

**Daughterhood to Motherhood: The Impacts of
Childhood Exposure to Family
Violence on Subsequent Mothering**

Submitted by

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List of Abbreviations

AASW	Australian Association of Social Workers
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
CYPA 89	Children and Young Persons Act 89
DHS	Department of Human Services
DVIRC	Domestic Violence & Incest Resource Centre
PADV	Partnerships Against Domestic Violence
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
SOCA	Survivors of Childhood Abuse
WAFE	Women's Aid Federation of England

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Summary

Daughterhood to Motherhood: The Impacts of Childhood Exposure to Family Violence on Subsequent Mothering

Research indicates children's exposure to family violence results in long-term negative consequences, hindering social skill development and impacting on the ability to function as healthy, productive adults. Also, there exists a widely accepted theory, called the 'cycle of violence', which hypothesises that children who have experienced violence at the hands of their parents tend to grow up to become violent parents themselves. Some evidence for this theory has been found following research with groups of abusive parents and people who have committed crimes. This study explores the specific impacts of childhood exposure to family violence on the subsequent mothering of a group of women drawn from the general population.

A qualitative approach using a methodology that combined feminist and narrative approaches was used. Nine women who have been exposed to family violence in childhood including physical, emotional/psychological, sexual abuse and witness to violence between parents participated in interviews which explored their experiences of mothering. Each woman was interviewed twice to collect stories of childhood and of mothering experiences. These were analysed revealing that the women's mothering was affected by their childhood exposure to family violence in several ways, ranging from direct emotional impacts to indirect impacts of conceptualisations formed in the light of childhood experiences.

This study adds to the existing knowledge of the long-term impacts of childhood exposure to family violence by focussing specifically on subsequent mothering. The findings encourage social work and health care personnel to appreciate that women exposed to family violence in childhood have specific issues with their mothering and there is a need to address these issues. It also challenges the weight given to the cycle of violence theory in intervention and prevention strategies in child abuse and family violence sectors.

Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

The thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

Signed

Date