, unlike the helpless children they once were. I also anticipated that age would be a factor in the vividness and extent to which a person would relive her/his physically abusive past. I believed that as survivors of physical child abuse age and experience many occasions in which they were thrown back to their past abuse, they might have developed ways to diminish the intensity of the experience. In addition, I assumed that these adults likely developed an awareness of the aspects of an encounter that throw them back to their abusive past, as well as ways to diminish the impact of being thrown back.

Regarding their relationships with the parents and/or caregivers who abused them, I anticipated that although the desire to be loved, cared for, and accepted is a foundational characteristic of being human, it might be something the participants never experienced. The participants might still be searching for the parents/caregivers to accept responsibility for overpowering and hurting them as children, and for shaping their entire life in various negative ways. I also believed that most participants' parents perceived the physical abuse as an acceptable form of discipline. Thus, the parents/caregivers would not perceive a need to apologize.

In the Discussion chapter, I will review my assumptions in light of the results.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Defining Physical Child Abuse**

To my surprise, a broadly adopted definition for physical child abuse does not exist whether among researchers or for legal purposes (Portwood, 1999; Briere, 1992; Carlin et. al., 1994; Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2008). “The research dealing with consequences of abuse is made more difficult by the lack of consistent definitions of physical abuse that may be as inclusive as experiencing a fist fight as a child...or as restrictive as multiple episodes of physical harm” (Carlin, et. al., 1994, p. 393). Furthermore, although federal legislation (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2008, pp. 1-2) provides guidelines, each state is granted permission to create its own definition of physical child abuse within the guidelines. Some states provide broad definitions while others define physical abuse in a precise manner. In addition, some states further narrow the definition by providing exceptions. The most important exception to consider is corporal punishment, which is physical force utilized as a means of discipline. At this time, thirteen states and the District of Columbia have legalized this exception. This is an exception that can blur the line between discipline and physical abuse.

The definition of physical child abuse that I will use for this study, as I found it to be the clearest, least questionable definition, is the one provided by the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect, now known as the Child Welfare Information Gateway, (2004) as a guideline for each state:

Physical abuse is nonaccidental physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) as a result of punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting (with a hand, stick, strap, or other

object), burning, or otherwise harming a child, that is inflicted by a parent, caregiver, or other person who has responsibility for the child. Such injury is considered abuse regardless of whether the caregiver intended to hurt the child.

(p. 2)

### **Research on Adult Survivors of Physical Child Abuse**

From the 1940s to 1970, according to Gil (1970), “several hundreds of professional articles and books” studying physical child abuse, including possible short-term effects in children’s lives, had been published (p. 1). Physical child abuse has been shown to have various harmful effects in the lives of children and adolescents. Kaplan (1999) reviewed the research on physical child abuse, and reported that physically abused children, in general, endure problems in interpersonal relationships, have cognitive impairments and poor academic performance, display aggressive and delinquent behaviors, engage more frequently in risk-taking behaviors, and have increased proneness to psychiatric illness.

While researching literature on adult survivors of physical child abuse, I was astonished at the paucity of material concerning long-term consequences of physical child abuse, although I found an abundance of research on survivors of sexual child abuse (Gross & Keller, 1992; Varia, Abidin, & Dass; Carlin, Kemper, Ward, Sowell, Gustafson & Stevens, 1994; Sheerer, 1997; Lopez & Heffer, 1998; Briere & Runtz, 1990; Kamsner and McCabe, 2000; Duncan, Saunders, Kilpatrick, Hanson, & Resnick, 1996; Silverman, Reinherz, & Giaconia, 1996; Starr, MacLean, & Keating, 1991; McHolm, MacMillan & Jamieson, 2003). Furthermore, many articles, books, and websites with the phrase “child

abuse” in the title or description focus either entirely or primarily on only sexual child abuse (e.g., Briere, 1992; Reder & Duncan, 2000; Herman, 1997).

However, Herman (1997), a psychiatrist whose interest is in the field of trauma, informs us that for many childhood abuse victims, “the personality formed in an environment of coercive control is not well adapted to adult life. The survivor is left with fundamental problems in basic trust, autonomy, and initiative...She is still a prisoner of her childhood; attempting to create a new life, she reencounters the trauma” (p. 110).

The research that has been conducted on survivors of physical child abuse has focused primarily on the potential long-term consequences of psychiatric illness, including depression, suicidality, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, dissociative disorder, and bulimia (Bryer, Nelson, Miller, & Krol, 1987; Chu & Dill, 1990; Reder & Duncan, 2000; Duncan, Saunders, Kilpatrick, Hanson, & Resnick, 1996; Silverman, Reinherz, & Giaconia, 1996; Mullen, Martin, Anderson, Romans, & Herbison, 1996; Brown, 1999; Rorty, Yager, & Rossotto, 1995; McHolm, MacMillan, & Jamieson, 2003; Briere & Runtzm 1988) and substance abuse (Schaefer, Sobieraj, & Hollyfield, 1988; Goodman & Fallot, 1998; Malinosky- Rummell & Hansen, 1993; Martin & Elmer, 1992).

Dissociation, defined in the DSM-IV-TR ( 2000, p. 4) as “a disruption in the usually integrated functions of consciousness, memory, identity, or perception of the environment,” is described by several researchers as a defense that may develop during experiences of childhood abuse as a means of survival and of coping with the overwhelming feelings that continue into adulthood (Briere, 1992; Herman, 1997; Greven, 1990; Chu & Dill, 1990). As discussed in the previous chapter, in my prior study on the long-term consequences of physical child abuse, one woman stated that she

“erect[s] a ‘shield’” when around others to cope with the ways in which the physical abuse from her mother that she endured throughout childhood has shaped her life. How she survived the “beatings” and violent acts, which included being “cut with a chainsaw,” have remained her ways of responding to many people and situations perceived as potentially overwhelming.

The perception of abuse by individuals who were physically abused, whether or not they viewed themselves as victims, was found by Varia, Abidin, and Dass (1996) and Epps, Carlin, and Ward (1999) to have an effect in their adult lives. The results of both studies were that adult survivors of physical child abuse tend to have lower self-esteem and increased “trait anger” and “seething suppressed anger.” Epps, Carlin, and Ward (1999) specifically found that those who met the criteria for childhood physical abuse, that is, who endorsed physically abusive experiences such as “bones broken, teeth knocked out, being purposely burned...[or being] pinched, hit with a board, stick or wire, [or] being shaken” (p. 179), but identified themselves as non-abused tended to express their anger in a less controlled manner.

Aggression, suspiciousness, and hostility toward others, typically in passive-aggressive forms, was one set of findings in the research conducted by Martin and Elmer (1992) on physical abuse survivors.

Goodwin, Hoven, Murison, and Hotopf (2003) as well as Thompson, Kingree, and Desai (2004) found a relationship between childhood physical abuse and health problems in adulthood, including, but not limited to, migraines, ulcers, and recurring stomach problems. Salmon and Calderbank (1996), studying adult illness, found that physical child abuse characterized a significant number of patients who sought repeated

medical attention. In a follow-up study on adults who were severely physically abused in childhood, Martin and Elmer (1992) anticipated and discovered health problems, including permanent disabilities and/or disfigurements. Several of the participants in the study had facial scars and reported the negative impact their appearance had on their social lives.

Dave Pelzer (1993), a survivor of severe and violent physical abuse endured throughout his childhood at the hands of his mother, repeatedly describes in his book, *A Child Called It*, how his mother did not see him as intelligent, creative, loving, sensitive, or playful, but as dehumanized. When being physically abused, a child was not related to as a human being. Miller (1983) tells us that the child was perceived as an object, specifically an outlet for the parent's anger.

### **Existential-Phenomenological Theories**

Although I have not found existential-phenomenological research specific to this study, I believe that theories on related topics may illuminate the experience of being thrown back in encounters with strangers for adults who were physically abused as children. Some of the existential-phenomenological theories I address have discussed temporality, that is, the lived meaning of time, the look, and the development of being seen.

In his book *Existential Foundations of Medicine & Psychology* (1979/1994), Medard Boss describes what he considers the fundamental characteristics of human beings. The temporality of existence is one such characteristic. According to Boss,

While dwelling in the world means extending ourselves simultaneously into the three temporal dimensions of past, present and future, these

dimensions are not always open equally...At various times one or another of the dimensions will be the most commanding and at those times we enter into it much more than the others. (p. 100)

Remembering is understood by Boss to be a mode of relatedness in which we “visualize a thing of the past [or an experience] as something experienced *at that time*” (p. 116). It is not an object of our memory, a replayed movie, or simply a processing of sensory information, but the lived experience of the past.

In our everydayness, we move through the world, encountering others, and coming upon things. When we engage with others genuinely, we participate in the shared relationship, togetherness, and the stories exchanged. We are not necessarily aware of our bodies in such interactions. We “...body forth...ways of being in which we are dwelling and which constitute our existence at any given moment” (Boss, p. 102-103). For Boss (1994), we are most genuinely human when we are totally unaware of our physical bodies (p. 101).

Merleau-Ponty (1964) describes the wondrous development of being seen, a pivotal developmental milestone that opens up the child to a world beyond oneself. Merleau-Ponty addresses the child’s relationships to self and others, and the emergence of the perception of self and other as separate beings. The “crisis at three years” is defined as when a child “stops confusing himself with the situation or the role in which he may find himself engaged. He adopts a proper perspective or viewpoint of his own – or rather he understands that, whatever the diversity of situations or roles, he is *someone* above and beyond these different situations and roles” (p. 152). The child no longer views her/himself as one with the world and others, but as uniquely distinct. There is a



distinction between self and others, and the other's look has meaning. Furthermore, gradually the child comes to realize that what she/he does is in relation to others from this point forward. "If a three year old child is inhibited by the other's look, it is because from this point on he is not simply what he is in his own eyes; he feels himself also to be that which others see him to be" (p. 153). The expression of the other is taken up, understood among other expressions and past experiences.

A look, which can be momentary in terms of measured time, may be experienced as extending far beyond the solitary minute, second or other short period of time. The meaning of the time has greater value than measured time. A look from a stranger may arouse a variety of emotions and thoughts, or past experiences of encounters with others or hopes or fears regarding the future. Feelings such as vulnerability, anger, or defensiveness, may be thematic. Even though the encounter may have ended minutes, hours, or even days ago, some may live out that encounter and the meaning(s) of it repeatedly. Our mood or attunement to the world may shift dramatically when being seen by or seeing another, restricting or expanding our openness to the world. Boss (1979/1994) informs us, "[t]he prevailing attunement is at any given time the condition of our openness for perceiving and dealing with what we encounter" (p. 110).

Being seen or seeing another person, particularly when the person is a stranger, can be a breach of self in which one is called back to oneself. Through the look of the other "...I am [suddenly] conscious of myself escaping myself..." (Sartre, 1956, p. 349) "The look which the *eyes* manifest...is a pure reference to myself" (Sartre, 1956, p. 347). We are thrown back upon ourselves as our bodies are thematized in the encounter with another person. One's relation with the world is disrupted. The look of another also can

give rise to the emergence of the body as an explicit object. For Sartre, the look of another objectifies the one being seen. Sartre (1956) also informs us that to be seen through the eyes of the other is “to apprehend oneself as the unknown object of unknowable appraisals – in particular, of value judgments” (p. 358). Nevertheless, not every look is taken up as a judgment by all people.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHOD**

### **Recruitment of Participants and Data Collection**

For this study, I utilized participants' written and verbal descriptions of their experiences of encountering a stranger and being reminded of their history of physical child abuse by a parent and/or caregiver. In light of my work as a psychotherapist at an agency that focused on providing psychotherapy, as well as other services, to adults who were abused in their childhood by a parent(s), I assumed that once I posted a request, participants would be forthcoming. Although my work was the foundation for this assumption, it was also through the frequent unsolicited revelations of acquaintances and strangers that I felt strongly that survivors of childhood physical abuse longed to share their stories, to be heard and acknowledged.

Once I had created a flyer that announced the research to be conducted and the need for participants, I quickly encountered difficulty in finding locations to post it. For ethical reasons, I chose not to seek individuals who were receiving services at the agency. Surprisingly, I struggled with finding businesses and locations where it was acceptable to post my research request. Gradually, I located several local businesses, including a coffee shop, a few grocery stores, and a wellness center, as well as an apartment building, the lobby of a small strip mall, and community libraries, where I was granted permission to post the announcement.

In the request, potential participants were given the option of contacting me either via email or phone to express interest and/or to ask questions. I received a total of seventeen calls and two emails from fifteen females and four males. During the initial contact, I provided information about the focus of the study and the criteria for

participation, which included a history of childhood physical abuse by a parent and/or caregiver, but no history of sexual abuse. My goal was to provide each person with all aspects of the research study so that they could make an informed, self-determined decision about participating. During the initial phone screening, three females and one male reported having been sexually abused in childhood and were informed that they did not fit the criteria for the study. Also, despite requesting to talk further at a later date, three individuals, one male and two females, did not respond to further calls. The man asked many questions about the study, including with whom he could speak to determine my legitimacy. I provided him with the name and phone number for the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Duquesne University, and I informed him that he was welcome to contact the Chair and ask any additional questions. I had no further contact with this man after the initial call; he did not respond to voicemail messages. Thus, I am uncertain if he contacted the Chair of the IRB. One additional call was from a therapist who wanted further information to provide to her clients.

A total of eleven people agreed to meet at a location of her/his choice, most of which were at the individual's home, while a few others requested to meet at a library, a coffee shop, a private office, or a small strip mall lobby, provided that privacy and confidentiality were maintained. I assured each person of the professional nature of this study in which confidentiality and privacy were essential. During the meetings, each person asked further questions, signed a consent form and obtained a description of what participation was requested. I informed all potential participants that a follow-up interview would be scheduled at their convenience once I received her/his written description.

## **The Requested Description**

Each potential participant was asked to provide a response to the following request:

*Please respond to the following statements in writing. Tell me enough detail so that I will know just what this incident was like for you.*

- 1. Please describe in detail a time when you encountered or came across a stranger who looked at you and you reacted in a way that reminded you of your childhood history of being physically hurt (i.e., beaten, kicked, hit, thrown, slapped, shaken, stabbed, and/or burned, etc.) by your parent(s) and/or guardian(s).*
- 2. Tell me about your feelings, thoughts, and actions during and after this encounter.*
- 3. Also, include in detail what was going on before the incident and how the experience finished.*
- 4. What experience(s) of your past did you recall at the time of or following the encounter?*

Within several weeks, seven individuals, five women and two men, submitted a description of her/his lived experience of encountering a stranger and being reminded of her/his history of childhood physical abuse in the encounter. One woman asked for two interviews, the first to provide a verbal response to the above statement. She was concerned that she would not have enough time to submit a written response. Following her first interview, I transcribed her response and reviewed it in preparation for the second interview.

Although four additional people signed consent forms and agreed to participate, they did not submit a description or respond to follow-up calls. The only exception was a woman who initially informed me that she was physically abused as a child by her mother; however, she could not recall an encounter in which she was reminded of her abuse. She agreed to give this further thought. In a follow-up phone conversation, she informed me that she would not be participating, as she still could not recall an encounter in which she was thrown back to her childhood physical abuse experiences. I thanked her for her willingness to participate and told her that she was no longer eligible for the study.

Soon after I received the written descriptions, one woman, who was 69 years old, requested to withdraw from the study, disclosing that she became highly anxious, fearful, and overwhelmed after writing about the encounter and being reminded of her childhood physical abuse experiences. Compassionately, I expressed my appreciation for her involvement and willingness to share her story with me. Then, I informed her that she was eliminated from the study immediately, at her request, and that her information would remain confidential. In addition, after informing me that she was in therapy with a psychiatrist and attended weekly sessions, I suggested that she contact the psychiatrist to request an additional therapy session. Clearly, it was not in this woman's best interest to move forward and share additional intimate details of her abuse and her experience of being thrown back to her childhood physical abuse experiences. As with clients, I again witnessed how pervasive the traumatic memories and feelings associated with the abuse can be for some, even into a later stage in life.

I then contacted the remaining six people who had signed consent forms and provided written or verbal descriptions of their experience of being thrown back in an encounter with a stranger, and arranged individual meetings in locations of their choice. Prior to each interview, I requested permission from each participant to audiotape the interviews. All participants agreed. After I had carefully read the participants' descriptions, I asked open-ended questions primarily for clarification. I also asked additional questions about other encounters in which she/he was reminded of her/his physical abuse history. Of the six individuals, only one woman requested that we meet in her office, while the remaining five asked to meet at her/his house.

### **Analysis of Data**

In this section, I will outline the method of research utilized for this study. A detailed description of the method is outlined. Also included is a flowchart that summarizes my method.

I transcribed each interview and included participants' affect, pauses, and my other observations. To analyze the data, I utilized a variation of the empirical phenomenological method as described by Giorgi (1985). I combined the written descriptions initially provided with the interviews, creating a master text. Later, I typed line numbers by each line in order to be sure that I included all of the material and could check the faithfulness of the narratives to the participants' accounts in their descriptions and interviews. Next, in order to manage the varied stories in each account, I organized the data chronologically and by topic (e.g., physical abuse, encounter, additional material). However, as I wanted to remain close to the participants' words and was

concerned that this organized report may have fallen short, I returned to the master text to conduct the analysis.

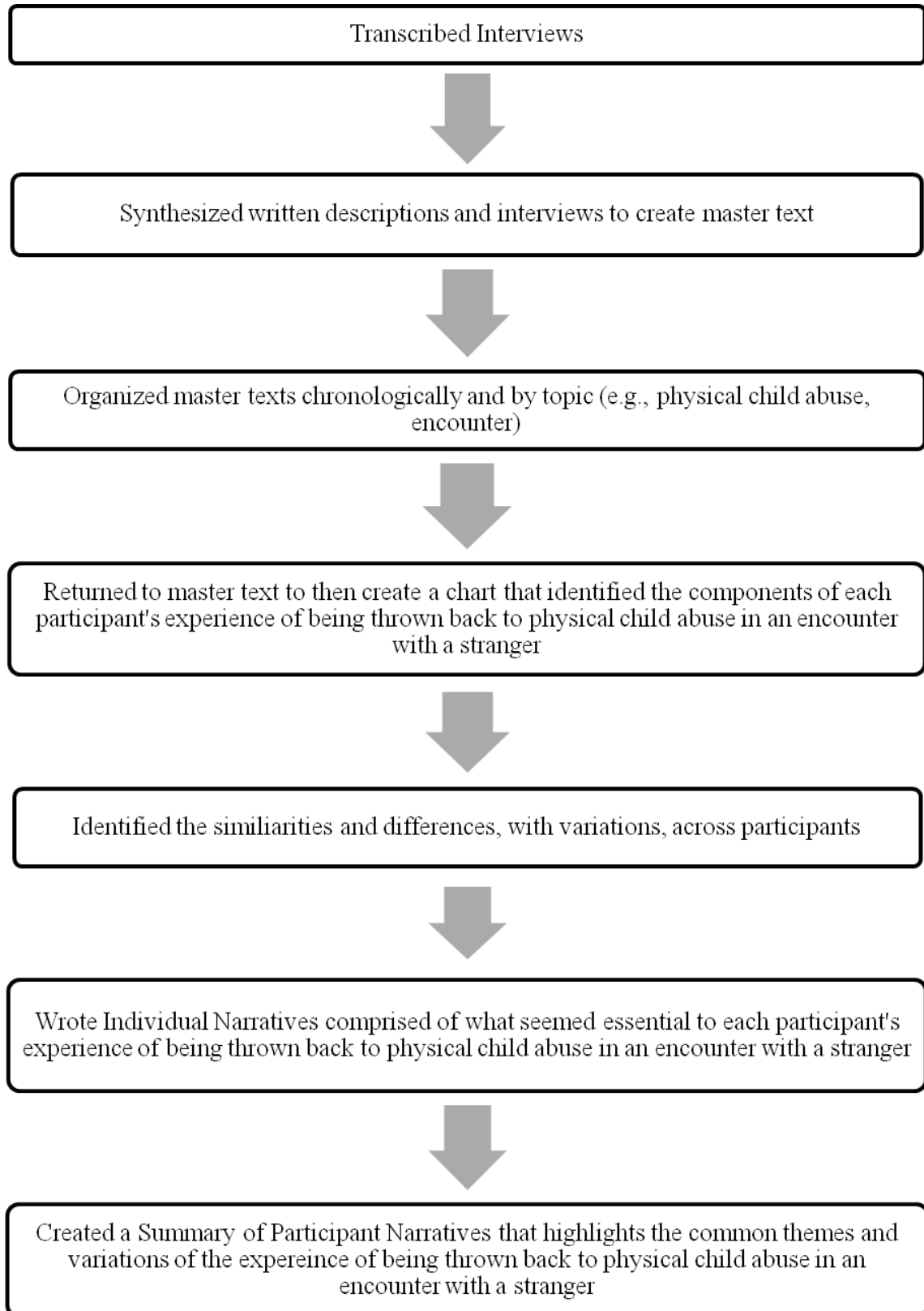
Continuing with the variation of Giorgi's method, I read each master text closely several times to gather a general sense of the whole and to immerse myself in the described experiences of being thrown back. I then broke down each participant's experience into the seemingly meaningful components of her/his story. Then, I identified the similarities and differences, with variations, across the participants' experiences, in the encounter and in the childhood physical abuse, diverting from Giorgi's formal method. After charting all of the similarities and differences with referenced quotations from the master text, I identified common themes, with variations, as well as noted themes that occurred only for two or three participants.

Next, for each participant I wrote an Individual Narrative that is comprised of what seemed essential to the participant's experience of being thrown back to physical child abuse in an encounter with a stranger. I tried to stay close to each participant's life world, and with each theme, I asked myself how in that theme the person was living the past, present and future. In addition, I also asked how in that theme the person related to her/himself, her/his world and to others. This was a difficult task, and I continually reminded myself of the focus of the study – being thrown back to childhood physical abuse – as my focus often shifted to the encounter. Since not all of the findings of this study were true of all the participants' experience of being thrown back, a General Narrative, as defined by Giorgi, was not applicable. Instead, I collected the common themes and variations and wrote a Summary of Participant Narratives to explicate the



experience of being thrown back to childhood physical abuse in an encounter with a stranger.

## FLOWCHART OF RESEARCH METHOD



## **CHAPTER 4: INTRODUCTION OF PARTICIPANTS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF INTERVIEWS**

In this chapter, I present demographic information for each participant as well as some background information and descriptions of the interviews. My hope is that the reader will gain a deeper appreciation of the world of each participant. See Appendix C for the full interviews.

All of the written responses and subsequent interviews were incredibly powerful and deeply moving. All participants described their experience of being thrown back to their childhood physical abuse in an encounter with a stranger with rich detail and intensity. During the interviews, I experienced being with each participant as she/he relived her/his childhood physical abuse, as well as the associated encounter. On more than one occasion, I had to bring myself back to the present and regain awareness of my role as a researcher conducting an interview, as I was with the participants in their vulnerability, intense sadness, helplessness, terror, and/or anxiety.

Although I interviewed six participants, I have included only five participants in the data analysis. In a written description, one female participant, “Paula,” described an encounter in which she was thrown back to her childhood physical abuse. However, soon into the interview as I asked clarification questions, Paula retold her story. She described experiencing a “panic attack” while riding a bus, in that she became fearful and “panicky” and had “muscle cramps” and repeatedly thought that she was “going to die” if she did not exit the bus immediately. Paula said that she began to avoid buses and then eventually avoid riding in cars. At least four years later, Paula came to understand her physical symptoms, fear and anxiety as how she was reliving being physically abused as

a child by her mother. However, Paula also remarked that this period of her life became “complicated” because she had other physical problems that related to her fear and anxiety. As I have moved and no longer have access to conducting another interview to gain a clear understanding as to whether Paula fits this study, I have chosen to eliminate her data from the study.

Table 1: Demographics of Participants

Pseudonym	Race	Education	Employment	Marital Status	Ages when abused	Age at encounter	Age at interview	Abuser
George	African-American	Technical School	Plumber	Married	Infancy to 7	37	55	Father
Linda	Hispanic	Doctoral Student	Full time student	Married	3 to 5	23	27	Nanny
Harold	Hispanic	Master's Student	Full time student	Married	3 to 17	26	26	Father
Amber	Caucasian	Doctoral Degree	Psychologist	Married	Infancy to 18	45	55	Mother
Emily	Caucasian	Bachelor's Degree; Partial Completion of MSW	Adjunct Professor	Married	3 to 17	54	57	Father

One particular aspect to be noted of the sample population for this study is the high education level of the majority of participants. I anticipated that the more educated participants would provide greater depth to their stories and articulate understandings beyond that of the less educated participants. It was my assumption that with greater education, a participant would possess not only varied perspectives of her/his life and experiences, but also greater self-understanding and an expanded ability to ponder and

articulate her/his experiences. Thus, I believed that the more educated participants would contribute more to the findings for this study. However, as revealed in the Results, the education level of the participants showed little to no relevance to the meaningfulness of each participant's story and the findings of the study.

In order to protect the confidentiality of the participants, the steps I have taken include using pseudonyms as well as changing any other potentially identifying information. Also, to protect participants, I destroyed the audiotapes after I transcribed them.

### **“George”**

At the time of the interview, George, an African-American male, was fifty-five years old. He had been a plumber throughout his career after obtaining the necessary technical education and achieving the status of a registered plumber. In the beginning of his career and at the time of the encounter described, George had worked for various companies. Since that time, he had established a successful business with several employees. George also shared that he was happily married with two children.

George and I met at his modest home in the Pittsburgh area for the interview. With a confident and calm presence, he warmly invited me into his home and led me to his office, which he felt would be a quiet place to conduct an interview. Although George was alone when I arrived, he explained that his wife and children might be returning home during the interview. He assured me that his family would not interrupt. I began by asking permission to record the interview, explaining that it would be solely for my use to transcribe the interview, which is the data for this study. George expressed no concerns and agreed to my recording the entire interview. I then explained that

primarily I would be asking clarification questions in order to deepen the written account. I invited George to read the written description he provided if he desired to reacquaint himself with what he had shared. George eagerly and engagingly stated that he was ready to begin the interview without a review.

When he initially spoke about the encounter, describing the events prior to being thrown back to his childhood physical abuse, George was lighthearted in tone, and relaxed and carefree as seen in his posture and body movements. He leaned toward me and tended to keep his body open facing me, and made frequent eye contact, which to me demonstrated his engagement. Throughout the interview, George carefully selected his words, often pausing before responding. George clearly wanted me to grasp his lived experience of being thrown back.

George displayed a dramatic shift in appearance and tone as he described the moment in which he was thrown back to his physically abusive childhood in the encounter. As his voice wavered, his pauses lengthened. George held his head downward and physically drew into himself. At times, he seemed to struggle to fight back tears. The confident man who greeted me at the door was back in his childhood as a terrified, vulnerable and helpless child reliving the physical violence of his father. He seemed to be a child once again fearing for his life, knowing what awaits from past experiences – unrelenting, life-threatening, terrifying physical abuse. After a two and a half hour interview, in a barely audible tone, George simply stated, “I don’t want to say anymore.”

Concerned about George’s well being, following the interview I asked several questions, including if he was in therapy. George said that he was no longer in therapy,

but he had a number of supportive family members and friends. He also shared that in trying to understand the physical abuse and why his father displayed extreme violence toward him, George has learned to “guard” himself from repeatedly reliving the trauma of his physically abusive childhood.

### **“Linda”**

Linda and her husband, Harold, who also participated in this study, were from Columbia, South America, and identified themselves as Hispanic. Linda, at the time of the interview, was twenty-seven years old and completing a doctorate in business.

For the interview, Linda requested that we meet at her house, which was located in the city of Pittsburgh. Linda pleasantly greeted me upon my arrival. Smiling and laughing, she welcomed me into her small yet warm home. Linda apologized for the small space, citing their student budget. The presence of numerous books and papers in their home displayed their worlds as students.

Throughout Linda’s interview, Harold was present. Since he intended to provide an interview, he remained at a distance, engaged in his work until it was time for his interview. While Harold was apparently engulfed in his project, it seemed possible that his quiet presence was a source of comfort and support for Linda as she was interviewed. This assumption arose from the relaxed and loving manner in which they related.

Linda and I sat diagonally in the close quarters of their living room, facing one another. I invited Linda to review her written description. After she read it, I explained to Linda that I would primarily be asking questions to clarify and to deepen the written account. I also requested permission to record the interview. Linda readily agreed and expressed understanding from the shared world of being a student.

In light of the fact that English is not her first language, at times while telling her story, Linda struggled to find the precise word. I also struggled at times to understand the meaning of what she was trying to convey. Despite this, Linda and I were able to reach shared understandings after I asked additional clarification questions.

When she spoke about the encounter, prior to being thrown back to her childhood physical abuse, Linda was lighthearted and pleasantly spoke of witnessing a man and girl walking. She initially laughed with fondness and warmth as she described how “little” the girl was and how “sweet” the man and girl appeared. Linda made frequent eye contact and sat facing me in an open manner. Her slender frame remained upright.

In contrast, as Linda began to relive her past childhood physical abuse in the encounter, she looked downward frequently, spoke critically of herself while laughing, and then became increasingly sad. I came to understand Linda’s laughter as a means to distract me, and perhaps herself, from her harsh self-criticisms as well as to distract me from the pain and sadness she was reliving. Linda stated that she had used cutting as a means of “focusing” and quieting her racing thoughts, so after the interview I asked further about the cutting to assess Linda’s safety. Linda stated that she had not cut herself in about one year. She assured me that if she thought about cutting again, she would immediately seek therapeutic services.

### **“Harold”**

As stated previously, Harold is married to Linda. Harold also is from Columbia, South America, and identified himself as Hispanic. At the time of the interview, Harold was twenty-six years old and completing his master’s degree in business. Although he desired to obtain employment, Harold explained that his student visa limited him.



When I arrived at Harold and Linda's house, although initially greeted by Linda, Harold also warmly welcomed me. After I completed the interview with his wife, Harold eagerly joined me in their living room for an interview. Linda moved as far away as possible from us in their small home. During Harold's interview, Linda was absorbed in reading, thus was no distraction. However, as with Linda, I believed that his presence might have provided unspoken encouragement and comfort in light of the caring ways they engaged with one another.

Harold chose not to review his written description, when asked, and requested to begin the interview immediately. As with previous participants, I also informed Harold that I primarily would be asking questions to serve as clarification and to deepen the written account. Before beginning, I requested and received his permission to record the interview.

Harold was affable despite his sometimes loud tone. In that English was not his first language, Harold searched at times for the best word to express his thoughts. Several times, I questioned him further when the word he used did not seem to fit what he described. Seemingly, because Harold may not have found the correct English word to use from time to time, he tended to be verbose. However, I believe Harold provided a powerful description of his lived world.

In addition, as he spoke, Harold's facial features were very expressive and his body movements were dynamic. As Harold relived the anger from his physically abusive childhood as well as the anger from the encounter, his tone elevated and his arm movements increased in frequency. He described himself as "aggressive," explaining that he was quick to respond physically, fighting others to defend himself from often

misperceived verbal and/or physical attacks. At times in the interview, as I asked clarifying questions, I wondered if Harold would take up a question(s) as a verbal attack. However, throughout the interview, Harold responded openly and interacted with me in a respectful manner, showing no signs of perceiving the questions as a personal attack.

### **“Amber”**

Amber requested to meet at her office in light of her full schedule as well as for privacy. Amber is a psychologist who has a private practice. At the time of the interview, Amber was fifty-five years old. She is Caucasian and married with one adult child.

Amber was the only participant who requested two interviews, as she did not have the time to complete a written description. As discussed previously, I readily agreed and met with Amber to gather the information the other participants had provided in writing.

Upon arriving at her office, I remained in the waiting room until Amber was available. Smiling, she pleasantly greeted me and directed me to her inner office. As we walked to the second room, I noted that both rooms were full of stacks of papers, books, and miscellaneous items, which were all in disarray. I came to understand the clutter as part of Amber’s described world as “ADD” (Attention Deficit Disorder).

Once finding enough space, we sat in chairs across from one another. Amber was eager and engaged. I requested permission to record the interview and Amber quickly agreed. When she began to tell her story, Amber was calm and she even laughed occasionally. Gradually, as her voice rose in pitch, Amber’s speech quickened, which I experienced as anxiety. Amber fearfully then angrily relived her childhood of physical abuse as she described the encounter in which she was thrown back to her physical child

abuse experiences. Her eyes widened with fear, but then Amber showed anger through her louder and firm voice. She recalled the physical child abuse her mother inflicted upon her throughout her childhood and adolescence. Interwoven with her anger, fear, and anxiety were many moments when Amber spoke in a business or professional tone, possibly because of the intensity of re-experiencing her physical child abuse experiences. However, I also wondered if Amber wanted to be viewed in her role as a psychologist, as a professional who has worked through and understands her experiences, particularly given our shared field of psychology.

