Parentification in the Context of Diverse Domestic Violence Exposure Experiences

by

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Abstract

Guided by family systems theory and Johnson's typology of violence, the current study examined the parentification experiences of 25 young adults exposed to father-mother domestic violence (DV) using thematic analysis. This study integrates family systems and DV exposure literatures to explore variations in parentification roles and experiences in diverse DV exposure contexts (i.e., coercive controlling versus situational couple violence). Findings suggest that parentification is quite common in the context of DV exposure but the purposes these roles served varied, suggesting that parentification is indeed quite multifaceted. Analysis identified five main parentified roles: intervening to protect mothers from violence, serving as mother's emotional support system, shielding siblings from violence and conflict, caring for siblings' daily needs, and managing parents' health and well-being. The young adults carried out these roles for various reasons including protecting their mothers and siblings from their fathers' use of physical violence, feelings of obligation or due to a parent approaching them. Though parentification was common throughout these participants experiences, variations identified depended on the DV context such that those exposed to higher levels of coercive control and more severe acts of violence fulfilled multiple parentified roles, including intervening to protect their mothers— likely the most dangerous of the roles carried out. Discussion of explanations for why children likely took on parentified roles and the purposes they served in light of FST and DV exposure literatures, emphasizing the heterogeneity in DV-exposed young adults' childhood experiences occurs.

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Introduction

It is estimated that approximately 7 to 15.5 million children and adolescents (hereafter referred to as youth) are exposed to domestic violence (DV) each year (Edleson, Ellerton, Seagren, Kirchberg, Schmidt, & Ambrose, 2007). Exposure to DV is a complex phenomenon that varies depending on chronicity and severity of physical violence; the various ways in which youth can be exposed including exposure type (e.g., witnessing, hearing) and violence type, or DV context (coercive controlling versus situational couple violence) are imperative to understand (Holden, 2003). In his taxonomy, Holden (2003) detailed the importance of specifying the types of exposure children experience as this often goes unexplored or misunderstood, especially in the family context. According to family systems theory (FST), the experiences in one part of the family (e.g., father-mother perpetrated DV) impacts functioning in other parts of the family (e.g., parent-child relationship), as the family is an interdependent system (Minuchin, 1974). For example, research suggests that maritally violent fathers create an environment in which mothers' report barriers to their parenting and an inability to cultivate healthy, developmentally appropriate relationships with their children (Bancroft & Silverman, 2002; Bancroft et al., 2012; Jaffe & Crooks, 2005). In addition, siblings may feel the urge to protect one another or their mother, and children may feel pressure to side with one parent over the other (Callaghan, Alexander, Sixsmith, & Fellin, 2015; Edleson & Williams 2007).

Family systems theory is rarely applied when seeking to understand family dynamics, particularly hierarchies and boundaries, in the context of DV. Hierarchies, in highly functioning families, are clear and authority or power is allocated to and distributed by the marital partners, while boundaries are flexible and maneuverable (Minuchin, 1974). In families with high conflict

or DV, research suggests that boundaries are more rigid and hierarchies are unclear and less defined—increasing the likelihood of boundary infringements, specifically, parentification (Bancroft & Silverman, 2002; Fosco & Grych, 2008; Grych, Raynor, & Fosco, 2004). Often, children experience maladaptive outcomes such as internalizing (e.g., depression, anxiety) and externalizing (e.g., aggression, avoidance) behaviors resulting from parentification that are inappropriately managed within families (Cummings, Ballard, El-Sheikh, & Lake, 1991; Davies, Cummings, & Winter, 2004; Peris, Cummings, Goek-Morey, & Emery, 2008).

Over the past decade, researchers have documented how all DV is not the same, as well as the importance of measuring the degree of coercive control exposure (Jouriles & McDonald, 2014) and making distinctions between types of DV (Haselschwerdt, Hlavaty, Carlson, Schneider, Maddox, & Skipper, 2016). Johnson (2008) identified two main types of DV, coercive controlling violence (CCV), and situational couple violence (SCV), differentiated based on the context in which they occur. Coercive controlling violence is perpetuated by the abuser's constant control tactics toward the victim, and SCV typically occurs in instances of conflict escalation (Hardesty, Crossman, Haselschwerdt, Raffaelli, Ogolsky, & Johnson, 2015; Johnson, 2008). Though unexamined to date, the present study seeks to examine whether there are differences in boundary infringements, specifically parentification, by type of DV (i.e., CCV versus SCV). These distinctions may be associated with differential family dynamics, including how frequently parentification occurs, the type(s) of DV identified within families with DV histories, and variability in parentification purposes. Specifically, emphasis is placed on whether the physical violence is rooted in coercive control (i.e., CCV); it might be that youth exposed to CCV experience greater parentification roles than youth exposed to SCV based on research findings specific to particularly controlling, maritally violent men (Bancroft & Silverman, 2002,

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Johnson, 2008). To address the gaps in the current literature, the present study will examine

familial interactions, particularly parentified roles in relation to their parental figures, in the

context of different types of father-mother perpetrated DV from the perspective of 25 DV-

exposed young adults.

Theoretical Frameworks & Background Literature

Historically, machines and the ways in which they work provided the foundation for understanding systems concepts; all individual parts must work properly and in unison to create a satisfactory machine. As General Systems Theory emerged, psychiatrists applied the concepts to examine families from a systemic approach (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993); FST was developed. Family systems theory is a broad theoretical framework that encompasses several models, including structural (Minuchin, 1974) and intergenerational (Bowen, 1978) models. The structural model emphasizes the ways in which family members' developmental level, resources, and composition influence patterns of family interaction, whereas the intergenerational model emphasizes how these patterns come to be through the passing of patterns from one generation to the next. The currently, present research study is guided by the FST, structural model. Family systems theorists seek to answer three main questions: how should family processes be understood, what are the relationships between the family system and extra-familial systems (e.g., neighborhood, school), and how do family systems change over time (Boss, Doherty, LaRossa, Schumm, & Steinmetz, 1993; Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993)? The present study will apply FST focusing on family processes and internal family dynamics and relationships.

Family patterns and dynamics, according to FST, are the unit of analysis (Davies et al., 2004). The family is comprised of individual parts that when combined, make the family a "complex, integrated whole (Minuchin, 1988, p.8)", with hierarchies delineating familial subsystems (Cox & Paley, 1997). Familial subsystems are comprised of at least two, interdependent individuals within the larger family unit (Cox & Paley, 1997; Murray, 2006). According to Lindahl and colleagues (2012), ideal family subsystems are in balance with one

another, creating a cohesive family unit as they adapt to internal pressures (e.g., family conflict) and external demands (e.g., cultural norms). There are three primary subsystems: couple, parental, and sibling, with the marital subsystem providing the foundation of family functioning in two-parent families (Minuchin, 1974). Familial subsystems, like the entire family unit, experience ongoing, continuous change and transition throughout the life course; therefore, changes, transitions, and stressors experienced by one subsystem impacts the other subsystems given their interdependence (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993).

Hierarchies, Boundaries, and Parentification

According to FST, it is important that there are clear hierarchies and boundaries, delineating how individuals and subsystems relate to each other within the family system (Cox & Paley, 1997; Minuchin, 1985). The concepts of hierarchies and boundaries are at the core of FST both theoretically and empirically (Cox & Paley, 1997; Minuchin, 1985), and thus, they are the focus of this present study. The structure of family hierarchies is such that the original or most typically, influential subsystem (i.e., couple and parental subsystems) is in the superior position, while the subsystems comprised of the children are underneath. Authority and power is distributed by the marital or parental subsystem (and at times, the oldest children), which means that they should establish boundaries for setting rules and strategies, allocating roles, and delineating subsystem responsibilities (Cox & Paley, 1997; Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). Although no set of concepts apply to all cultures, this study's approach follows a more Eurocentric idea of the family system.

Boundaries are guidelines, or spoken and unspoken rules of spatial maneuverability (e.g., who enters and exits the home, physical closeness or distance) and symbolic or emotional interactions (e.g., who a child can turn to in distress, what secrets or feelings are disclosed;

Minuchin, 1974). These boundaries are constantly in motion—contracting, expanding, and changing—as families navigate developmental transitions and interact with extra-familial systems (e.g. school, neighborhood; Minuchin, 1974). Thus, boundaries must be regulated internally (i.e., inside the family) and externally (i.e., outside the family; Fine & Fincham, 2013). Boundaries can either foster or hinder growth and transition; they define permeability and flexibility, such that rigid boundaries represent less flexibility in engaging with others (Boss et al., 1993). Permeability refers to the degree of information flow within and outside of the family system (Davies et al., 2004; Olson, 2000). To achieve optimal family processes and functioning, FST emphasizes the maintenance of clear boundaries and hierarchical order between subsystems with the couple unit at the top in two-parent families (Minuchin, 1974).