Another interesting aspect of Amber's interviews was that she sometimes described thoughts instead of feelings. Amber acknowledged this struggle and seemed to take time to thoughtfully, and perhaps correctly tell me what she felt. For clarification, I reiterated questions about her feelings while being thrown back to her childhood physical abuse. As said above, Amber showed fear then anger, and she spoke of feeling "rage" or "anger" when reliving her abuse.

One main challenge of the interviews was that Amber tended to alter topics frequently and in multiple directions as she responded. Although some diversions from the primary question added to depth of the interview, at other times redirection was necessary to maintain focus on Amber's experience of being thrown back to her physical childhood abuse in the encounter. Naturally, Amber's second interview was more challenging given the numerous clarification questions as a result of her shifting focus.

After transcribing the initial interview and reading it several times, I gathered clarification questions, which served to deepen the data from the first interview. In the second interview, Amber again greeted me in a friendly manner and invited me into her

office. I offered Amber a copy of the transcribed interview for her review. Amber requested that we move forward with the second interview without reading her statement. When asked clarification questions, Amber tended to digress repeatedly. After transcribing her interview, I realized that a few questions actually never were answered.

### **“Emily”**

Emily is an adjunct professor who completed some coursework toward a Master’s Degree in Social Work. She teaches at a college in Pittsburgh, and she is involved in volunteer work. Emily is married with eight children – three daughters and five sons. Emily is Caucasian and at the time of the interview, fifty-seven years old.

As with most of the participants, Emily requested that we meet at her home. Upon arriving, I was immediately greeted by Emily’s husband who was in the driveway. Emily then welcomed me into her home and directed me to her deck. Emily informed me that she was watching one of her grandsons, who was playing in the backyard. Although her husband was also home, Emily said that her grandson was comforted primarily by her presence. She assured me that most likely we would not be interrupted. I told Emily that if she needed to take care of her grandson at any point, we would make adjustments in the interview process.

Emily’s tone and manner of speaking was respectful and professional. At first, I thought of her tone and mannerisms as business-like, and then I came to understand her tone as that of a teacher. I wondered how her role as a professor and my role as a student shaped the manner in which she spoke with me.

Emily appeared eager to begin the interview process. I discussed my plan to record the interview and Emily agreed, expressing no concerns. I then asked Emily if she

wanted to review the brief written description she had provided. I had typed Emily's response, which was written on the bottom and back of the request that had limited space. Emily stated that she did not believe this would be necessary. After receiving her brief and seemingly quickly written response, I anticipated that Emily had minimal information to share about her encounter and being thrown back. However, in the interview, Emily was forthcoming and seemed very willing to share her story.

As I moved into asking clarification questions with the purpose of deepening her written account, Emily responded rapidly, exuding confidence and power. Not only did I observe this in her tone, but also in her upright posture. However, as Emily described the encounter and being thrown back to her childhood physical abuse, she transformed, reliving the "terror" of her childhood. Emily's eyes widened and her speech quickened. Emily began stuttering, and said "t-terror" when she mentioned her "father's rage." It was as if she were reliving her childhood physical abuse right before my eyes. I sensed my desire to help her get out of the pathway of the man "chasing" her in his car, or to find a way to appropriately and safely respond in order to calm her. In addition, despite the fact that her father was deceased and that Emily had become "very close" to him later in life, Emily shook and stuttered as she described the childhood physical abuse that she endured from him. Following the interview, Emily returned to being the confident and assured woman I met upon entering her home.

## **CHAPTER 5: RESULTS**

In this chapter, I present the findings as developed through the method described in Chapter 3. The five participant accounts are presented in Individual Narratives to provide an understanding of each participant's experience of being thrown back to physical child abuse experiences in an adult encounter with a stranger. Then, a Summary of Participant Narratives, which captures a sense of the five experiences is presented. All statements and interpretations in the Individual Narratives and Summary of Participant Narratives are grounded in the empirical evidence of this study (See Appendix C: Interviews) if not explicitly supported by evidence (e.g., quotations.)

### **INDIVIDUAL NARRATIVES**

#### **“ George”**

Approximately eighteen years ago when George was thirty-seven years old, it was the end of another long and hard day at work. George was tired and ready to end his workday. However, as a registered plumber, often George was prepared to work overtime, whether or not it was his desire. This was one of those days. A homeowner called the business late in the day and requested a plumber to repair his leaking hot water tank. Given that George was the only available plumber, the job was assigned to him. Although he was “ready to shut down...looking forward to going home,” given his strong work ethic, he always prioritized work over his personal desires.

Once he had the directions, George drove to the customer's house. As he pulled into the driveway, the homeowner rapidly approached George and explained the problem with his hot water heater. George immediately noted that the man “just didn't seem friendly...it was in his demeanor.” Although George understood that the man likely was

“frustrated” that his hot water heater was leaking and eager for it to be repaired, he was struck that the man seemed to be strictly focused on the needed work, unwilling or unable to engage with George in an everyday polite fashion. In that George was an experienced plumber, he had encountered many home and business owners. Some people were affable, while some were cold and distant. Valuing his professionalism, George always focused on the work to be completed in a timely manner instead of on the customer’s attitude.

“Frowning,” the homeowner invited George into his home and directed him to the hot water heater. Upon proper examination, George determined that the only viable option was to replace the hot water heater. He explained this to the homeowner, who responded with disbelief, which George thought questioned his integrity. George showed the man the critical part that had deteriorated beyond repair and gave further explanation to reassure the homeowner that George was being honest and doing what was best for the homeowner. After some time and with “reluctance” the homeowner agreed to allow George to replace his hot water heater. However, he requested a new electric hot water heater to replace his old gas hot water heater. George informed the man that he could do the work, but there would be an additional charge. After debating the estimated cost, the homeowner reached an agreement and requested George to replace the hot water heater.

As soon as George completed the work, he provided the homeowner with a final invoice. Upon reviewing the invoice, the homeowner “nearly transformed right before my eyes.” George explained that the man abruptly “went ballistic...an explosion of rage.” Momentarily stunned by the homeowner’s outrageous response to a typical invoice with a cost about which he was previously informed, George was briefly

paralyzed. George further described, “His eyes opened revealing fire....they were blood red and I hadn’t noticed that before...His body nearly shook with rage...flailing his arms...really pointing for me to get out of his house.” Through the homeowner’s actions and sudden change in behavior, although it was not direct, George assumed that he was being threatened. The only direct threat was that the homeowner intended to call the police if George did not leave his home immediately.

George continued, “He raised his voice, screaming and yelling for me to get out of his house. I thought he was going to attack me. For one brief moment, I nearly froze with fright.” The homeowner’s sudden transformation was familiar to George, yet it was a familiarity he could not fully grasp. Then he realized that what he saw before him was not the homeowner, but “a glimpse...a snapshot of my encounter with my father was just so right there as if that’s what was happening...” Shocked, George was thrown back to the physical abuse he suffered at the hands of his father. He slowly but vividly recognized the rage that came with the severe physical abuse to be unleashed. He was “frozen in pure naked fear” and wanted to escape, but was too helpless and powerless to run.

With intense sadness that visibly seemed to have penetrated every fiber of his being, George described the “culmination of abuse” he endured in childhood, likely from birth to age seven or eight, which he relived in the encounter with the homeowner,

...there’s so many moments that stand out and I tend to put them all together...but...in a way they all constitute that period of my life of being abused – um, you know, from eating raw meat rubbed in the dirt, to eating tubs of raw onions – to being kicked and thrown up against the wall and



being thrown down to the floor and beaten with wire. It's hard to forget those moments and urinating blood, being awakened from sleep with beatings and you don't know in that moment were you having some (emphatic tone) frightening dream, nightmare or is this really happening, (softer tone) Unfortunately, it turns out it's really happening (even softer tone) and trying to orient yourself to get some clarity to what's happening, but (resigned tone) at some point you come to understand what's happening – under assault again (extremely sad, vulnerable tone) nothing you can do about it.

Still trying to understand the similarities between the encounter and his childhood physical abuse, George clearly knew that it was not that the homeowner had attacked him. He was not being beaten or terrorized in his sleep, but he gradually recognized that it was the look of the homeowner that fundamentally thrust George back to moments of abuse. It was the look in the homeowner's eyes – the “fire” George saw, the “explosive rage.” This was an all too frighteningly recognizable look that had not paralyzed George since he was around seven years of age. This was the type of look that announced what was forthcoming. It was the same powerful, “condescending, and menacing” look that George received from his father – the look that stripped George of his humanity in his innocent, early years. It was a look that defined George as “insignificant... nothing.” It was a look he likely had seen since birth. According to his mother, George's father “couldn't stand to look” at him once he was born. To be loved and cared for by his father is something that George never experienced, and he longed to understand why and what

it was about him that his father was driven to destroy George, a defenseless, vulnerable and frightened child.

In discussing his physical child abuse and the look, George said, the way he looked at me – um, it, it, it was unnerving. It, it, it troubled me – *deeply* troubled me and (sighs) so many times I, when I was a child – I, I don't know it's hard for me to say that I thought of myself as a human being. I, I saw myself as something to be *beat* on and something to be *despised* and something to be regarded as insignificant and (softly) um...um, and, and so that look and that moment that I saw, I recognized (sullen tone, pace slows more) immediately or immediately afterwards, it's hard to say, but...and I, I hated that look. I, I hated the look because when my father looked at me that way I felt small, even though I was...I felt...I *knew* what was to come...and it seemed that it did not matter – to my father – how small I was, how vulnerable, how (sighs) afraid and how helpless and defenseless I was and, and the pain and suffering I would endure (breathes) it was as if it didn't matter and what, what could I do? How could I be such that he...would see me as a person so that...um...or to see me as his son.

As abruptly as George was thrown back to the past, reliving the powerlessness, vulnerability, and profound fear of his physical child abuse, he was brought back to the present, consumed by the homeowner's look of increasing rage. The homeowner vehemently continued to direct George out of his house. Although he was perplexed by the encounter, moving as quickly as possible, George left the house and entered his

vehicle. He informed his supervisor of the details of this job, the homeowner's threat, and the fact that the homeowner did not pay for the work completed. Although George was concerned about his boss' reaction, the boss reassured George that he responded to a potentially volatile situation appropriately, and he informed George that the business office would assume responsibility for the financial matter.

Greatly relieved, George finally ended his workday and returned home.

Nevertheless, George continued to contemplate the look of the homeowner and how it took George suddenly and vividly to a past he never desired nor believed he could relive. George described feeling "shaken and out of sorts" immediately after for several days following the encounter, shocked that the physical abuse he endured in childhood and the "fierce" look of his father had re-appeared.

At the age of seven or eight, George had escaped from the brutality of his father by running away from home. Within a safe and secure home, George had the opportunity to envision a future with endless possibilities and to experience care, love, and significance, deservedly, as a human being. Furthermore, George made a "vow" that if anyone ever physically tried to hurt him again, he would successfully retaliate, doing whatever would be necessary to protect himself. Serious yet saddened, George explained, "if anyone were to physically abuse me again...I would probably kill them, or they would have to kill me." From that moment forward, guarded by his anger, George was confident that he could protect himself even if that meant that he had to harm someone physically in order to be safe. Throughout his childhood, George believed that his father was on a mission to destroy him. Being small, fragile and defenseless, George's life was in constant question. He wondered nearly every moment

if that was going to be his last. Once free, George assured himself that he would never again need to ask that question. George clarified that he merely had to confront someone who was challenging him and confidently say, “Don’t you know who I am?,” as if everyone was aware of the “vow” George had taken. It has been this confidence that had kept others who thought about attacking at bay.

Because of this “vow,” not only was George confident that he would never be abused again, but he was fearful for others. George explained, “the position I always took was that I was protecting people from me because I knew what I was capable of doing.” George knew that he never wanted to harm anyone and he never wanted to be given a justifiable reason to do so. Physically harming anyone would likely lead George to see himself as a mirror image of his father. This would likely devastate him.

In the encounter, George was caught off guard, believing that he had protected the past and how it had shaped his life from being revealed by anyone. Until this encounter that occurred about eighteen years ago, George assumed that he was in full control of keeping the profound terror, anger, and vulnerability of his past traumatic childhood physical abuse at bay. Beyond this encounter, George spoke of only one other encounter in which he was thrown back to his physical child abuse.

George wondered about the possibility of being required to return to this house, being forced once again to face the homeowner. Because it was a realistic possibility, George was saddened, fearful that he might be put in a position to protect himself and potentially harm the homeowner.

## **“Linda”**

One day about three years ago, when Linda was twenty-four years old, she was leaving work at a local university. It had been a usual day at work with “nothing memorable” occurring. She recalled that it was a warm and pleasant day, and she had her car window rolled down. While listening to music and cautiously attending to the traffic and pedestrians, Linda caught sight of an older man, about 50 or 60 years old, holding a very young girl’s hand as they were crossing the street. Given Linda’s location, she could watch the girl and man for a while as they crossed several streets.

Linda initially was happy as she looked at the girl and man. She described the girl as “very thin” and “gorgeous” with “short dark hair and big eyes” and “*really, really* small” legs. Linda was struck by how very small this girl was and how much tinier she appeared next to the man. As she enjoyed watching them walk, Linda first thought about how “cute” and “sweet” they were, both individually and together.

Slowly, Linda’s happiness shifted as she began to “worry” along with considering the “cuteness” and “sweetness” of the girl and man. Although she was holding the man’s hand, the girl was very small and could get hurt if she were alone, Linda considered. In addition, Linda thought, “She’s *so* frail.” After some time, Linda’s “worry” for the girl consumed her thoughts. Linda considered that the girl could be hurt if the man was not with her, holding her hand and “paying attention” to her.

Linda noticed that the man and girl were talking with each other and smiling. The man looked at the girl with care and affection, which touched Linda, and she noted that the girl continued to appear “even smaller.” Linda guessed her age to be about five. As they continued to cross the next street, the man and girl moved closer to Linda’s car. As

she continued to watch them with concern for the girl, surprisingly, the man momentarily looked at Linda “with the same look he was giving the girl.” It was a look of care, concern and affection as well as interest in what the girl was talking about and doing. Linda initially thought the look was meant for the girl, but was elated that she also received the look. Linda felt that the man conveyed that he was there for her, that he cared about her and what she was doing. At the same time that the man fondly looked at Linda, she turned to look at the girl, who was smiling at her before continuing to cross the other street with the man. Linda was also thinking about being five years old and “realized that I was five once and that frail and small.”

Although Linda knew that prior to reaching adulthood she was once a child and once five years old, this still was a “very surprising” discovery. “It’s kind of like the realization that *that age comes with that size.*” In order to reach this understanding, a key factor was that Linda was looking at the girl while the man looked at Linda. As a “reference,” the girl served to remind Linda of something she had forgotten – exactly how small a five-year-old child is and that a child of this age requires an adult’s frequent if not constant attention. Additionally, Linda imagined her face on the little girl’s body so that she could see herself as a five year old. Linda said that until that time, when thinking about her childhood, she always imagined and “always judged” herself as an adult, even when she was a child. Linda had placed unwarranted responsibility on herself as a child for not providing protection from the physical abuse she suffered. Linda realized in the encounter that she had been very unfair to herself as a child. Although Linda had seen many other adults with small children throughout her life, this encounter

was powerful because of the “reference” as well as the looks exchanged between Linda and the man as well as Linda and the girl.

Linda was physically abused by a nanny for about two years, from the ages of three to five. The abuse experience that she was thrown back to is only one of two memories of abuse that Linda can identify. However, she knows from stories told to her by her mother that she had bruises on a regular basis that her nanny explained as resulting from a typical child’s fall. Unfortunately, Linda’s mother believed the nanny. Linda also said that she just “knows” that she was physically abused, but was frustrated that she cannot remember.

During the encounter, Linda was thrown back to “really BEING small. Not just memories of when I was small, more like being small itself.” While living the smallness of a five year old, Linda recalled that at least one time the nanny “took me by one leg and submerged my head in water...a place to wash clothes, a small reservoir of water... several times” increasing the time as she repeatedly pulled Linda’s head from the water and rapidly submerged her head again. Linda remembered the “water in my nose, my mouth and it was hurting really bad not to breathe.” During this traumatic experience, Linda tried to move so that she could “catch additional breathes,” but the nanny moved her very quickly.

This was a pivotal encounter in Linda’s life. She cried as she thought about being thrown back in the encounter to her physical abuse experiences and described reliving and acknowledging the need of a five year old to be cared for as an “epiphany,” a “surprise.” Linda explained that she had tried to understand her role in her childhood physical abuse for many years.

While the man and girl continued to walk away, Linda “just watched them. I was almost paralyzed...I had to stare.” As she continued to cry with her sadness intensifying, Linda adamantly wanted to hold onto the feeling of “being small and frail.” Therefore, she watched the man and girl for as long as they were in her vantage point. She completely forgot that she was driving and probably sat through several cycles of the traffic light, while reliving her childhood.

After the encounter, Linda “felt very sad...and very, very vulnerable and frail...small.” In feeling as a five-year-old child, powerless, vulnerable and small, Linda understood what it might have been like when she experienced the physical child abuse. Linda continued to be “surprised” about her newfound understanding of her past in light of the fact that now she understood that she was not responsible for being physically abused as a child. Linda was critical and repeatedly referred to herself as “stupid” and “dumb” for being “surprised” by the “obvious” facts that a five-year old is small and does not possess the size or strength of an adult. The intense sadness and self-critical thoughts persisted for several weeks. Linda continually contemplated her physical child abuse and imagined herself as a small and frail five-year-old, someone that could not take care of herself. Linda described her “mind as being too loud, too busy or too disoriented,” as she continued to critically relive the encounter and her past abuse, as well as “being small.” In order to manage these overwhelming feelings and thoughts, Linda turned to a reported longstanding coping mechanism – cutting. Linda explained that she had been cutting herself since childhood, initially with objects such as paperclips. In her recent adulthood, she “struggles with [cutting] now and again” and had sought “counseling to stop that.”



When asked about other encounters in which she was reminded of her history of physical child abuse, Linda said that this encounter was unique. However, she had other encounters, mostly in her teenage years, when she was startled when “unexpectedly” touched by others with "the same touch of everyday.” Since that time, Linda reported being at ease with being touched.

### **“Harold”**

A short time prior to the interview, Harold and his wife, who are from Columbia, South America, and in the United States with student visas, were eagerly looking forward to visiting Washington, D.C. and spending time together. They chose to travel on a Greyhound Bus for financial reasons given that they were graduate students. As they exchanged pleasant conversation, savoring the time they had together, Harold also wondered about the multitude of educational and historical sites they could visit during their trip. As other passengers boarded the bus, Harold casually noted them talking with others, sitting quietly, or searching for an available seat. He noted that the atmosphere of the bus was “calm.”

Then a woman and a girl, whom Harold assumed were mother and daughter, quickly grabbed his attention, as well as the attention of others. As the woman and child moved through the bus, Harold witnessed the woman repeatedly “hitting, kicking and beating” the child. Harold immediately identified with the girl and felt a special connection, understanding the fear and helplessness she likely experienced. Harold had been physically abused as a child, primarily by his father. He noted one crucial difference between the abuse he endured and the abuse of the girl – she was being abused in public, while he had been physically abused in the privacy of his home.

Harold was angry and desired to respond for the girl and imagined retaliating on her behalf, physically hurting the woman as she had hurt the child. Harold wanted to get revenge for the child, “to answer for the kid,” just as he wanted to get revenge for the physical abuse he endured at the hands of his father. While “cooling down,” he considered the possible consequences of retaliating – being “sent back to my country” and possibly ending the pursuit of his studies – all consequences he did not want to face.

Considering the child, Harold also expressed concern that if he would physically attack the woman, she might blame the girl and intensify the physical abuse when at their home, out of the public eye. He considered that since the woman showed no concern about displaying the aggressive behavior toward an innocent child in public, it was likely the physical abuse the woman unleashed on the child would escalate within the privacy of their home.

Harold recalled that the woman looked at him with anger “in her eyes” as she moved through the bus toward the door. Acting in a lawful and acceptable manner, Harold “retaliated” by looking at the woman with a “disapproving” expression, “trying to complain with [his] eyes,” as she continued to physically harm the girl. Harold expressed to me his desire to protect the girl as he could, but also to take a stand against and work toward abolishing physical child abuse. Harold wavered between believing and not believing that the woman understood his disapproval of her abusive actions. He wondered if his look would lead her to make positive changes in how she expressed her anger and/or how she disciplined the girl.

After the encounter, Harold continued to think about the girl and woman, wondering in particular about the girl’s well being. He described feeling “depressed,”

“powerless,” and “small” not only concerning the limited way he attempted to protect the girl with a disapproving look, but he also felt limited in society. Harold desires to abolish the physical abuse of children, a complex and challenging issue, but questions the difference he can make as one person against a long history of physical aggression and/or violence accepted as a form of discipline.

Harold stated that he was physically abused by his father from the ages of three to seventeen, primarily with a belt every other day. While witnessing the abuse of the girl during the encounter, Harold recalled the day he experienced “excessive” physical abuse, being kicked, slapped and hit with a belt. It was a Saturday, and, as usual, Harold, his parents and his two sisters, were about to eat the typical Saturday lunch – “bean soup” and a “berry fruit shake.” As these are “very heavy” to eat together, Harold tended to save his shake for later or freeze it to make an ice cream, something that he relished. On this particular Saturday, after he finished the bean soup, Harold froze his shake to enjoy later as ice cream. After several hours, Harold anticipated eating the ice cream he made, but soon noticed that his ice cream was disappearing. Assuming that his sisters were eating his ice cream, Harold confronted them. Gleefully, his sisters admitted to eating his ice cream. Harold argued with his sisters, as siblings tend to disagree and verbally fight. He angrily stated that the shake was part of his lunch and that he did not want to share it.

Harold and his sisters then appealed to their parents to resolve the argument, with each pleading their case. His parents decided that Harold should “share the ice cream.” Angry about his parents’ decision, Harold discarded the ice cream instead of following his parents’ decision to share it. His father witnessed Harold throwing out the ice cream. Without hesitation, his father responded by quickly approaching Harold, and then pushed

him and punched him in the face, causing his lip to bleed. Harold said that he tried to run away, but his father quickly caught Harold by kicking him so hard that Harold was knocked to the ground. As Harold tried to stand up, his father hit him again, then grabbed him by the arm and began hitting Harold with a belt. Along with the physical abuse, Harold said his father was also verbally abusive, and called Harold a “bad boy” and “shitty.” As the abuse continued to escalate, and his father struck him “*very hard*,” Harold’s mother and sisters cried as they watched. Harold recalled that he responded with a look to assure them and convey, “I’ll be fine. I’m strong enough, not to answer back, but strong enough to survive this.”

Harold explained that his mother also was physically abusive in that she sometimes used a belt to correct Harold. Nevertheless, he stated that he did not consider his mother as abusive because in comparison to the intensity of the physical abuse from his father, the experiences and memories of abuse by his mother “vanish[ed].” Harold also believed his mother tried to correct him verbally and explained his mistakes so that he learned to make the necessary changes in his behavior.

Trying to defend himself, around age eight, Harold cautiously confronted his father at a safe distance with a letter explicating the unfairness and ineffectiveness of the physical attacks. He pleaded for his father to cease the abuse and use constructive ways to correct him. “I think he beat me again,” Harold laughed and wondered if he was correctly recalling this memory.

When Harold was about sixteen or seventeen years old and strong enough to defend himself, the physical abuse ended. As Harold’s father motioned to strike, empowered, Harold told him with a stern tone, “Just try to hit me. I would *love* if you try

to hit me. I will kill you for all the times you hit me. So just try that and now, I am very strong so at least we will both be dead. But fine, that will be fine with me.” His father backed down. Proud of his success, Harold also wanted to protect his sisters, mother and others. He added, “If you try to hit anyone else in my family, I will kill you. So, think about it twice next time.” Although Harold achieved his goal, bringing an end to his father’s abusive ways, he regretted that this was the only way he could end the abuse. He particularly expressed regret at having had to address his father with aggression rather than with the respect that should exist in a father and son relationship. Harold wished that his childhood was different, and that he had had a positive relationship with his father.

In recent years, Harold “complained” to his parents about being hit with a belt throughout his childhood. His parents’ “excuse or argument” was that the “Jesuit priests” from Harold’s school told them to use a belt or hand to hit a child who was misbehaving as this was an appropriate method of discipline. Although Harold spoke passionately several times about wanting to retaliate and “hit” his father, he has restrained himself from physical aggression. A few months prior to the interview, Harold again confronted his father about the physical abuse that Harold endured and the “bad things” Harold gained from these experiences – rage, being guarded, and responding to others aggressively, even when it is not warranted. According to Harold, his father responded by sharing that he was physically abused as a child as well. From his childhood to this day, Harold has tried to understand why his father was physically abusive. He has considered that something else might have been going on in his father’s life that would

have led him to be angry much of the time and subsequently direct his anger toward Harold.

When asked if he experienced other encounters in which he was reminded of being physically abused in his childhood, Harold promptly responded with several stories. “I’m an aggressive person in many ways...I don’t think it’s because I *hate* the world...It’s just a way of protecting myself.” The fear, vulnerability and powerlessness of his past are at the forefront of his life, and Harold has chosen to respond first and powerfully. Harold explained that he often has perceived aggression in encounters when the other person does not intend to be aggressive. However, Harold has responded with physical aggression before the other person could harm him. In Harold’s daily life, for example, he has misperceived aggression while playing sports, driving, joking around with colleagues, and in a verbal dispute over a parking space. In addition, he has pushed or hit harder than others while engaged in athletic activities, such that those who know him fear him and avoid getting too close to him.

Harold spoke passionately about protecting himself from any potential physical abuse. Harold’s anger toward his father runs deep and collides with his desire for a consistently strong relationship. Although his father favored him, showing him more attention over his sisters and mother, perhaps because Harold is the only son, he also displayed more aggression toward Harold. He longs for a positive relationship, yet also has feared that one day he may be just like his father.

### **“Amber”**

As a psychologist, Amber often attended school meetings in order to assist teachers in learning ways to help students with special needs. At one particular school

meeting in 1995, while completing an internship, Amber had prepared to discuss the needs of a sixteen-year-old African American boy who had been attending therapy. She believed that she could provide some information to his teachers to assist the boy in improving academically in school.

Amber had driven “50 miles” from her home to reach the school to attend the meeting on time. She thoroughly prepared for the meeting; she knew the classroom accommodations that would aid the boy’s learning, and was ready to share an appropriate picture of the boy’s therapy. Amber was confident that she would achieve her goal for the meeting.

Upon entering the room where the meeting was being held in the school, Amber greeted the teachers and waited until it was her turn to speak. As soon as Amber discussed the boy’s classroom needs, she noticed that the teachers avoided eye contact and turned their heads away. As she continued to speak, Amber’s focus shifted from the boy’s needs to finding a way to reach the teachers so they understood the importance of the information she was sharing. Amber felt that “the teachers were oppositional and against” her. Hence, she began to protect herself from the impending “rejection.” Amber tried to remain calm, quieting the anxiety and fear that was coloring her world. Although being “rejected” by teachers was not a new experience for Amber, it still was a challenge for her to overcome. Amber was familiar with her ideas and opinions being unjustly rejected because in her childhood as well as her early adult life her mother forced Amber to think as she did or be hit. The primary difference between this encounter and her childhood experiences of rejection was that her mother reinforced the rejection with physical abuse.

As she tried to understand why the teachers were dismissive, Amber asked the teachers to explain their experiences with the boy and discuss why they were angry about the proposed accommodations in the classroom. One male teacher responded by standing to address the issue. Amber's fear intensified. As he walked around the room, seeming to distance himself from her, he said, "he comes in this room and he has his hands *all* over the white girls and I'm not going to do *anything* to help that boy." As soon as the teacher stated his view, Amber said, "it touched my mother bone, my unfairness bone...It was as if my mother was standing there." Amber was stunned and enraged that the teacher's primary concern was not about education, but race. Angry, she told the teacher, "I think this is a problem," to which the teacher replied, "Yeah, it's a problem that you want me to help him."

Amber noted that the other teachers did not respond to the one teacher's comments, leading her to believe that this teacher was in a powerful position among the teachers and within the school. In a demeaning and confident tone, Amber asked the teacher, "Do you want to come and see me in the morning? I can make an appointment for you. There are some things we need to work on." Amber gleefully and with pride said, "I got him! I felt I made a difference." In responding to the teacher in this manner, Amber felt she "hit him like I wanted to hit my mom." Although she never hit her mother, verbally or physically, Amber felt confident to stand up to the teacher. She also believed that she was "justified" in reacting this way to protect the boy and to help him obtain the most from his education. After confronting the teacher, Amber continued her presentation, perceiving the teachers to be more cooperative.



Because Amber was completing an internship, after the meeting the teacher contacted her supervisor and reported Amber's condescending remark. Amber acknowledged her unprofessionalism, but continued to feel proud that she confronted the teacher.

In her childhood, Amber wished she had confronted her mother verbally, standing up for what she believed was right. However, she knew that she would have been hit repeatedly for what would be deemed as talking back. The teacher responded by contacting Amber's supervisor and complaining, with Amber accepting responsibility for her actions. Amber believed that what she did was right, yet knew that it was unprofessional to behave as she did.

After the encounter, Amber was "shaking out of fear." She recalled numerous times that she had been hit by her mother for expressing her opinion. Hence, she was proud and "frazed," a word that Amber defined as "exhilarated," that she had responded to the teacher instead of remaining silent. In addition, Amber "ruminated," reviewing every detail of the encounter, including what was said, what was her responsibility, if any amount, in how the teacher responded, how she could have responded constructively, and so on. In fact, Amber said she still ponders this encounter, even though it occurred ten years ago.

Amber was scheduled to conduct a workshop at another school immediately following the school meeting. Although she had been "ruminating," by the time the workshop began Amber was "excited" and "exhilarated" and believed she made a difference for the boy during the school meeting.

Amber said that while “ruminating,” she had recognized her past physical childhood abuse as arising during the encounter when the teacher stated his prejudice about the boy. However, it was after the encounter that Amber recalled the “daily” abuse, “the hell to pay...never being at ease, always being watchful, mindful, and vigilant.” Additionally, she recalled a specific abuse experience that involved prejudice and unfairness, similar to the interaction she had with the teacher:

I remember when the woman down the street, who [my parents] called an "N lover," went to a protest at the local pool. When a bus full of NAACP people came cause there were no blacks allowed into the pool...my family was just furious. I spoke up and said, "What's the problem?" I just didn't understand the problem. They're just people. I got hit for saying that.

Amber reported that she was physically abused “daily” by her mother beginning at an early age and ending when she was eighteen years old. Amber’s mother hit her with her hand on Amber’s face or head and used a paddle when Amber was younger.

Although Amber does not remember exactly how old she was when her mother began physically abusing her, she witnessed her mother impatiently hitting her nephews when they were babies as punishment for crying. Thus, Amber believed that she was also physically abused as a baby; particularly since she knew that she had colic as an infant.

As a child, Amber tried to stand up to her mother in whatever way she could. For example, she would “shut down,” that is, she would stop listening to her mother. She constructed a set of limitations within what her mother asked her to do. Amber felt that she needed to do what she believed was right, even if it meant that her mother would physically abuse her.

In trying to understand why she always had to agree with her mother's opinions and "parrot" her or be physically abused, Amber concluded, "my mom was trying to control me."

When asked if she has had other encounters during which she was reminded of her history of physical child abuse, Amber promptly responded that she is often thrown back to physical abuse experiences. All of the examples she provided were in a professional setting, with clients, during a workshop or attending a school meeting. Amber explained that she has the "social skills" to handle "unfair" or "rejecting" situations in her personal life without reliving the abuse.

### **"Emily"**

Three years prior to the interview, one "calm, normal kind of day," Emily completed work at a local college and was prepared to go home. She began to drive the usual journey to her home. At one point early in her travel, Emily had to turn onto a main road but had limited visibility. Being very familiar with this situation and having a strong sense of abiding by the rules of the road, Emily cautiously and repeatedly looked in both directions to determine if it was her turn and, more importantly, if it was safe to move onto the roadway. As soon as she turned, Emily immediately saw a car speeding toward her, one that was out of her sight prior to the turn. Emily noticed that the male driver needed to brake quickly in order to avoid an accident. She considered it "unreasonable" when the man began to honk his horn, displaying what Emily thought was annoyance. She understood the frustration of this driving scenario, yet also believed that this was something that "you can brush off." Additionally, Emily angrily stated that

despite the fact that this man was not following the rules of the road and was clearly speeding, "...in *his* mind, [the man] decided I had *no* right to be on the road."

However, as the encounter continued to unfold, albeit within fractions of a second, Emily's understanding of what was occurring and the possibilities rapidly changed. She heard "the unrelenting horn" and glanced into her rearview mirror, and noticed the man simultaneously gesturing obscenely – "the finger out the window" – toward her. Instantaneously, Emily "recognized the rage." This was no longer an experience of someone being annoyed at her, but a time when she needed to protect herself in the face of rage. The familiarity of the man's rage readily overcame Emily and she stated, "I was clearly the object of his rage and it seemed so familiar that someone was enraged at a behavior that I thought was normal behavior." In this moment, Emily was taken back to physically abusive experiences in her childhood, times when her father became enraged for unknown reasons or for her having broken unwritten rules. Just as in this driving encounter, Emily always followed the rules, yet never knew when her father might "fly into a rage and backhand [her]." According to Emily, "...because I had such a t-terror of my dad's rage, I never broke a rule. I was the *most* boring kid you ever met in your life...whatever I had to do, I would do." The possibility of what could occur if she ever broke a rule, whether in the past or the present, was not something Emily ever wanted to consider.