Minuchin (1974) explained that parentification occurs when a child takes on the roles or responsibilities typically delegated to a parent(s) or the adult(s) of the family. When a parent relinquishes executive roles to the child and boundaries between subsystems are crossed, the child is elevated to the hierarchal level of the parental subsystem; this can originate from the parent (or grandparent) or child (Byng-Hall, 2002; Cox & Paley, 1997; Peris, Cummings, Goek-Morey, & Emery, 2008; Minuchin, 1974). It is an instance in which the family is responding to stress (e.g., DV) or adapting to change (e.g., job loss), but does not maintain clear or acceptable hierarchical order (Minuchin, 1974). Children may feel more compelled to take on a parentified role if parents share marital problems or conflict with children (Peris et al, 2008).

Emotional and instrumental parentification are cited as the most prominent duties children take on in the parental role (Hooper, 2007). Emotional parentification means that the child attempts to fill an emotional or psychological void; the "parental child" (Minuchin, 1974) cares for family members in distress or conflict becoming a source of support (Byng-Hall, 2002).

Instrumental parentification is identified as relieving the parent of some type of stress by taking on roles (e.g., acting as mother) or filling responsibilities (e.g., cooking, cleaning, caring for siblings; Hooper, 2007). As examined in a study conducted by Godsall and colleagues (2004), alcohol misuse by one or both parents often initiate a child into the parental subsystem by filling the instrumental role (e.g., cleaning up after a parent, managing household duties).

The majority of child parentification research highlights the potential negative effects of the parentified child in later life. If the emotional or instrumental caretaking roles held by children are excessive, without support, or developmentally inappropriate, the role is more likely destructive (Byng-Hall, 2002). Furthermore, research suggests that child parentification can result in difficulties achieving developmentally normative milestones, like forming positive relationships and separating from the family of origin (Hooper, 2007). Positive aspects of taking on the role of parentified child are less understood; however, children may develop feelings of accomplishment, independency, and contribution (Hooper, 2007). Child parentification effects may vary between cultures and differ based on the amount of support provided to the parentified child (Godsall et al., 2004). According to Jurkovic (1997), however, adaptive parentification might ensue if the role is not consuming for the child, if the child receives support, and if the role is clearly defined and delegated to the child (Byng-Hall, 2002; Jurkovic 1997; Minuchin, 1974).

The development of child parentification is often a result of a family's attempt to manage a problem or stressor. Although there are instances in which children taking on the parentified role may be beneficial and helpful to families, clearer and more well-defined boundaries and hierarchies, free from infringements, typically yield more optimal family functioning (Minuchin, 1974). This boundary infringement is documented to be associated with a variety of maladaptive

symptoms (e.g., depression, anxiety, aggression) if the role being fulfilled is not developmentally or emotionally appropriate (Byng-Hall, 2002; Lindahl et al., 2012).

Parentification in the Context of High Conflict and Domestic Violence

Family systems theorists have recognized that high levels of conflict and DV can become part of a familial pattern, ultimately leading to diffusion of hierarchies and inappropriate boundaries (Boss et al., 1993). High degrees of conflict and DV are distinct phenomena. Couples who experience high conflict may, engage in discrete acts of physical violence, such as pushing and hitting, to manage a specific conflict. Research suggests this is a separate phenomenon from physical violence rooted in the context of coercive control and psychological abuse (Jaffe & Crooks, 2005; Johnson, 2008; Holden, 2003). Most of the research on familial boundary infringements is specific to high conflict couples who may or may not perpetrate acts of physical violence in the context of conflict; therefore, a brief review of this literature is presented before describing boundary infringements in the context of DV.

As previously noted, parentification is often a way in which parents and marital partners lessen the stress or burden of couple and family conflict. It is common for this strategy to become a pattern of family interaction in high conflict situations as an (effective and ineffective) coping strategy. High levels of marital conflict bleed over to the parent-child relationship, as the marital conflict might interfere with parenting given the interdependent nature of families (Guille, 2004). It is in these circumstances that children may harbor more feelings of being "caught in the middle," suggesting a boundary infringement. Findings from multiple studies suggest that children's tendencies to mediate marital discord (by either freely entering or entering via parental invitation) peak in middle adolescence; parentification may develop from the children in hopes of helping the parents resolve conflicts (Cummings et al., 1991; Fosco &

Grych, 2008). There is also an increased likelihood that children will serve as the parental mediator or "confidant" to one or both parents (i.e., emotional parentification) if there are greater levels of emotional disturbances in one or both parents (Peris et al., 2008). Emotional parentification can lead children to perceive the conflict and the other parent more negatively than non-parentified children (Peris et al., 2008).

In comparison to research on high-conflict families, less is known about parentification and DV; however, a few empirical studies and clinical books written on parenting by maritally violent men and DV- specific couple dynamics can provide insight into this association. Evidence suggests that boundary infringements, specifically parentification, might serve two distinct purposes in the context of DV. First, abusive fathers may purposefully create boundary infringements as an abuse and control tactic against the mother, and between siblings, in which they undermine the mother's authority over the children, create conflict and division between members, and pit members against one another (Bancroft & Silverman, 2002; Jaffe & Crooks, 2005). Second, boundary infringements might also serve as a maternal coping response to DV. For example, the maritally abusive father's tactics may lead the mother to alter her parenting style, seeking instrumental or emotional support from her children (e.g., parentification; Bancroft et al., 2012; Bancroft & Silverman, 2002). Likewise, research with DV-exposed children has documented their heightened sense of duty to protect or support their mother or siblings, taking on a more adult role as care taker (Bancroft & Silverman, 2002; Katz, 2015). Regardless of purpose, these parentified roles children take on alter the family's hierarchal order and shift boundaries in ways that are typically inappropriate or lead to, potentially dysfunctional patterns if carried out frequently over time. This small body of literature, however, has not focused on the diversity within DV to capture variable family dynamics.

Researchers studying DV among adult samples have documented the importance of viewing and examining maritally violent men as heterogeneous; not all men who engage in DV are the same (Johnson, 2008; Hardesty et al., 2015). Application of Johnson's (2008) typology of violence assists in identifying differences, focusing on two main types of DV: coercive controlling violence (CCV) and situational couple violence (SCV). Coercive controlling and situational couple violence are differentiated by the context in which the physical violence occurs, which is particularly salient for investigating family dynamics (e.g., parentification). Coercive controlling violence entails "the repetitive use of tactics to regulate and dominate an intimate partner's daily life and restrict personal liberties" (Hardesty et al., 2015, p. 2) using intimidation, threats, monitoring, and surveillance (Dutton & Goodman, 2005). In contrast, SCV refers to physical violence that occurs in response to an escalation of conflict, or when one or both partners resort to physical violence to manage disagreements. This violence is not part of an ongoing pattern of coercive control. Though the context of the DV is central to making distinctions between CCV and SCV, research highlights differences in physical violence such that CCV more likely involves serious injury, is less likely a mutual pattern of violence, and entail more incidences of violence than SCV (Hardesty et al., 2015; Johnson & Leone, 2005).

Until recently, the concept of coercive control and Johnson's (2008) typology was missing from the youth exposure literature. Findings from Jouriles and McDonald (2014) and Haselschwerdt and colleagues' (2016) studies have documented the salience of coercive control when examining DV exposure, but these distinctions have not yet been applied to family dynamics, nor parentification. Though the reviewed literature has provided examples of maritally violent men's behaviors that researchers can classify as parentification, they did not differentiate between CCV and SCV. Given the high levels of coercive control in Bancroft and colleagues'

(2002, 2012) clinical sample of maritally violent fathers, it is likely that they were tapping into the experiences of CCV. Other literature (e.g., Fosco & Grych, 2008, 2010; Grych et al., 2004) concerning parentification in high conflict families may have been tapping into SCV; thus, further research is needed.

The Present Study

The purpose of the present study is to fill the gaps in the FST and DV literature, making them more complete. First, by examining hierarchies and boundaries in the context of DV, the present study will apply FST to the DV exposure literature in a unique fashion, as, FST's use is typically to theorize why DV occurs and explain its frequency within the family (Lawson, 2012). The present study will apply FST to understand the impact DV has on various subsystem interactions, specifically parent-child relationships. Second, this study will add to the small body of literature on the experiences of DV-exposed young adults by documenting how various types of parentified roles among children can occur within families serving various purposes. Third, the present study will extend the FST and DV literatures by examining how differences in types of parentification roles (i.e., emotional versus instrumental) depend on the context in which their DV exposure occurred (i.e., CCV versus SCV). Through the integration of FST and Johnson's typology of DV, we will answer the following research questions, based on qualitative interview data from the perspective of DV-exposed young adults: 1) Do families with DV histories experience the boundary infringement, parentification? Particularly, how common is parentification and what purpose does it serve? 2) How do experiences of parentification vary, if at all, based on whether the young adult's DV exposure was CCV or SCV?

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Method

The present study utilized qualitative research methods. As explained by Goldberg & Allen (2015), qualitative research methods are well suited for a research topic when there are unanswered questions or an understudied topic, therefore warranting further exploration (Creswell, 2013; Goldberg & Allen, 2015), and when examining sensitive topics (e.g., intimate partner violence, DV exposure). Utilizing qualitative research, participants have agency in telling their stories from their point of view (Goldberg & Allen, 2015).