Although she was a strong and confident adult, as Emily was reminded of her past physical abuse, she began to live out the road encounter as a terrified, frightened, helpless, powerless and vulnerable child.

The helplessness, the terror before unreasonable and unwarranted rage, the fear of being overpowered and hurt for a behavior I thought was normal and right behavior, brought back the memories and feelings of my childhood. This driving incident was very much like that. I did nothing I could think of to illicit this rage. The confusion of my youth returned full-force.

Vivid memories of her abuse came to life. Emily was physically abused by her father from at least the age of three until seventeen years. Immediately when Emily “recognized the rage” she was taken “back to age 12,” but also she described several memories of abuse beginning with the last time she was physically abused.

While dating the man who is now her husband, Emily and her boyfriend purchased her required uniforms for nursing school. Since they were in New York City during the time of the World’s Fair, the plan was to attend the Fair afterwards. Emily’s father was aware of their plans, and firmly demanded that Emily return home by 8:30 p.m. They decided to go home earlier with Emily arriving at her house at 6:00 p.m. Emily’s boyfriend walked her home and they said goodbye. Her boyfriend needed to leave quickly as his bus was arriving shortly. As Emily entered her home, she heard her father come from the dining room and saw him race toward her. Although her father did not tell her this until later, he was angry that Emily had not returned home sooner as he assumed that they would not be attending the Fair due to the rain. However, instead of expressing his anger verbally, within a fraction of a second of Emily walking through the doorway, Emily said her father “hit me so hard...across the face...that I fell out the door and screamed.” Although typically Emily refrained from ever crying or responding in

anyway, she was “so startled” that she could not withhold a scream. While at the bus stop, her boyfriend heard her scream and with great concern, called out to her saying, “Do you need me to come and get you?” Although Emily did not leave her home that evening, she believed that the physical abuse she had endured for most of her life ended at this moment because her father saw that Emily had someone to protect her, someone who could confront him.

Just as she did not question or challenge her father, Emily was “afraid to look – to make eye contact with [the man driving].” However, she caught a glimpse of him and noted that the man was about thirty years old, which Emily defined as “my most vulnerable time” in relation to her father’s age. Once the encounter moved to one of rage, Emily’s world narrowed to her being threatened by a man driving fast and close behind her. “I felt like I was being chased.” Although other cars were on the road, Emily could not see them as a potential source of protection.

Furthermore, in being chased, Emily “felt trapped like a small animal – in front of him and very much at his mercy.” Emily was fully prepared for this man to attack her violently, whether with his vehicle or perhaps a weapon. Emily shared that she is fearful when her husband becomes involved in similar encounter similar, because he has retaliated, whether through words or attempting to overpower the other driver with his vehicle. In these moments, Emily said she is “*petrified* that somebody will pull a *gun*, that someone will hurt us.” This was a possibility Emily imagined in her encounter.

She became very aware of her body as her heart rate quickened, her hands became sweaty, and her “legs felt like rubber.” “I *literally* knew that unless I stopped and collected myself, I was not going to be able to continue to drive.”

Emily believed that she could only try to protect herself by fleeing, finding a safe place to go with the hope that this man would not follow her. She did not plan a method of escape in that she was not able to consider her options, but instead, “it was pure instinct to get away from him.”

Respectful of the property of others, Emily felt that she could not pull into a private driveway; although she was certain that at any moment, the man would harm her. As her heartbeat continued to intensify and thoughts were of danger, Emily finally saw a “station for safety.” As she pulled into the gas station, her fear continued. Emily was overcome with fear that the man would follow her into the gas station and harm her. Terrified, Emily sat in her parked car waiting for the seemingly inevitable vengeance the man desired to display. To her great relief, he drove past the gas station, but Emily’s fear persisted as he continued to honk his horn “long and hard.”

Once the terror ended, Emily “calmed” herself, became aware of her surroundings and quickly became “embarrassed,” considering how “ridiculous” she appeared – a “grown woman” who was “hiding from a stranger in a car.” She continued to criticize herself, and stated that she was an “idiot.” Emily believed others would perceive her in the same manner if they saw how she was behaving. Emily emphatically stated that she did not cry during or after this encounter, and added, “I don’t cry.” Emily explained that she perceives “crying as a great weakness.” She described herself as “a little more strong-willed.” She said that she would never cry when her father hit her because she “didn’t do anything wrong” and therefore, “I’m not going to give him the satisfaction.” Just as with this encounter, Emily wondered why she was being “threatened” by the man when she had not made a mistake, but was driving on the road like anyone else.

Emily believed she “owed” the owner of her safe haven, the gas station, compensation for providing protection. Indirectly she thanked the owner by making a purchase, as she did not want him to know of her “ridiculous” behavior and the reason she actually was at the gas station.

As Emily described the encounter, her past was vivid. Emily’s voice trembled as she spoke about understanding the man as “unreasonable” to recognizing that he was “enraged.” She began with a steady, consistent speech and a confident tone of voice, but shifted to speaking at times with fear.

Emily said that she is taken back to her childhood physical abuse experiences at any time when she is involved in or witnesses an encounter in which “male violence” is displayed or perceived. For example, Emily shared that when her sons were children and teenagers, they would playfully wrestle. Emily was frightened by such behavior and would walk away. Overall, Emily understood her physical child abuse as shaping her life such that she is easily be thrown back to the past, reliving the terror, helplessness, confusion and powerlessness.

Despite Emily’s knowing that she did not make any mistakes or break any rules during the encounter, in the interview Emily seemed to empathize with the other driver, “that car’s probably his baby.” She expressed understanding and described his car as perhaps a classic – “an earlier 50s model,” perhaps one that he had put a lot of time and effort into making it his dream car, “a souped up, hot rod kind of car.”

In a similar fashion, Emily said that although her father was physically abusive and easily enraged in her childhood, he was a good father who cared for Emily and her family, spending time with them and taking “pride in his family.” Later in life, Emily



came to understand her father's struggle with controlling his anger. She further said that her "father was, later in life, *very* sad about his temper." Emily defined her relationship with her father, toward the end of his life, as "*extraordinarily* close."

## **SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT NARRATIVES**

### **From the Everyday to the Familiar**

Each participant described the day of the encounter in which she/he was thrown back to her/his physical child abuse experiences as "routine" or "ordinary" prior to being thrown back. Several participants were at work, professionally providing services when they were surprisingly thrown back. Others had just left work and were driving to their respective homes, only to relive suddenly traumatic physical child abuse experiences. All were simply moving through the day doing what they were required or wanted to do. In this everydayness, despite varied awareness of their physical abuse experiences, there were no expectations of the impending reliving of their frightening physical child abuse past.

An aspect of being thrown back in an encounter for all participants was a "familiarity," whether or not each participant was readily thrown back. The majority of participants stated that they quickly grasped the familiarity (e.g., male rage, the "look", "unfairness", "being small") in the encounter and relived their histories of physical child abuse. However, one participant explained that he only comprehended the familiarity once he was fully engulfed in the encounter and found himself unwillingly reliving the terror of the physical abuse experiences he endured in his early childhood at the hands of his father.

## **The Many Faces of the Look**

**Being Seen.** Another significant aspect of being thrown back to childhood physical abuse in an encounter with a stranger was the look, defined by multiple meanings. One man specifically indicated that the aspect of the encounter that threw him back to his childhood physical abuse experiences was the way in which the homeowner looked at him, which was a look this participant had not seen for many years. It was the “condescending and menacing” look that his father had given him that defined him as “nothing.” Perhaps even more vivid, the look portended terror, a sign of the life-threatening physical violence that was to follow.

**Afraid to Look at the Stranger.** A female participant explained that she was immediately thrown back to physical child abuse experiences when being “chased” by an aggressive male driver. She anxiously stated that she was “afraid to look, to make any eye contact” with him, but quickly gleaned that he was about “30” years of age, which she described as her father’s age when she was “most vulnerable time with dad.”

**Looking at and Wanting to Be Seen.** Along with receiving a look of “anger,” another participant looked back at a woman “disapproving[ly]...complaining with [his] eyes” as she was “kicking and hitting” her daughter. This participant immediately was thrown back to physical child abuse experiences in which his father repeatedly hit and kicked him. Although he wanted to “get revenge” for the physical abuse he endured, this participant chose to act in a “socially sanctioned” manner, while he attempted to provide some form of protection for the girl being abused.

Another participant described her experience of being thrown back to physical child abuse as beginning in an encounter with a group of teachers avoiding eye contact as

she made a presentation. Through one teacher's appearance of increased "frustration," this participant felt "attacked," she was thrown back to the experiences of her mother physically abusing her as a child for speaking freely, sharing her opinions and thoughts.

For another participant, being thrown back to her physical child abuse experiences occurred while looking at a man and very small girl together, and being looked at by the man while watching the girl. Although the encounter began as pleasant while the participant watched the man and five-year-old girl walk, the participant was suddenly drawn to the smallness of the little girl and began to "worry." "Feeling small and frail," like the little girl, this participant was thrown back to the intense sadness and vulnerability of her physical child abuse experiences as the man looked at the participant with the same care and interest he was showing toward the little girl. In being thrown back and reliving "being small," the participant began to re-examine the blame she assumed for the physical child abuse she had endured.

### **Reliving a Vivid Past**

Each participant vividly relived her/his past experiences of physical child abuse once thrown back. Although there was a varied length of time between the encounter and the interview, which ranged from "recently" for one participant, to three to eighteen years, all participants easily recalled the encounters. Their descriptions of being thrown back read as if the experiences were presently occurring. Further, as they told their stories, through their words and expressions all participants shifted from confidently sharing a story that was initially about an encounter with a stranger, to suddenly and vividly reliving their experiences of physical child abuse with a multitude of related feelings -- fear, terror, helplessness, powerlessness, vulnerability, sadness, anger,

anxiety, and overall confusion. All spoke about being thrown back as if they were in their childhood or adolescence, vulnerably and terrifyingly standing before the parent or caregiver who physically abused them, awaiting what was to come (e.g., “I was like right back there...I was 12.”, “I still find myself reacting as if my mother was standing there.”)

Most of the participants were thrown back to specific experiences of physical child abuse, while the other participants were thrown back to a “culmination of all the abuse.” Several participants were thrown back to the last time they were physically abused as children, which was defined as the “worst” or most intense of their physical child abuse experiences.

The vividness of the past was also powerful as participants spoke in the present tense while they relived their traumatic physical child abuse experiences. For example, one participant repeatedly stated that she was thrown back to “being small and frail,” reliving her physical size at age five, when she was physically abused by a caregiver and nearly drowned. As with all of the participants, she relived her painful past with intense sadness and vulnerability. Unlike the other participants, however, she also relived her past with a new understanding of herself at age five, one who was simply too little to protect herself from her abusive caregiver.

When thrown back in the various encounters, nearly all participants described needing to bring her/himself back to the present, to the encounter with a stranger. The power of their terrorizing abusive pasts being revealed in the encounter with a stranger was so vivid that some momentarily lost awareness and described an inability to physically move (e.g., “nearly froze with fright”, “almost paralyzed,” “I *literally* knew

that unless I stopped and collected myself, I was not going to be able to continue to drive.”).

Additionally, each participant’s affect dramatically shifted as she/he spoke about being thrown back to her/his physical child abuse experiences. All began the interview speaking with light and pleasant tones and facial expressions. Then, while discussing being thrown back, the vulnerability of their childhood physical abuse experiences was displayed as they became profoundly sad (e.g., lowering their head as they spoke, diminished tone of voice, difficulty speaking), their fearfulness was exposed (e.g., suddenly stuttering when speaking, “t-terror”, quickened speech), and/or their anger intensified (e.g., louder tone of voice, faster rate of speech, wanting revenge).

### **Looking Out for Oneself**

Looking out for or taking care of oneself so as to cease being thrown back to physical child abuse experiences, was another significant finding in the study. All of the participants acted to protect themselves within the encounter while reliving traumatic experiences of physical child abuse. Among the variations, two participants acted defensively, with one “verbally hitting” a “bigoted” teacher who was “rejecting” her views. In a passive aggressive tone, this participant suggested that the teacher needed therapy. Another participant acted with a “disapproving” look to try to stop a mother from physically abusing her child. In reliving his experiences of physical child abuse, this participant was able to confront the abusive adult as he could not as a child. Both participants relived their physical child abuse experiences with a different outcome from the past.

Another variation of looking out for oneself was that two participants ended their encounters by finding a way out and leaving in order to quell the vivid “terror” that arose upon being thrown back to relive their childhood physical abuse experiences. For different reasons both participants had to thoughtfully leave their encounters. One participant was providing a home service to a client and desired to maintain his professionalism while assuring his and the homeowner’s physical safety as the possibility of assault existed. In reliving his past of physical child abuse, the participant recalled his “vow” to protect himself from ever being physically abused again, even if this led to one’s death. The other participant was driving in a residential area with an aggressive driver behind her. Upon being thrown back to the “terror” of her physical child abuse experiences, this participant began to feel as if she were physically incapable of driving and she wondered about the possibilities of the male driver’s aggression. Once able to exit the roadway, the participant was able to “calm” herself and silently thanked the “station for safety”.

Unlike the other participants who quickly wanted to end reliving their overwhelming physical abuse experiences, another participant desired to remain thrown back to her past physical child abuse and thereby take care of herself. Upon being thrown back, this participant “stared” at the individuals, the man and “very small” girl, in the encounter with the goal of holding onto the “feeling of being small and frail” in order to “remember” what it meant to be a five year old, particularly in terms of limitations. While reliving her past physical abuse, this participant recognized for the first time that she was not responsible for the physical child abuse she endured, as she was incapable at the young age of five of protecting herself from the abuse. She realized for the first time

that she could have never defended herself against an adult. The participant acknowledged this as an “achievement.”

### **After the Encounter**

All participants described continuing to be thrust back to their childhood physical abuse experiences after the encounter, while some also tried to make sense of being thrown back. All participants continued to relive a variety of overwhelming emotions associated with their traumatic physical child abuse histories, including “constant fear,” “anger,” “powerlessness,” “helplessness,” intense “sadness,” self-criticism, and “vulnerability.” Only one participant described feeling “frazed,” which she defined as “exhilarated,” while also trying to understand and change reliving her physical child abuse experiences. Another participant stated he was “shaken out of sorts” for some time after the encounter. In addition, the notion that he was “guarded” from reliving his physical abuse experiences was put into question. Thus, while he tried to grasp that he had been uncontrollably thrown back, he also had tried to figure out how and if he should “respond,” particularly if additional encounters were to occur.

Two participants, both women, harshly engaged in unwarranted negative self-talk, and some negative behavior, after the encounter. Each participant was displeased with her response. One woman described her actions as “ridiculous” and added that she felt “embarrassed” that others might see her, an adult, terrified and trying to escape from an aggressive driver by “hiding in [her] car,” acting like an “idiot.” The other woman repeatedly referred to herself as “stupid” because it was “obvious” that five-year-old children are small and consequently need adults to take care of them, need to be protected. These were aspects of being five-years-old that she never “matched up” to

herself when thinking about herself at five-years-old. To quiet her intense sadness and continuous negative self-talk, she “cut” to bring about “focus” and “quiet [her] mind.”

In their profound sadness, vulnerability, anger, and fear following being thrown back, some participants thought about the encounter and being thrown back to their past physical child abuse experiences in terms future possibilities. One participant thought about his future as a father, wondering if he would be like his father or the woman on the bus, defining and using physical abuse as a form of discipline and guideline for parenting, or be thoughtful and caring, using a non-aggressive style of parenting. Another participant considered the possibility of being required, due to his job, to return to the same home to provide an additional service. He pondered various ways of responding to potential rage from the homeowner again, including concern, as guided by his “vow,” that he would need to defend himself to whatever extent necessary.

Regarding being thrown back and possible similar future encounters, another participant wondered how she could be “more effective” in achieving her goal, especially with understanding and acceptance from other audiences of educators.

Unlike the participants who seemed to be working toward possibly *not* being thrown back to her/his physical child abuse, one participant discussed accepting being thrown back to her physical childhood abuse as a part of her life that she had no control in changing, even in terms of her responses. For this participant, rage or violence of any form “terrifies” her, but only if a male is displaying the aggressive behavior.

### **Trying to Make Sense of the Physical Abuse**

An additional aspect of the experience of being thrown back for some, particularly occurring after the encounter with a stranger, was a re-examination of the



abuse with the goal of trying to understand the reason for the abuse and/or to understand the abuser. There appeared to be few if any explanations for the physical abuse or the violent way in which the parent or caregiver behaved. Some participants reported confronting their abusers either during their childhood or in their adulthood. Only one participant, who discussed her abuse with her father in the later weeks of his life, a time when she could safely do so, received an apology. Another participant reported that his father simply made excuses about his physically abusive behavior toward him from early in life until age sixteen. Unlike these individuals, the remaining participants often thought and continue to think about the unwarranted physical child abuse they endured, but have never confronted their abusers, most likely because of terror.

All of the participants stated that they were physically abused beginning between three and five years of age. The physical abuse ended for the majority of participants when they were out of the home of the abuser, whether through running away at age seven to literally save his life, or moving away to attend college. Even prior to moving out, once strong enough, one man confronted and “threatened” to harm his father if he ever was physically violent toward him again. This ended the physical abuse that he suffered from since early childhood until his late teens.

### **Additional Findings**

In this study, there was only one finding that differentiated the experience of being thrown back in encounters for women in contrast to those for men. Unlike the women, both men in the study described themselves as “guarded” since being physically abused by their fathers. Upon either running away from or standing up to their fathers, both men silently assured themselves or “vowed” that they would never allow anyone to

physically harm them again without protecting themselves, even with the possibility of death for either person involved. Each man lived being “guarded” in a different way. One man described that taking the “vow” gave him a great sense of confidence that simply through words, he could stop anyone from trying to hurt him, and thus never be thrown back to his extreme physical child abuse experiences. Until the encounter shared in this study occurred, this man believed that he was always in control of whether he would relive the physical abuse he endured. However, the other man in the study reported acting on any perceived aggressive threat as he was being thrown back, in order to control any potential physically aggressive act toward him.

Although she did not prepare to protect herself aggressively, another participant explained that her protection from further abuse was established the last time she was physically abused. Her boyfriend, whom she later married, heard her scream after being struck and “falling out the door.” He offered to take her away from her home, which she declined, knowing that her father realized that she finally had someone who would protect her from his unpredictable rage. This woman stated that her husband is still her protector.

The primary focus of this study was to explicate the adult’s experience of being thrown back to childhood physical abuse in an encounter with a stranger. Each participant described an awareness of being thrown back in various encounters to her/his history of physical child abuse. They expressed belief that these traumatic experiences will always remain with them despite a desire to forget. Most of the participants defined specific aspects of an encounter (e.g., male rage, perceived aggression, “unfairness”, being “seen”) that throws them back to their physical child abuse experiences. For nearly

all of the participants, being thrown back to childhood physical abuse experiences in an encounter with a stranger had occurred more than once, sometimes frequently (e.g., “*any* kind of [male] violence terrifies me”, “on a daily basis,” perceived aggression).

## **CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION**

I explored the experience of being thrown back in an encounter with a stranger for five adults who were physically abused as children by a parent or caregiver in this study. The primary goal was to explicate the experience of being thrown back to childhood physical abuse in an encounter. Studying the experience of being thrown back provided an access to both childhood experiences of physical abuse and the continuing impact of the physical child abuse in the adult's life.

In this chapter, I will discuss some of the findings of the study presented in the Individual Narratives and the Summary of Participant Narratives. Throughout the chapter, I will return to the literature review in order to dialogue with the findings. Next, presuppositions are reviewed, some contributions are discussed, and suggestions for future research are offered.

### **From the Everyday to the Familiar**

Each participant described the beginning of the day she/he was thrown back to physical child abuse experiences in an encounter as “routine” or “ordinary.” Some participants even described the beginning of the encounter in the same manner. Until being thrown back in the encounters, their lives were unfolding according to their taken-for-granted expectations of what it meant to be at work, to drive to one's home after work, or to take a pleasurable trip. According to Heidegger (1996, pp. 16-17), the “routine” or “ordinary” is our everydayness, the way we usually go about doing things, moving through our lives and in the world. This is always in relation to each person's past experiences. For all of the participants, an aspect of the horizon of their

everydayness was their stories of physical child abuse and the way in which these experiences have shaped their lives.

Once they came across their respective encounters, all participants were thrown back to their physical child abuse experiences either “immediately” or soon after the encounter began to unfold. There was something “familiar” in the encounters that led them to be thrown back. It is important to recognize that they did not have memories or mere thoughts about their traumatic experiences of physical child abuse, but relived one or more experiences of their terrifying physical child abuse. Time was not calculated chronologically, but meaningfully. Furthermore, past, present and future were accessible at all times in varying degrees. Through the encounter, the participants found themselves becoming uncontrollably and for most unwillingly fully open to their past experiences of physical child abuse. As they remained in the present of their respective encounters, each participant relived the physical abuse the abusers inflicted upon them as children.

### **The Many Faces of the Look**

Initially, my sole interest in this study was to explore the experience of being seen for adults who were physically abused as children. In the data analysis, I was surprised to discover that multiple meanings of the look were significant in this experience. One participant emphasized the significance of a look in terms of being seen as pivotal in being thrown back to his physical child abuse. The remaining participants primarily described variations of the look as essential in their experiences of being thrown back to physical child abuse in their encounters.

A variation of being seen included wanting to be seen, with one participant’s encounter involving a group of teachers who avoided her look. Other variations of the

look were looking at another person/people, being afraid to look at the other, and the look or physical appearance of the other.

**Being Seen.** The power of the look of the homeowner in George's encounter was primary in throwing George back to his physical child abuse. It was not the everyday, ordinary look from others. The unexpected look of rage replicated his father's look prior to unleashing horrendous physical abuse on George. It was the familiar look that called George back to himself and threw him back to past childhood physical abuse. This particular look placed George eye to eye with his abusive father beyond the homeowner standing before him.

What was shocking to George was that he had previously stood up to anyone who had displayed aggression toward him, yet he was unable to defend himself from the homeowner's look of rage. For George, the vulnerability and powerlessness of his physical child abuse was illuminated in the look that threw him back to his childhood physical abuse. It was the look of his father that defined George as "nothing." In his encounter, the look reduced George from a professional, capable adult to a defenseless child. To be seen, to be looked at with the rage of his father, was to open the floodgates of a past from which he desired to be protected, and perhaps forget.

George believed that he could manage interactions with others, always asserting an unspoken power. Until this encounter, in his professional and personal life, George received many looks – from pleasant, happy looks to looks of anger and frustration. Even angry looks had not previously thrown George back to the terror of his childhood. His experience of being thrown back to his physical child abuse demonstrated how one

can be unwillingly open to the traumatic past. The past does not fade away, but will always be a part of one's life in some way.

Another understanding of the significance of the look in being thrown back to physical child abuse experiences, was in Linda's encounter. In contrast to George's encounter, for Linda, the look was not terrifying, but pleasant. In the look, Linda re-experienced being small. She felt acknowledged and cared for as a child, as well as came to understand that she was not responsible for the physical child abuse she endured.

**Afraid to Look at the Stranger.** In the experience of being thrown back to physical child abuse experiences, another participant, Emily, was "afraid to look" at the man driving aggressively behind her. Not only was she trying to get away by seeking a safe place to pull off the road, but Emily also was attempting to escape the possibilities of the man's rage. The rage mirrored her father's rage.

Dave Pelzer (1995), a survivor of severe physical child abuse by his mother, shared his experience of looking at others in the book *A Child Called It*. He discussed how he protected himself from his mother and her wrath by "dodg[ing] her looks" as she physically abused him. Subsequently, Pelzer found himself also "afraid to look into [the] eyes" of others. To look at another person is to engage the other, relate with the other in a variety of ways. Similar to Pelzer's experience, Emily feared engaging with the aggressive male driver.

**Looking at and Wanting to be Seen.** Amber wanted to be seen, to engage with the teachers. However, they avoided her look. Through her look, Amber wanted to give of herself, sharing her knowledge and experience for the betterment of the school, the teachers, and specifically the student to whom she was providing therapy. Yet, it was not

accepted. That is, Amber was not accepted, which threw her back to childhood experiences of her mother not accepting her opinions and physically abusing Amber for having her own opinions.

Unlike the participants trying to avoid being seen, Linda desired to look at and take in what she was seeing – a man caring for a little girl, paying attention to her, delighting in her presence. Linda seemed to have wanted to be acknowledged, nurtured, and cared for, as well as loved as a child, instead of being physically abused as if she was merely an object on which the nanny could take out her anger (Miller, 1983).

In a variation of looking at, when thrown back to his childhood physical abuse, Harold used his look to take a stand against physical child abuse by “disapproving” with his eyes. His attempt to correct the woman who was hitting and kicking her daughter seemed to be to a way to try to protect the girl in the present as well as to protect himself as a child in the past.

For all of the variations of the look discussed thus far, the look was not about merely seeing the other or being seen. The look was meaningful for each participant in light of her/his past physical abuse experiences, in light of the terrorizing, angry, and/or “condescending and menacing” look of the abuser. Although most of the significant looks in the encounters were angry looks, what was an essential aspect of Linda’s experience of being thrown back to her physical child abuse in the encounter was the man’s pleasant, caring look. However, her initial feeling of happiness shifted to sadness, vulnerability, and worry as she continued to relive her physical child abuse experiences.

Sartre (1956) addresses the ways in which the look of the other calls us to ourselves, our history, and our experiences. He explained, “...to perceive is to *look at* and



to apprehend a look...is to be conscious of *being looked at*. The look which the *eyes* manifest is a pure reference to myself.” (p. 347) Beyond the actual look given or received, all participants seemed to experience the look as possibly a judgment of themselves from their physical child abuse or perhaps a judgment their abusers had of them or related through the abuse. All participants described feeling helpless, vulnerable, sad, fearful, and confused. All of these feelings related to their experiences of physical child abuse and, for some, also only minimally related to the encounter with the stranger. In addition, as an example, in their experiences of being thrown back to physical child abuse, Linda and Emily described themselves “stupid.” This likely was one description their abusers had for them. In that experience, they were unable to recognize their strength and courage in finding ways to care for themselves when reliving their physical child abuse.

Although it was not explicitly discussed, looking at the other in the experience of being thrown back to physical child abuse seemed to refer not only to seeing the other but also seeing oneself. Harold seemed to see his father in the woman physically abusing the girl. Although as a child he could not safely give his father a “disapproving” look, he proudly could stand up for the girl and “disapprovingly” look at the woman. He was hopeful that the woman would see herself and her actions through his perception of her, that is, as abusive. In addition, while reliving his physical child abuse, it seemed possible that by trying to correct the woman, Harold was imaging himself as a child chastising his father for physically abusing him.

For Merleau-Ponty (1964) being seen leads one to recognize the perceptions of others and potentially incorporate these into one’s self-perception. The participants’ self-

perception while reliving their physical child abuse was of the abused children they once were. It was likely also shaped by their abusers perception of them.

**The Physical Appearance of the Stranger.** Finally, for Emily, another significance of the look in her experience of being thrown back to her physical child abuse was the physical appearance of the aggressive male driver. Upon being thrown back by the man's rage, the meaning of his physical appearance for Emily, specifically in terms of age, further opened Emily to her past. Emily relived experiences with her father in his rage during the height of her physical child abuse when her father was about the same age as the aggressive male driver.

Although I believed that the physical appearance of a stranger who bears some physical resemblance to the abuser would be common, only one participant, Emily, found it relevant to being thrown back to her childhood physical abuse.

### **Reliving a Vivid Past**

As each participant spoke of an encounter in which she/he was thrown back to physical child abuse experiences, she/he described being fully engulfed in this past as if it were the present. The encounter in which each participant was involved became a distant background to her/his powerfully vivid physical child abuse. All participants described seeing her/his abuser and suddenly being thrown back to reliving her/his physical child abuse. The focus of the encounter shifted from being involved in a task – work, driving, or traveling – to reliving one's own physical child abuse and becoming overwhelmingly fearful, vulnerable, angry and/or sad.

In all of the interviews, I was profoundly struck by the intensity with which all five participants relived their physical child abuse. The participants neither merely

recalled stories nor were they simply reminded of the physical child abuse they endured. Each participant was thrown back to her/his past physical child abuse as if it were present. They relived the experiences of their childhood physical abuse as the children they once were.

The multitude of overwhelming feelings – helplessness, powerlessness, vulnerability, sadness, fear, terror, anger, and/or anxiety – that colored each of their childhoods, were unwillingly relived. Each participant lived out one of more of these feelings to varied degrees.

The seemingly effortless transformation of each participant to her/his childhood once thrown back to her/his physical child abuse was astonishing. For example, Emily, who presented as polished and confident, suddenly stuttered the word “t-terror,” with congruent emotion, as she described her father’s “violence” and “unwarranted rage.” Likewise, George moved from displaying confidence along with lightheartedness to looking downward as he softly and slowly spoke with profound sadness. The impact of reliving the repeated and traumatic childhood physical abuse by his father, and reliving the defenselessness, powerlessness, and terror, was consuming. For all participants, I found myself caught up in their overwhelming feelings, as if I had accompanied each participant as she/he relived her/his physical child abuse.

The participants’ awareness of their physical child abuse experiences reflected their openness to the past and to relive these events vividly. The extent to which each participant willingly thought about her/his physical child abuse seemed related to the frequency that participants were thrown back to their physical child abuse. For example, Amber spoke of being thrown back to her childhood physical abuse “daily,” while

George, who defined himself as “guarded,” described only two encounters in which he was surprisingly thrown back to his traumatic physical child abuse.

In discussing reliving a vivid past, we can look to Boss (1979/1994) for an understanding of being in the present while also reliving one’s past. Past, present, and future were accessible at all moments to varying degrees. Boss informs us that

At any given time, we are constantly bringing past, present and future together in a unique way....While dwelling in the world means extending ourselves simultaneously into the three temporal dimensions...of the past, present and future, these dimensions are naturally not always open equally to each existence.

At various times, one or another of the dimensions will be most commanding, and at those times, we enter into it much more than the others. We may even be trapped in one of the three. Even then, however, the other two are never negated or destroyed, but only deprived or concealed. (pp. 99-100)

The experience of being thrown back to physical child abuse in an encounter with a stranger showed that the five participants found themselves suddenly open to her/his childhood physical abuse. As Boss states, the participants were in the present encounter while simultaneously reliving the past traumatic physical abuse their abusers inflicted upon them as children. In the encounter with the stranger, all participants were abruptly open to their past physical abuse while their awareness of the present encounter diminished.

### **Looking Out for Oneself**

It seemed important for all participants to protect or take care of themselves when thrown back to their physical child abuse experiences. Looking out for oneself may have

been a step toward limiting reliving the traumatic physical child abuse. For some participants, the way in which she/he took care of her/himself in the encounter may be understood as standing up to the abuser, which nearly all of the participants were unable to do in their childhoods. Other participants, including George and Harold, who both described a determination or “vow” to never be physically abused again, clearly attempted to establish some control in their lives unlike during the unpredictable and terrorizing physical child abuse experienced.

Once thrown back to their physical child abuse, two participants acted in non-physically aggressive manners in their encounters. Amber proudly stated that she verbally “hit” the teacher by condescendingly suggesting that he would benefit from psychotherapy. Even though she knew her actions were unprofessional and that her supervisor would likely correct her, Amber continued to feel justified. In addition, Harold gave a “disapproving” look to a woman who was “hitting and kicking” her young daughter. By acting aggressively, both participants felt successful in their encounters because they acted to protect themselves and others. Furthermore, Amber hoped that she effected positive change for the student, while Harold hoped that his look guided the woman to consider non-physical ways of correcting her child. Taking a stand for oneself and for others may be ways in which Amber and Harold have been working toward diminishing the impact of being thrown back to their physical child abuse.

Epps, Carlin and Ward (1999) concluded in a study on adult survivors of physical child abuse that these adults tend to have more “trait anger” and “seething suppressed anger” than adults who were not abused as children. The present study did not result in similar findings; none of the participants described nor displayed these forms of anger.

In addition, a study by Martin and Elmer (1992) indicated that women who were physically abused as children scored higher on the assault subscale than non-abused women. Although one woman in the present study acted in a passive aggressive manner, verbally striking the teacher, this finding was inconsistent with the Martin and Elmer study as well as the Epps, et. al. study.

### **After the Encounter**

Once the encounter ended, all participants described continuing to be thrown back to her/his childhood physical abuse. All participants stated that it took several days to several weeks to diminish the intensity of being thrown back. The past was more prominent than the present or future. Whether it was terror, fear, anger, anxiety or profound sadness, each participant was consumed with some or all of these persistent and powerful emotions. Upon reviewing being thrown back in the encounter, participants were overwhelmed and attempted to understand her/his physical child abuse. They could not completely escape the encounter, or perhaps more accurately, escape the physical child abuse they had experienced.

Being thrown back in the encounter with a stranger led a few participants to question their self-understanding. Until the encounters, these participants believed they understood their personalities and experiences. One woman, Linda, held herself accountable for the physical child abuse she endured as a very young child. Until being thrown back in the encounter, George believed that he could control when and if he would even think about his traumatic physical child abuse. In these two participants' lives, the experience of being thrown back to physical child abuse showed that one's self-perception could be altered positively or potentially negatively. Once released from the

burden of the responsibility for her physical child abuse, Linda could also accept the multitude of ways in which her abuse has shaped her life, and could potentially work toward change. The challenge for George's self-understanding was whether he could continue to protect himself, through either remaining guarded or reconsidering how to avoid being thrown back to his physical child abuse in future encounters.

According to a study by Varia, Abidin and Dass (1996), adult survivors of physical child abuse tend to have lower self-esteem than adults who were not abused as children. Although my study did not focus specifically on self-esteem, the findings for two participants showed minimal relatedness to the above study. Both participants, Linda and Emily, made self-degrading comments once the encounter ended as they gradually returned to the present. However, the self-criticism was confined to the experience of being thrown back to their physical child abuse. There were no suggestions of general lower self-esteem in the overall interviews as in the Varia, et. al. study.

Linda did refer to herself as "stupid" for not realizing that as a child she was simply too "small and frail" to defend herself from her nanny who was apparently attempting to drown Linda, a defenseless five-year-old. Emily, who spoke in a confident and assured manner when not discussing being thrown back to her physical child abuse experiences, dramatically shifted to expressing self-deprecating thoughts. Specifically, Emily referred to the terror relived, and subsequent action of pulling safely off the road to escape the aggressive male driver, as "ridiculous." She added that she was "embarrassed" to have others witness a "grown woman hiding in a car." Emily trivialized and disparaged her actions to protect herself and to diminish the impact of being thrown back to her physical child abuse. In addition, Emily's openness to the

present expanded and she considered others perceptions of her through negative lenses. She concluded that she was behaving as an “idiot.” It seemed possible that while thrown back to her terrorizing abusive past, Emily was not acting as an adult, but as the scared child she once was. From the perspective of the present study, Emily’s action of protecting herself by getting away from the aggressive male driver was not “ridiculous,” but an act of courage. Overall, it seemed important for Emily to be perceived as a strong and confident woman.

### **Trying to Make Sense of the Physical Child Abuse**

Being thrown back to physical child abuse experiences led all participants who were physically abused as children by a parent to try to grasp some understanding of their parents’ motives for the abuse. The one participant, Linda, who was physically abused by a nanny, did not indicate that she was seeking understanding of why the nanny abused her. It seemed likely that since Linda’s relationship with the nanny was neither her primary relationship nor was it long lasting, the significance of Linda’s relationship with the nanny would be less important than her relationship with her parents.

Many people desire to be acknowledged and accepted for who they are, as well as to be loved and cared for by a parent, from birth through adulthood. This often is a steadfast longing, even when it appears obvious that the abuser will never show love to the child, even as an adult. Harold, the one participant who seemingly will continue to question his father, also appears to desire an apology as well as acknowledgement of his father’s responsibility for the physical child abuse.



## **Additional Findings**

The majority of the studies on adult survivors of physical child abuse found numerous psychiatric illnesses as significant (Bryer, Nelson, Miller, & Krol, 1987; Chu & Dill, 1990; Reder & Duncan, 2000; Duncan, Saunders, Kilpatrick, Hanson, & Resnick, 1996; Silverman, Reinherz, & Giaconia, 1996; Mullen, Martin, Anderson, Romans, & Herbison, 1996; Brown, 1999; Rorty, Yager, & Rossotto, 1995; McHolm, MacMillan, & Jamieson, 2003; Briere & Runtzm 1988), including substance abuse (Schaefer, Sobieraj, & Hollyfield, 1988; Goodman & Fallot, 1998; Malinosky- Rummell & Hansen, 1993; Martin & Elmer, 1992).

In my study, none of the participants reported or evidenced psychiatric illness such as depression, suicidality, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, dissociative disorder, bulimia, or substance abuse. However, one participant reported past incidences of self-cutting related to racing thoughts. She stated that she had attended psychotherapy to address this issue. Likely, potential participants with severe psychiatric disorders either naturally eliminated themselves from this study after an initial meeting or did not seek to participate in this study in that it delved into being thrown back to experiences of physical child abuse. One example is a potential participant who informed me that she had regular appointments with a psychiatrist. After submitting a written response to the initial request, the woman asked to be eliminated from the study, stating that she became overwhelmed with persistent and intense emotions from her physical child abuse experiences.

An additional aspect of the study that would be beneficial to discuss is the range of severity of physical child abuse among participants. It is important to emphasize that I

strongly believe that any type of physical child abuse detrimentally shapes one's life. In this study, the range of the severity of physical child abuse was vastly different for the majority of participants in comparison to one participant, George, who endured intensely traumatic, life-threatening physical child abuse. His father beat him violently, often until unconscious, and on numerous occasions, bloody, bruised, and likely seriously in need of medical attention. As a young child, George feared for his life daily. Linda also described one experience of physical child abuse in which her nanny held Linda by her ankles/feet and repeatedly dunked her into a reservoir of water. Not surprisingly, she recalled losing her breath. Although she did not report any serious medical consequences from this terrifying ordeal, clearly her young life was at risk.

In comparison, the remaining participants all described enduring milder forms of physical child abuse, including being hit with a hand and/or being kicked. None of these participants described the physical abuse as life-threatening or requiring medical attention afterward. Despite the wide variations in the severity of the physical child abuse endured, significant differences among the participants in the experience of being thrown back to their physical child abuse experiences were not found. The only differentiating finding was that both of the participants who were severely physically abused as children such that their lives were at risk said that they were thrown back to their abusive past only a few times. This contrasts with the other participants who endured milder types of physical child abuse in that most of them said that they were thrown back to their physical child abuse in encounters with strangers frequently and repeatedly. It seems that the participants whose lives were at risk because of the severity of their physical abuse, may strongly avoid reliving their physical child abuse, and therefore do whatever is

necessary to avoid being thrown back. George, who informed me that he had only two encounters in which he was thrown back to his physical child abuse, supports this idea by being guarded. In keeping others at bay, staying vigilant, and being willing to defend himself at any cost, George ensured that he would never be physically abused again. Being guarded seems to have protected George from repeatedly reliving the traumatic physical child abuse he endured.

Although this study did not focus on resilience, it is worthy to acknowledge each participant's resilience and hope. Despite the traumatic physical child abuse each participant endured that continues to affect her/his life, by volunteering for this study and willingly sharing their painful stories, all participants demonstrated their courage and strength. They implicitly conveyed the attitude that ultimately their experiences of physical child abuse will not define them as victims, but as survivors with many possibilities. All participants either attained graduate degrees and/or achieved highest certification in their fields. This speaks to their motivation, commitment, and desire not be defined by their abusers, but by their successes.

In addition, as described previously, all participants acted in ways to protect or take care of themselves in the encounter. For this sample population, being a victim was not an option. Some participants explicitly stated prior to the encounter that they "vowed" to protect themselves from further physical harm. Silently or overtly, they sent a message to others that they are not helpless, but can protect themselves.

Participants also expressed hope for a future society without physical child abuse. Harold took a stand against child abuse in the encounter by looking "disapprovingly" at the woman who was physically abusing her daughter. He expressed a desire to end

physical child abuse, particularly when defined as physical discipline. Emily stated that she had fought against physical child abuse in her work with an agency as well as voluntarily. For all participants, the possibility existed to diminish, if not abolish, physical child abuse.

### **Presuppositions Revisited**

As anticipated, I found that all of these volunteer participants seemed to want to tell their stories of being physically abused by a parent or caregiver, as well as to discuss being thrown back to these traumatic experiences in an encounter with a stranger. The interview appeared to be a place for each participant to talk openly about thoughts and/or feelings without judgment or criticism. I felt that each participant trusted me to truly hear and respect her/his story.

All participants reported reliving their physical child abuse experiences on more than one occasion, as I had assumed. However, contrary to my assumption, some participants were not easily thrown back to their physical child abuse experiences. These individuals described few encounters in which they were thrown back. I had not considered how being “guarded,” particularly as described by one participant, might be a way to control reliving one’s physical child abuse. In addition, I anticipated that the severity of the physical child abuse would correlate with the frequency that the participant relived this traumatic past. In contrast, again in reference to the participant who endured severe and life threatening physical child abuse, he was thrown back to his physical child abuse in an encounter the least number of times of all participants in the study. Furthermore, this participant did not discuss distancing himself from others or state that he was always prepared for attack as I had assumed. Only one participant

described often misperceiving actions by others as aggressive and acting defensively by physically fighting.

Additionally, I anticipated the look of the other to be the most significant theme in the experience of being thrown back to physical child abuse experiences. A surprising finding was that the look of the other was primarily significant for only one participant. However, variations of the look were found to be significant for all participants. This included being looked at, fearing looking at the other, avoiding the look, and one's own look or physical appearance.

However, my assumption that the participants would relive the fear, terror, helplessness, vulnerability, and sadness experienced in relation to the physical child abuse endured, was founded. In addition, my anticipation that participants would escape the encounter in which they were thrown back and achieve a sense of empowerment was only partially founded. Although all participants looked out for themselves in the encounter once thrown back, and eventually terminated the encounter, no participants reported feeling empowered. Only one participant described standing up to and verbally "hit[ting]" a teacher as she was thrown back to her physical child abuse experiences. She believed that she put the teacher in his place and was "excited" about her bravery in taking a stand.

As I assumed, participants relived their physical child abuse experiences suddenly, without warning. In addition, all participants recognized their past as revealed in the present. However, neither the age of the participant at the time of the interview nor the frequency with which she/he was thrown back to her/his physical child abuse experiences in encounters with a stranger correlated to the vividness of reliving their

physical child abuse. My assumption regarding the age of the participant was that the younger participants would be more easily thrown back in various encounters to their physical child abuse past, while as they increased in age, participants would have gained an increasing distance from reliving this past. Two participants, both women in their mid to late 50s, seemed to relive their childhood physical abuse experiences as frequently as when they were younger.

My assumption that participants would not have experienced care, love, and acceptance from the abuser was not found. In light of the results, I was reminded that not all parents who physically abuse their children are only abusive. Parents are human beings with an array of possibilities, including in terms of who they are and how they relate with their children. A few of the participants' parents seemed to want their children to grow up to be competent adults, but may not have known how to appropriately discipline a child or appropriately express disappointment or frustration toward a child. A few participants actually described their fathers as "good" and "caring," with one participant remarking that she "always knew [her] father loved [her]." Only one other participant stated that he never had a relationship with his father, for his father "was bent on literally destroying the life he had given me."

Finally, my belief that I would find that most participants' parents perceived physical child abuse as a form of discipline was found for only one participant. This participant reported that his parents viewed physical abuse as discipline because "the Jesuits told them it was a nice or good way to educate kids."

## **Some Contributions**

This study has contributed to what I hope will be seminal findings in the field of adult survivors of physical child abuse. Other researchers can now continue to expand our understandings in this understudied field of the enduring impact on the lives of adults who were physically abused as children.

Clinically, this study primarily offers to adults who were physically abused as children by a parent or caregiver acknowledgement of the unwarranted suffering they endured as children. It also provides hope through similar stories of others. That is, they can recognize that other adult survivors of physical child abuse relived their abuse and found various ways of looking out for themselves while thrown back. From this, adults may learn ways to take care of themselves while being thrown back to their vivid physical child abuse experiences. Survivors of physical child abuse can also learn that their stories are valuable and meaningful, and that they can be heard and understood.

Furthermore, this study provides physical child abuse survivors with meaningful narrative accounts from other adults who were physically abused as children by a parent or caregiver. It could be an empowering experience to identify with the findings of this study. Other adult survivors of physical child abuse may gain understanding of the ways in which their abuse may have shaped their lives. Perhaps this may lead some childhood physical abuse survivors to seek mental health services to address problematic thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Additionally, I hope that this study provides mental health professionals with greater understanding of the life-world of adult survivors of physical child abuse. Going beyond the various questionnaires that result in a narrow view of a person, this study

openly explored the experience of adults who were physically abused as children, and hence provides meaningful narrative accounts as well as a summary of participant narratives of these adults' lives. This study could assist mental health professionals in providing individual as well as group psychotherapy to adult survivors of physical child abuse. A counselor or group psychotherapist, for example, could provide group members with the Individual Narratives and the Summary of Participant Narratives in order to facilitate a discussion of comparisons to the findings for each group member.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

The finding of the many faces of the look leads me to wonder about each variation of the look and to suggest that further study might elucidate significances of the variations, especially in regard to the abused child's perception of the abuser's motives. Further, as the look was not of primary significance for each participant and some reported other aspects in an encounter that threw them back to their physically abusive past, I believe it would be fruitful to explore other aspects, including, but not limited to, "male rage," perceived aggression, and "unfairness." I believe my initial guiding interest of being seen may have colored my perspective of the participants' stories, and thus may have shaped the interview process. Being open to further exploring all possible aspects of encounters would be beneficial to the body of research.

Another area of related research that, to my knowledge, has not been explored is the experience of being thrown back for adults who were physically abused as children in encounters with family, friends, and/or associates. I wonder how the findings of this study that focused on encounters with strangers, would compare to the experience of everyday encounters with family members and other people with whom the adult has



some form of relationship. I imagine that in some ways the encounter with the stranger may be uniquely powerful because of its unexpectedness.

In that it was beyond the scope of this study, I did not explore situations other than encounters with strangers in which adults who were physically abused as children were thrown back to this past. Gaining a broader understanding of the experience of being thrown back for these adults could assist the many adults who frequently and terrifyingly relive their physical child abuse experiences and desire to gain some control over reliving this past. Expanded study of the conditions, situations, objects, and so forth, in which adults have been thrown back to their physically abusive past would extend our understanding of the continuing impact of childhood physical abuse.

A primary interest, however, is that more research be added to the overall and minimal body of research on adult survivors of physical child abuse. I believe it is likely that although similarities would exist, there are differences between adults who were physically abused as children and adults who endured other forms of abuse, whether sexual or emotional, or neglect. I further believe that adults who were physically abused as children would be acknowledged, just as sexual abuse survivors are acknowledged, if the category of child abuse research were to include greater research on physical abuse. In my pilot study, which was discussed in the Introduction, while seeking participants to explicate the long-term consequences of physical child abuse, one man in particular had a significant impact on me when he thanked me for studying and bringing to light the potential ways in which physical child abuse can shape a person's life. He stated that the physical child abuse he endured was never to be spoken about, and he believed many others like him were suffering. Although child abuse and child abuse survivors are topics

open to discussion in society, it is likely that many adults who were physically abused as children have never spoken about it. As this man desired, further research would acknowledge survivors of physical child abuse and the ways in which the abuse has not only shaped, but also continues to impact their lives.

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## APPENDIX A

*Have you been beaten or physically hurt  
in other ways as a child by your  
parent(s) and/or caregiver(s)?*

*Are you willing to talk about these  
experiences and your life as an adult?*

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

HELP US LEARN MORE ABOUT  
SURVIVORS OF  
PHYSICAL CHILD ABUSE

*If you are at least 18 years of age and  
interested in participating in a study on  
adults who were physically abused in  
childhood (but not sexually abused), or if you  
have questions and would like more  
information, please contact  
Jean at 412-396-6562*

*This study is a dissertation project for the Psychology Dept. at Duquesne University.*

## **APPENDIX B**

### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY**

- TITLE:** The Experience of Being Thrown Back in Encounters for Adults who were Physically Abused as Children by a parent or caregiver: An Empirical-Phenomenological Investigation
- INVESTIGATOR:** Jean Rusnack, M.A.  
Department of Psychology, Duquesne University  
412-396-6562
- DIRECTOR:** Constance Fischer, Ph.D.  
Department of Psychology, Duquesne University  
412-396-5073
- SOURCE OF SUPPORT:** This study is being performed as partial fulfillment for the requirements for the degree of doctor in philosophy in psychology at Duquesne University.
- PURPOSE:** You are requested to participate in a qualitative research project that seeks to investigate the situation of encountering a stranger experienced as threatening for you as an adult who was physically abused in childhood by a parent(s) and/or caregiver. You will be asked to try to recall events that the experience reminds you of. You will be asked to describe your experience in writing or via an interview, and you may be asked to participate in a follow-up interview that will be audiotaped and transcribed.
- RISKS AND BENEFITS:** Your participation in this study may lead to further understanding of your childhood history of abuse. However, in light of the sensitive nature of this study, you might also become upset during the interview process. If this occurs, the researcher will ask if you want to stop the interview temporarily. The researcher can also introduce a relaxation technique(s). The researcher can provide you with recommendations for counseling, if so desired.

COMPENSATION: Compensation will not be provided for participation in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Strict confidentiality as well as anonymity will be maintained throughout the research project. Your name or identifying information will not appear in the dissertation or any other documents. All materials, including written materials, audiotapes, and consent forms, will be stored in a locked file in the investigator's home.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: You are not obligated to participate in this study and have the right at any time to withdraw your consent to participate and the data you have provided through a signed statement.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that I may contact the researcher, Jean Rusnack (412-396-6562), if I have any questions about this research project. I further understand that should I have any questions about my participation in this study, I may contact Dr. Paul Richer, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board (412-396-5074) and will be given an opportunity to discuss, in confidence, any questions about my participation in this research.

My signature means that I have freely agreed to take part in this research project.

_____ Participant's name (printed)	_____ Participant's signature	_____ Date
_____ Researcher's name (printed)	_____ Researcher's signature	_____ Date

## APPENDIX C

### Interviews with Study Participants

(R = Researcher, P = Participant)

#### “George”

R: Regarding the encounter you described, you said in your first paragraph you "thought nothing of it because it was a simple routine"...

P: Yeah, I thought nothing of the call (pause) initially.

R: Yet in the next sentence down you say, "I was more than looking forward to going home for the day." Is there anything there you want to say more about?

P: Well, it was late uh even though it was a routine call uh we get, we get such calls regularly -- still, at the end of the day I was sort of looking forward to going home. Um, I'd just as soon not get a call. I mean... knowing that that's that's fairly routine... still, um, (quickened pace) I'm ready to go. Ready to call it a day. Ready to shut down.

R: Now when you met the homeowner you say he "did not appear to be the friendly type." Can you tell me more?

P: Well, it was in it was in his demeanor (high pitch). I mean I think he was a bit curt, he was um... and I don't know (sounds uncertain) if it was just the fact that he.. was... frustrated because his hot water heater had been leaking all over the place.. but, he just didn't seem too friendly... just, you know just wanted me to get in, repair or replace the hot water heater and get out, I guess (resigned tone). But, uh no he didn't seem warm. He didn't seem friendly and I... working in the field I'd encounter people who were friendly even though they had some major plumbing problems uh, but they were still friendly, uh -- it wasn't our fault that they experienced plumbing problems at least most of the time (slight laughter). But, that just seem to be the type of person he was. He just didn't seem friendly. He may have been, but he didn't portray it that day.

R: Can you describe his demeanor?

P: (Breathes heavily) Well, there was a frown on his face as I recall -- um... he just seemed annoyed...um... and um of course I'd also encountered that before as well...um... (slowly) but again it it was his choice to be friendly or unfriendly. At at that moment it didn't.... it didn't really matter uh to me that he was unfriendly, that he was

frowning, that he was (breathes out) seemed..... *bothered* by whatever. I don't know what his situation was. He just didn't appear to be friendly type.

R: Okay, so you say when you initially in count him he "did not appear to be the friendly type" through his demeanor and the frown on his face showed you he was annoyed?

P: Well, I guess it was the frown... I think it was a combination of just his facial expression... ah, um... and just the... just the manner, (slowly) ah, in which he spoke...ah, you know, he just sort of... you know there was no chatter, idle chatter just blunt speaking um and it seemed there was a little anger in his voice um... and who knows what transpired prior to my arrival, but it was my impression that again, from his facial expression and the way in which he spoke that (breathes) he wasn't too friendly.

R: And then you said that he, once you had completed the work, he "nearly transformed right before my eyes."

P: Yeah...um...(laughs softly) the guy went ballistic, I thought. He went into a rage just because I presented him with the service invoice (clears throat) describing what the problem was, what it took for me to change out his old hot water heater, the cost, um... which for me, I thought was really no big deal. That's that's... you know if it was any other place that... it would be the same thing, but, um this guy ah did not like it. He did not like it at all. He thought I was trying to rip him off.

R: So even though he initially appeared annoyed, there still was transformation?

P: (emphatic higher tone) Well, ah this this wasn't anything like I, at a beginning, I mean, at the beginning, yes, he seemed to be annoyed, he didn't seem friendly, you know (breath). Um, his facial features bared that out, but, um, but being presented with the invoice and him looking at it and just... suddenly this (pronounced slowly) *explosion* of rage as if I had come into his home and violated him or a member of his family, just (breathes) *that was incredible to me* (sound of disbelief).

R: When you approached him and saw him that he did not appear to be the friendly type, were you anticipating a certain response from him or...?

P: (casual tone) No, no, not really. I mean, like I said, that was fine, you know, he, uh... I'd encountered all types -- friendly, unfriendly... hostile (slower pace), you know, uh, uh, you never know what you were going to walk into, but, one of the things we got to a point, especially I got to a point, where to where (breathes) I really didn't react one way or another to...ah, if they were nice, that was fine if they weren't, that was fine...um... usually the response afterward... but I usually reacted to, to some degree, and I, I thought this was really one of the those...um, um... moments... or his reaction, his response to the invoice, um, payment for services, I thought, I thought was just a little bit much. It was I

mean it just ahh (breathes) yeah, I was really kind of taken aback... at the moment.. by his reaction, uh, uh to what I thought was just uh a simple invoice. Uh, I didn't think.. I didn't think that the job was a big deal. I didn't think, uh, that the charge (clear throat) the cost of services was a big deal, but apparently he thought differently.

R: You say, "His eyes opened revealing fire?"

P: (laughing) Well, that's what it looked like!

R: Can you describe what you saw?

P: (higher tone, laughing) Well, uh, it looked like, they were blood red and I hadn't noticed that in the beginning, I mean, uh, (serious tone) and I mean and it may be just because of..of...that intense anger that I... that I just... something about...ah, ah, ah my looking at his eyes at that moment it just seemed... red, like they were on fire... and...um... (serious intense voice) you know, it was striking that ah you know that... this person...ah, would... would (slower pace) *show* such *rage*...um, uh...

R: How else did you see the rage? You mention "his body nearly shook with rage."

P: Well, I mean, I mean just, just flailing his arms, I mean just really *pointing* for me to...to ah... to get out of his house... to get off his property as if there was... you know... if I didn't move (slight chuckle), ah, then I mean... I thought inherent in that what he was saying, the way he was just, just flailing about that there was a threat *to me* and..... and yeah, I...*sure*, it wasn't my house and (lower tone) you know, he made that clear. He wanted me out of there, that *very* instant. At which point, that's what I did. I proceeded to go to my service van and... to, uh, call in and explain the situation and... leaving.

R: So, it is, the threat was never direct, not...

P: I... I don't think it was direct... I... I didn't... I didn't necessarily.... I don't think it was explicitly...um... stated... but...um... (slow pace) the way which he spoke and the way which he...he.. you know, pointed... me to the door to get out -- this wasn't his house -- this wasn't *my* house, as he said. He wanted me gone, (soft tone) and... and, uh, he also threatened to call the police...uh, if I didn't leave immediately (softly laughing) you know, again I...ah... there are a lot of things happening in that moment -- for me.

R: Such as?

P: (long breathe) Well...well, I, I, I could, I could sense anger... welling up in me as well... and... I could also... I can probably say there was fear although I think there was fear... on two different fronts. I think there was fear of how I w... if I reacted to the anger I was beginning to feel because, you know, here I was, simply doing my job, um , um, responding to a service call, um, doing the job, uh, and doing the job and, uh, to be

almost ah accused of of ah just simply... you know, robbery or whatever um I don't know it was just... and I just felt, you know, I felt myself being threatened and I'm thinking..... you, you know...(confident tone) this man, if he only *knew*, uh, he wouldn't be, he wouldn't be threatening me...

R: If he only knew... what?

P: (serious tone, normal pace, matter-of-fact) Well, ah, a feeling knew the person I was. If he only knew the intent that I had of not letting anyone...um... hurt me... and.. to know that nothing short of him killing me would, in that moment, stop me from killing him if I had to. The...um, so he didn't realize, he may have felt like he was in control, that, you know, he was in a position to do harm to me, not realizing -- at that moment -- how much he was putting himself at risk from me.

R: Was that your greater fear... that you would harm him?

P: (deep breath)...Well, (breath) (confident tone) I think so. I mean I always, I, I think I, I that's the position I always took, that I was protecting people from me because I, I knew what I was capable of doing, and I knew that once it got to a point, um... (slow then slower pace, tone saddens) there was no stopping me... and I would not... I would not stop until I was either satisfied with the amount of punishment inflicted on that person or somebody stop me, physically stop me....

R: And you knew you were capable of this?

P: (definite tone) Oh, absolutely, absolutely

R: From past experience?

P: (breath) Absolutely right.... I mean, I can... I can...just... you know, I'd, I'd made a vow...that, um... I would never let *anyone* physically hurt me again. *I meant that!* I was, you know, (slowly pronounced) I was still a child, I was still a little boy, seven or eight years old, and... I can recall making that vow that if anyone were to physically abuse me again, then..... (serious intent, saddened tone) *I would probably kill them...* or, or they would have to kill me... and... once I made that vow.... my fear of someone hurting me (breathes out) I won't say that it dissipated, but... I think it... it emboldened me. It gave me a sense that (slower pace) people needed to be careful how they handled me, and..... it was, it was like I knew something about myself that they didn't know... and, I remember an incident in high school... during... during phys ed we were playing football and we didn't have a referee, but the other team...um (clears throat) uh, had committed an infraction which warranted a five yard penalty and... in a sense of fairness, I decided to mark off the 5 yard penalty against the opposing team.. and one of the... players on the other team took exception to that and... and picked the ball up and put it

back and challenged me not to do that again... and I, I was beside myself. (Higher tone) I couldn't believe that someone would challenge me like that and I said to him, "Are you crazy? Don't you know who I am?" I mean it was like... how, how can you with having any... sense defy me? You know, as if they should have known, that person should have known you didn't challenge (states full name confidently) because to do so...um...(sad tone) would... to put... them at risk of, of suffering some serious, serious harm.

R: So this, you mention that you went through, moving back to what you talked about, the anger and two-fold fear, but you also said that driving away... I guess, let me go back to first. Initially, in the encounter you said that "for one brief moment [you] nearly froze with fright.

P: Yes (breath) one brief moment I nearly froze ah froze with fright only in that there was, there was...(slower pace) there was...there was something of a familiarity with what had transpired in that moment ... (clears throat)... and which was, which was somewhat disturbing and I...(breath – even slower pace; fear? confusion?) and there was something... almost (breath) I would say almost... it was certainly alarming, but it was almost disarming, I mean, I, I... felt like... it was a... chink in my arm or...um... (louder, normal pace) and that had (clears throat) that had not happened before (slower pace) since my... taking the vow that no one would hurt me again... (emphasized) I felt confidence in myself and I felt assured and...um...

R: In the moment?

P: ...but, in, well, prior to that moment that's how I was feeling. That moment sort of...um... caught me at an unexpected... moment in that..... I think it was so vivid in it's, in it's expression that it...

R: "It" being...?

P: The the encounter with the homeowner and the way in which he...um, demonstrated...um...um, his anger towards me. I mean, I, I cause, I... I... see usually..... some people would get angry at how much they have to pay for service and they're looking at the invoice and they... this is really going to hit me hard. Do you guys have some kind of payment plan? Or blah blah blah. So the aim of the anger is... not what, what's... or the frustration and having to meet that particular financial obligation... is not directed at me, necessarily... but, this person...um... took offense towards me rather...um... it is almost as if the...(slower pace, sad tone) the invoice was an excuse... to... direct his anger, his frustration, whatever it was that he was experiencing toward me, and I'd... and I'd encountered that in my childhood because... you know, I thought about this a lot... I don't know whether to say a lot, but... growing up... *any time* I would reflect on the abuse and my.... my father (clears throat) I would....um, (slow, pained tone) try and figure out how, what was it, what was it about me? About... the situation



we lived? What was it about him that gave.....um.....life to this..... need to abuse... and..... (long sigh).....um..... well, we move on (pause)

R: And you mention soon after you talk about freezing for a brief moment that you, you say, “but suddenly I was thrust back to the present,” and I’m wondering where you were.

P: Well, I, I, like I said, I had, um, a falling back on a familiar situation of the past. It just, it just struck me that...

R: So you knew it was familiar, but you didn’t know exactly what....how it was familiar?

P: (voice lightens significantly) Well, I think it (slight laugh), it was, I knew it was familiar, but, I was really kinda struck that, that that situation, that my past experience showed itself so suddenly in in in this moment, um.....you know, (slower pace) and I....and I, you still heard this, this man...homeowner....you know, there was a moment there were I, I don’t know if I, if I heard everything he said, but I, you know...but, but....I was thrown back on myself (even slower pace), but I, I....you know, I was just kind of struck by that situation and you know, so I had to....hurry up and...get myself together and, and get out of his house like he wanted me to, but, but, you know, it was like there glimpse...um, a snapshot of my...encounter with my father was just so right there as if that’s that’s what was happening and yet (assured tone), I knew it couldn’t be happening, but, it was incredible the similarity there was, there was something that was so....*the same* as...experiences I’d had so many times in my childhood and the fact that it showed itself in that moment....with such vividness and such poignancy....ah, (awestruck) it was incredible to me....and I guess being froze and also perplexed just, just.....yeah, it was a difficult moment, that brief moment. It was like, yeah, something had been awakened that I thought..(higher tone) even though I thought about – it’s interesting cause even though I thought about often about, I don’t want to say often...but, I have, I had over the years through about...ah....past experiences...um...I thought I was guarded enough that I could think about them and (softer, sad tone) not, not, not really be affected by the abuse I suffered as a child and so, or how my father looked at me, any of that...and, yet, (even softer tone) here it was and it happened and, uh.....

R: Can you say more about how you thought you were guarded – you had guarded yourself?

P: (pause...breathes) Well, uh, again it goes back to when making the vow and, and it was like making that vow, having that resolve, having that...okay....(assured) *this* will not bother me, my father and what he did, how he treated me will, will only serve as a reminder that I will not, no one will never harm me again. They will never bother me again. I don’t care....um, and so...so, I felt good about that. I felt ah, ah, you know, so

people, it was people could actually say things to me...and I could sort of smile inwardly or even outwardly because I know that they couldn't touch me. The only way that they could touch me, I felt, was *only* if I allowed them to touch me...um, and they would have to, they would have to really...the process of (slower pace) really physically attacking me, that would be the only way that someone...could really...um, bring me to the point...that I would...(softer tone) retaliate – in a physical manner in order to protect myself...against them.

R: You mention specifically that...and I'll quote you, "It was not so much the man's verbal threats or his inimical behavior that troubled me; it was something more about the way he looked at me. Yes, that was it! It was the way he looked at me! I had seen that look before."...

P: (heavy sigh)

R: ...was that something as you were driving away you started to come to that realization – it was about the look you, a look you had seen before?

P: (heavy sigh) I'm not sure, uh, but...I think it was....

R: ...it was after the encounter?

P: I think it was...I think it was the moment the moment that froze me...um...that...that that's why I was suddenly gripped by that...that..that (slow pace)...the way he looked at me troubled me more than his threats and, but, there was something...and and perhaps it is the...perhaps it was all comprehensive. Perhaps it was the threats, but certainly way he looked at me...um...it, it, it was unnerving. It, it, it troubled me...*deeply* troubled me and (sighs) so many times I, when I was a child...I, I don't know it's hard for me to say that I thought of myself as a human being. I, I saw myself as something to be *beat* on and something to be *despised* and something to be regarded as insignificant and...(softly) um...um, and, and so that look and that moment that I saw, I recognized (sullen tone, pace slows more) immediately.....or immediately afterwards, it hard to say, but....and I, I hated that look. I, I hate the look because when my father looked at me that way I felt small, even though I was...I felt.....I *knew* what was to come...and it seemed that it did not matter – to my father – how small I was, how vulnerable, how (sighs) afraid and how helpless and defenseless I was and, and the pain and suffering I would endure (breathes) it was as if it didn't matter and what, what could I do? How could I be such that he....would see me as a person so that...um...or to see me as his son.....so I.....that's what I recalled....seeing even so many years later this incident happen and I was no longer a child....yet....um (breathes heavily)...that moment *exposed* me, um...temporarily stripping me of my...armor and...(breathes deeply).....um.....it's still difficult to speak of the moment (long pause)

R: Did you recall a specific experience of abuse in that moment?