Participants and Sampling Strategy

This present study is part of a larger qualitative study (Young Adults Live and Learn) on the experiences of 25 DV-exposed young adults attending one Southeastern, public university. From September 2014 through March 2015, potential participants were recruited through advertisements on campus and in newspapers, emails from instructors, announcements in classes, social media (e.g., Facebook and Twitter), and word of mouth. Inclusion criteria included: (1) between the ages of 19-25; (2) father or father-like figure (hereafter referred to as father) must have physically hurt mother on more than one occasion (e.g. pushed or shoved with force, slapped, punched, kicked, or beat up), and (3) parents must either still be married, or must have separated or divorced sometime after their 13th birthday. This therefore excluded same-sex and mother-perpetrated DV. Halfway through recruitment, it was apparent that the eighth birthday was a modest cutoff for inclusion; therefore, inclusion criteria allowed for participants whose parents had separated after their eighth birthday as all interviewed participants vividly recalled their earliest DV exposure experiences. The participants interviewed, following this decision,

reported similar ages of first DV exposure unless their mothers married their stepfathers later in life; thus, the criteria remained throughout the duration of the study.

Upon learning of our study, 41 potential participants either emailed or called the research project. Potential participants received the three eligibility questions via email or responded to the questions verbally, over the phone, depending on the nature of initial contact. Of those who initially contacted the project, 27 responded to the eligibility questions and were eligible, 12 responded and were ineligible, and two never responded to the eligibility questions and subsequent follow-up attempts. Although it is unknown whether the non-respondents were eligible or ineligible, we suspect that some may have chosen not to respond based on the eligibility criteria. After eligibility of young adults was determined, a research team member set up the location, date, and time for the interview. Of those 27 eligible to participate, 25 participated.

The analytic sample for the larger and current study consists of 23 female and 2 male young adults. The participants were between 19 and 25 years old ($M = 20.48$ years old; $SD = 1.46$ years). The majority of participants were European American/White ($n = 13$) or African American/Black ($n = 7$), with the remaining participants identifying as biracial ($n = 3$), Latino/Hispanic ($n = 1$), or Asian/Asian American ($n = 1$). Participants had an average of two siblings ($M = 1.84$ siblings), with a range of 0 to 5 siblings. Eleven participants were first-born children, four were middle children, nine were the youngest child in their family, and one was an only child.

Participants' mothers ranged in age from 37- 66 years old ($M = 48.96$ years; $SD = 7.2$ years). The majority of mothers ($n = 21$) reportedly had at least some education beyond high school/GED - some college *(n = 7)*, Associate's degree ($n = 4$), Bachelor's degree ($n = 6$), some

graduate school ($n = 2$), or Master's degree ($n = 2$). The majority of identified fathers were the participants' biological father ($n = 17$) and eight were stepfathers, described as either the subject's sole father figure or played a substantial role in their upbringing. The fathers ranged in age from 39-65 years old ($M = 49.7$ years; $SD = 6.98$ years). The majority of fathers ($n = 22$) reportedly had at least some education beyond high school/GED or some college ($n = 4$), Associate's degree ($n = 7$), Bachelor's degree ($n = 5$), some graduate school ($n = 5$), or Master's degree ($n = 1$). At the time of the interview, 11 mothers were still married to the participants' father, 12 were divorced, and two separated.

Based on the participants' self-report, they came from a nearly equal distribution of rural ($n = 9$), urban ($n = 7$), or suburban ($n = 9$) communities. Half of the participants reported that their family received at least one type of public assistance support during their childhood or adolescence, such as free or reduced school lunch ($n = 9$) and food ($n = 9$), health or child care ($n = 5$), and/or cash assistance ($n = 2$).

Procedure

To assure confidentiality and protect the rights of the participants in our study, Auburn Institutional Review Board approval, as well as a Certificate of Confidentiality from the National Institutes of Health (additional security ensuring security of the collected data) were obtained. Interviews occurred in a private, on-campus interview room. Interviews lasted from 48 to 142 minutes, with the average being 86 minutes ($SD = 26$ minutes). Two participants received an additional short interview, in which follow-up questions and unintentionally missed questions from the initial interview, which lasted 12 and 24 minutes respectively.

All participants completed written informed consents before interviews were conducted. A semi-structured interview process was utilized, based on reviews of DV and high conflict

exposure, and family systems theory which allowed for probing or follow-up questions (see Appendix A). A pilot-test occurred using the interview protocol with a young adult who met the larger study criteria with the exception of living in a different state. Her feedback on the interview questions and protocol was included in the final protocol for the study. Throughout the interview, questions were broad and probes allowed for elaboration, consistent with grounded theory methods (Charmaz, 2006). The protocol starts with simple basic background questions regarding the participants, their parents, and siblings, with questions about their community of origin following. The remainder of the protocol was broken into three sections: 1) Violence and Abuse (e.g., violence and exposure description, different types of abuse, children's involvement, causes of violence and abuse) 2) The Impact of Abuse on Family Dynamics and Functioning (e.g., family communication, cohesion, and involvement), and 3) Interpersonal Relationships (e.g., peer and romantic).

With verbal consent, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. To ensure subject anonymity, participants received pseudonyms and editing of identifying information in participants' quotes, without altering the meaning. After completing the interview, participants received $25 in recognition and for appreciation of their time, along with a comprehensive resource list. Transcription and partial coding using MAXQDA, a qualitative software package, and analysis for the larger project using constant comparative analytical approaches occurred with all interviews (Charmaz, 2006).

Larger Project Analyses

Data collection and analysis for the larger project was initially concurrent until data collection ceased and analyses continued. Before describing our Plan of Analysis, we begin with a description of the research team at the time of data collection and analyses that generated our

research topic and initial research questions based on our reviews of the interviews and data. A faculty member/principal investigator, three graduate students, and two undergraduate students made up the research team. Each research member was actively involved in all stages of analyses; however, I was not on the research team during data collection and initial analyses.

Memoing. Memoing was an ongoing, core component of the larger projects' analyses, as it provided the opportunity to make analytic connections to identify themes and categories within data (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008). After each interview transcription, all initial research members independently wrote summary memos for each of the interviews to accurately capture the participant's experience. One purpose of memoing is for each research team member to independently categorize each participants' experiences into either CCV or SCV. However, during early classification stages, to gain better understanding of the participants' exposure experiences, the team switched to categorizing the participants on a range from no coercive control to high, with low and moderate in the middle. After categorizing all participants, the team then decided to collapse no and low coercive control into SCV, and to collapse moderate and high into CCV (see Haselschwerdt et al., 2016). Initially, two discrepancies occurred through this process. Research team discussions occurred until consensus was reached, eliminating the two discrepancies. Participants were ultimately categorized into SCV ($n = 10$) or CCV ($n = 15$) based on their reports of fathers' nonphysical abuse, whether they were controlling, and other DV-specific tactics. Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of the participants by various coercive control and physical violence exposure experiences.

Present Study Analysis

This present study utilized theoretical thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) analytic approach. A theoretical thematic method is a common method of categorizing

and reporting patterns or themes across or within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Charmaz, 2006). Thematic analysis allows for participants' "experiences, meanings and [their] reality" to be explained (Braun & Clarke, p.81, 2006). Additionally, the theoretical approach further exposed a detailed analysis of a part of the data (e.g., boundary infringements). This follows the Braun and Clarke (2006) explanation that theoretical thematic analysis tends to be driven by researcher's theoretical interests, and therefore, focuses the research questions on influential research and theoretical frameworks (i.e., FST and Johnson's Typology). Specifically, our analyses focused on examining and comparing boundary infringements (i.e., triangulation, cross-generational coalitions, and parentification) in the context of CCV versus SCV. To do so, I followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six analysis phases. Constant comparison, a core aspect of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) also guided data analysis, such that we compared within and across each participants' interviews, producing a better understanding of similarities and differences by types of DV and boundary infringement experiences.

During the first analytic step, I documented details related to boundary infringements, extracting them from the first 11 transcripts. In collaboration with the project Principle Investigator (PI), I independently reviewed each interview, paying attention for examples of boundary infringements. A table was created to provide a better visual through color-coded boundary infringements and to interpret boundary infringements per each participant. Details related to family relationships (e.g., marital status, sibling order) and family dynamics (e.g., participants' description of family) were also included as they were pertinent to understanding participants' boundary infringement experiences in the context of their family of origin (see Table 2). Memoing and tabling were used interchangeably throughout the data analysis process, such that writing out identified patterns often led to creating detailed tables and vice versa; this

was an ongoing, iterative process that we detail below. Following these close readings, I wrote a detailed memo, using the previously drafted table as a guide, to describe each identified boundary infringement, the purposes they served, and other relevant details. Memo discussion occurred regularly with the PI and discrepancies between our independent analyses took place until we reached a consensus.