P: (tone lowers as he continues to speak) .....No...um.....ah (deep breath) I think it was a culmination of ah.....all the abuse.....although, I have to say that.....(deep breath) when I think about...there's, there's so many moments that stands out and I tend to put them all together...but, I, I in a way they all constitute that period of my life of being abused...um, you know, from eating raw meat rubbed in the dirt, to eating tubs of raw onions....to being kicked and thrown up against the wall and being thrown down to the floor and beaten with wire.....it's hard to forget (clears throat) those moments..and.....urinating blood.....being awakened from sleep....with beatings and you don't know in that moment were you having some (emphatic tone) frightening dream, nightmare or is this really happening, (softer tone) unfortunately, it turns out it's really happening (even softer tone) and....trying to orient yourself to get some clarity to what's happening, but (resigned tone) at some point you come to understand what's happening.....under assault again.....(extremely sad, vulnerable tone) nothing you can do about it, but...and, and I think it is just, it is just every time, you know, I get that look that one of these....episodes is to follow, the extent to which you don't know...you don't know how bad it's going to be. You just know that it's going to be bad.....(sighs)

R: So you've had similar experiences of receiving this look?

P: (soft tone, slow speech continues) Well, that was the first time I think I, that again, I think that's why I was so...thrown by it, so....caught in it's grip...you know, people have looked at me many different ways and I've had, I've not had that experience. I've thought about these (clears throat) I've thought, you know, about those childhood experiences on my own without.....it being initiated by anyone or anything, just...perhaps just sitting alone, reflecting, thinking, but there was something more powerful about (clears throat) that incident with the homeowner, how he looked at me...and just all how....it was....it was my father's look and the terror of what was to come was so striking, so.....(softer tone) I didn't think that anyone could look at me like that again and that I would be so..moved by, you know...maybe I'd (clears throat).....I'd got caught in my own illusion of being so..well protected that it was only.....physical harm from someone that could bother me, not necessarily the way that someone looked at me that would affect me as powerfully as I was affected by this (tone lowers) homeowner's look.

R: So even though that that was the first experience, you've had other experiences since that time – or other encounters?

P: It's hard to say, I mean I've had an encounter since that....(heavy sigh) one...one encounter since then, I think that.....(heavy sigh) I was in the store...and....this, this..man...said to me, "I saw you.".....It seemed strange that ...I didn't know this

man...and for him to come up to me and to whisper....that he..he saw me ....um  
....um.....that bothered me. I wondered what he was up to...and...I don't remember...  
it's hard to recall much else from that. Either I got in my car and drove away, or he got in  
his car and drove away, but I was a little thrown by that and that I thought...you know,  
someone...could actually see me...um.....that was a little disturbing, um...  
because (heavy sigh) you know, (pace slows even more) I, I felt ....that I gave out of  
myself...I showed *only* of myself what I wanted others to see, what I felt others needed to  
see of me and, and I wanted to protect...I wanted to show myself as, as just ordinary, like  
anyone else and not be plagued by...uh.....my past experiences...and.....but, for  
someone to tell me that they saw me....(very sad, soft tone) that was troubling....(tone  
slightly increases) but, I, I haven't had an experience...since where I felt someone has  
looked at me in such a way as to evoke glimpses of my past or an experience where (tone  
very slow, very sad) someone has seen beyond what I've projected...those two  
experiences, I think has been...the most....troubling.

R: What do you mean people have seen beyond what you've projected?

P: Well (deep breath) uh...(deep breath) I think like most people I have this public self  
and this private self and....the public self is, uh....perhaps a façade, but I think it serves  
to....create...enough of what I am and what I am about.....to the public, that's, that's  
sufficient.....and, for the most part, that's how I like to think of myself...the private part  
of me is that part of me that I think is still vestiges of from...years gone by...my history  
wherein I had to (clears throat) build upon that...moment of...building this wall...sort of  
....keeping at bay, um.....

R: You stated that after that encounter, "I was shaken and out of sorts."

P: (resigned tone) Yeah, it was..it took a while to get over that experience. It's like being  
caught in public with your pants down (clears throat) your exposed and it can be  
embarrassing, but in this instance, it's.....I just took awhile. I think it was....the fact  
that it happened first of all, and.....(deep sigh, soft tone) yeah, I was, I was trying to  
figure out what to do with that...and....at the moment I wasn't quite sure what to do with  
that. It just....yeah, I was all out of sync and I needed to, needed to get myself back  
together.....yeah

R: Would you say that being "out of sync" meant that you were in the past?

P: (long breath).....Well, um.....it's a difficult question to answer. I don't, when I  
think about my childhood, I think about the abuse, I think about the difficulty of it all....  
Um....certainly at that point.....whether or not I was in sync, I'm not....I'm not sure  
about how to answer that. I could...I could say no, I was, I was not in sync in that I put  
forth ... a conscious effort to get myself in sync and...in this situation, this experience,

this encounter with the homeowner upset that...um...and all of the sudden now I have to get myself back in sync....I don't know if I'm making sense at this moment because I don't really know how to think about that.

R: Are you able to speak to how you were "out of sorts?"

P: (heavy breath) uh....well, yeah...I think...there was, there was, there was again anger, there was fear....um....fear about if I had to go back to this homeowner's house again...how would I be? How would I respond to another potential um....volatile blowup...or whatever from this homeowner? Would he....would I allow him to treat me the same way this ti...if I had to go back, as he did in the beginning and I was struggling with that (pause)

R: You seem to be talking about...you did mention what you might do if you came upon this mean again...

P: (heavy sigh) Yeah....um....I hated to be put in that position. I hated to....be in a place where..I had to think about that....um (clears throat) for the most part, you know, I could revisit people in their anger and their....prejudice and their....ah, whatever. It didn't bother me because I felt like I was in control of myself and people did not *dictate* how I responded to that. I felt in control of...enough in control of myself that I...could respond the way I wanted to respond. That I would be...the way I wanted to be regardless of how other people behave towards me.....but, (slower pace) *this was different...and (begins clicking pen) you know, in, in some ways, I, I'm thinking, you know, (confident tone), you don't talk to me, you don't, you don't....(deep breath) come up against me like that.*

R: Were there thoughts of revenge?

P: (still clicking pen) I wouldn't say there were thoughts of revenge. I would, I would say that...as long as there was no longer....any..possibility of there being my returning to this...this man's residence....I could....that was fine, *but*, what if I did have to return? What if there was a call back? Something that I did...went wrong, and I was the only tech available to respond? (slight laugh)....If he were to get angry again, how would I respond to that?....I really didn't want to....to know the answer to that, but I'm sure that somewhere, to be honest....I probably would not have allowed.....(lighter tone) well, let's just say we don't know....yeah, I'm just, I'm glad I never got to go back...and, I think that was the best....um...thing that could have happened.

R: You talk about how in your childhood you used to hide under your house or in the woods....

P: (terrified yet absolute tone) Yes

R: ...and that you say, “now my anger was my woods, my place underneath the house.” Are you talking about now currently or now after the encounter? When is “now?”

P: (clicking pen) Well, the now was, the now began after I said no one would ever hurt me again....um....

R: It continues?

P: ...and....in a sense...in a sense I would say...sometimes I chose to be angry and I don't like for anyone to try to abort my anger. I like my anger to run it's course. I think that...it is an anger that I control. It is not an anger that controls me...um...I...if, if my anger, (despondent tone) which I know if I unleashed it...the consequences of that could be devastating particularly for me and so it is a managed type of anger...um..... somehow I, I derive something from....(deep breath) from that anger and perhaps what I derive from that anger or at least what I thought I derive from that anger was a sense of security....(softly) and....because if....if I were angry and I knew....um..... well, it was, it was, it was an illusion that I've come to understand. That anger could not protect me no more than hiding in the woods or being underneath the house could protect me and that's essentially what my anger was about. It was about protecting me and I've since come to realize that....(even slower pace) if there was a need on my part to feel that need to protect myself, then that simply meant perhaps that those issues of the past are still in a way....ah...present...and at least not to the extent to which..it.....(deep breath).....(softly) it bothers me. I will say, I will say, no.

R: Have you had encounters with others, more specifically people whom you know where you've been reminded of your history of abuse?

P: (long, deep breath).....when I think about, when I hear about...children who are abused by a parent...a caregiver, whoever today, whether I'm reading it in the newspaper or seeing it on television or whatever, hearing about it...um, I suppose there's a kinship. I'm reminded of my own past experiences and...the question continues to arise...(sad, compassionate tone) how can...someone...be so brutal, so uncaring, so...insensitive to a child that they can.....afflict such violence upon them. It astounds me.

R: So for you to encounter someone who also has been abused as a child, physically...what is that encounter like for you?

P: (deep breath) You know, I think about in that moment..I'm not, not even, though I'm reminded of my experiences, I, I, I sort of know what that child is experiencing and ...but, my mind, my thoughts goes from the child to the perpetrator. I'm reminded of an incident that happened when I began this plumbing business....

R: And when was that, just for a sense of time.

P: It was about the same, perhaps during the same time that this encounter happened with me.

R: Which was about how long ago?

P: Oh...oh...ah....maybe 18 years ago....(slow pace, deliberate tone) This, my supervisor, service manager was...living in an apartment and...he had heard this thumping like someone was throwing something against the wall and, and...he'd heard this kid crying and he said he was hoping that it wasn't the parents throwing this child up against the wall or to the floor. He says, but then the child stopped crying and so he didn't think about it anymore, but a few minutes the...mother of the child came..was pounding on his door asking him to call 911...um...to call for an ambulance stating that their baby had fallen out of bed...and...and they didn't think the child was breathing...he called the ambulance. They came and they...he had given the mother a blanket to wrap the child in...so they took the child to the hospital and...the next day (clears throat) the service manager, since I was in the area of the hospital, radioed me and asked if I would stop by the hospital to retrieve his blanket, which, blanket his wife had crocheted for him and he'd wanted it back and to secondly to...inquire about the condition of the...child that was taken to the hospital and...I did so. And the child..stopped by to see the child and was told by the nurses that, that the child might not live. His body, the child was 9 months old, his body was so badly bruised. His face so swollen you could not see the child's eyes or mouth....and...I looked at the child and...just.....just walked out really.....angered..and...(deep breath) enraged by what I saw and.....(tone saddens further) when I took the blanket back to my boss and described how the child looked, and he informed me that the police had contacted him for.....what he knew about the situation and he...described to them what he had heard and their coming over to get him to call. (firm tone) It was just unbelievable that...(deep breath)...that someone could do that to a 9 month old baby (deep breath).....(deep breath) I know, I don't know if the child lived or died. Don't now to this day. I've thought about the times, how many times I came....close....to death by the hands of my father and.....and it continues, you know.

R: It continues?

P: The abuse, the abuse inflicted on other children continues and....

R: How early do you recall being abused?

P: I can remember as far back as 4 or 5 years old...being abused because I remember my 5<sup>th</sup> birthday, and, of course...I...remember...being abused before then, so it'....I was at least 4...I can remember.

R: Do you know from stories that maybe someone else has told you that you were abused even before that time period?

P: (incredibly sad tone) Um (deep breath)...my mom has stated that....(deep breath)...my father *never*, when he found out she was pregnant, um...he never accepted the fact that...he was now going to be a father with the responsibility of...raising and having...children....and, he just *never*.....we were....responsible....um, for ruining his life. I suppose he was bent...on doing the same...to my twin brother and me.

R: Has your mother said your father was abusive towards you even before you were born?

P: No, just that after we were born, he couldn't stand to look at us.....and, so I imagine *the look* started long before I caught sight of it.....(deep breath)

R: Do you have anything more to say?

P: (soft tone, barely audible) I don't want to say anymore.



**“Linda”**

R: I have a question about your incident. The first question is about the time. When did this occur?

P: That was not so long ago.....I think...it was....I would say like 2001/2002. Yeah, maybe a little bit more, but not before 2000, that's for sure.

R: You talk about seeing the girl and the man crossing the street and I was wondering about prior to you seeing the girl and the man crossing the street. Do you recall your thoughts or how you were feeling?

P: (light tone) It was pretty much like an everyday (slight laugh) after work kind of thing, so I was just like seeing the [traffic] light. I wasn't really thinking about anything that I can think of clearly.

R: Were you stressed or tired?

P: No, I'm not particularly, I'm not a very stressful...that doesn't happen very often. I was tired. I'm always tired by the end of the day, but...um...not more than any other day.

R: Nothing out of the ordinary?

P: No, no.

R: Now you say that, “all the time as they were crossing I was looking at them.” Can you tell me specifically at that time how you were feeling as you were looking at them, but before they looked at you?

P: Um, okay. Um, it was a long, because it's like 2 streets then 2 streets, so it's a long time. I could see them for a very, very long time as they tried to cross the first street and then try to cross the second street, and when they crossed the second street, they were by my side and then they had 2 more [streets] in the other direction. Um...I thought...I thought...I was thinking, they look nice. That, that...I remember thinking that like, (higher, even happier tone) ‘oh, they look so cute!’ (laughing). You know, like ‘oh, they're cute!’

R: Were you feeling happy or something else?

P: Yeah, yeah it was a nice feeling when I was looking, like, yeah, (higher, happier tone) 'okay, they're sweet...oh, the girl is sweet. Oh, yeah, the guy is sweet. They're all sweet. They look so sweet!' (laughing) That's what I was thinking, yeah.

R: And you mention that you were wondering how old the girl would be and that "she looked so small and frail." Can you tell me more about this girl being "small and frail?"

P: She had these, she was very thin, like what my mom calls 'Mickey Mouse legs,' so they were like *really, really* small and um...her face was really like thin and she had like this...cute dress...she was in a dress with like a sweater on top and it was...like...very... little (laughs). You know, like the dress was little and she was little and...she was very thin. She had big eyes, like when your...like kids have big eyes. I don't know. She looked small and she was holding the guy's hand, so she was *smaller*.

R: Were you feeling the same as you had felt before?

P: Yeah, at that point I was, I was more like, but it didn't happen all the time...I was first thinking 'oh, how cute!' then I thought like, (concerned tone) 'oh, she's so small.' And it was like at this point that I was thinking like '*oh, she's like you,*' you know, like, *she's so frail*' um...it was, it was more mixed by then, but it was not like anything...it was like (extremely concerned tone) '*Oh my God! Take care!*' (laughs)

R: What do you mean "it was more mixed?"

P: It was not so (high pitched, happy tone) '*cute..they look nice! This is beautiful.*' but kind of more like worried, worried? Yeah, I think worried is the right word.

R: Do you remember what you were worried about?

P: I don't know about...kids (laughing, light tone). About, like...like...like how you have to be that small and frail to bring up worrying. They're so small. That everybody has to go through that stage. Like to think that everybody...goes through that stage and that something could happen, almost definitely could happen.

R: So there was some assessment about...

P: Yes, yes

R: ...that something is going to happen?]

P: Yeah, not that it would happen, like...

R: But “almost definitely” it could?

P: Well, it’s something that could happen more easily than with adults. No, I was not really thinking about anything specific that could happen. I was vulnerable. At that point, I, I wasn’t thinking anything specific...I was just thinking like, like, (concerned tone) if she doesn’t have the guy with her, she wouldn’t even be able to probably (laughs) cross the street and make (serious tone) it alive to the other side, like, you know? Like she’s *very* small.

R: You were imagining other scenarios?

P: (casual tone) Yeah, I, I was just thinking that she’s small everywhere. You know, like, she will, she will eventually grow older, but she’s small right now, she will keep small for....ever

R: And I’m hearing that she needs someone to take care of her,...

P: Yeah

R: ...keep her safe.

P: Yeah, yeah, that was it.....the fact that she was with someone made her smaller. In the park, they don’t look so small.

R: You said that, “they both turned and looked” at you. Can you describe the man’s look? You said his look was, “very nice like for the girl.” Can you describe more or say more about the look?

P: Yeah, um. I don’t know what else to say about that, but...he was pretty good looking. I have something for gray hair. He was gray haired and he was a very handsome guy, but, he was not looking at me. He was just walking by, but when he.... they were like talking...they were....I don’t know if they were talking, talking, like saying something, but they were interacting in some way. Like they were looking at each other, they were....(slower pace) and when he looked around, he was more like...looking at the girl, first, like he turned around to look at the girl, but then suddenly he looked at me, so that’s when he turned around, sooo...he *still* had that look like he was veryyyy..sweet. It was very sweet. I don’t know. It was like the wrinkles that your eyes make (laugh), they look sweet. (laughing) It was sweet wrinkles.

R: So can you describe the facial expression toward the girl?

P: I only remember the eyes. I don't remember if he was smiling or serious. I'm not really sure about that. I only remember the eyes. (laughs) That's what I recall. (serious tone) It was a very sweet expression.

R: And you also mention that the girl looked at you. Can you describe her look?

P: She looked happy. She was...she was...yeah...very relaxed. She was happy and relaxed.

R: And you saw that in her facial expression or....?

P: Yeah, in her face. I was just looking at their faces.

R: So you went on to say that you "guessed she was around 5 and he looked to me that way and in that moment I realized that I was 5 once and that frail and small." First, I don't know if you already answered this....when you said that he looked at you in that same way, what did you see?

P: I was....(heavy sigh)....when he turned around he was more looking at the girl, so he was kind of....met my...it was....he was turning around to see the girl. I was in the car. I was down so he kind of crossed eyes with me, but he was giving that look to the girl, not to me, (excited tone), but he gave it to me! It was like that kind of look, like, it was very sweet, like, 'yeah, I'm interested in whatever you're doing or saying.' Like, it was very sweet. (slower pace) It was that kind of....like, 'I'm here!' or 'Yeah,' you know that kind of look and he (surprised tone; happiness) actually did look at *me* instead of looking at the girl then he looked at the girl, but he did look at me first. So he looked at me as if I...I felt that that look was meant for her so it made me feel, 'Oh, that's sweet! Yeah, you're here for me! Thank you!' Like, yeah (laughing, light tone), you know...(laughing) yeah, it made me feel like, 'Oh, that's cool!' (laughs)

R: You were sharing a moment?

P: (light tone) No, no, I was thinking that...I guess when I was a kid it was also nice to have someone like look, like when someone looked at you like, (high pitched, happy tone) 'oh, it's cool to have you here!' (laughs) Oh, I don't know, it was like that kind of.... 'oh, I'm very.....tranquil about....you'....I don't know. It was, it was.....that kind of recalling....of yeah, having a nice look.

R: You said, “I realized I was 5 once and that frail and small.” Do you have anything more to say about that, that feeling?

P: I don’t know if it’s clear through the writing, but it was very important that I was looking at the girl when the guy gave me the look. Like it was important that I could have *her* as a reference.

R: A reference?

P: (emphatic tone) Of how small you are when you receive...when you need all that attention. Like how small you are when you are that age and how small, like how much attention you need, you know? Like it was important that she was there. It was not only the look, but it was the look and the reference to the (laughs) size of the girl. That was important, yeah. It was about realizing...

R: Can you say more about why it was important that you had the reference, not only the look, but also the reference?

P: (slow pace) Um...it’s, it’s hard...I never...I never think of myself as...as having...I remember myself as having been 5 or 4 or 3. Like, I remember myself as that, but I never matched that with being *that* small. Like it’s, it’s not a match....you know?, it’s kind of like the realization that *that* age comes with *that* size.

R: What was that like for you?

P: (light tone) Surprising! You know, like in my own personal memory I never think of ...of...of that...smallness. I don’t think....the memories don’t come with a recognition of that so it was kind of surprising to realize that in order to get to my height, I *must* have passed through being that size and that small and that frail. It doesn’t....it’s not something that I recall, like.....um.....easily.

R: So you were....I’m wondering what your feelings were about this...seems like shock or surprise?

P: It was surprise. It was very surprising. It was like ah (smiling) *I had an epiphany! Huh! Now I understand so many things!* It was very surprising....ah....yeah. It was good thing to be surprised about, but it was *very* surprising. (tone lowers) It’s pretty obvious, yeah....

R: What do you mean “it’s pretty obvious?”

P: ...Well.....(critical, laughing tone) 5 year olds are small! They are supposed to be! You know? (laughs) I’m no different than anybody in that sense, (serious tone) so, why would it be different? Like, it’s pretty obvious that you’re supposed to be that size that age and then you grow....(softer tone) that’s how things are.

R: So how did you perceive yourself as a 5 year old before you saw this girl in reference to the man?

P: ...I don’t know....I’d....pretty much like I do myself now....like....or then, how I did it then.....someone.....uh...who made decisions and, you know, like someone big. I don’t know (laughing) not so small definitely. I don’t know, not so small, definitely not so small.

R: So maybe someone who could take care of herself?

P: Yeah, someone who could take care of herself, that kind of stuff.

R: And you said you had an epiphany...

P: *Ah, I understand!*

R: ....and you understand. What was the epiphany? What did you understand?

P: Um....uh....well, I understood that I was small (laughing)...I’m going in circles here! But, I understand that I was, that I was.....that I was small! (laughing) You know? (matter-of-fact tone) That I was not big enough to take care of myself. That I was not big enough to...to fight back, if it was ever necessary...that I was not big enough. That it was....it was....that like, the comparison between an adult and a, a 5 year old is a pretty obvious...win for the adult when it comes to size and strength and probably even like....so, yeah, yeah....

R: You go on to say that you had “felt very very vulnerable and frail” and I’m wondering if there was anticipation of something?

P: I don’t understand.

R: Did you...were you expecting something to happen or....

P: Then? Like when...

R: ...when you were feeling “very very vulnerable and frail?”

P: (sullen tone; “ah ha!” tone) No, no. It was.....it was.....not anticipation of something to happen afterward... It was not. It was....just a self realization. It was...it didn't really change, it didn't change how I, how things would happen afterward. It only changed how I felt about *things* in my past. That's what it changed. It didn't change, to....like in a very obvious way it didn't....anticipate anything different happening. After that, many things *did* change, but it was not anticipation of that, it was the changes were more...about my....my conception of myself...Make sense? (laughs)

R: So you weren't anticipating, you were thrown back to your past?

P: Back, yeah.

R: But you also said, “but mostly I felt sad, very sad.” Can you talk more about the sadness?

P: Yeah....um....um.....I don't know, it's hard....it's hard to explain (laughs) I think I wrote that it's hard to explain....like I was very surprised about realizing that I was once small and vulnerable and all that...and....I don't know, it's....when I thought about myself...when I was looking back at myself, not at that point, like at that point in my life, I guess, when I look back to my life or whatever, I...I have always been very *critical*...you know? Like, *I should have done this. I should have done that*, you know? And I keep like....keep coming back to things and, you know, like, ‘*you were stupid with that..you were good with that or bad with that*’ or whatever. I have always been very critical and (slower pace) I have *always* judged myself as an adult even when I think about things that happened a long time before that..and then, when I realized that, that I was a *kid*, like that I was *so* small, back then, then it's not....it's not fair to judge myself as an adult. Like it was clear that it was not fair. Like my today me judging my then me as an adult, and it was *not* fair that things happened to me as a kid with another adult. It was not fair, and, stupid as it is, I never clearly realized that it was *that*. That it was *not* fair....like, you know, like it's not fair and it's sad, it like was like the first time that I realized that it was sad...that it's *not* fair (laughs) you know, like it was very out of control because I did not think [inaudible words].....sad. (light tone) There's nothing else.

R: So you felt that you didn't have control, but you also had that feeling of “achievement.” Does that relate to your epiphany?

P: It um....more...when it happened, I had been in therapy for a *long* time...and there were some things, when I was dealing with my past, I, that were very hard to understand, that I never....that I always felt like I was bumping into a wall and I felt achieve – I felt I had understood something so...I, it was more achievement in that way. It was, I was in that time of my life, I was struggling with ‘*Can’t be!*’ (laughs) So I guess that it was more in that sense that it felt like an achievement.

R: I’m going to quote another part of your writing. See if you can tell me more about this – “I just watched them, I was almost paralyzed, like I couldn’t move, I had to stare. I think in some way I felt if I did something this feeling of being small and frail would end and I didn’t completely want it to end. I wanted to remember.”

P: ...Um....this again relates to....to the achievement part of that. I...I...I...I thought that I would...I would keep it, in the end, keep it in the back of my mind, if it was short, too short. Like I wanted to, like, to be completely *feeling*...like...what I was feeling, that realization and that smallness – everything. I wanted to remember that, even if it was saddening I wanted....(laughs) I felt it was important to remember, so I tried to keep it loooong and I was consciously thinking, like, ‘I have to remember’ (laughs) ‘I have to remember this.’ Yeah.

R: And you said you drove home slowly and you were feeling surprised.

P: It was the same surprise all the time. I was like ‘*Oh, 5 years old! Small!*’ you know, it was a surprise. I was not expecting anything. Sometimes you look for things. I was not looking for anything here. (laughs)

R: I’m wondering...you go on to say with the sadness you had this “stupid feeling”... “stupid feeling and thoughts, it was dumb of me not to always know that. I cried a lot. Later that evening I cut.” Are you able to say more about that?

P: About what?

R: About cutting. Can you talk about that?

P: (laughing; light tone) Yeah, yeah. It was um....after everything. I felt like it was *so* obvious, like, ‘of course I was small.’ There’s nothing to...there’s nothing extremely interesting about that (laughs). Of course. So I was like, ‘How didn’t you see this before? Why is this so shocking and surprising and saddening, you know, it’s *dumb! It’s obvious!* So I was kind of.....(laughs) kicking myself (serious tone) for that.



R: So was the cutting a punishment?

P: No, um, I have um....it's m more like....cutting is....yes, it's just....

R: Are you able to talk about this?

P: It's just a very difficult thing to explain. I've done it...*forever*, like *forever*...

R: Since when to.....?

P: Well, I never...when I was a kid, I didn't cut because I didn't have access to anything that cut in my house (laughs). (serious tone) But it was different. I did other things like I would, I would, I would open my skin with my nails....or I would use the stapler and staple myself and do that sort of thing since like....since like forever....since like 5 or 6 I have done that...and then I grew up and discovered (light tone; excitement; awe) a whole new world of different things you can do (laughs)....and, uh, but it's not, it's *not* a punishment. It's more like a release...it's more like...when I feel that I'm not getting it together. Like when my...mind is too....loud or too busy or too disoriented, it just helps me focus. So it releases all the tension and leaves me focused. It's been a long time since I did it so, but it....it's a very good way of focusing again.

R: Very good way?

P: Yeah, getting it together.

R: So cutting isn't something you've done for awhile?

P: Sometimes I struggle with it....uh.....sometimes I struggle with it. It's something I'm trying to not do much. When I came to Pittsburgh I went to counseling because I have been without cutting for a very long time and I wanted to cut again when I came here. So I went to counseling to stop that and...it didn't quite help..like I ended up burning one day, but that's it. That's the last time. So I struggle with it now and again....

R: Getting back to the experience, afterward, I'm wondering how long the memories of ...the experiences of you and the memories of your past stayed with you and all these feelings and thoughts you were having.

P: Um....I guess the feelings stayed for awhile....and the sadness stayed for awhile. I was crying and that, but, um, that confusion, those very strong feelings that are confusing

are gone with the cutting so I usually did it late at night so probably it (casual tone) stayed with me (sing-song tone) all day until I cut at night (casual tone), so those overwhelming feelings might not leave....continue for awhile. I remember I thought about this *a lot* during that period of time. I thought about it. I gave it a lot of thought.

R: Awhile being?

P: Uh, I don't know. I guess....in a strong way, probably weeks and then it kept coming back afterwards, but not so strong. But I guess, some weeks. Yeah.

R: So can you tell me at the time of the experience, was it during the experience of looking at the girl and the man and referencing the size of the girl to the man...was it during that time that you....oh, you did say this – you remembered a past experience of abuse – can you talk briefly about the abuse, who abused you, your age, and the context of it?

P: Yeah, umm.....it was, it was, it was a woman who was supposed to take care of me. She was living with us and her job was to take care of me.

R: Like a nanny?

P: Yeah, yeah....and I...was...I was...I was....around....5 years old. She stayed for 2 years. She left when....my parents kind of learned about this, but she left *WAY* too late then when she should have. It took them awhile to get rid of her and (laughs) it took them awhile to notice that something weird was going on (laughs)....uh, yeah.

R: So I'm taking it that she abused you – she physically abused you – more than on one occasion.

P: (rapid response) Yeah.

R: Can you describe the type of physical abuse?

P: Um....I have a very, like....broken memory....of that time, so there's some things that are very clear and there are some things that are not. Like, for instance, I know that she beat me because, because my mom once told, I once asked my mother about all this and she told me like she did notice several times I was like all bruised all over, but then she, the woman, said something like 'oh, she fell from' whatever or whatever and whatever and then she...like how they eventually knew that something was going on – another woman like the one who took care of the house, she asked to meet them, so they

met outside of the house and she told them ‘you have to get rid of this woman because she, she, she doesn’t know, she’s beating her.’ So, she said she’s beating me. Truth is, I...(smiling, confident tone) I *know* it happened cause, you know, like....but, the physical beatings, I have *NO* memories. I don’t remember that....but I have, which I found kind of amazing (laughs) if you think about it.

R: What is kind of amazing?

P: (surprised tone) That I don’t remember...but I do remember other stuff...it’s just... weird...and, uh....I remember, I remember a lot the water thing that I write about, um... simply because you need a kid to be small to (laughs) take them by the leg and handle them in that way. You really have to be small....um.....uh, I remember that....she put me in a very small room (laughs). I thought that was very scary. I know it’s not physical abuse – at least she wasn’t hitting me, I was just kept there.

R: As punishment?

P: No....I think it was more like ‘don’t bother’ (laughs). It was, it was....it’s hard to explain....I always...I always...in some part of me I thought because I cut, I burned, I thought maybe I liked it, maybe I liked it. Maybe I was actually liking some of it because, I was thinking, I do it because I want it and I do it because I *need* it. It helps me and, of course, I do it because I *like* it. (matter-of-fact tone) I don’t, I don’t like it when I don’t do it. You know, like I don’t like the pain when someone else does it or I do it when I don’t need it. I do like it. So...there was always like these back thoughts that I was thinking...because I liked it, I asked for it. I wanted it. All of these back thoughts kept coming, but it’s so obvious that when you’re so small, it becomes obvious that it was not your choice, so it was...it changed...it changed the way I thought about....about.... about it. [inaudible portion of tape]

R: [inaudible portion of tape] You blame yourself?

P: In a way. It’s hard to completely get rid of all the things you tell yourself, but it did, it did change that...way of recalling, of recalling it....a different way of recalling it, it’s recalling it, but giving myself much less....power in the whole situation.

R: I’m wondering if you’ve had, since that experience or as an adult, any other encounters with strangers that has brought about these feelings of sadness, vulnerability ...um...brought back experiences of your history of abuse?

P: Not that I can recall. It's usually...especially not strangers...it's...it...no, no... like it was very surprising then, but it never happened again, so surprising. I'm pretty sure it never happened before that (laughs) or I would have remembered. But, uh, afterwards, I guess the surprise was kind of.....done with....I was done with the surprise, I guess. I don't remember having feeling that way again...

R: Or remembering your past abuse?

P: Yeah, no.....it sometimes happens, but not with strangers. Sometimes...it's easier for me to think about it with people I know, but.....yeah, not with strangers, usually – not that I can *recall* though, anyway. Not in such a strong way, anyway.

R: So you've have some type of encounter or encounters with people whom you know that has brought back your experiences of being physically abused?

P: When I was younger – I remember this – when I was at school....um....like sometimes when people touched me, I would, they would be people I know – strangers don't touch you, usually anyway (laughs) – it would remind me sometimes. I would be very bothered by that kind of stuff.

R: Bothered by what kind of touch?

P: It could be the same touch of everyday, but then sometimes it bothered me...I really don't know what made it different. Like...when I was not prepared, when you don't see someone coming, when I didn't see it coming, it sometimes really bothered me and it did...yeah, like, the unexpected kind of contact creped me a little....um...I remember that uh....I've been getting better with that part (laughs) it's creeps me less.

R: There are some encounters in your adulthood where unexpected physical contact creeps you?

P: Yeah, but not much now. It used to creep me a lot when I was in high school. I remember (laughs), I remember that it used to creep me a lot, but, it has changed. Um...I know..I do remember it with not such strong feelings. Like sometimes when you see people are too rough on the kids, I do remember and it makes me kind of angry. But, I don't feel it so strong like this time. I don't get such strong feelings, like personal, like you *personally* feeling that...it's more like a recalling thing when I see, for example, like they're being too rough, but it's not...it's just a recalling, it's not a feeling.

R: And when you have unexpected physical contact as an adult – you said it's getting less creepy. Is there a recalling and some kind of feeling?

P: No, not now. It doesn't...the physical kind of contact that bothered me lowered.

R: I'm wondering also what it is like for you now to see young or very small children, I guess, in reference to an adult

P: Uh...It has not been...it's not that surprising. I just think they're cute (laughs). I don't...I guess sometimes I do, but for the most part I don't, I don't, I don't see myself in them like I did with the other girl. I just see kids, cute kids (laughs). That was a very specific point. I can't say for sure that I *never* think of it, but it's never, it's not usually, I guess, at least.

R: Can you talk a little bit about how physical child abuse is perceived in Columbia? Is it acceptable? Is it viewed like it is in the United States?

P: I think it's not acceptable, but...people do expect some kind of spanking to educate your children. I think in many ways it's...it's still not accepted, but it's pretty common to have at least a certain degree of spanking that is acceptable. But, I think with time, it's become..more...people keep doing it, but it's more..not accepted. I think it's changing. I think abuse is given more importance here, but it's the same feeling towards it.

## **“Harold”**

R: You mentioned in this incident when you were traveling to D.C. you saw “a black female” coming through the bus “hitting and kicking what [you] presumed was her daughter.”

P: Yeah

R: You said the woman looked at you – you looked at each other before and when the abuse took place. Can you describe the look from her and how you felt initially before the abuse took place? How was she looking at you? Can you describe her facial expression, body language?

P: (steady pace; confident) Yeah. I think there is not much to say about that. It was just a look to any stranger in the bus. She was like a normal person that just looked at me, I looked at her, and that was it. I mean, just like eye contact and that was it. It was not a big deal. She was normal, I mean like normally as anyone in the bus. Nothing special in her. She was just, yeah, a female with her daughter or a little child on her side and that was it. I mean, pretty much like a regular thing.

R: So when the abuse was taking place, you also exchanged a look. Can you describe that look?

P: Yeah, she was, when she was abusing the child, she was upset and when I looked at her, I think she felt something inside like, um, like if I were complaining or something like that. But, ah, yeah, she looked at me with like an angry face and I just looked at her. I was, yeah, I was trying to complain with my eyes (laughs). I was trying to tell her I don't think that's right. I was trying to be disapproving, like, ah, yeah, with a disapproving attitude in my eyes. I don't know if she got it, but I felt like she got it. And I felt she, she was, she was understanding like most of the people or at least some of the people around was not approving her attitude. Yeah, she was just pretty much angry. I don't think she was doing anything more than kicking and beating, you know, like, she was just upset, angry and doing it, and keep doing it and going out of the bus.

R: So in her facial expression and maybe her body language as well, how did you see that she was angry?

P: It was, it was in her eyes. Pretty much I could see that in the eyes and, ah, she was moving faster like when people get angry sometimes they like show more energy. I think that's a..a common expression. I mean it's not the only way to show that you are angry,

but it's a, it's a way of telling the other that you, you, you have, you have rage or something inside you. And the eyes were like, the face was like, I don't know, the eyebrows were close to each other more than normal and the eyes were very open and, and, and, yeah, as I told you, she was moving very fast and, you know, like trying to push and fast and strong and all the movements were like exaggerated.

R: You said during the look exchanged, when the abuse was occurring, that you were trying to give her a disapproving look? You were trying to complain with your eyes...

P: Yeah, yeah, I told you...

R: ...so can you say any more about your feelings and thoughts during this time?

P: Yeah, well I, when I see that kind of things, I usually feel upset. I feel angry. I feel I would like to, to, to answer for the kid, you know? To hit her back or something like that. Yeah, uh, I never did so, not here, not in Columbia. I, I feel here I am even more constrained because I feel if I do something like that, I'll be...sent back to my country and that, that would not be good. In Columbia, I might be just taken to the police and, I don't know, they will charge me with something, maybe not so bad (laughs). So I was pretty much like stopping or trying to cool down, you know, not trying to get my rage and my anger out of my body...you know, not expressing it, but I was at least trying to tell her I'm not, I don't agree with you. I was trying to tell her as a social sanction. I was trying to be part of that community around her that was the only people knowing what she was doing...and, yeah, that was, that's it. That's pretty much it. (matter-of-fact tone) I always feel rage. I feel upset. I always want to, like get revenge for like, what happened to me before. It's something, like I, I feel a particular connection with the people that is going through...an abusive situation. So, yeah, I try to support them, somehow, in the way I can, where I see it's possible for me.

R: And then you mention that after witnessing the abuse, you "got a little depressed." Can you say more about that?

P: Yes. I always, when I see that kind of things, I always feel..like, without power to do anything...like, uh, very small and little compared, if you compare that with the society. I always feel that in many ways. I always feel the society is wrong in many ways and this is a particular issue when I feel very...very...*little* compared to the big thing in the customs. You know? I feel like people is used to that and have been doing that for years and years and I...pretty much can do...can't help it. I can't stop it. I just can do little things around me, yeah, I know that will help in the end if more people do that then it will be better. We can do it better. Still, I feel I would like to do more. I'm that case, I

would like to just go and hit back the female, I mean, the woman that was hitting the girl, the kid. But, it won't help. I know it won't help. Maybe (gentle laugh) later and she will, she will, she will kick *harder* the girl, complaining about what happened or telling her it's her fault or something like that. So, so, I feel like it's something I don't have the power to do anything about. It's just that's what makes me depressed, makes me feel bad and....*small*.

R: And you said this is “a very difficult problem to be handled by societies.” Is there more to say about it being “a very difficult problem?”

P: Yeah, um, well, *yes*. I feel, um, here and in my country and all the countries I have visited I have seen that. I have seen, like, people who are scared, people having bad, hard times, bad memories about what happened and having problems to, to talk to people – being shy, being quiet, suffering from panic attacks and that kind of things. And I think most, I mean when I talk to them or like as friends or whatever, I always feel like they, they have, and they tell me that they have been abused and something like that, either physically or psychologically. I feel that's a big part of what they, what they hate or what they don't like or why they suffer. It's this is very related and societies are not doing much about it. I feel *maybe*, yeah, education, it somehow...trying to do that. But, when I talk to my parents and I complain about, uh, I complain to them because they hit me, uh ...uh, they always said, they, like, one of their excuses or arguments is the people from my school, the Catholic priests, the Jesuits, they told them that was a nice or good way to educate kids. So, I still think there are some people, I mean people with power, who are trying to study how to educate people who still is attached to that awkward and old style of teaching people and I don't believe in any way that *that* is a good or the only way to treat kids. I don't, I don't believe so. I just feel it's a, a easy way out of the problem. It's a way of shifting the responsibility of having kids and educating them, educating them. It's just a, it's just a....shortcut to try to, to avoid the problems, to try to make them just follow a path and not try to explain and convince them that the best path. Maybe they don't want to face the, the reality that there are so many paths in the society that are not right. It's just many mistakes the people don't want to think about those. It's just my feeling. It's what I have been thinking for a long time. I just feel, it's, yeah, it's a way of hiding or not facing the reality. It's just that.

R: And you mention – you stated – you think your father “did a bigger damage with his corrections than the god he could [have] made on me.” Can you say more?

P: (trepidation in voice?)...Yeah. I think my, my father was trying to, to educate me in what he, he thought was a 'right' way, but I, I think when he...he hit me, it was.... I mean I never got the point. I never understood what was going on and I was always, like,



just scared and just hiding from him, trying to avoid him, trying to....to....just follow what he said, but, not understanding, not really answering the questions that I think kids should answer when they are being...part of a society. So, I, I think my father just, ah... make, like, educate me as a, pretty much as a, as a, as a mouse that is on an experiment, like, if you know on the door you will get toys. If you touch this, you will get hurt and that kind of stuff. But that's not the way of explaining and, like, ah, like, facing all the things and trying to....educate a kid. So I think, like....and....and from his...attitude, from his views on abuse, I just go....ah, a lot of rage a lot of, uh, prevention, uh, a lot ...ah, like fear.

R: Prevention?

P: Yeah, prevention, like when you're like trying to talk to someone or you're...ah trying to deal with someone. I think I always have my guard up. I'm always prevent facing someone aggressive. I'm always trying to be....(higher tone) I'm more like an aggressive – (quickly) I'm trying to change that because I'm somehow conscious of that, but I always am an aggressive player when doing sports. I'm an aggressive driver when I'm driving. I'm an aggressive person in many ways. It's not, I don't think it's because I *hate* the world or something like that. It's just a way of protecting myself. It's just trying to – I can be more aggressive because, you know, like, I couldn't be more aggressive than my father was, but now I can. So, I try to protect myself, being an aggressive person. Then...that works. That works for me in the way if you don't think about it, you feel like, *well, it's fine*. In the games, everybody's scared (laughs), nobody wants to, to be near you. Nobody wants to...to be over you, just basically win. Or you just find that person is stronger than you are. But, that maybe is not the best way of enjoying life (laughs). So...I, I, I realize I should change that, but it takes me so much time, so much work, so much energy that I, I'm glad to be using that in a way different way, in a different issue, you know, like, participating in doing better things than trying to correct my and fix my...problems, problems that couldn't or shouldn't be there. I just feel like it's a waste of time and energy and a lifetime, everything, you know, like, I could, I feel like I could be a better person if I wouldn't be fixing all that little things.

R: But, you feel a need to protect yourself? And, if so, from what – or who?

P: Yeah, it, it's just like, I feel like, as I told you, I have to have my guard up. I am like in a defensive way always. Not, not allowing anyone to hurt me. I am just trying to...I feel I have to keep my guard up because...yeah, sometimes I feel like some people is attacking me with – when, when – it, it, I think, or when I am cool minded, I feel it is not. Sometime when I am playing games or something like that, I feel people hit stronger than they should be, then I answer back, but it's, it's sometimes not like that. Sometimes

people is just playing the game. Or...I, I also told you when I...when I was like studying or something like that and I...eh...make presentations or something, people would criticize me and I would take it like very personally. But then I realized it's not personally, maybe people just thinking about what I, what I was talking about, so I was... now I feel like if I just listen to the people and think what, *really* think about what they are telling me, I would try to make it...better and try to....(sigh)...to solve it in a better way and take the good things out of faith and try not to, not trying to take it as a... like as an attack. And...that, that's the thing that make me feel like I am somehow..defending myself many times and I don't have to do that..most of the time. And now I am, I am trying to change in that way and I think that I already did so in many ways, but still I have to keep working in that and it's, it's just a way of relating with the people in different situations. It's, it's, it is that.

R: Okay, so, I know you've said that you had a hard time differentiating between what's an attack versus what's aggressive versus what's...I can't remember your word exactly... part of the play, part of the game...

P: Of the situation

R: ...or the situation, so, I'm wondering, in those moments, do you feel...you said you recall the abuse, do you feel like you're being abused?

P: (quick response) Yeah, it is...I, I feel pretty much like they're, uh, like exaggerating what they should do, or like they, the way of doing, yeah, the way of playing or the way of being the boss or the way of criticizing. So I feel like they are abusing somehow the power they have, like being a boss or being stronger or bigger in a game or just being part of the public in a presentation, you have a very comfortable position because nobody.. I mean what you, what you're telling is not being criticized as the one in front of you is telling. So, they're, sometimes I feel like they're using their like, powerful position to.. to...to... yeah, take advantage of me, somehow. But and then I realize it is not many times, most of the time. Of course, there are some people sometimes I feel like there are some bosses that are, like obviously there are some players that are abusive, there are some public persons that are abusive of their positions, but the thing is try to recognize when is it and when is not and try even, even if it is, try to address it in a better way that make it better and not so confrontational all the time.

R: Going back, you said when you had seen this incident, the situation of this girl being abused, you felt rage, you felt the need to protect yourself which is your guard, and you felt fear. Can you talk about, I don't know if there is any more to say about the rage, you

did speak about that, but there may be something more to say about that, and can you speak about the fear?

P: Um, the rage I don't think there is much to tell. It was, yeah, I think I said like it's pretty much I felt upset and, and fear is, is just like when you feel like you're in the position of the other person you can pretty much have the same feelings or feel how the other person should be feeling, and, and, I felt like I was, I was scared by the situation if I, I would be scared by the situation if I were the girl. So I feel, I feel like, it's kind of like connection, like a sympathy for her. Uh...yeah, I don't know if sympathy. I think (slight laugh) connection is better somehow it describes more what I felt. Um...it is yeah, it just like sharing the, the position and the situation and the feelings and the maybe, the, the fear that she was...yeah, (voice saddens) she was scared by the adult hitting her. She was pretty much crying and not liking, so. (softer tone) It was like a, yeah, way of connecting with her.

R: After the incident you gave her the "complaining look." I'm assuming there was no other actions, just the look? So after the abuse, this incident, um...did the feeling of depression and thoughts of your experiences of abuse stay with you for long?

P: (slowly) I, I, um I feel I just thought about that in the next minutes. Like, repeatedly, like, frequently I was thinking and thinking about it and remembering and everything. Uh, but you know I like always try to compare and try to feel like the person was feeling and how I felt and try to link everything. Uh...um...but then I just stopped thinking about that. I just moved to a different issue. I don't know. We were traveling, many things were coming over, but, yeah, later on I just start remembering again and think about it for awhile and then it starts to go, like, the...the gaps of time, between each time I think about it grow and grow until I just stop thinking about it. But, yes, I think I still like keep going back to it, the situation or the issue again and again, but yeah, every time with more space, time in between. And...yeah, there is something that...the thing doesn't happen anymore in my mind.

R: Can you tell me more about the past physical abuse that you recalled during this time? You mention it was some incident where you didn't want to share ice cream with your sister. Can you tell me more about this incident – how old you were?

P: I can remember something. Uh, let me think. Like we was living in this building. I was...less than 11, so that means, and my older sister is 2 years older than me and my younger sister is 3 years younger than me. Um...well, I was less than 11 and older than...7, I guess. Something more close, I guess to 9 because it wasn't so close to the date that we got into that building. Um...well, um...what happened was that my mother

prepared a berry fruit shake, I don't remember the name of the berry. In Spanish it's *morta*. And, uh, I liked that shake, so ah, we always used to eat bean soup on Saturdays and we always used to drink that berry shake with the bean soup. But if you combine those, it is very heavy for the stomach, so, I always tried to avoid the berry shake in the lunch and I tried to do something like either put it in the frig for awhile or just try to make some kind of ice cream with that. And, uh, this time, like that time, I decided to make ice cream and the ice creams were very good...So, I was keeping it in the refrigerator and I was very happy to have those and then I realized that my ice cream was disappearing, but it was funny because I, I didn't, I mean didn't like that because I didn't, I didn't drink my..my shake in the lunch just to get the ice cream and then it was disappearing which meant that someone was eating it and I asked my sisters if they were the ones who were eating my ice cream and they said, 'yeah, yes, we're doing that.' And I just said, 'no I don't like you doing that. I don't want to share it. It's mine. And I just did it and I just sacrificed my lunch shake' and...and then they...were discussed for awhile, you know, like all brothers and sisters fight, 'no it's mine – it's mine – I can do that.' Then of course we always went up the hierarchy to ask our parents about that. So our parents um decide that I should give it to them, I should share my ice cream. But then I decided, well, I don't have to share it. I'd rather throw away the ice cream than share it. I was throwing it away when my father realized what I was doing and...and he was very angry...he was very upset. (quicker pace) I, I still think something was going on in his mind, in his life and he was angry about something else because it was excessive. I understand that...a person or whatever, siblings should share some things, should be able to share things and be, share things more in the community than just in them, but still (higher tone) you can just explain that or create some kind of way of telling the kid or teaching the kid that he should do that...uh...he should share some things. But, uh...he just got very angry. He started pushing me, then..yeah, he hit me, he punched me with a fist and then I start bleeding on the lip. I was trying to run away. He caught me, of course. I was (laughs) very small and he was *huge*, for me at least. He kicked me on my butt and I just fell down because the kick was very strong. And when I was trying to...stand up he slapped me and..then...he just got me somehow, I don't know, by my arm and he started to hit me with the belt and...and then he just stopped me against and started to tell me how "bad boy" and "shitty," you know, like using very bad words I was – for what I was doing, and, I don't know, I feel like maybe because of something that was on his mind. (higher tone) I think I was, yeah I wasn't that messy. I was a good kid at school. I never had problems at the school. I never had big issues in the neighborhood. I was a pretty good kid, most of the time. I, sometimes things happen sometimes. You screw here, you mess around here, but not much. Some little things. I think things lots of other people has done at some point, uh, when they were kids. Uh, but, yeah, we were always fighting with my sisters. I don't know, maybe my father just hated that so much, or something. Yeah, but, (low tone) that was very bad. (normal tone) And that was, of course, the worst.

That's the worst. That's the one I remember the most because that was the worst time he hit me. Uh, but he hit me like, every...like, I can tell that, my mother hit me with a belt like..once, not once per week, almost once every two or three weeks...and, my father at least one every two days, at least, and with a belt and sometimes he slapped me, but not many. And this time, it was just like (tone of disbelief, soft) *just too much*. Yeah, yeah. And, of course my father was always very psychologically abusive. He always tells very manipulative things to us. He was always trying to push us to do like things just, I don't know, to make us feel bad more than anything. Um...and, yeah. I, I already think I tried to get over it so many times. I'm trying, I cry, I everything, and now even though I would *love* to hit him back but now it's just too late, I just try to live with it and try to uh, um, understand it wasn't what he meant to do many times, at least. And, for, for the other things, he's pretty much a good father. He...he tried, he tried and I think it's not easy. Being a father should be hard, and, that, that, I think that kind of things scare me somehow because I don't want to do the same thing to my children, if I have some at some point. So, that's kind of a challenge, but also a *fear* I have. Yeah, I think that scares me. Yeah, I think that's pretty much what it was, what I felt. I also felt a lot of fear, I was thinking, 'fuck shit! when this thing is going to be over? I just want to go to my bed.' And yeah when he was doing this thing, hitting and kicking me like the worst thing, when he started to hit me *very* hard, my mother start to cry and my sisters start to cry and my, yeah, everybody was crying around me, so I just try to look at them and tell me, (comforting, strong tone) 'don't worry, I'll be fine. I'll be fine. I'm strong enough. Not to answer back, but strong enough to survive this.' (higher tone) And, yeah, this is very funny, the last time he tried to hit me I was big enough, I was at least like 16 or 17 and I stand in front of him and I just told him, (empowered tone) '*Just try, just try to hit me. I would love if you try to hit me. I will kill you for all the times you hit me (laughing). So just try that and now I am very strong so at least we will both be dead. But fine, that will be fine to me.*' But I don't think that way of being with your father is the best of solving things, but, yeah, he stopped doing that. He stopped trying to hit anyone if my family. I told him, (confident) '*If you try to hit anyone else in my family, me or anyone else, (slight laugh) I will kill you. So, think about it twice next time.*' (slight laugh) And, yeah, that's what happened. And, I think that's a bad way of solving things, it's the way that works for me at that time. But I think that some...some...somehow I feel that people learn from the way they start to solve the problems and if they, something like that works for them, they keep doing it as a general way of solving problems, so, many times in relating to people, I have try, or hit people that, make fun of me, or something like that, I sometimes answer physically and I think it is...it is...it is not a good way. I mean, that gave me problems (laughs) at some points. Yeah, it doesn't happen so many times, but it happens...or people who was trying to...um...get money from me, not really steal, but not trying to pay for it that much, I am very...I would very easily...or more easily than other persons get close to a physical confrontation. Yeah, I think that covers a lot.

R: You have had experiences as an adult where someone has either come at you or you feel attacked physically or verbally and you want to, you feel abused, you want to....?

P: Yeah, I have like three stories that come to my mind very fast. One was in the office. We were going like with office friends to a party and I used to have a...(breathe) ...do you have a name for a...I don't remember it, like kind of nickname, but it's not a nickname, it's a funny nickname people don't like so much?

R: No. You mean to call someone names?

P: Yeah, call names. I was calling a friend of mine funny nicknames, but he didn't like it. He was pretty relaxed. I just called him again by the same name and he just came on my back and pushed me. He pushed me. I kept laughing, I thought he was playing, but when I looked at him and he was angry, (lower tone) he was pretty much angry, (normal tone) and I just kept asking him for awhile, (questioning tone) 'Do you mean to hurt me? Do you *really* mean to hurt me? Do you want to hurt me?' And he just started to walk away and tell me, (angry tone) 'I told you! I told you! I told you not to call me that! I told you!' And then we got in a crowd, more people around, we were alone at the time, nobody saw that, but then we got in a crowd and I told him, 'Do you really meant to hurt me?' And he said, (angrily) 'C'mon, just shut up and just forget it.' And I just tried to hit him *so* bad that someone stopped me from doing it. I, I, I tried to hit him with my fist, but someone pushed my fist before I, I threw it to his face. And then the thing stopped there and I just like apologized and he apologized and that was it. I mean that wasn't a behavior for an office (laughs) or for any adult. And this other time I was with my wife in a parking lot in Columbia and they crashed her car – someone in the parking lot. We told the person in charge, like, 'Hey, the car is crashed and you have to answer about that. I mean you have to be responsible for that.' And he denied. He said, 'Oh it's an old crash. I'm not going to answer for anything. I'm not going to pay anything for that.' And I got upset because she was trying to be nice with him. I, I wasn't, I wasn't out of the car, I was in the car. They were talking outside of the car. And then they kept talking about it and he was trying to, just to avoid the responsibility. And I..got upset. I got angry and I just went out of the car and yell at him and I told him, (angry) 'You're going to pay or I will do something. I will call the police or something like that. You have to pay for this!,' just yelling, really upset. And he just started to laugh at me. And he started to laugh at me and what I thought is, (angry) 'You want to laugh at me? You want to make fun of me? I will tell you what is fun.' I just started to hit him and hit him and hit him until my wife jump on me and he started to..hit us with an umbrella and..well, many people came to the place. And..there was another time, but I don't remember now. Those are pretty much...ah, yes! When I was in the university...when I was younger and in the

university I was always like around some people, some friends. And one of them I, he was very, like, a funny guy, what he thinks is funny. And he was always trying to make fun of the others. And he was always making fun of me in many ways and keeping doing it, doing it. And I always tell him not to do it, not to do it. And I always sometimes like push him and tell him very seriously, (angry tone) 'If you do that, I will hit you. If you do that, I will hit you' many times, but he never stopped doing that. So, I just one day got very pissed off and I pushed him onto the floor. I didn't do anything more, that, that was (slight laugh) more than enough. It, it didn't like...go so bad...Like, I mean like nothing else happened, but it's better not to. I feel like it's better not to be physical. It's better to think of something else or solving the problems better. You know, like, it's a small thing that doesn't hurt so much, but, but in the end if I answer back physically, that could hurt me, really hurt me, like screw my career or something like that. So, that's not so good (slight laugh). And, yeah I think everything like that is pretty much related of my education as a...my, my (laughs) education. I don't know how to call that, like, not education, but the way my father taught me to do things, like, trying to prevent me of doing things by physically abusing. So I think like maybe if I physically abuse others, they will stop doing what they are doing. But, (higher tone) it doesn't work (slight laugh). It doesn't really work. I mean they don't get so scared anymore. They don't really learn. They don't stop doing things. It doesn't really work.

R: So I'm wondering what it's like for you to encounter a stranger, right now, who is angry. Not necessarily angry at you, but just angry?

P: Well, it depends on the way the person is angry. Sometimes I can see just in the face people is angry. I just try to avoid them. I don't want to..be...like have to talk or face any one who is angry because maybe that person will be angry to me. If the person is like really expressing anger or something like that, I would be more, eh...prevent to be around. I'd try to walk..like away. And the other, if someone is just angry I would just try to talk, but I would not care so much be around. But, when the people is *really, really angry* or expressing so much their anger I would try to walk away from the person. And the feelings? I don't...yeah...I would feel like, um, uncomfortable. Like when people is angry I feel like this is, this is uncomfortable to be around someone who is upset or angry. [lost portion of tape]...yeah, I was always telling him [his father] about everything, what I felt when I was like 12 or 13. Once I just went out..he, he, when he's not angry he listens to people and especially to me because he chauvinistic in that way. He feels like males...I think he tries not to, but I still think he has it. He thinks I'm his son, his only son and maybe I have more...I don't know, more illumination from God (laughs) and I don't what kind of thing that makes me be more clearer, whatever he thinks, but he paid more attention to me than my sisters or my mum or whatever or his mother. And I told him once, (confident tone) 'You know I'll have better family than

you. When I get older I'll have a better family than yours.' And he told me, 'Let's make this a bet.' And we have this bet, I mean, it's not a bet about anything, you know, like I'm going to pay or you're going to pay. It's just about the honor, you know, like, who can do better the life. Who, whose.. who works harder. It's a good target when you get old and you can say, 'My family has done better things than *your* family, because I was a better father than you were!' Just, it's very hard because it would be humiliating for me. But I have an advantage. I have my life in front of me. He already did what he did. And... and he accepted. We were talking in the car like a month ago and I told him, you know, like...I think before that he told me, 'You know, I've been thinking about what you told me.' Because I told him once, we sit in front of each other once and I told him, 'I got so much bad things from you. You were always very abusive. That's not a way of teaching anyone. That gave me so much problems now in my adult like. Like, it's not a. a big thing, but I am always trying to stop things happening in my life and I'm always worried about it I'm going to do something that is not, is not right to do. And just because I got that physically abusive way of answering and solving problems.' So, I, I, I...yeah, we discuss about that and he told me like a month ago, it happened like 5 or 6 months ago. And a month ago we were discussing in the car about something, and he told me, 'You know, like I have been abused too. My father abused me when I was a kid. And that wasn't good. I mean they abused me physically. They abused me mentally. They abused me in many ways. I, I got injured by the absence of my father. He never...' His father died when he was like 18 months, so he never really had a father, a real father because my grandmother never married again. Um...and...he told me that and I told him, 'Yeah, I think this is a process. It will take time, but if, if you, if you think you did a better job than they did with you, and I think I am able to do a better job than you did with me, so I hope my sons will be better educated than I am and their sons will be better educated than they are. And I always, I'm pretty sure that they will complain about me that they will tell me you have so much prejudice, you have so much bad things in you and you gave it to us.' But I think somehow that's a natural way of knowing what is wrong and what is right and evolving as human beings and families and societies and that's the way it should be. So, I, I pretty much tried to calm down him and I told him like, 'Yeah, I know. I understand that. And I mean it's already done and we just have to try to..make it work better in the future and know that it was a mistake. That's our first step at least. And try not to repeat it and do it again.' So, yeah, that's pretty much what I told him and that's the way I look at it. That's the way I see my life and the future of my life and the future of my kids. So, yeah, I think it is. I think talking about it helped and has helped me and helped him and helped my whole family. (hopeful tone) I wish I could be, I could be better in that way and I could have the consciousness that I have now when I was like 13 or 10 years old, 12, I don't know. I think I abused my, my sisters, especially my older sister because she was, she was pretty much trying always to, to make things look like she was doing the right thing and I was doing the wrong thing. That's my



perception. And my parents always..eh..punish me, like physically so I always got the bad thing about it. But then when I, I got older, I learned that I have to tell bad things to her, like push her down and tell her how I think she's so stupid and make her look at all her mistakes and everything. And, it was, it was bad. I just didn't know how to get rid of all the other problems that I found a very bad way of pushing her down or taking her apart. And now I think she has a lot of things like that. I think that it's also because my father did so and I learned that she got depressed or she got upset or she'd lose her mind when he did that, so that's already a mistake. So I know I'm able to do that kind of mistakes and I don't want to do that when I have kids or when I relate to other people. I, I..it's not just about the family. When I relate to my wife, or when I relate to my classmates, or my job mates, or whatever it's called, people at work, or people like in any kind of societies circle – society – community. So, I think that, yeah, that's a thing that I'm trying to learn and not do again. I'm trying to get rid of it and be very conscious when I treat people and be very conscious of the way I talk to everybody, I relate to everybody.

R: I'm not sure if I asked you this already. You were speaking about other encounters with strangers and people who might bring up the abuse experience. You might have already covered this, when you're playing sports and someone pushes you, that might bring back experiences of being physically abused.

P: Yeah, yes. I think it happens when I get hurt in any physical way I start to feel.. it's not exactly that I remember a particular episode, but I feel the same way as I was feeling when my father and my mother were punishing me. I always feel like...and there is a funny thing...my, my...my mother never...she cried sometimes and she said, 'Don't hit him so bad' or something like that, but she could do something about that. She could stop him, maybe not trying to change him, but trying to threaten him, like, 'If you do that again, I will leave the house,' or whatever. It's a way of threatening to stop him, you know. And I feel like when I'm playing something like that or when I'm doing something and something unfair happens, and like the boss or the referee or someone in charge of making the society or group follow the rules doesn't do anything about it, I get so upset. I always go and get revenge myself. I try to, to get it back, to show there it, it's not going to happen to me again. There is no one who is going to push me down so easily. I will at least try to fight back. That's what I try to do. This sense of unfairness, of unfair things is so much...hard to me, it hurts me so much. It drives me crazy. It gets me to do things that I would never do in a different position.

R: So, as far as your experiences of physical abuse, do you remember what age it started and when it ended?

P: I cannot tell exactly when it started, but I think it was time when I was like 3 or 4 years old. I was pretty young. I mean it's like a thing that has been with me my whole life until I got like, yeah 16 or 17, something around that age. I was already living out of my house. I was studying in a different city. I was going for vacations to visit my parents...at some point in that period of time I confront my father physically, you know, like not, we didn't go into a fight or anything, but I, I stood up for myself in front of him. Yeah, I stopped him from doing it. That was it.

R: And you said that your father was the main person that was physically abusive, but your mother also used the belt. Do you consider her as being physically abusive as well?

P: I think like the physical abuse by my father was so strong that it somehow made the physical abuse by my mother vanish. And, and I, I feel like somehow my mother was committed to hit us, but, because my father was telling her to do so. But the way, when I was very, very young, like 6 or 7 years old I would cry when she hit me, but later on I would just laugh (laughs). She would try to hit me and I would say, (offhanded, cocky tone) 'C'mon. You don't hit us. You don't hit hard. You don't even know how to hit.' I mean, I didn't say that, because I know she would hit me stronger and she could make me cry, but I just let her hit me and run away or whatever, just kept doing what I was doing because she was never explaining. She was just telling me, 'Not to do, not to do, stop doing it.' I think sometimes she tried to be more, persuasive with words, trying to explain more, 'You shouldn't do this because of this and that reason.' Somehow I learned from her, you know I paid attention to what she was telling me. I think because I have less fear, I was able to listen to what she was telling me, but, but, with my father, I was just all the time thinking, 'When this is going to be over. When this is going to stop. This is already crazy thing. I have a lot of fear. I want to run away. I don't want to be here. I just wish that I could like let my body there and let it happen without me in there, something like that.' It's just like, 'I don't like this.' Whatever he said, whatever he asked me, like 'Do you understand?' (all responses to questions were with robotic sounding tone) 'Yes.' You know, like whatever he said, 'Yes. Yes.' 'Are you doing to do it again?' 'No.' You know, just try to tell what is on the script, nothing beyond it. Even though I think he's not right or whatever, I would just say like, whatever you say. I tried to discuss with him once...I remember when I was like...I was.. I was very young. I wrote a letter for him, like I wrote a letter telling him, 'You treat me so bad. This is unfair your way of doing this and that is so unfair. This is not good for me. I'm not understanding. I don't like it. I hate it.' And I think...I think he beat me again (laughs). He was just crazy. He didn't hit me. I think..I have a bad memory about this thing, but he at least complained about it for so long, telling me I was so wrong and that was a big mistake. He was manipulating me. He was trying to mix my thoughts and feelings and try...yeah, it's pretty easy with an 8 year old and you're like 38 years old, you can do that

pretty easy, but he didn't pay attention to the important thing. I was pretty much against his attitude and it wasn't for free, it was for a reason.

**“Amber”**

R: You talked about your experience at a school meeting that “the teachers were against me.” Can you tell me more about that?

P: What do you mean?

R: How did you observe that? How did you know this? Feel it?

P: (calm tone) Their body language showed it. They did not engage in dialogue with me and..they turned away their faces, their bodies..um.....they weren't receptive. For instance, if you're talking with someone and they shake – they have eye contact and they shake their head 'yes' while you're talking, you know they're with you. Or if they respond to you in a positive way toward you, you can tell they're with you. (slower pace, clearly pronounced) But these people were not with me. It was as if I was entering into an alien zone, that everyone else except me was..there were rules to that group, (slight laugh) and I didn't belong there. I didn't say the things that were accepted into group.

R: So what were your feelings during that, as you were starting to think all of this and make these observations?

P: Um..my feelings were...feelings, I know what I thought. But my..feeling was that (quicker pace, factual) I had to protect myself. I had to...not.....go to far deeper into what *they* were doing. What they – at some levels I thought I *knew* what was going on. I thought I knew why they were rejecting me. So..I tried to do a little more..explanation in order to..um..(questioning tone) try to get them on the same page....uh....so, my feelings. I have to go back to the feelings here. My feeling was (quickened pace) '*ought oh! Oh, no! Here we go again!*' (laughs; normal pace) '*Oh, I've been here before.*' (breathes) It's like..to prepare for it. To....um...get ready. And apprehensive.

R: You were prepared for? And you were protecting yourself from?

P: .....(softer tone) Uh, attack. Preparing myself for attack from the teachers.

R: Can you say more about the attack that you were preparing yourself for?