After these preliminary classifications and summaries, we narrowed the focus of the analysis as there was an abundance of information regarding the boundary infringement, parentification. I continued following the same steps, documenting only details related to parentification and extracted them from the final 14 transcripts. In phase three, we sorted and categorized parentification by type (i.e., emotional or instrumental) based on commonalities and differences and assessed type of DV exposure experiences. Phases four and five of Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis approach were not distinct phases, rather they were combined as we simultaneously wrote and reviewed parentification roles. Detailed memos, post identification of parentification roles provided descriptions of various types of parentification roles (Birks et al., 2008). Upon development of this memo, I created a table that documented the parentification experiences of each participant—providing a visual depiction to assist in identifying patterns within and across the overall sample and by DV type (Birks et al., 2008, see Table 2). Through the thematic analysis phases, memoing, and tabling, we developed and began writing the Findings section. Initially, two parentification classifications, physically protecting/emotionally supporting mother and providing support to parents. In the final stages of writing, however, we ultimately shifted to five parentified roles, or themes, to more accurately highlight the full range of differences and similarities among young adults' experiences within my Master's Thesis.

Findings

Twenty-three participants provided stories from their childhood through the time of the study that were consistent with empirical and clinical research definitions of instrumental and emotional parentification. As described previously, children typically take on parentified roles when parents are experiencing some type of stress or stressor, from which they need assistance in alleviating said stress or stressor. Children, therefore, fulfill a responsibility usually fulfilled by parents or another adult. We identified five different ways in which the participants engaged in parentification: intervening to protect mothers from violence ($n = 14$), serving as mothers' emotional support system ($n = 8$), shielding siblings from violence and conflict ($n = 7$), caring for siblings' daily needs ($n = 7$), and managing parents' health and well-being ($n = 5$). We describe each of these parentified roles, the ways in which participants engaged in each role, the conditions under which the roles occurred, additional, contributing factors, and outcomes of the parentification. In conclusion, we will situate the parentified roles in the context of DV exposure, specifically type of DV (i.e., CCV versus SCV) and severity and frequency of the physical violence. Table 1 visually depicts patterns of parentified roles by participant, DV type, and physical violence exposure.

Intervening to Protect Mothers from Violence

Fourteen of the participants intervened to protect mothers from violence, beginning in childhood through their participation in the project as young adults. Intervening occurred when their fathers were perpetrating violence against their mothers, but also when they suspected a situation, like a conflict or a father coming home drunk, might escalate to physical violence. Twelve of these participants were the oldest child in the family or the oldest child living at home

during the violence. Out of home siblings also intervened, from afar. Intervention occurred directly in both physical and verbal engagement with the father during violence and conflict, as well as in more "behind the scenes" ways. A strong sense of obligation or instinct to protect mother, drove their decision to intervene. For example, one participant, Taylor reflected, "I think it was just instinctual, like, I need to take care of [my mother]. She was taking care of me, I kinda needed to do the same. We are very close, so I just couldn't watch [violence] happen."

Intervening by physically and verbally engaging with their fathers during violence or perceived conflict escalating to violence was carried out by ten participants who described standing in between their mother and father, refusing to leave the room, or getting in the way of their father throwing things or physically harming their mother. London stated, "[My father] kept telling me to move out of the way and like he tried to like drop a carpet from up there down onto my mom, but I pulled her out of the way." Intervening also entailed attempting to diffuse the situation by redirecting their father's attention away from their mother, towards himself. Verbally intervening entailed going into the room where the parents were in conflict or where violence was occurring and interjecting themselves assertively for the same purpose as with physically intervening—to stop the violence. Blair explained how she "couldn't keep [her] tongue to [her]self" and would ask, "Why are you doing this to her? [Mother's] not doing anything!" Aside from intervening after the violence was occurring or conflict was escalating, participants described noticing changes in their fathers' demeanor and appearance as signs that violence was imminent, especially if the fathers were drinking alcohol. Alcohol helped cue them to the possibility of violence, or more severe violence, and the likelihood that they would need to intervene.

Young adults recalled intervening based on the belief that their fathers would not become violent towards them or their siblings, and thus, they were in the best position to stop the

violence from escalating by distracting or deflecting their fathers' focus. Rebecca said, "Me and [my brother] started sticking up for mom. We would get in front of dad and be like, 'Stop!' and obviously he would stop because he didn't want to hit us, so he would back off." Elizabeth described a gender and age dynamic that contributed to her intervention decisions: "I think part of it has to do with the fact that like he can handle hitting a woman, and he can handle hitting his kid, but he can't handle hitting his kid who is also a woman." Though the participants described being successful in deescalating the situation or stopping the violence, there were also examples of intervening that occurred at the expense of their own or their siblings' safety and wellbeing. Mary Beth explained that she and her brother knew their efforts would not stop their father, but they thought that "maybe [they] could shift [his violence] from her mom to [them], just so [her mom] could have a break from it." Four of the intervening participants described personal victimization during the violence, though not always intentionally. Caitlin, for example, explained how she would get between her father and mother to stop him from kicking and hitting her mother though this often lead to her father throwing her across the room to "get [her] out of the way." Despite the potential or real risk of violence towards themselves, these participants felt strongly that their obligation was to protect their mother by intervening, and thus, indicating no regret within their narratives.

Aside from the aforementioned intervention approaches, participants also recalled how they intervened from behind the scenes in ways that resemble safety planning (e.g., helping mothers devise a plan to leave), or by calling the police or a trusted adult when violence began. One participant stated her goal was to get their mother or father to leave the immediate situation to "cool off," hoping this would lead to de-escalation in the short term. Many of these interventions entailed potentially dangerous encounters with their father or more drastic steps

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towards exiting the abusive relationship if the fathers learned they had called the police or told someone outside the family about his violent behaviors. London recalled how, on one occasion while her mom was hiding in her room, she crawled through her window to get outside and then back inside to a different part of the house with an accessible phone. During this time, London told her mom to stay in her room, but then:

> "[My father] started banging on the door again, and so I told my mom that we needed to go to the neighbor's house so we climbed back through my bedroom window and went next door to my neighbor's house until the police came".

Taylor's older brother was out of the home and recently started working in law enforcement. Through this experience, he gained tools to help Taylor and her mother, and ultimately helped her safely leave their father. She recalled him telling her mother, "The most dangerous part is leaving, but once you do that, you'll be fine."

Serving as Mothers' Emotional Support System

Eight participants reported serving as the mothers' emotional support system which entailed acting as their mothers' friend and serving as her confidante. These participants were the oldest child in the family or oldest child at home at the time of the violence, or they described their older sibling carrying out this role. Serving as the mothers' support system typically occurred when the mothers were emotionally distressed and looking for support, but also during impromptu conversations about their experiences in an abusive marriage. In some instances, mothers were noticeably taking on child-like roles. For example, Lauren and Elizabeth both described constant bombardment by their mothers' need for their support. Lauren explained how there were "numerous times, she would just come bang on my door in the middle of the night and come cry about [the things my father did]." The previous example is extreme compared with

most of the participants' descriptions in the emotional support category. More common is the description of often sensing their mothers' hesitance in requesting this parentified role of her children. Ellie recalled how her mother "started talking to me about [the DV]," but would then say, "I know I shouldn't talk to you about this."

The reasons participants gave for serving as their mothers' support system varied greatly. They included: hoping their support would assist their mother as motivation for leaving the relationship; helping mothers cope with their isolation due to cultural differences upon immigrating to the United States; mitigate the fathers directly or indirectly isolating the mothers from adult support systems given their coercive controlling tactics; lesson the negative impact of lack of family nearby; and lessen mother's isolation due to their father's control tactics (e.g., monitoring her whereabouts, requiring her to be home at specific times). Lauren believed she was in this parentified role because of her mother's dependence on her father, and subsequently, on her. She said, "It was like she just always expected me to put her first and treat her how a parent would treat a child and take care of her and make sure she's not upset." Reflecting, she believed her mother relied on her as her emotional support system because her mother "wanted to drive a wedge" between her and her father, saying, "Like she wanted me to be hers." Lauren was the only participant to describe this underlying motivation, though many recalled similar frustration in carrying out this unwanted role.

Participants' responses to providing emotional support or serving as their support system seemed to depend on the way in which they entered the role, if they understood and accepted the role, and if they felt as if the role was developmentally appropriate. Unlike with physically protecting their mothers, in which all 14 participants actively sought out their instrumental role, only four participants actively chose to serve as their mothers' support system, and in these

instances, the role emerged during late adolescence and early young adulthood. Emotionally supportive children appeared naturally drawn into this supportive role by their mothers who would reach out to them. Additionally, for some who took on this emotional support role, they viewed their role as part of a catalyst for their mothers' decision to leave the marriage. Taylor recalled how her mother needed help leaving, "she needed the courage and strength to get out of the situation," so she "kind of had to support her." The purpose of this parentification, the role they served and when they served it, and the outcome of serving as their mothers' emotional support system influenced their perception of whether this was a burdensome or beneficial experience, as well as whether their role was developmentally appropriate or not. **Shielding Siblings from Violence and Conflict**

Seven participants reported wanting to shield their siblings from the violence and conflict that was occurring within the household as their motivation for involvement. This parentified role shares many similarities, though also differences, with the role of intervening to protect their mothers during violence. All but two participants were the oldest in the household when they carried out this role. The two participants who did not carry out this role were similarly shielded by their older siblings. Shielding occurred through directly engaging with their fathers or serving as a barrier between their father and their siblings and by distracting their siblings when high conflict and violence was occurring.