P: (business tone) Yes, and it's because I've had other professional experiences with this. Um.....for example, I would go into an IEP meeting or an ISP meeting with teachers, meaning instructional teacher's support meeting. And I will say things that... the

teachers need to do, some new things that the teachers might need to do. For example, move the person up to the front of the room. I ask them to make changes.

R: So the attack you were preparing yourself for, protecting yourself from, wasn't...

P: It was rejection.

R: Based upon experiences with – similar situations with other teachers.

P: Yes.

R: Okay

P: But that also taps into what I was saying about my family of origin. Okay, for example, if I would say something new that I had learned. Let's say I'd come home from school and I learned something new in psychology. Um...(quickened tone) I would be attacked if I said things. I would be laughed at. I would be ridiculed. I would be..put down.

R: So it would be more of a verbal attack...

P: Verbal attack

R: ...from your family, not physical?

P: No, not at that point. See, I think it's like, when I was younger, when I was growing up, it was much more physical. And then as I got into...when I would be able to take classes that taught me things that were different than what my parents knew..uh, specifically my mother. When I learned things that would be new to her..uh...I was older...

R: Are you talking college age?

P: College age...or high school. No. Mostly college age.

R: So the physical abuse happened from...do you know when it started and when it ended?

P: (factual tone continues) I think it started at a very young age. The reason I say this is I used to go over to my mom's house when she was babysitting my nephews. My sister

lived close by and she would bring..her babies over and my mother would watch them. And when she would put them down for a nap and...the babies would cry. And she would go up and *hit* them and give them a *whippin'*. She would hit them and say, 'There! Now you have something to cry about.' And I remember the last time I saw it happening, standing there and knowing full well I was colicky...probably happened to me all the time. It probably did...I mean if she, well usually if it's your child you can feel free to do that, but now this is a *grandchild* and she's *still* feeling free. So to me that meant that I could look at what I probably went through.

R: Were you, right at the point, were you starting to think about this? When the teachers were "attacking" you, did it tap right into your family of origin, as you say, stuff?

P: No, not intellectually. Because, I was, I was there to..educate. To give out information. But, but on a physical level, physical response was tenseness..and fear where..(semi-reprimanding tone; quick pace) okay...get it together fast. Keep it together. Keep your thoughts in order. You know. Here it comes. Don't let anxiety take it over. Um, don't withdraw. Remember your information. It was sort of like I was asking my neocortex to stay intact, to overcome the fear of the amygdala! (laughs)

R: So going further on in the experience, you said that one gentleman in particular stood out and started to walk around the room and put his hands in his pockets. Can you describe his facial expression, his posture, his look? His distance from you? Did he approach you? Were there any gestures?

P: No, no. There were..um...no there was no gestures toward me. There were facial expressions of (deep sigh)...um...taking a deep breath, showing frustration. I could tell he was frustrated especially since he was standing up circling and pacing (slight laugh). But it wasn't close by. It just seemed farther away. Like he was pulling himself farther away and getting..irritated (lower tone) with the whole thing.

R: Do you recall your facial expression, your reaction, your feelings and thoughts at that moment when you saw him?

P: (quick pace; sounded fearful) Fear.

R: Had it changed from the fear and protection you were experiencing with all of the teachers being "against you."?

P: (soft tone) It became heightened as he became more agitated.

R: Did the fear change? The fear of...?

P: Of an attack. No, it just became more heightened. It became more heightened. The...um...the intensity, I don't think I spoke any louder, but I could have....

R: Did your thoughts change as your fear heightened and you prepared for attack?

P: (pensive) Did my thoughts change? (slow, methodical pace) I was aware of him and I know that as I kept focus on the task at hand, trying to help these teachers to understand that this child – young man – (sounds agitated) 17 years old, African-American, attending their school needed some accommodations and needed understanding and they were not giving that to him. I tried to remain on that topic. I *really* tried to stay there. Now, the whole time, I could see..the guy out of the corner of my eye. You know, while I'm reading the other teachers, I was also observing him and the periphery.

R: You go on to say that he said, "He comes into this room and his hands all over the white girls and I'm not going to do *anything* to help that boy!" And you said, "that's when I felt it. Right there, because that didn't have anything to do with what was going on." Can you tell me what is the "it?"

P: (casual tone) Okay..um..it might have been rage. Rage, that, anger, that this (angry tone) teacher was writing off..helping this kid because of a race issue.

R: So the anger you felt, the rage you felt wasn't...it was about the issue and the boy. It wasn't anger about what was happening to you?

P: Yes, right...right. But it, it is as if it tapped into....my strong feelings of.. inappropriate..behavior on people in power...toward you...toward me...It was like it was unfair. It was unjust..that this teacher would treat this boy differently..because of his race.

R: Did you feel like the teachers were using their power inappropriately...

P: (quick pace) Yes

R: ...on you as well?

P: (long pause; then softly spoken) No. No, I did want to hear what they had to say what the barriers were....because as I'm giving information (slow pace) if it does not fit into..if I'm not connecting with them so that they can...integrate new information to make a difference in their behavior toward a student, (tone of confidence) I needed to know

that...(slower pace) because then I could have...um.....like taken into consideration and...reframe it...so that it would be more palatable.....reframe my information – the question of “it,” what is “it.” Reframe the information that I have to give out to help this child...to make a change. These teachers had the power to make a change with these children. So, I thought it was appropriate that they let me know...what the barriers were; however, I wasn’t prepared for a race card, a race barrier.

R: So in regard to the race barrier that you talk about, you go on to say, “I got upset. I said to the man, ‘Sir, I think this is a problem.’” Can you say more about getting “upset?” Can you describe...?

P: I remember..that I thought it was such a *major* problem that that was something that could not be resolved at that time. That was *such* a major problem and I did not know – it looked to me as though this man...had power within the culture that I was in because he felt free to say this stuff. If he didn’t feel free to say this stuff, he wouldn’t have said it. And he said it so freely. What was it? It was...“I’m not going to help this kid because he is a black boy who is touching white girls.” Um...it was pervasive. It was like... (hopeful tone; then slower pace) this man has power over this group and if I can work with this man, if there is some way to show that this is inappropriate to the other people, while at the same time diffusing this man...I thought that I could be able to make more progress with the rest of the group.

R: Had your feelings changed...or shifted?

P: ...from when I walked into the room?

R: I guess from the rage...when the gentleman stood up and you said you started to feel rage and anger at what he was saying and you said, “I got upset and I said to the man, ‘Sir, I think this is a problem.’”

P: So did my feelings change?

R: I’m wondering what the “upset” is in terms of feelings.

P: (calmly, softly) The rage.

R: You’re feeling like there’s no resolution.

P: No, no resolution....Angry...(angry tone) I couldn’t believe that this man was ...going to withhold education because this black boy touched a white girl. (confused



tone) It was very bizarre. I guess it was disbelief..that a teacher would do this. I mean, now..

R: Sounds like mixed feelings. You were angry, in rage; you feel like there's no resolution; and disbelief.

P: Couldn't believe it was happening. Right.

R: You said later that – after you made these statements to him that you, “Do you want to come and see me in the morning? I can make an appointment for you. There's some things we need to work on. They called [her supervisor]...”

P: I was a brat (laughs)

R: “...and told on me.” How did you feel about that?

P: (slow pace; each word clearly annunciated) You know what? When I did it, I remember my heart beating and, my heat beating very fast, feeling like I was in a flight or fight situation. And I felt like I'd fought. And I was able to complete the workshop. I was able to do the rest of my presentation and it seemed to be accepted by most. You know, I felt like I got more cooperation after that...(quickened pace) However, this gentleman felt strong enough that he wanted to do some...he wanted to retaliate..with me. He wanted to get me for saying that, for humiliating – I guess I humiliated him in front of others and...(higher tone) that wasn't appropriate. I thought it was...it worked.

R: What wasn't appropriate?

P: My behavior. My actions. I thought it was fine. I mean I knew I was attacking him, but I thought it was justified. And...

R: So his calling and telling your supervisor was...

P: (delightful tone) I got him!

R: You felt even or that you got revenge?

P: ...I, I felt like.....I felt like I made a difference. I felt like, when I went into that situation to do one thing, I ended up doing another in order to be able to do what I needed to do. I felt like.....I put myself out there. I took a risk. And, I was shaking afterwards. I was shaking afterwards because I knew that I had just been in a battle and

then when the retribution came back on me by them calling my supervisor, I knew that I just had to take it. So, yeah, I guess I did feel pretty satisfied.....And, and it's not revenge that I was trying to do. It was trying to..show the insanity of it. That to me was ...so outrageous that a teacher would hold...would not be willing to work with someone.

R: You went on to say, “Anyhow, I was upset. I got that same feeling because this is what I grew up with.” Can you say more about that “same feeling?”

P: That same feeling...uh...um....(rote rules; with a tone of resentment) when we were younger, we were not to have a voice. We were not to express our feelings. We were not..we were to be seen and not be heard. We spoke and if...it was not approved – what was said was not approved of..or sanctioned, you know we were to parrot our parents and if we put anything in there that was of us...um, we were *hit* for it, I mean literally hit. I mean it was not only....um.....uh.....it was to stop us from being ourselves....uh, when we were younger. We..

R: So when you said your “parents...”

P: My parents. Specifically my mom.

R: Did your father hit you?

P: No. One time. Just one time. He didn't like the boy I was with. I think I was 13.

R: Was that same feeling – you talk about not having a voice --- was that same feeling of being powerless....or being...

P: (quick) Yes.

R: ...angry?

P: Powerless...not accepted...rejected...um.....yeah, disbelief, rejected, unaccepted..um...trying to be, to be controlled.

R: You also state, in reference to your mother calling African-Americans “everything...”

P: (softly) Yes

R: “...every word...”

P: (softly) Yes

R: "...that you could imagine" and you said "it took away their humanity and it was like my humanity was taken away from me when she did what she did back then." Can you say more about this?

P: I think part of being human, I think part of the human process is making mistakes and learning from your mistakes. And we weren't permitted to do that. We were to... parrot and we were to be *literal* clones of my mom. Like she wanted to live her life through us by having us say and do what she wanted us to say. And it was as if...we weren't allowed to make mistakes. We weren't allowed to be human. We weren't allowed to learn...because it might be something different than what...she was telling us.

R: Did you feel in the encounter with the teachers that your humanity was being taken away from you? That you weren't allowed to be your own person and have your own thoughts?

P: ...I was identifying with the child. I was feeling like...um, he was permitted to do this and I was taking up the gauntlet for..that child, but it could have been my inner child. I wasn't thinking of it at the time. It was like my actions spoke for me.

R: And you said, "So yeah, I reacted to this man just the way I would react to my mom." But later, you also say, "I wanted to hit him like I wanted to hit my mom. I didn't hit him, but verbally I did." Can you clarify these statements? I thought you didn't talk back to your mom.

P: Nooot very much. I also didn't listen to her very well so I might say, "yeah, okay, okay, I'll do it" then I just went ahead and did whatever I wanted to do.

R: In saying, "I reacted to this man just the way I would react to my mom," can you say more?

P: I, I was talking about my feelings. The, I, my internal reaction.

R: Not how you verbally reacted?

P: No, not how I verbally reacted to my mom. Uh...I guess I did something with him that I was unable to do with my mom or if I would have said anything I just would have been hit. So...I didn't when I was younger...(softly) speak back to my mom...not very much. My sister did.....Speaking about speaking back to my mom, I remember

one of the things that would happen. When she would ask us questions, she would ask us questions, ask me questions about something that happened that I really knew that she didn't like, like, "where were you?" And, let's say that I knew that she wouldn't like the answer, and if I would tell the truth, I would get hit. If I didn't tell the truth I would get hit. So as I would 'him and ha' around, trying to go through my mind of (laughs) 'What do I tell her? What do I say? What do I do?' there was a.....there was a feeling of how do I respond. There was a question of how do I respond. How do I speak back? But, there was no winning. It was almost as if she would *set* us up and if we would tell her things that were close to us, she would use them later against us. So anytime you got close to her and disclosed any information, she would use them against you. And that's what happened in this situation too. What I said was used against me. But I was trying to hit this guy (laughs).

R: So that's the difference between this encounter and experiences of the abuse with your mom.

P: Right....right.

R: You talk about the incident that you recalled at the time of the encounter. More specifically when "the woman down the street who they called an 'N lover' went to a protest at the local pool. When a bus full of NAACP people came cause there were no blacks allowed into the pool. A busload came on it and my family was just furious. I spoke up and said 'What's the problem?' I just didn't understand the problem. They're just people. I got hit for saying that." Can you describe the hit more...give more details? Were you hit with something, an object? Were you hit more than once?

P: Um, uh, probably. I can't remember specifically, but I do remember feeling the sting of a backhand across the face, the mouth, where I was not to speak that way. I had to... look at...the incident the way I was being promoted – I mean the way it was being promoted. Now, it could have been looked at as insolence or whatever, you know, 'how could she be questioning me?' Um...it could have been the way I said it, in retrospect. But to me it was like, um...I had different thoughts than they did. I looked at the situation differently than they did and I was being hit for it. I was not accepted.

R: And when you say "they" are you including your father as well?

P: Yeah, because he didn't speak up... He did not speak up.

R: So he supported your mother by not speaking up...?

P: Yes

R: ...but not directly?

P: Yes

R: So you got hit...

P: I think at that time it would be one hit. And this is probably at a high school age. I was pretty tall. I was as big as my mom and yet she *still* felt that she could slap me across the face.

R: Do you remember how you reacted?

P: I withdrew....I withdrew.

R: Physically? Emotionally?

P: Both. In fact, what my general response was..was..to shut them out....to block.. them out. Not tearfully, whatever. It was like, okay. It was like turning off a light, I would just turn it off..turn myself off and block it out. Then whatever they had to say, whatever my mom had to say afterwards, I would not accept or reject. I just wouldn't hear it.

R: So you had reacted this way earlier in your childhood or was this a response you developed as you got older?

P: Well, lets put it this way, I think it was. I think it was my response that I developed as a young child growing old. I, I remember, let's say, being in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and being hit and *really* being beat, let's say, because I didn't do my chores, and.. I, I just remember shutting down. Just shutting, turning it off. I wouldn't listen to anything she had to say whether it was good, whether it was bad, I just shut down. And, not that I went into my own world, but what I did was I made decisions...based on keeping away from her.

R: Such as?

P: Um...I'll do my homework when I am ready. I'd do my homework..or I would..I will wash the kitchen floor...when I can.

R: Did you verbalize this?

P: Inside my head. Yes.

R: Didn't that bring about more punishment, more hitting...

P: No.

R: ... because you weren't doing what you were told to do?

P: Right. Right.

R: Did it lead to more abuse?

P: (first soft, then normal tone) It probably did. It probably did. However, the thing that was being the incident, the trigger that would make me shut down, that I would shut down around...seemed to me to be.. 'I'm just unfair and nonsensical.'

R: So those were your triggers – unfair, nonsensical, and unjust.

P: Right. (paced) Now..I shut down..to her, not to myself...I would go back and say, to myself, 'what do you want to do?' and then I would construct it with the limitations of 'okay, well I can't go out..I'm not going to runaway, but I'm just not going to do that. I would speak to her again but I'm not going to say the N word. I'm not going to call people the N word because that's the way she wants me to be.'

R: In your mind, you were taking a stand.

P: Yes. It was like I was correcting, but (firm) I was not going to do what she wanted me to do because it was not right – to me it was just not right. You know how in your heart you know what's right and wrong? And to me that was not right and I didn't care if I was beat or not. You know, if it is not right, then I guess you get beat.

R: Were you beat with a hand or objects?

P: Oh, it was with her hand. But when we were younger, there was a paddle – you know, what kids have, the ball with paddle – only without the ball. They were the weapon of choice.

R: Were you hit anywhere as a child or teen?

P: Usually the face and head. So I might have done damage because of that. (slight laugh) I used to think that my ADD was part of that. That um (clears throat) that maybe some things were loosed, because they were jostled loose (laughs).

R: So you would get paddled in the head?

P: (casual tone) Hit in the head a lot. Those are the ones I remember the most. I remember one time being paddled to the point that my rear end was...all the blood vessels were broken. And my response was 'I don't care. I'm not going to change the way I think because I'm getting physically hurt.' You know, maybe I won't talk to them, but I'm still not going to give up. My...my belief in what I am and who I am – what I am, who I am, what I think – I would just block them out. 'Go ahead you can talk all you want and I'll just sit here. And you're going to talk to a chair or a table, but I will not listen to you and if you say, 'is that right?' I might shake my head, it might be up and down, it might be side to side. But, it would not be because I felt that way. It would be to pretend I am paying attention.'

R: And again you said they. Would that apply to your father as well if your father said something to you and you decided....?

P: My father was absent. (softly) My father was absent. If he was around, he just let my mother do whatever she wanted to do. And he sided with her. In fact, my mom died in...about 8 years ago...well, no, maybe 9 years ago, and when my father and I had a conversation about the abuse, after – when my mom died – he said, "you brought a lot of that on yourself by disagreeing with her." Blame the victim. I was supposed to go along with it. So, yes, that's why I say "they."....Often times she would wait until he got home in order to demonstrate her point in front of him and then she would beat me there and say, "See Hon? That's what she does to me?" And my father didn't do anything. So, yeah, I have a lot of..negative feelings toward both of them. I group them as a whole. I thought it was a show. You know, like a unit.

R: Were your siblings around?

P: Yeah. It was a show for them too. There were 3 sisters. Now, apparently...most everything was directed at me. All of my mom's negative energy was directed at me, towards me. My younger sister tells me that she used to sit back and watch me make mistakes or do things...it's usually that I didn't do things that I was supposed to do. I didn't do my homework. I didn't wash the floor. I didn't sweep the back porch enough. I didn't run the sweeper. It was usually cleaning things to help my mom. And it usually wasn't what I said as much as what I neglected to do.

R: So the physical abuse – so it wasn't always a punishment for not doing a chore or task you were told to do or not following some directions....

P: Right

R: ...but it was also, for not "parroting."

P: Yes, yes. It was as if – (desperate tone) I couldn't do anything right. In fact, one of the things that I remember in college, saying to myself and my friends, my mom used to hit me so much for things that I knew were okay, or disagreeing with her that I really don't know right from wrong. I have to find out as an adult. So there was a lot of experimentation...because I did block her out. I would not listen to her. Just the whole thing about the N word, I was taught to hate people of another race. I was taught to hate Italians, they were Dagos. I was taught to hate Irish people, they were drunks. I was taught to hate African-Americans. I was taught to hate Chinese. I was taught to hate Polish people. The only people that you weren't allowed to hate were Germans...And even then, there was something wrong with everyone. 'Oh, he's too this' and 'she's too that.' It was almost like the Arian way (laughs). I mean I hate to say it like that, but I feel like I understood the Hitler complex as I was growing up. Oh, and Jews, oh my God. Part of what came out of this was a sense of humor – laughing at...the incredulous.

R: Although I'm taking in the encounter with these teachers, there was no laughter...

P: No, no. I took it very seriously.

R: I wasn't thinking that you didn't take it seriously, but there wasn't some way that you could lighten it up.

P: No. Fear. I was fearing.

R: You talk about this kind of set of feelings in the end. You talk about being angry and lashing back at the man, at the teacher, verbally; physically shaking out of fear...

P: Like I was attacked (laughing) when really he was telling..me...what he was...about. And I wasn't accepting him.

R: ...but also being excited.

P: (matter of fact) Put to the test, on the spot. In that sense....I was excited.



R: You talk about ruminating and you mention, well “obviously I still think about this encounter now and that occurred in about 1995, about 10 years ago.” So I’m wondering what it’s like for you to think and talk about it now.

P: Um...I..wonder about different reactions. I mean reactions that I could have had, other ways to have handled it. Because I thought I was effective, but I thought there must have been other ways that I could have been even more effective – what I could have said to that gentleman or how I could have said it in..order..to get to the point...where... everyone was on the same page, and at this point I still haven’t found an answer to that yet.

R: Do you ruminate about the feelings as well? Does that stay with you?

P: The feelings come with me every time I think of that incident. Yeah, I can..I can feel it now...fear, the anger, yeah, the excitement. The being put on the spot.

R: You said that before the incident you had “Before the incident I had to drive 50 miles to get there. I was ready. I was very prepared for it. However, I wasn't prepared for the bigotry. Like it touched my mother bone, he touched my unfairness bone and I reacted strongly to it. I still find myself reacting as it would have been if my mother was standing there.”

P: I think..when things are said that are *outrageous* like that – when I hear people who are racist, when I hear racist comments...especially when things are held back...like his.. his ability to teach was held back. I mean what he had to teach was held back to that kid because of the way he felt. Um.....yeah, I feel, you know, the egregious nature of it, like an injustice was done.....and I want to do something about it. (long pause) I think one of the things that happened was that I was put back into like 1969 when Martin Luther King died and the..the feelings that were going on...with me at that time..and the race riots. I was in college at the time [in an area] close to the riots [in Pittsburgh]. I remember thinking [vengeful tone] ‘Good for them.’ [The riots] had to happen in order for these people to get rights.

R: That’s your “unfairness bone?”

P: Yes. Yeah, it is. It was unfair. Now, as I got older, I know that life isn’t fair and this sort of thing is going to happen to us a lot. This is one of the issues that I try to... deal with...within myself. How do I deal with unfairness and injustice in..a..more positive way that I can make the most change, be a change agent without hurting, without

humiliating. You know, I, uh, am constantly looking for ways to promote peace and... acceptance and harmony.

R: I want to ask you about other encounters you may have had with strangers or people you know in which you've had similar reactions. You mentioned previously that you come across people on a daily basis – "it happens to me when I come across people on a daily basis it happens to me that when I see people or come across people who I am working with or in a social setting with um. It all depends on the interaction." So you have had other encounters either with strangers and/or with people you know where you've had this similar reaction. Are there differences in the encounters and your reaction or are they all similar?

P: (soft tone) The gut, the primal feeling is still the same. It's attack, it's um...here it goes, that's unfair. I feel it on a visceral level or on a feeling level before I feel it on an intellectual level.

R: You talked about another incident in which you worked with a girl, an encounter that was not face-to-face, but on the phone. And the father "was totally absolutely rejecting of me." You said that you had a similar reaction

P: Right.

R: It may have been a different type of encounter, but you had a similar reaction.

P: Right. When I work with children sometimes I think there's more than two reactions. There's more than, 'oh that's funny' or 'I hate this. I'm angry.' You know like it's very...primal of, um...hate, angry, rage or love and laughter. Like there's a whole range of emotions in between that and sometimes when it's like, when it's unfair it hits my motherbone (laughs). That unfair...um.....thought. So yes, I come across it on a daily basis and what this guy was doing I thought was unfair to his child....But I still had that gut reaction to it, like, um, he's going, he's really angry, he's going to come after me. (higher tone) And, in fact, he did. There was a letter written where he didn't want me to see his daughter. I was not *permitted* to speak to his daughter or *any* member of his family..in the future. And, that's really hard because the community we live in is somewhat small..annnd I'm running into these people.

R: So far the encounters you have talked about have been on a professional level...

P: Right.

R: ...that you've had this reaction. In your personal life have you had similar encounters?

P: (softly)..Not as much. It has to do with issues and that's usually in my profession. Isn't that interesting? That I picked a profession where I'm dealing with those issues. (laughs). This is something I am just putting together. It's probably that I'm trying to perfect this...very *basic* primal response of how to deal with..resolving..the rage against unfair and unjust..things. So, yeah, I probably picked this profession in order to come across it so I can get better at it. (laughing)

R: What is your daily experience of encountering strangers, not in your profession?

P: Uh..I don't usually have a lot of conflicts in that regard. I think it's uh a very pleasant, peaceful – I think I have enough social skills that there's no real conflicts that I come across. Or if I do come across them it's not...it doesn't go to a primal level with me.

R: So when encountering a stranger who walks by you and gives you some sort of look, say an angry look....

P: A rejecting look...

R: ...a rejecting look...

P: ...like I had swear words written on my blouse or jacket and they were reacting like that. I usually don't get that. I usually don't get outward rejection from walking past people. It's usually in...a professional setting.

R: What about encountering a stranger who is angry?

P: I can only think of, um...No, no. It doesn't affect me in the same way. I was thinking of the one time when I got angry, you know, where I had a response similar where I was full of rage. It was um...I was at Best Buy and there was (tone reflects annoyance) this young kid on the register and everything I said he talked back to me. He talked back to me. It was like 'oh, yeah,' It was just, um...the most *rude* thing that you could imagine and I said (calmly), "you're talking back to me, just stop it." And he talked back to me again. And, (laughing) I got to the point where I raised my voice and said, (louder) "What are you doing? You're talking back to me?" And he did it again. So I just tried to walk away, but the manager (softer tone) came over and asked me to leave. I said, "Do you understand what he's doing?" He said, "You're causing a problem. Leave." I said,

“Wait a minute. He’s causing a problem. He should be fired cause he doesn’t know how to talk with people.”

R: So that was a situation in which he was unfair to you.

P: Yes, but that’s pretty rare for me. I usually laugh.

R: What is it like for you to encounter or see a child who is being abused?

P: Um....(saddened tone) It’s hard. It’s difficult. I feel..like..I’m being put..in conflict. For instance, I was doing school based therapy in the past two years and you would think there no longer be a principal who paddles the kids. But he would take the..kids in the back room and..push them around and throw them around and paddle them. And, uh..the kids would come back out and tell me..what was happening. Or they’d be crying or whatever, and (laughs) I may have sent them to the office (serious tone) or someone else may have sent them to the office. But they could have been sent to *me* to have *me* talk to them.

R: Were you in conflict because you may have put them in that situation?

P: (quickly) Yes. Yes. And I would...intervene. (empowered tone) Okay, so, if there would, um like...a first grader or kindergarten child put into the principal’s office and I knew that he was abusing him...and..hitting him and...I couldn’t do *anything* about it, (slowly) I would..feel...very..bad. (normal pace) I would try to intervene, but we were to act like...it wasn’t going on. We were to ignore it because it was done behind closed doors and we weren’t to say anything.

R: And what if you were, again, not in a professional situation, just in public?

P: I don’t see people.

R: You don’t ever see parents yelling at their kids or hit there kids in a store?

P: Yes, I do see that and my response is it’s different in each situation. I do believe that there are some times..where you have to..remove the child or..get a different response. Um, if the kid was just pitching a temper tantrum, or, you know, talking back, just being rude...you know, (light tone) I would have liked to hit the guy at Best Buy. But I didn’t! But he was like a 23 year old. (serious) If they’re little kids, I don’t usually see it. When I was doing school based therapy I would see their mothers abusing them outside the school. I would wait until things were over and, um, see if we could talk about it.

R: What is your initial reaction?

P: Oh, it hit me. It hits me.

R: What about hearing about children who have been physically abused, like on the news?

P: (soft tone) It upsets me. It sickens me. It, it hurts my heart...I, I wish I could do something. I wish I could help in some way or another. Yeah, I'm affected by it, but I don't..get angry and think I'm going to beat up the person.

R: When you say that it hurts your heart, it sounds like a very personal connection.

P: Yes. Yes, exactly. I guess it's like being a child like thing where I want to give myself a hug for living through it.

R: You talked about your unfairness bone and most of the unfairness you find in your work and professional settings. But, I'm thinking unfairness occurs everywhere. Unfairness can happen in day to day life with family, friends, and so on. So how do you handle those encounters?

P: I'm usually pretty verbal. The things that I usually respond to is parental figures who respond to you in a guilt type, shaming way when you encounter life circumstances. You learn from life experiences. You don't need a parent standing over you and... yelling at you, and shaming you. For example, my niece cut the curb too closely and blew a tire. She called her dad for help. He was yelling at her. I was in the kitchen when the call came in. She asked for help and the father was saying, (loudly) "I told you how many times!...You're a bad driver! You shouldn't be doing these things! You did it again!" And I thought...that was uncalled for. So..I, I usually say something. I say something like, 'You know this sort of thing happens all the time especially with the people I work with. You know, you're not paying attention...' [yelling in the voice of the father] "Yes that's right! She wasn't paying attention!" And I would say (calmly), "This sort of thing happens and you learn from it."

R: You were talking to him in the calm tone that you are speaking in now?

P: Yes. I can usually talk in a calm tone. The incidents that I talked about before is when I got fussed up. Now I didn't get fussed up with this guy who had the daughter...

R: “Fussed up?”

P: Fussed up..um, angry, um...upset..in a rage where I felt like attacked. Um...I felt like I could use wisdom at this point and say to my brother-in-law, (gentle tone) “You know she probably feels really bad.” (angry voice speaking as brother-in-law) “Well I want her to!” (gentle tone) “Well, she probably feels very bad that she has to pay for the tires and this is really upsetting. Is she okay?” (angry voice speaking as brother-in-law) “Oh she’s fine or she wouldn’t have called!”(normal tone/pace) In other words, his response was not to see if she was okay. He was upset because a possession was...marred. (quickly) Anyway, I spoke up and I usually do speak up in situations like this. But I’m usually calm when I do it. Now, did that alienate me from my brother-in-law? Yeah, my sister came up and had words with me afterwards. She said, (gentle, soft tone) “He’s allowed to do that. That’s okay. You don’t have to say anything.” And I at that point I dealt with my sister and said... “He was just frustrated and he took out his frustrations on his daughter and...there’s, there’s other ways to handle that.” (gentle, soft tone speaking as sister) “Well he’s been very frustrated lately.” Making excuses for him. And, I just didn’t want to hear it.

R: What do you think the differences and similarities are between that situation, which was personal and there’s unfairness, and a professional situation where there is unfairness? You said your response is different. You become angry, fearful, etc. in a professional situation. Yet with your brother-in-law, a situation of unfairness arises but you said you reacted in different manner.

P: No, no I didn’t. I didn’t respond the same way. I reacted the same way inside, but my responses were different. My responses were much more controlled.

R: So you had the same feelings – angry, fearful?

P: (softly) Yes. I felt the attack..and the unjustness of the attack....Uh, so, my response was to.....(normal tone) the response there was more normal to me. I run into *that* sort of thing on a daily basis. That’s the sort of thing when I have family sessions, that sort of stuff is said all the time, so I know that. I think when I get most upset and most in a rage, when I felt like, um....it was more back to the day when I had *no* power, *no* voice is when I’m thrown out of the norm of the responses that I work with. For instance, the race issues was.....unexpected. It was really unexpected and I didn’t know what to do about it in that situation.

R: And what about the phone conversation with the father?

P: (confident) That was easy to deal with because it's something I had experience in doing in my personal and professional life.

R: So that wasn't totally out of the norm, unexpected, but you had the same reaction...?

P: Right

R: ...that you had with the teachers?

P: Right, it's the unfairness, that you can do this differently...um...there's other responses you can have.

R: I guess I'm getting confused because you said with the father you had that experience before with families so you were able to handle that. Yet, with this father, just like with the teachers, you had the reaction where you felt attacked and wanted to attack, and went back to your past history of abuse, but not with your brother-in-law?

P: I think it was there, underlying. But I could temper it because I thought it was..a normal thing that I deal with everyday.

R: But with this phone conversation with the father, you said that was also something you dealt with before, but you weren't able to temper it. I guess I'm wondering the difference.

P: I thought I tempered it. I was pretty good at diffusing it.

R: You seem to describe having a stronger reaction to this father than to your brother-in-law. That's what I'm trying to sort out. What is the difference? What is the similarity?

P: Okay, with the father that didn't like the diagnosis, I was able to keep my cool with him and I was reasonable. It was the situation with the teachers where I felt like I sort of crossed the line even though it was needed. I felt I sort of insulted and humiliated him. I did not do that with the father. I did not do that with my brother-in-law. I felt like I was more instructive. So I think I have a couple responses to the same feeling. As I become better at..reacting to threats..or perceived threats (laughs), I, I can go into...I guess the more I get used to it the better I am at getting to an instructive place where I can help things change. Where people can talk about frustration without shaming or guiltning a person.

R: I'm still really struck by the split between your personal and professional life and your reactions to similar situations.

P: Professionally I think I have more pressure on me to make..to respond to make a difference...So.....my reactions are more, um...maybe stronger. (softly) Like to that teacher. ....Maybe I'm just getting better at it. [Tells story of conducting a training at a conference in which she was not understood by the participants, but did not respond as if attacked. She considered other ways to teach the information. But still felt unaccepted.] When not getting verbal confirmation of acceptance, that's when I put my glasses on and I thought 'okay, I just won't look at them then. I was hired to do a job here. I was being paid to give information and whether or not they cared to accept it, that's their problem. I'm not going to make it mine.'

R: What did putting your glasses on do?

P: It blurred them. They went away. Just like I did with my mother by not listening to her anymore.

R: Do you think in other encounters you use that technique of going away, withdrawing, in some way like you did with your mother?

P: In that one I did, I put the glasses on.

R: Right, like in that one. Do you do use that...?

P: Yes, right.

R: ..in other encounters?