Often, these participants were simultaneously shielding their siblings while also intervening, as they were aware how quickly and easily their father's attention could shift toward another family member. In these instances, they served as the eyes and ears for their siblings. Caitlin described instances in which she kept her younger brother safe by bringing him into her room, barricading her door with a dresser, and determining ways he could exit the house safely.

On one occasion, she recalled telling him, "I will get your stuff and just put it outside the window. Stay inside the room and don't open the door unless you hear my voice and I am telling you to open it up." Other, less dangerous efforts at protecting occurred when the participants did their best to shield their siblings from the conflict and violence such that the siblings would not hear, see, or be aware of the violence. This occurred by distracting thesiblings with music, television, closed doors, going to other parts of the house, or in some instances, helping them in leaving the house altogether. As the participants got older, they could more easily remove their siblings from the home. For example, once Victoria got her driver's license, she would "take [her brother] out for ice cream or something like that." She would hear her parents arguing and would say, "Okay, let's go."

Participants' obligation and duty to protect their siblings mirrored their described role of protecting their mothers, though they did less safety planning with their siblings and reported acting more on a whim or simply responding to help create a "safe zone" for the siblings, to comfort them and let them know they were not alone in their exposure experiences. Barbara said, in reference to protecting her sister, "I just feel like that's what any sibling would do. I loved her and I wanted her to not know what it was like [to be exposed to DV]." The younger participants whose older sibling shielded them felt that their older sibling was more impacted by the violence exposure experiences, suggesting that the older siblings potentially did serve a salient role in their younger siblings' positive development and outcomes over time. In instances in which participants were unable to shield their siblings, they reported their attempts as failures which could induce guilt that they were not able to do more.

Caring for Siblings' Daily Needs

Seven participants offered advice and assistance to siblings related to caring out daily needs in a more adult-like role. They helped them make decisions, attended their events without a parent attending, provided transportation, administered and monitored medication, oversaw homework completion, and prepared regular snacks and meals. Rebecca described being a "motherly figure" to her younger brothers because she, "[made] sure that they did their homework and made them food because their dad worked until like six." Like with the other examples of parentification, these participants were the oldest child in the family or described their older sibling carrying out these roles. Emotionally caring for siblings was related to their shared DV exposure experiences, as the older sibling would share advice about families and explain that not all couples or fathers are violent. They also helped guide younger siblings in making difficult life decisions, like when Sarah visited her older brother for a week so he could help her decide what to do after she became pregnant in high school.

Caring for siblings' needs mainly occurred because, occasionally or more regularly, mothers were physically or emotionally absent due to the demands of a busy work schedule, their own addiction issues, or simply being emotionally unavailable because of the traumas they were experiencing at the hands of their husbands. The violence and abuse often made it difficult for the mother to fulfill mother-like roles or establish and sustain a consistent parenting routine; thus, the older sibling stepped in to fulfill these roles. Based on their descriptions, participants recognized that it was unlikely for their parent or parents to be able to provide everything for their sibling(s). For example, Allison's little brother needed consistent attention because he was a diabetic. Her mother was incapacitated by drug use, and although her father assisted in daily tasks, Allison still took on the mothering role. It was also apparent when participants had hoped for more connection and involvement from their parent(s) when they were growing up, so they

took on this role to partially address their own desires for their siblings. Amelia stated, "…I wanted more from [her mother] like I wanted her to be present in my life more, and so I would go to [my siblings] things. I would go to their honor roll things. I would go to their ball games." These participants described taking initiative to be part of their siblings' lives in a different manner; none of the participants stated that their parents told them they were required to support them in their parental duties. It is as though the sibling bond and desire for their siblings to experience a more supportive lifestyle inclined siblings to be involved.

Participants who had an older sibling who cared for their daily needs were explicitly appreciative of all they did for them as they grew up, stating that these siblings were not just family but also their best friend. Sarah described her brother, saying:

> He's my hero and my best friend. I go to him for everything, just because he has always been there for me. He is my rock. I wouldn't have made it through…I wouldn't be where I am without my brother. I love my brother . . . That's really who I go to whenever stuff like [DV, pregnancy] happens.

Those who took on the parentified role themselves, like Rebecca, felt that their role was simply to act as the mother. In this way, participants could perceive that their siblings were less likely to think of them in a friendly way, or want to be in an emotionally close relationship. Furthermore, caring for their siblings helped them reconcile their experiences with their parents.

Managing Parents' Health and Well-Being

Managing parents' health and well-being was carried out by five participants and entailed ensuring they had correct medications, following up with doctor's appointments, teaching them about technology, making sure their parent(s) went to work on time, and instilling morals. Jasmine and Elizabeth had mothers with debilitating health conditions (e.g., aortic aneurism and

depression) that entailed them stepping into a parent like role, or as Jasmine described it, she was "absolutely her parent" after the aneurism occurred. Both of these participants were older when they took on these roles, but they described doing so out of sheer necessity.

Managing their parents' well-being was evidenced by young adults disciplining their parents or engaging in behaviors aimed at teaching their parents right and wrong. Additionally, as identified with caring for siblings, parentification in this form occurred because a parent or parents were incapable of fulfilling these roles themselves or for each other due to addiction issues. For example, Allison had to bail her mother out of jail on one occasion and scolded her for using drugs with one of her high school friends. She recalled, "I am yelling, I mean going off, telling her, you're 38 years old, you should not be acting like this! I shouldn't be having to get on to you and parent you! This is not how this should go." In a similar way, participants described trying to instill morals in their parents because participants felt they had no other option. Jasmine said that if she did not step in, the only option would be to "let them run rampant and do terrible things," so instead, she tried to "talk to them about their actions and things like that" while she was away at college and she would call to check in on her father. Managing their parents' health and wellbeing was perceived as a positive necessity when mothers had debilitating health conditions that required support that fathers were not providing, but the participants seemed more frustrated and reluctant in their roles under conditions of substance abuse and developmentally inappropriate adult behaviors.

Parentification and Domestic Violence Exposure

All but two participants provided examples and stories of the ways they stepped into parentified roles from childhood through the time of the interview, suggesting that parentification cuts across type of DV (i.e., CCV and SCV) and physical violence exposure (i.e.,

severity and frequency) experiences. However, we did identify some variations in participants'

parentified roles based on their DV exposure experiences. As a reminder, the young adults were

classified into two groups based on their reported degree of coercive control exposure with ten

participants in the SCV group (i.e., no to low coercive control) and fifteen in the CCV group

(i.e., moderate to high coercive control). Although this was not a highlight of our findings, all

participants' mothers were biological, with eight participants identifying their father figures as

stepfathers; two stepfathers were in the SCV group and six in the moderate to high coercive

control group. There did not appear to be differences in participants' parentification experiences

based on relation to their father figure.

Despite shared examples of parentification, taking on multiple parentified roles, was

more common among participants who were exposed to CCV and more severe and frequent

violence. Ellie, for example, intervened to protect her mother, provided emotional support to

mother, and cared for her siblings' daily needs. Four of the ten SCV-exposed participants took

on more than one role, whereas ten of the fifteen CCV-exposed participants took on more than

one parentified role. We also identified variations across the two DV groups, as well as when

focusing on physical violence severity and frequency, when we looked within each of the five

parentified roles.

Equal amounts of participants reported providing emotional support to their mother

regardless of DV exposure experiences (i.e., SCV versus CCV). In comparison, the majority ($n =$

10/14) of young adults who acted to protect their mother from violence or conflict were exposed

to CCV. Additionally, intervening and being victimized during father-perpetrated violence was

more common among the CCV participants. Those exposed to CCV were more likely to report

managing parents' health and well-being ($n = 3/5$), protecting their siblings during the violence

(n = 4/7), and caring for their siblings (n = 6/7). Parentification also manifested more often in those young adults who were exposed to CCV as they took on multiple forms of parentification; ten participants were identified as providing emotional and instrumental support in two (n = 7/15) or three (n = 3/15) ways while only three (n = 3/10) in the low to no CCV group took on multiple roles. This suggests a possible relationship exists between the likelihood that parentification could manifest in young adults and the type and severity of DV they were exposed to during childhood. For example, 10 of the 13 participants who provided support to their parents in multiple ways were exposed to severe violence, as well as those who intervened in the violence or conflict to protect their mothers (n = 11/14).

Discussion

This study examined young adults' experiences of various parentification roles in the context of marital violence, applying family systems theory and Johnson's typology. Findings suggest that parentification is a way to respond, or a coping mechanism, to a stress or stressor (e.g., DV; Minuchin, 1974). Much of the current and previous parentification research focuses on parentified roles occurring in high conflict family environments or families with other internal (e.g., alcoholic parent) or external (e.g., job loss) pressures; far less information regarding parentification in the context of DV exists (Cummings et al., 1991, Minuchin, 1974, Peris et al., 2008). In the case of the present study, parentification was occurring in the context of couple violence that was perpetrated by fathers towards mothers. We identified five parentified roles that the DV-exposed youth engaged in during childhood through the time of the interview: intervening to protect mothers from violence, serving as mother's emotional support system, shielding siblings from violence and conflict, caring for siblings' daily needs, and managing parents' health and well-being.

Furthermore, parentification manifests in young adults exposed to both CCV and SCV, but differences were found in the number of times parentification was evidenced in those exposed to more severe DV. Young adults who were exposed to higher levels of coercive control were more likely to support their parents both instrumentally and emotionally and in multiple ways, while young adults exposed to no or low coercive control were more likely to support their parents in one way. It is clear that DV and physical violence exposure impacts children's relationships and roles within the family. Additionally, our findings support the argument in more recent years of DV research; it is likely that these young adults are more active, not

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passive, participants of DV and are influencing their home environments more than previously expected (Katz, 2015; Overlein and Hyden, 2009).

The Purposes of Parentification

Our first research question addressed whether families with DV experienced parentification and explored the various purposes they serve in these families. Our findings are consistent with our hypothesis in that most ($n = 23$) participants experienced some form of parentification, from intervening to protect mothers from violence and serving as their mother's emotional support system, to shielding siblings from violence and conflict and caring for siblings' daily needs. Additionally, our findings suggest multiple purposes are served through these parentified roles. We first explain the types of parentification that were evidenced in these five parentified themes, highlighting the differences and similarities of instrumental and emotional parentification roles and move to highlighting various purposes parentification roles served.

The literature describes parentification as manifesting in two different ways: instrumentally or emotionally. Instrumentally providing support to parents was evidenced by the ways in which participants physically protected their mothers and siblings through intervening in the DV and high conflict, caring for their siblings' daily needs, and managing their parents' health and well-being. Emotionally providing support to parents was clearly identified through acting as the mother's support system or confidante; however, additional emotionally supportive roles took place when participants cared for their siblings' daily needs. Whether the participant actively engaged in a parentified role, or seemingly stepped into it on their own accord, appeared to vary depending on whether it was instrumental versus emotional. Participants seemingly stepped into instrumental roles as active agents, hoping to stop their fathers' use of violence and

protect their mothers and siblings, but also due to concerns regarding their parents, especially their mothers', mental and physical health and wellbeing.

In contrast, emotional parentification, particularly the mother turning to the children to serve as their emotional support system, appeared less in the participants' control but conflicting outcomes were associated with how the participants felt in their roles. The literature explains how mothers are more likely to seek emotional support from their children and through emotional parentification, children are more likely to perceive conflict and distress more negatively (Peris et al., 2008). Our findings also represent these conclusions as there were several participants who described feeling their mothers were their best friends but also those who found this emotionally supportive role to be a burden, potentially interfering in their daily lives and developmental growth. It is difficult to tease apart whether participants were independently motivated or if their mothers, who chose to disclose to them, were the instigators of their children filling these roles. Evidence suggests that when parents share their distress with their children, the children are more likely to feel compelled to fulfill the parent's emotional void. Additionally, those who provided emotional support or had their siblings provide emotional support to them through caring for their daily needs, expressed more positive sentiment towards this role, suggesting that the type of or reason for emotional support could play a factor into young adults' perceptions of these roles. Finally, almost all participants who took on these instrumental and emotional roles were the oldest child residing in the house while father-mother domestic violence occurred.

Much of the current and previous parentification research focuses on negative outcomes of parentification roles (Byng-Hall, 2002; Lindahl et al., 2012, Peris et al., 2008). Furthermore, the research emphasizes that parentified children are often serving a purpose to relieve a parent

or parents of some type of burden or stressor and the potential negative outcomes of these roles (Byng-Hall, 2002; Godsall et al., 2004; Macfie, McElwain, Houts, & Cox, 2005). Family systems theory often views this boundary infringement as harmful to child development and warns that children could suffer in later years; however, FST also understands that familial relationships and subsystems impact one another (Minuchin, 1974). Unfortunately, past research fails to see these experiences and the purposes they serve in a more complex way. Throughout our findings, we identified that young adults relieve their parents of some task or provided emotional support to their mothers, which likely served the purpose of an overall support system in their family. It is clear, however, that parentification served various purposes for the participants themselves, and not just their mothers or parents.

Although little research exists which focuses on parentification in the context of DV, Katz (2015) explained that children discuss agentic roles, such as parentification, as a coping mechanism when exposed to or experiencing DV. As discussed in our findings, it was clear that fewer participants demonstrated feeling burdened by their roles, rather, these roles were potentially protective, gave them purpose, and were likely a form of coping mechanism in toxic environments. They reflected instinctual feelings to intervene and protect their mothers from the violence, easing the burden off their mothers who were often trying to work outside the home, parent, and survive an abusive home life. Parentification purposes also included helping their siblings succeed and experience less negative outcomes than they otherwise might have through their care and protection. Additionally, their parents rarely compelled them to take on parentification; rather they more likely entered these roles voluntarily, actively choosing to support their parents in these various ways. This provides additional insight into the concept of viewing and understanding children and their parents as interactive subsystems inside the larger

family system as family system theory promotes (Minuchin, 1974)**.** There are similarities between FST and the bilateral model, as discussed by Katz (2015), suggesting children effect and are affected by, their parents.

Parentification in the Context of Diverse Domestic Violence Exposure Experiences

Our second research question addressed how the nature of couple violence (e.g., CCV, SCV, severity, and frequency of physical violence) influenced how and to what extent parentification manifested. It is clear from our findings that the likelihood of parentification manifesting in a family increases when some type of DV is present, and even more so if the DV is severe; parentification themes were evidenced in all but two ($n = 23$) participants. These findings are consistent with clinical literature by Bancroft and colleagues (2002, 2012) on how parenting styles of both parents may differ in the presence of DV, therefore increasing the possibility of parentification roles, yet the findings offer additional nuances in how and why parentification manifests in families with DV.

Parentification is very common within this sample of DV-exposed young adults, regardless of severity and frequency of physical violence or degree of coercive control exposure. Nearly all engaged in some form of parentification, with many engaging in multiple forms throughout childhood and into young adulthood. However, those with more severe and coercive DV exposure experiences (i.e., CCV group) reported more consistently taking on parentified roles, particularly dangerous parentified roles aimed at protecting their mothers and siblings. This form of instrumental parentification, specifically, intervening either by directly engaging with fathers during violence or by working behind the scenes to help their mothers, proved to be dangerous at times. Regardless of this known risk, an obligation to help and protect often drove their continued decisions to support and protect their mother and siblings (though some did stop

intervening due to increased risk of victimization by their fathers). The findings from this study suggest that this form of parentification is likely more common in families in which there is a heightened severity, frequency, and overall chronic pattern of DV, and thus, these youths are at greater risk for physical and psychological injuries.

Limitations

Several limitations exist in the present study in relation to the findings and results. Participant interviews were partially retrospective and although participants appeared to easily recall detailed events and memories from their childhood, retrospective bias is not free from this study. Participants may have recalled memories that are more closely associated to their current relationships and roles with their parents and siblings. Additionally, changes in their experiences from the time they were in their homes to the time out of the house could be influential in their ability to interpret previous parentification events. Consistent with previous researchers' hypotheses, however, due to their age at the time of interview, participants could process and recall their experiences of DV exposure and coercive control in a more complex way than at a younger age. A second limitation of this study is that detailed follow-up or probing questions were not asked regarding parentification experiences as this is part of a larger study including multiple focus areas. Thus, there were inconsistences across participant interviews as some provided detailed recollections of ways they supported their parents while some were more superficial (e.g., "my sister supported my mother"); however, participants provided sufficient information and detail on their parentification experiences to address the three research questions. With this in mind, it is possible that the two participants who did not describe taking on parentified roles did indeed experience parentification, but they did not describe their experiences in the interviews. Finally, despite the efforts of the larger project to recruit male

participants, females largely comprised the makeup of the sample and therefore the findings are less generalizable to DV exposed young adult males; however, consistent with research on high conflict and parentification, daughters are more likely to take on parentified roles (Peris et a., 2008). Nevertheless, an even distribution of gender may have promoted a more representative understanding of parentification in the context of DV and children regardless of gender.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

Despite these noted limitations, our findings can inform future research, and potentially, clinical practices with DV-exposed young adults. Our findings emphasize the complexities and implications of DV exposure on boundary infringements, specifically, parentification. It is imperative to recognize the complex nature of DV exposure and how children and parents experiencing DV contexts respond through boundary diffusion and hierarchy and role swapping.

Potential research could investigate comparisons between how children in families without DV may feel differently about the roles they take on addressing this gap in research by exploring those young adults' (exposed to DV) feelings and beliefs behind their contribution to their familial environment. In the same respect, including siblings and mothers when exploring past experiences would be beneficial. While exploring other family members' experiences, it would be of interest in future research whether relationship to the father makes a difference (i.e., biological or stepfather). Although our study did not focus on relation to parental figures, further investigation with a larger sample size could provide additional understanding. It would be important to know how others young adults perceived the parentification roles and how others view the purposes they served within the family. Additionally, including the mother in future research may strengthen the results and confirm those experiences young adults recollect as some were younger during their parentification involvement. As discussed in some of the

research on children who experience or witness high conflict in their homes, it is likely that adjustments should be made in the research on children and DV to explore and understand parentification in children in a more complex way--parentification does not result in absolute negatives or positives. Timing and length of these parentification roles would be useful to know in terms of longevity and how consistently these young adults continue holding these roles or if they ultimately cease upon exiting the household. Some of the young adults in this study indicated that they would often call to check in on their siblings, or their siblings or mother would call for advice. Finally, future research should compare potential gender differences within each type (e.g., males versus females' parentified roles within CCV exposure groups).