P: Yes. I can give you a situation with my husband. This is personal. I have a feeling that my husband wants me to think like he does. He wants me to feel like he does and he thinks that if he tells me something and if he tells me how he feels, I should feel the same way. And so, I will say to him, "Thank you for sharing that." Or "I'm glad you told me that. I just don't think the same way about this." And he will get very upset with me because I don't think about it in the same way that he does. And, so, instead of..well, there was one time, we've been married for 23 – 24 years, there were a period of years in there where I started to talk back to him. He would tell me something he thought and I would say, "Yeah, but no. I understand, but no. That's not the way I feel." So, this "yeah, but no" I thought would be telling him the way I felt, not that he would.. think like



I would, but that he would accept that I was different. And in the process, I got to be very good at saying who I was and what I think. It was like, I find my voice.

R: So unlike your parents, your husband allowed you to speak without hitting you. He may not accepted it, but he didn't strike you or attack you.

P: Not usually (laughs then becomes serious). I mean there was one time he pushed me and it was like a year before I spoke to him. So you don't touch me. You just don't do that. You don't use force in order to get your point across. If anything, it will put a greater division between us. I would say it was more like three months that I didn't speak to him. And, of course, he became very submissive and timid around me because he knew that he had done wrong. He had crossed a barrier. And I thought 'okay, I'm not going to reinforce the negative. When he speaks to me and it's good, I will say, okay, but I will not just trying to engage him in any conversations.'

R: You had perfected that skill with your mother.

P: Uh huh. Yeah so I'm still using my techniques. But, when I finally did find my voice as an adult, I wanted to use it all the time. So, it's like I can speak what my feelings are. I can say what I think. That's okay if he doesn't accept me. I am who I am. So I *do* come across it in my personal life. It isn't as dramatic anymore with my husband.

**“Emily”**

R: Prior to this encounter, what occurred, how were your feeling and can you recall your thoughts?

P: (steady, confident tone) I was leaving work. I was..you know..calm, normal kind of a day. It was – there was nothing unusual up until that point of the day.

R: You said you were coming out of a side street and you made a left hand turn and a man in a car was coming over the hill. Can you describe the man?

P: Um...hard to describe. I mean he was behind me now, once I had made the left, he was behind me. He was, you know...there was nothing unusual about..his looks. He was probably 30 something..um which was probably my most vulnerable time to my dad as well, so that may have been part of it, but he was *really* enraged. You know, like I had *some* nerve to be on the road in front of him.

R: How did you see that he was enraged?

P: (tone of disbelief) We must have gone a quarter of a mile with him not taking his hand off the horn and giving me the finger out the window.

R: Did you see his look?

P: (firm tone, yet sense of fear) To be honest with you, I was afraid to look at him. I mean, I knew he was behind me. I felt like I was being chased. Um, but I was afraid to look – to make any eye contact with him.

R: For a quarter of a mile.

P: You know, it was – I could not get *away* from him until I turned into the service station. I was in front of him and I was clearly..the object of his rage and it seemed so familiar that someone was enraged at a behavior that I thought was normal behavior.

R: It seemed so familiar?

P: Familiar because my father was – would get angry at me like that over something that I thought was..nothing wrong.

R: For example...

P: Um, I guess I didn't talk about that very much, but – it was, it was not that he ever chased me with a car, but it was that same feeling of...I'm going about my daily business and I set off my dad..in a wa – (slow, deliberate) there was no consistent reason ever that I got beaten.

R: So it wasn't that he told you to do something and you didn't do it?

P: (talking so quickly seemed to be stumbling over words – firm) There was no such – there was – that never happened in my life. (light laugh, but serious) If he told me to do something, I did it. (slower) But there were times when he *unreasonably* would of thought I should have done something...or that I shouldn't have done something. It wasn't part of the rules. It was just in *his* mind, he thought..let...[name] should be doing this. Or [name] should be doing that or shouldn't be doing that. It wasn't part of the standard family rules. It was just, um..once I came home. I was supposed to come home at..um..8:30, I came home at 6:00, but because it had been drizzling, he thought I should come home at 5:00, and so he beat me. Even though the rule was to be home at 8:30. So it was that same exact kind of situation...Anytime that I'd get..you know, because I feared being..hit because I had such a t-terror of my dad's rage, I never broke a rule. I was the *most* boring kid you ever met in your life. I mean I was like, whatever I had to do to, I would do.

R: But it didn't matter. You were still...

P: (unfairness in tone; increased anger) It didn't matter. I'd still get hit for unexpected reasons and this was exactly the same situation. Looked right, to the left, to the right, didn't see a car until I was making the turn and this guy, because he was speeding..in *his* mind, decided I had *no* right to be on the road. It was almost *exactly* parallel to the..traumas that I had as a kid.

R: Did you immediately go into – you said, “this abusive display of rage terrified me.” Did you immediately go into terror?

P: (rapid response) Immediately. Soon as I, I recognized the rage and the..unrelenting horn – hand on the horn and the finger out the window, I was like..(quickly) right back there. I was 12.

R: Did the abuse start when you were 12?

P: (quickly) Oh no the abuse started when I was 3.

R: Age 3 until...did it go past 12?

P: It went until I was..17. The last incident was the incident I just told you. I was 17. He thought I – [name of man who is now her husband] and I were out. I, I came in. We were at – ah, ah..getting my uniforms for nursing. We'd gone down to the city. We went to the, um..New York World's Fair. And..it was the last beating I ever got, but it was, it the was the, the *same* exact kind of surprise. Um, he said, (firmly) "I want you home at 8:30." We came home at ten after six. But because it was *drizzling*, he decided that..we wouldn't go to the World's Fair. We had no communication. There weren't cell phones then, whatever...

R: You were just supposed to know this.

P: I was supposed to read his mind. Exactly right. Here I am, walking in my door, happy. [name of man who is now her husband] was running down the road to catch the next bus. You know, he took me to the door and then he said, "I'm going to run quick cause this is in a hurry." In 15 minutes the bus we were just on turned around and came back and got him back to Queens. And..he – my dad backed me – I walked in – as I was going in the front door, he heard me coming in, got up from the dining room table... *rushed* down the corridor, which wasn't very long, and hit me so hard that I fell out the door..and screamed.

R: He hit you across the face?

P: (everyday tone) Across – just across the face and knocked me right – I was [inaudible] because it was *so* expected. And I *screamed*, I don't – didn't usually scream. I didn't usually give him that satisfaction, because I was *so* startled. And [name of man who is now her husband] heard me and called. He said, "do you need me to come and get you?" And I think it was the first time it occurred to my father that I might have...an out. Then that's why it stopped. It was the last time he ever laid a hand on me.

R: You mention this incident brought you back to 12.

P: Well it, it brought me back to – cause this is just *one* example. I remember that because it was the last beating, but it would be..I remember a little bit earlier when I had my first job. I took my paycheck and bought 2 pair of shoes, a pair of brown and a pair of black. He said, "Why'd you buy 2 pair of shoes?" And I said, "It's my money." That, that resulted in a beating. How dare I say that. Even though it was...

R: You were backhanded again?

P: Mostly backhanded.

R: Did it continue or was it just once?

P: No, maybe once or twice. It depends. If I didn't cry, I'd get hit again...Of course I remember an incident with my sister when I was probably 14 or 15 and she was 8 years younger than I am, and she said, "just cry, if you cry he'll stop." She'd cry before he'd hit her.

R: And he wouldn't hit her?

P: No, he never hit her. But, I was a little more strong willed than that. I didn't do anything wrong, but I figured since I knew it wasn't wrong, doggone it, I'm not going to give him the satisfaction.

R: So I take it that in the encounter described, you didn't cry. You didn't mention it.

P: I didn't cry. No, no. I don't cry (laughs lightly).

R: You don't cry ever?

P: Not, not when I'm face-to-face with it. Even if I have an argument with [name of husband], and he's never physical, [inaudible; laughs]. If we have an argument I will *never* cry in the..body of an argument. I will cry after.

R: So that's something you really still hold onto?

P: (quickly) Oh yeah.....I, I saw crying as a great weakness. My mom was a big crier. She had a Sunday cry. They'd have, you know..violent kind of words, not physical and she'd go in and lock herself in the bedroom and cry (annoyed tone) *loudly* for an hour or two. I saw that as great weakness so I didn't do that.

R: Am I understanding this correctly that the minute that he started pressing his horn you immediately felt terror?

P: (rapid response) Immediately

R: You said you looked in the mirror and you saw his...

P: Well not when he first hit the horn cause I looked back and thought, that's unreasonable. When he stayed on the horn..I realized that that was..this was a different kind of incident. It wasn't somebody saying, "oh, I'm annoyed." It's "I'm enraged."

R: So when it's an incident where someone is just beeping for a little bit, you can brush that off....

P: Ah, yeah.

R: ...it's no big deal

P: No, but it's when it's *rage*, and this is what the difference was. People get annoyed at me..all the time..in the car. You know, oh, you cut me off, or you're not fast enough. When you don't, you don't take off fast enough from a light and they beep their horns, they're not enraged. They're just annoyed at you...I realize this guy was in a different place. (fearful tone) I *was* afraid that he would come *in after* me when I turned in the gas station. And I'm, I don't know what, if [husband]..has an incident on the road where somebody – and he cuts them off or says something and he tries to retaliate anyway, I am..*petrified*...that somebody will pull a *gun*, that someone will..hurt us.

R: You're prepared. So here too you were prepared for this man to hurt you.

P: Yes. I *fully* expected it. I fully expected that I – that something – even though I was a *grown* woman in my 50s, I fully expected something terrible was going to happen.

R: You said your heart was racing, your hands were sweating, your legs felt like rubber.

P: (terrified) I had thought I couldn't drive. I *literally* knew that unless I stopped and..collected myself, I was not going to be able to continue to drive.

R: You felt "trapped like a small animal."

P: Because he was behind me and I figure I got to scurry out of the way.

R: And you said you couldn't get off of the road until....

P: Well because, there was nothing – I wasn't going to pull into somebody's driveway (laughs). I had to wait until I got to a place that was public enough that I could pull in..

and calm myself and then pretend that the reason that I pulled in was to buy a bottle of water.

R: You were able to do that once you pulled into the station?

P: Once I pulled in and I calmed myself, then I was like..embarrassed cause I'm a grown woman. What am I doing this for?

R: You were also anticipating that he might...

P: So I didn't get out right away. I just stayed there and figured I could always hit my horn if I needed help. But then, one – once he was gone..once he had passed and I knew I wasn't in danger anymore, then I was like, (softer) this is ridiculous, a grown woman hiding from a stranger in a car that was, you know, only a moment that he was threatening – a quarter of a mile, however long it takes to go a quarter of a mile.

R: Did you see it as a sign of weakness?

P: (quickly) Yes, I was – very similar to my crying. I was not going to let people at the gas station know I was being an idiot. So I calmed down and I went and got a bottle of water (laughing) – cause I figured I owed the guy a dollar, at least, to buy his water. He was just...this station for safety.

R: So you were able to calm down pretty quickly, get yourself together.

P: Yes. As soon as he was gone, I was okay.

R: But you were also, prior to that, planning, well how will I save myself in case he does come in. I'll start pressing the horn...

P: That's right

R: ...So you had a plan in place.

P: I had a plan. As if this – and, you know – and, like I said, this is one incident that I used as an example. But *any* kind of violence (softly) terrifies (normal tone) me.

R: So you've had other encounters of rage of strangers?

P: Not even from strangers. Even if I'll see....like...I was stuck one time in the middle – it, it happens a lot in the car. I don't know why that is. But, once stuck in..very bumper to bumper traffic, stuck in it...um, middle of an intersection, you know how you wind up with gridlock, a cop passing saying – you know, he was walking – calling me a moron...It was as if he had struck me. I mean, you know, again those same feelings cause there was a lot of name calling as well as physical abuse...in my house.

R: So you were saying with this incident you never looked at the man, you were afraid...

P: I was afraid

R: ...but you had seen the finger and heard the horn. In this incident with the cop calling you a moron...

P: I mean he was *right*, walking right past me.

R: ...did he look at you? Do you remember him looking at you?

P: (fearful) It wasn't a terribly...ah, ah, ah and it wasn't, it wasn't as visceral, but again that "I'm back there." (normal tone) I guess that that's..what I am left with from the abuse – that it doesn't take *much*..to bring me back to those incidents. I don't know – that's why I work so hard..to help fight child abuse because I remember how small and terrified you feel..and how it doesn't go away. And, I, I developed a very good relation – I had a good relationship with my dad even through this and I developed a *very* good relationship with him later in life. He passed away about 3 years ago. So he – it's the *violence* that terrified more than the person who terrified me.

R: With this cop, you said he wasn't coming at you or...

P: No, he wasn't threatening, but he made me feel...

R: ...but it was verbally...

P: ...small, worthlessness

R: Was it the way he said it, the tone?

P: It was the *tone*, it was the *look*, it was for that moment I was told how unimportant and small I was...how *bad* I was.



R: Can you describe his look?

P: (deep breath) Contempt. Like, you know, what kind of a moron would..be caught in the middle of an intersection even though everybody was crawling for the last..20 minutes? (pace quickens) I remember where it was. It was actually right around the corner from [names businesses in Downtown Pittsburgh]. Very – any of those incidents I...I see very vividly. And so what it's lead me to be is (quickens pace) very perfect. Doing whatever it takes to please people so I won't get that response.

R: Say you're in the store and you accidentally bump into someone and the person flips out. Do you have incidents like that or similar to that where you are triggered?

P: Um, not often. And it's never, *never* with a woman.

R: So a woman can yell at you or call you....

P: (quickly) Right and I have no...

R: ...a name or road rage you...

P: And it's like 'pew! [flips hand carelessly] no big deal.' Definitely tied to men... [confidently] and if a woman should say something ugly or negative to me, I'll come back at her. Where I would *never* come back at a guy. And nobody would ever accuse me of being afraid of men, just of violent – male violence.

R: When did this incident occur? Can you recall the time period?

P: Maybe 3 years ago.

R: And the other incident with the cop?

P: May...be 18 years ago.

R: These obviously still sticks with you.

P: Well it was interesting cause I, I was stopped by a policeman..I was sick, my son was sick and I was driving him to the doctor at [hospital] and, you know, you, you're judgment isn't good, so I, I pulled over to get into [hospital] and – it was an illegal pullover – I – things were going slow and I went into the, um, shoulder, to sneak into [hospital], and..didn't realize I cut off a cop. And then I went to go around this truck that

I thought was parked and he was going in. So I made 2 *terrible* errors. Okay, I had my son in the car and the cop put on his siren and I looked back and I thought [fearful, helpless tone] “oh my God.” I was *so* terrified..*so* terrified. I stopped. I was shaking so ha – so bad. [critical tone] I could not find my registration, which was *right* beside me where I was looking. I could not find..my license, which was *right* beside me where I was looking. I couldn’t, I couldn’t even see it. There was so much anxiety...

R: And this wasn’t an incident where it was unexpected. You knew you did...

P: I knew I did something wrong...

R: wrong.

P: (laughing) well, I guess that’s why I thought “oh my God! This time I *really* did it!” And he had mercy on me – God bless him. He saw – I mean I was like..[softly] terrified [normal tone] because this time I *made* a mistake. Oh my God! (laughs)

R: Did you have any expectation of what’s going to happen?

P: [uncertain tone] I don’t know what it was. I was just – it was again those feelings of *terror*, shaking, couldn’t – *literally* couldn’t see. *No* sooner did say “alright” and we went to the doctor with my son and we came home and I open the same place I had looked and *right* on top were both things. He looked up, um, I guess I had an old license in my purse, so he had my license number and he knew that was current. He went – called on the computer and called this [playful tone] *very* boring Volvo with this *very* boring housewife (laughs) and looked up my license plate and said, [very understanding tone] “look, Ma’am, I understand you’re sick” – I..looked awful – “I understand you’re son’s sick. Be more careful. I’ll let you go this time.” When I went home and found the stuff I thought [critical tone] “how could you have that much anxiety about making a mistake?”

R: How long did that incident stay with you?

P: Um, well...a while. I mean, un – we took him to the doctor. I couldn’t – I couldn’t even *dare* to *look* in the..hand thing until I came home. So it had to be an *hour*..of anxiety.

R: And you said, “I couldn’t dare to make a mistake.”

P: [tone of impossibility; higher pitch] I couldn't dare to make a – I mean it was like “Oh my God! I did! I made a terrible mistake (laughs).”

R: So that probably is – does that incident intensify? So if you're in an encounter and you *do* make a mistake, that intensifies the feeling or not?

P: It's not a mistake – I don't – I guess I don't worry about mistakes so much as breaking a rule. Everybody makes mistakes and I have no problem saying I'm sorry to somebody or whatever if I've made a misjudgment, but *breaking* a rule is still..like [inaudible], like “oh my God, what will happen to me?”

R: What do you imagine is going to happen?

P: (high pitch) I have no idea. (laughs) I can't tell that you I imagine anything. I just know that I'm terrified of it. I don't take it past the – you know, because I think so many times I was hit and hurt for *no* good reason that I thought “God, if I ever gave them a good reason they'd probably kill me.” Or *hurt* me *beyond* hurt. You know or – wha — [matter-of-fact tone] I never – I was never hit, hit so hard that I was hospitalized. I never had stitches or..you know, broken bones. [slightly fearful tone] Just the *violence always* terrified me. I mean I remember an incident when I was 3 years old. Went to visit a friend and they bought m – I had a new dress and I had a new pocketbook, and...the dress was a what they call “flary” dress and if you turned around, if you spun – spun – and I had my pocketbook and I spun and the kid I was visiting walked into the pocketbook and got hit. I, I remember that was *one* of the worst beatings I ever had as a kid. [tone of disbelief] I was 3 years old.

R: Right there?

P: Right there, in front of everybody cause it was not, you know, the kids were chattle back then. You could hit your kids. It was your business.

R: You talk about other similar experiences where there's rage.

P: I, I was never comfortable with my boys..horsing around. You know how ki – how boys will wrestle? [fearful] I had to leave the room. [tone of disbelief] My children. I mean – we, we never hit our kids. You know, if I needed to control them I'd grab an ear and say “you're coming with me” (slight laugh) you know? But we never hit the kids. But, if they would hit each other, or if they'd wrestle with their dad, I'd have to leave the room.

R: Even if it was playful?

P: Oh it's playful and with no anger at all. Just *any* physical violence still scares me.

R: And what about it somebody would come after you or just kind of tap you, push you, bump into you?

P: Bumping into me is no big deal. But, but somebody *coming* at me aggressively, I'm sure I would..would be frozen.

R: When your kids were growing up did they ever even playfully come at you?

P: Hmm? No, I think that, I think that one of the things that happens in a family is family rules get set. [Husband] knew very early on about the abuse, like from when we were first dating. Um, he knew – he saw the verbal abuse in the family. I always say he's *never* called me out of my name in our marriage, in our life together. He's never said "you're stupid..you're fat..you're mean." He's never put a label on me in all the years we're together. And that *safety* net has made for a wonderful marriage [smiling; happy]. Just a *wonderful* marriage. And, but that – you start – I think family members know there are unwritten rules. We would never tolerate our kids calling each other names. If you said "you're stupid," you were put to your room....Um, we never cursed in our house. You couldn't say ugly things to each other. That was a rule because I was *so* aware of how..much damage that does.

R: What about the kids fighting? You have quite a few kids, especially boys.

P: Yeah. Well, when the kids would fight, um, I would..put them in their room together and I'd say, "you can't come out until you can say something positive about your brother." And it worked. They still think it's hysterical. They say, "We'd be *so* mad at you" and I'd say, "That was the point. That I'd become the enemy and that your brothers – you and your brother would be like, 'well the only way we're getting out of here is to say something nice.'"

R: And you were able to handle that. You didn't have to walk away?

P: I didn't have to walk away. No. Um, but I – that's, that's how I – we con..tained it. Now do that – do I think they said ugly things to each other when I wasn't in ear shot? Probably. But I also have said that rule to my grandkids. They are *not* permitted to yell at each other or be – *meanness* is something I can't tolerate.

R: So even if your grandkids were mean to each other and yelled at each other, you know, “that’s my toy!,” that kind of stuff...

P: Yeah, and I’d – I would reason with them and then I would find them a safer spot..to be with each other. And they know that they – they can’t be mean in front of grandma.

R: How long did this encounter occur in terms of time?

P: Timewise, however long it would take to go a quarter of a mile in a car. You know I’d – I pulled out of [college] – what’s interesting is, it’s now illegal to make that left turn. Two years ago they said no left turn here, you have to go right. So obviously it’s a pretty blind curve. And the guy could well have been..not just angry, but he could have been terrified..that he was going to hit me. He didn’t. He was kind of a late model – ah, earlier model, souped up..like 50’s kind of souped up, hot roddy kind of car. And I remember it fishtailing behind me. So it’s *obviously* a dangerous spot. But that’s a quarter of a mile from [college] to that service station. So however long that would have taken. Two minutes, maybe?

R: When you pulled into the service station, he continued to pass you and still honk.

P: He passed me. He still – he was still *very* angry. But he was probably a guy that loved his bab – that car’s probably his baby.

R: You said it was only seconds, but it seemed like...

P: Well...how long is – it’s probably not 2 minutes. How long do you go for a quarter of a mile at 35 miles per hour?

R: I don’t know, but I’m imagining that for whatever time length it was...

P: It was probably the length of this block.

R: it felt much longer.

P: Right. It was how far it took before I got to where I thought was safety.

R: So were you thinking as you were driving, “I’m in no danger. I’m in no danger”?

P: [fearful tone] No, no. I – I was thinking, “Oh my God. This guy is..[quickness pace] going to get me.” That’s what I thought.

R: You weren't thinking, "I'm being unreasonable."

P: I didn't think I was being unreasonable until he was gone. And then I thought, "Geez. If anybody had seen what a fool I had made of myself, being – running away from..this [slight laugh] guy." But I wasn't thinking at all. It was pure instinct to get away from him.

R: But then you moved to "What if someone sees me? What are people going to think?"

P: Right. I realized at that point what a – that it was an overreaction on my part...or maybe not, you know? Maybe the guy was a nut, but (slight laugh)

R: Are there other feelings you had besides – you talked about the "helplessness and terror before unreasonable and warranted rage, the fear of being overpowered and hurt for a behavior that I thought was normal and right"? You also talked about confusion, the confusion of the abuse.

P: I just – I was confused, like, *why* is he – what, what did I – *why* would he respond that violently to such a..small mistake, such a small issue, because he had to put on his brake? I mean, I've been in car accidents, small fender benders..um, and people usually act reasonable. You know, I – last year I was with my mom. We were going into her plan and you have to put a little card in to get through the gate. And the guy in front of us was a truck and didn't have the card. So he backed up into her – into us. Nobody screamed at each other. No – I mean..we were both unhappy that it happened and whatever, but, you know, reasonable people, even if you have an accident. He didn't have an accident. He didn't get hurt or whatever. But reasonable people talk about things, that's my, my philosophy (slight laugh), reasonable people talk about things. They don't yell at each other. They don't honk at each other. They don't hit each other. Reasonable people talk.

R: When we previously spoke you mentioned that your younger son has a lot of anger.

P: (quickly) Yes.

R: How do you deal with interactions with him when he's angry?

P: (fearful, lower tone) Um..he controls my behavior to some degree. He's actually..done better in the last.. year. But..when he was going through some real periods of anger, I had to distance myself from him. I had to go upstairs. I needed to close my

door. I needed to be away from him. And I would do not – no behavior that would..rile him, especially if [husband] was away.

R: Like your father.

P: Like my dad. Like my dad, I had to stay out of his way. And [husband] is very much the mediator there. So, I wouldn't even make a reasonable request. I wouldn't say to him, "Would you empty the dishwasher?" because that could sometimes set him off, not to hurt me, not even to say anything. But his *posture* and his *demeanor* and his nonverbal communication, you know, would be banging every glass if he put it away.

R: So he wasn't yelling at you or coming at you?

P: No. But his – even though nonverbal communication, to me, sends a message that, okay, it can come at any time. The fear – you know, the rage could come at anytime. The outburst, the physical violence could come at anytime.

R: So you distance yourself for protection...

P: For protection.

R: ...and to get yourself together?

P: Get myself together and, and *out* of his radar. You know, and with [son] he wouldn't become enraged unless I asked for something he thought was unreasonable, like "pick up your shoes, (laughs) or put away your dishes or empty the dishwasher."

R: Again, something that is, as you say, is reasonable request.

P: Is reasonable, a reasonable behavior. Yeah....His rage in the past was not as threatening to me as his rage when he became an adult..from the time he was like 17 on.

R: Because from 17 on...?

P: He's bigger and stronger.

R: This definitely occurred to you more?...

P: Yes

R: ...But even (6P was talking over R, thus several words are inaudible) coming after you?

P: But even though he never did. No.

R: Does he get into altercations with other people that you've seen?

P: Well, but he expresses his rage – sometimes he'll punch a wall. He's put a hole in the wall. He, he's threatened his own personal safety. He's held a knife to his – not cut himself, but held a knife to his wrists where he's had times of...grazed emotions, whether it's not necessarily..aggressive toward me, but aggressive toward himself or aggressive to the situation. He'll express his rage physically...by punching a wall.

R: Do you move into terror? Does terror set into you?

P: Um...yeah, it, I have to back away. Now of course he's my kid so when he – one day when he was just weeping and – horribly bad and holding a knife to his wrists, I sat with him for the 2 ½ hours before I took him to [hospital]. So it's not that it paralyzes me to not protect my kid. Okay? It paralyzes me – if he needs protection, that's the number one goal, okay? I sat with my – I actually kept a hand on him and reassured him for the 2 ½ hours, sweating bullets, but being there. By the same token, when he punches the wall, I'm like get – my first instinct is get me out of here. He's never laid a hand on me. He's never hurt me. He's never – barely ever shouted at me. But any, *any* exhibition of rage is terrifying to me. My first instinct is..hide and fly (slight laugh). I don't know.

R: What is it like for you to encounter a child or another adult who has a history of child abuse, physical child abuse?

P: (pause, deep breath; empathic tone) When I see, you know, the um, manifestations in the stores, you see the moms shaking their kids or whatever. Um, it's *very* hard not to want to interact with them. There was a mom and her two kids just last week and I see – I saw it a little bit from a far, she was *very* rough putting them into these car – into the little car things in Giant Eagle, *very* angry at something. And I try very hard to maintain the “one kind word” mentality. She was a little calmer by this time when she got up to me and I was able to say to the kids, “Oh you have a good mommy putting you in that car. Look at you driving so good.” You know, so like to engage the children and to diffuse it and then we passed each other and I would give her a smile and *try* to help diffuse it because I know that if you're aggressive or critical of the mom, it's much worse for the kids when they're out of sight.



R: Do you remember how you were feeling when you saw this?

P: My, my..first feeling was *great* empathy for the child..and a little bit of fear for the child. So, you know, you want to walk on eggs, but you definitely want to be... something, some kind of positive, calming influence on the situation.

R: Are you taken back to your history at such moments?

P: Not always. No. Because it wasn't terrible violence. It was just you knew that this mom, if she's this rough in front of witnesses, I figure she's pretty rough..other times... And I do believe, because I know my, my parents and I know my dad...I know he cared about us. He just never learned how to control himself. He took pride in his family. He spent time with his family. Um...many – there were many times – if I were si – I remember being sick and him being *extraordinarily* kind to me. It's not that he didn't love us. And I don't think of that with the parents that I see being rough with their kids. I don't think anybody takes home that infant and says, "When you're 2 I'm going to beat the crap out of you. When you're 3 years old if you hit somebody with a pocketbook I'm going to slam you against a wall." They don't say that. They don't think that. But sometimes they, they don't have the skills and that's where I've – why I put so much of my energy into [fighting against child abuse]. Because I, I do believe that most parents have good intentions with their kids. I mean my father later in life was *very* sad about his temper.

R: You were able to talk with him about it?

P: We were *extraordinarily* close. When he was dying in his last year, I spent a week every month with him down in Florida, him and my mom. And he'd say – and my brothers called him everyday and he'd say, "I don't know why you are so good to me... cause I know I wasn't always a great dad." And we'd all say, "Yeah, you were a great dad. You had – you were a great dad with a *terrible* temper."

R: But you weren't able to have the discussion until he was dying.

P: Until toward the end of his life. It was interesting because my, (tense, fearful tone) I remember my little nephew – we, we were all together and my dad was *really* angry. He wasn't in danger of hitting anybody at that stage of his life. He was in his 70s and 80s. And my little nephew was standing on a chair saying, (reprimanding tone) "Calm down poppa." And at that moment I was *terrified* for [nephew]. I thought for sure my father was going *knock* him to the ground. (light tone mixed with moments of laughter) Instead, he looked down and he laughed. And I thought, how people grow. I thought to myself, it

was like from a sitcom. “Calm down” and he had to stand on a chair. He was quite fearless. Unfortunately the poor kid’s now in jail, but. Maybe too fearless, right?

R: What are encounters with strangers in general like for you?

P: You know, I, I...I’m a very outgoing person, um..I think of myself as..someone with good leadership skills. I’m not un – I’m not shy. I don’t have difficulty encountering strangers. Um, I -- if I ever anticipate – if I, you know, I expect the world to be kind to me, which is really, you know, unusual with that background. And that’s because I think of the underlying love we *knew* was there even with my dad’s rage. Okay, it wasn’t a scary world to us because in many ways we believed that my father could take care of anything that was an outside threat (slight laugh). He was taking care of us pretty good we figured he could do the same. Um, and the – my brothers and I were the only ones that had the physical abuse. I have 3 brothers and a sister. And my sister did not experience any of that. She was like – she was raised in a different family as far as I know when we talk, like she’s got this Pollyanna (high pitch, happy) “Everything is beautiful!” (laughs) But what’s interesting is she has a very hard time parenting her children. She has 4 kids and they are out of control and their behavior with one another is *horrific* and, you know, one’s a felon on the run, another one’s on probation, um, because she was afraid to be a grown up. She was a little kid. She was a little kid all through my family life. I was the second – the third parent in the household – I was the oldest of 5 – and, I would rather – I’m going to look back, which is stupid, but if I look back and say I’d much rather have been strengthened by the abuse, if that’s a good term.. and learn to be a grown up than fail my kids [inaudible], cause she really has a horrible time with that. She can’t stand up – from the time her kids were like 12 or 13, “what can I do with what he wants?”

R: So you’ve learned from the abuse?

P: I’ve learned that you need to be strong, like, his strength of presence and my mother’s strength..was comforting. We knew who the grown-ups were in the family. Okay? And we knew that that’s what parents should be, was grown-ups.

R: So even though your mother went off and cried...

P: She cried Sundays but you knew – I saw that as a weakness.

R: But not overall as weak?

P: No. She was, she was the grown-up. You didn't backtalk your mom, you didn't disobey your mother, you didn't disobey your father. You had rules and in living in those rules you grew up.

R: Was your mother abusive at all?

P: Oh, well, she'd slap me around once in a while, but it never hurt very much (slight laugh). But not often, you know. And it would be to "get that look off your face" and she'd smack you on the arm or something. Or she'd say, you know, she'd be, she'd be harsh, but she would not be..the kind of mean – it wasn't the kind of rage that we got from my dad. But you still knew that she was the mother. You know you knew that that was – that she was somebody whose judgment you could trust. She would often provide some safety..from my dad. You know, she'd try and reason with him and...but she – the role model you got was, they're grown-up. A parent's responsibility is to be the grown-up and not be popular. You don't have to be popular to be a good parent. And I think that's, that's what's missing in a lot of families. Parents are afraid to set limits because they don't know how to correct them without being hurtful and there is a way to set..limits without being hurtful.

R: In these encounters of rage, is there something about the person's look that takes you back to your history of abuse and brings about the feelings of terror and helplessness and confusion?

P: Um.....I'd like to say that might be too much self analysis to do in the, you know, in these short periods of time of incidents. (fearful tone) I, I guess even with children when I see a fierce, mean look on their face, when they're arguing or fighting, um...or when I see a look of contempt on anybody, stranger or family member, it brings – it brings me back.

R: And they don't necessarily have to look at you?

P: (quickly) Right. I mean I can recognize – I think what happens when you're an abused child is you're very hypervigilant and you're looking for nonverbal cues to protect you, like, when is the danger coming.

R: So even with a small child (inaudible)

P: I'll be like, let's nip this in the bud before it becomes a danger and hurtful moment.

R: What kind of danger or hurt are you imagining?

P: (deep breath) I guess I'm more imaging – not that they're going to get hurt very badly, but it hurts.....um...it hurts the soul of a kid...to have someone be mean to them. I think kids do stew about stuff. Kids are impacted by every little chip in their armor. And I don't think that you can say, "that's unreasonable behavior." When you say, "you're stupid" or a "crybaby" or whatever it is, that, that's more hurtful than I think we realize.

R: I think what I'm hearing overall when you talk about seeing a child abused, you're thoughts and feelings are more for the child. You're more about the child and fear for the child as opposed to being retraumatized.

P: Yeah, yeah. I think I empathize much more because of my experience, but I definitely empathize. I think it might be a hypersensitivity of mine, I might be too sensitive – and I don't think that kids have to be rapped in cotton padding, but I do think that they don't need to be – experience great meanness. I think that's...I think that's more dangerous than people recognize.