Based on our findings and the similarities to other researchers, there are clinical implications regarding the importance of understanding how children feel in their roles, especially when parentification occurs in the context of DV. Comparisons could be made between how children in families without DV may feel differently about the roles they take on. Additional research could address this gap and explore those young adults' (exposed to DV) feelings and beliefs behind their contribution to their familial environment. Clinicians and other professionals working with DV-exposed youth should be aware of the potential roles they could be serving at home as compared to those in non-exposed youth. Specifically, professionals should recognize that children in families of DV are more likely to experience role swapping, boundary diffusion, and ultimately parentified tasks or duties in the context of severe DV; therefore, clinicians should attempt to assess and conceptualize family variables to implement psychoeducation and treatment for parentification roles. For example, parents should be encouraged to communicate with their children regarding not only the parentification roles, but also disclosure regarding DV. Research indicates that children benefit from parent-child

discussion related to DV. Practitioners should explore children's beliefs and feelings regarding parentification manifestation, as feelings are potentially associated with outcome (e.g., parentified children can feel empowered, agentic, and independent versus those who present as harboring more depressive, resentful feelings). Additionally, clinicians should consider other family factors (e.g., parental mental and physical health) that relate to parentification as these factors often impact the child's ability to navigate this role.

Conclusions

Couple dynamics, specifically DV and high conflict, ultimately impact the fluidity or rigidity of the boundaries and hierarchies within the parent-child relationship. Almost all young adults took on some form of parentification role regardless of exposure to DV type (i.e., SCV or CCV) suggesting that exposure to DV ultimately increases the likelihood of parentification. These hostile and toxic environments, especially experienced by those exposed to CCV, likely influence parenting strategies and consistency, and therefore children's responses and decision making. From our findings, parentification roles clearly manifested because participants felt, in some way, their intervention, emotional support, caring for their siblings, and managing their parents' health and well-being would be helpful. This study found that children were deliberate in their actions and believed in their ability to make positive change in familial patterns, often in dangerous situations.

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Appendix A. Tables

Table 1. *Participant and Type of Violence*

Participants	Physical violence exposure				Coercive control exposure			
	Direct	Indirect	Severe	Frequent	Emotional	Financial	Surveillance	Using kids
Situational Couple Violence (*None; n = 4*)								
P6 Briana	X	X	X	X	X			
P14 Victoria	X	X						
P19 Joshua		X			X			
P20 Stefan	X	X	X		X			
Situational Couple Violence (*Low; n = 6*)								
P1 Lauren	X	X			X		X	
P2 Elizabeth	X	X	X		X			
P7 Mia	X			X	X	X		x
P12 Annie		X			X	x		
P18 Steph	X	X			X	X		
P24 Allison	X	X	X		X			
Coercive Controlling Violence (*Moderate; n = 8*)								
P3 Jasmine	X	X	X	X	X	X		
P8 Keli	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
P9 Ellie	X				X	X	X	
P10 Blair	X		X	X	X	X	X	
P13 London	X	X	X	X	X	x		
P21 Mary	X	X	X		X	X	X	
P22 Rebecca	X	X			X		X	
P25 Amelia	X	X	X		X	x		
Coercive Controlling Violence (*High; n = 7*)								
P4 Barbara	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
P5 Sarah		X		X	X	X	X	X
P11 Caitlin	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
P15 Taylor	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
P16 Aaliyah	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
P17 Alexis	X	X	X	X	X	x	X	
P23 Emma	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Table 2. *Categories of Boundary Infringements by Participant and Type of Violence*

Participants	Parentified Roles					DV Severity & Frequency	
	Intervening to Protect Mother	Mother's Support	Protecting Siblings from Violence	Caring for Siblings' Daily Needs	Managing Parents' Health	Severe	Frequent
Situational Couple Violence (*None; n = 4*)							
Briana	X		X			X	X
Victoria			X				
Joshua		X					
Stefan			X			X	
Situational Couple Violence (*Low; n = 6*)							
Lauren		X					
Elizabeth	X	X			X	X	
Mia		X					X
Annie							
Steph	X						
Allison	X			X	X	X	
Coercive Controlling Violence (*Moderate; n = 8*)							
Jasmine	X				X	X	X
P8 Keli	X					X	X
Ellie	X	X		X			
Blair	X				X	X	X
London	X	X				X	X
Mary	X					X	
Rebecca	X		X	X			
Amelia				X		X	
Coercive Controlling Violence (*High; n = 7*)							
Barbara	X		X			X	X
Sarah		X		X			X
Caitlin	X		X	X		X	X
Taylor	X	X				X	X
Aaliyah			X	X		X	X
Alexis					X	X	X
Emma						X	X

Appendix B. -- Interview Protocol for Young Adults Live and Learn (Y'ALL) Project
The purpose of this interview is for me to learn more about the experiences of young adults who were exposed to violence and abuse perpetrated by their father or father-like figure towards their mother. I am going to ask you to tell me about your family life while you were growing up through the present time as well as your past and current romantic relationships. I will also ask you how you managed your experiences within your family and community. I will ask about the violence and abuse you were exposed to in a variety of ways, but I'll encourage you to just share your story through the majority of our time together.

Finally, I want to let you know that I will not be judging you based on your responses. If I don't comment on certain things you tell me, it is because I am listening and want you to continue your story.

Do you have any questions before we begin?
We are going to begin with some demographic and background information pertaining to you, your parent's relationship, some specific questions about each family member, and then also a few about where you grew up, but first, how did you learn about the Y'ALL Project? _____

I. Demographics/Background Information
1. How old are you?

2. What is your race or ethnicity?

3. What is your highest level of education?

If participant did not indicate who his/her mother's abusive partner was/is during the initial screening, ask the following:

Over email/phone you had said that your father or father-like figure had physically harmed your mother while you were growing up, was this your biological or adopted father, stepfather, or mother's partner not from marriage?

Now I'm going to ask you a little bit more about your mom's marital status and relationship with _____ (refer to him as participant did)?

[Mother's abuser is referred to as her "partner" but will be identified according to participants' labeling during interview process]

What is your mother and her partner's marital status? *[Probe for when they got married, separated or divorced; who initiated separation/divorce; who do they primarily stay with or visit when they are home]*

[If parents separated or divorced, probe for current relationship status, remarriage, step or half siblings]

Now I'm going to ask you to tell me a little bit more about your individual family members.

1. What is your mom's age?

2. What is your mom's race or ethnicity?

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3. What is your mom's highest level of education?

4. What does your mom do for a living? [Probe if these are jobs or occupations that have remained constant or have varied while growing up.]
_____

5. What is your mother's partner's age?

6. What is his race or ethnicity?

7. What is his highest level of education?

8. What does he do for a living? [Probe if these are jobs or occupations that have remained constant or have varied while growing up.]

9. Do you have any siblings? [If yes, probe for…]
       a. How many?
       b. What is their age?
       c. Gender?
       d. What is the birth order of siblings (e.g., oldest, middle)?
       e. Any still living at home?

10. Are there any extended family members or individuals (e.g., nanny, grandparent) who lived in your house while you were growing up? If yes, who? When did they live in your home?

Now I'm going to take the information that you gave me to draw out a picture of your family – it's called a genogram – so that I can get a picture of who is in your family and the relationships in your family. This genogram will make it easier for me to keep track of who is in your family and the relationships between your family members while you are telling me about your experiences.

Alright, now I'm going to ask you some questions about your family as a whole and the community you grew up in.

11. How would you classify your family while you were growing up? *[Probe for changes between then and present; would you classify your family as _____ at the current time?]*
Read as options, not like a multiple choice question:
       a. Impoverished/living in poverty
       b. Working class
       c. Middle class
       d. Upper-middle class
       e. Upper class

12. Did your family ever receive any of the following public assistance services? Reduced or free school lunches, cash assistance, food assistance (food stamps), health care or child care assistance, or housing assistance (e.g., Section 8 housing)? [If yes, specify which ones.]

13. In what town, village, or city did you grow up or spend the majority of your childhood?

14. What sort of setting did you grow up in (for example, was it rural, urban, or suburban)?

15. If you were an outsider (e.g., not close friend or family member), how would you describe your family?
   a. How does this compare to your perspective or the reality of your home and family life?

II. Violence, Abuse and Family Life: I am now going to ask you to tell me about your mom and her partner's relationship and how he hurt your mom, but I will also ask you some questions about your relationship with your mother's partner and the possible ways in which he may have hurt you.

1. How would you describe your mom and her partner's relationship while you were growing up? *[Probe for whether this has always been the case, or if there were ebbs and flows or patterns of change throughout their childhood]*

2. Reflecting back on your childhood, can you tell me about the first time you realized that your mother's partner was hurting your mother? *[Probe for specific age or year in school. They did not need to label it abuse at the time, but now when they reflect back]*

3. Can you describe the physical abuse against your mother while you were growing up?

   a. Moms who experience abuse often think or hope their children don't know about, see, or hear the physical abuse but research shows children and adolescents are often very aware of the abuse. Can you tell me about your experiences (and the experiences of your siblings if relevant) of witnessing or overhearing abuse towards your mom? *[Probe for whether they witnessed, overheard, saw the aftermath (e.g., bruises, property damage), or were told about it by someone else if they were not present; frequency; whether or not the participant or siblings intervened in any way]*

      1. Some children and adolescent say they sometimes tried to intervene to stop the abuse, but others have said that they did not intervene because they were too scared or thought they would make things worse. Can you tell me about your experiences and opinion about intervening?

      [Probe for factors that played into their decision not to intervene; if they did intervene, did the ways in which they intervened change over time; what happened when they intervened?]

4. In addition to physical abuse, can you describe some of the other ways that your mom experienced abuse by her partner? *[Probe with examples of emotional, sexual, financial, etc. abuse, if needed. Probe for possible controlling behaviors by asking to elaborate on examples of abuse; frequency]*

   a. *[If participant does not mention control issues in the preceding questions, directly ask if such behaviors were present.]* Would you describe him as controlling of your mother or not controlling? If yes, how so? Can you give me some examples? If no, why would you say he was not controlling?

   b. Research has indicated that children and adolescents are often exposed to the physical abuse, but we do not know much about exposure to some of non-physical abuses that you described. Can you tell me about your experiences (and the experiences of your siblings if relevant) of witnessing or overhearing these non-physical but abusive behaviors towards your mom?

   [Probe for whether they witnessed, overheard, or were told about it by someone else if they were not present; frequency; whether or not the participant or siblings intervened in any way; when they figured out that these behaviors were abusive]

5. From your perspective, why your mom's partner was abusive towards her or what was going on to cause or lead up to the physical and non-physical abuse? *[If necessary, probe regarding specific arguments, unpredictable violence, and violence used to control.]*

6. Some women who experience abuse respond by using violence to defend themselves or protect their children, whereas others use violence against their partner because they are angry with them or want to take control of the situation. How does your mom's behaviors align with what I just read? (Or, can you tell me about a time when your mother used acts of physical violence or other abusive acts towards her partner? *(If so, did she initiate or did he, what was her motivation for her use of violence; common? infrequent)*

7. How has your mother and her partners' relationship changed over time? *(If divorced or separated and mom initiated divorce and/or separation. Probe for responses that indicate control, such as threats of violence if she left, or threats to the kids. [Probe for whether abuse continued post-separation, types of abuse]*

Alright, now I'm going to ask you a set of questions asks about actions your mom may have experienced in her relationship with her abusive partner. You have already answered many of these questions these past few minutes. These questions have only been used in research with adult women who were hurt by their partner, so we want to see if the questions are useful in better understanding the experiences of young adults exposed to violence and abuse.

Caroline's Thesis Analysis Table: Boundary Infringements (Participants 1-11 as examples)

	Family Violence	Boundary Infringement & Purpose	Other Influential Factors
P1 Lauren	**CCV or SCV:** SCV (low) **Physical violence** (severity, frequency): mild, infrequent **Exposure type** *(direct, indirect, both)*: both **CAM** *(physical, verbal, or both):* both (happened 1x)	**CGC:** Line 610 "She wanted to drive a wedge between me and him even more… "like, she wanted me to be hers." ***Purpose:*** It appears that P1s mom confides in her daughter to build a wedge between P1 and her dad due to the violence. P1 states that her mom told her that it was like he didn't know what to do w/ her bc she's a girl and he had 2 boys before her. *It might be possible to infer that mom didn't want P1 to have a good relationship w/ her dad because mom didn't/couldn't. **Triangulation:** ***Purpose:*** **Parentification:** Lauren identifies her mom as her best friend even though she said she would feel judged by her mother. Line 143: "I had a very strong relationship with my mom. She was was like my best friend, I'd talk to her about everything, and then with my dad, it was kind of like he was always at arms length." **Emotional parentification** – bx started when dad moved out her junior year of HS Line 345: "Numerous times, she would just come bang on my door in the middle of the night and come cry about it. And I know she needed support, but it was just stressful for me, because I don't really know how to support her through that." Line 543: **"**It's like I said, she would come knock on my door in the middle of the night—like on a school night. I remember one night she did it and it was before I was supposed to take the ACT and she knew that, and it was like she just always expected me to put her first and treat her how a parent would treat a child and take care of her and make sure she's not upset." ***Purpose:*** *Serving as the mother's confidante.	**Biological or stepfather** *(if stepfather, note when he came into the picture, so you can be mindful of how this might influence BI)*: **Biological** **Married, separated, or divorced** *(if separated or divorced, when did this occur [be mindful of how this might influence BI])*: **Divorced (separated when junior in HS)** **Miscellaneous:** Youngest child, only girl, older brothers are significantly older; stay at home mom In the beginning of the interview, she describes her mom in complex ways… Describes her as friendly to outsiders but judgmental in the family. (See additional quotes page for full info).

		At the beginning of the interview, P1 notes that her mom had never had a job before marriage or did anything on her own and P1 feels that she chose P1 to lean on because after the divorce, she lost her support and needed to find a new support.	
P2 Elizabeth	**CCV or SCV:** SCV (low) **Physical violence** (severity, frequency): Severe, infrequent **Exposure type** *(direct, indirect, both)*: both **CAM** *(physical, verbal, or both):* none	**CGC:** *Purpose:* **Triangulation:** *Purpose:* **Parentification: Emotional & instrumental** *P2 identifies that there are much more "parent" roles being taken on after she left the house and came to college, but before there are times it appears that Elizabeth is protecting her mom against her dad and acknowledges that she believes her dad wouldn't go against her or "test her." She also identifies times that she verbally stands up for her mother.* Ex: Line 364 "But if things ever get physical and police haven't already been called, and I'll go ahead and do it" Line 370 "But he knows that if he did that to me, that there would be, so, he's not going to do that. So why would I not intervene if I know he's not going to do anything to me." Line 650 "It's okay, I get it you want to bond with me…. But can you not hit mom first? You know?" Line 819: "But she would, like, they asked her "who's your support system" and she mentioned my daughter, well, she's my support system. And she told me that, so basically, my mom told me that her 21 year old daughter in college in another state, is her support system. And I'm like, that's terrifying." Line 823: "but I mean, sometimes I feel like it's – in a way, I'm kind of the mom." Line 853: "You know, it's like, so I picked up bits and pieced because it's like I was helping her with technology stuff." *Purpose:* Protecting mom from dad (calling police /police, making sure her meds are right – hormone replacement and depression meds, helping w/ technology), emotional support system *mother would call daughter when daughter was away at school and cry about how bad things were at home and talk about the problems w/ her dad.	**Biological or stepfather** *(if stepfather, note when he came into the picture, so you can be mindful of how this might influence BI)*: **Biological** **Married, separated, or divorced** (*if separated or divorced, when did this occur [be mindful of how this might influence BI]*): **Married** **Miscellaneous:** Oldest child of 2 (has a younger brother who has love/hate, inappropriate relationship with father); Father was alcoholic; bx changes from more emotional and physical abuse when father lost job and when his brother died *MH notes: she took on a parentified role in a way that her brother couldn't. She explained at one point that he couldn't justify hitting a kid who is also a woman but he would hit her mom and her brother ("I think part of it has to do with the fact that like he can handle hitting a women and he can handle hitting his kid, but he can't handle hitting his kid who is also a women.")

P3 Jasmine	**CCV or SCV:** Coercive Controlling **Physical violence** (severity, frequency): Moderate & Frequent **Exposure type** *(direct, indirect, both)*: Both **CAM** *(physical, verbal, or both):* None	**CGC:** *Purpose:* **Triangulation:** *Purpose:* **Parentification:** Line 389: "So since being in college and wanting to move past those things I have taken it upon myself to tell my mom and dad every day or every time I talk to them "I love you" and so now they say it back. So I realize sometimes you just kind of have to help them so I am still really involved in their life and now that I think about it I really don't, I kind don't want to be, but it's like I kind of don't have a choice because it's either let them run rampant and do terrible things or kind of help them. So that's what I try to do. I talk to them about their actions and things like that." *Purpose:* When asked if she carried on a parent role, Jasmine stated, "Yeah that is how I feel. That is exactly how I feel. Yes basically for both of them. Not as much with my dad because his everyday activities he can handle perfectly fine by himself but I try to instill morals and things like that in him and tell him when he does something that is wrong or something like that. With my mom, I am really her parent now because she had an aortic aneurism."	**Biological or stepfather** *(if stepfather, note when he came into the picture, so you can be mindful of how this might influence BI)*: **Biological father** **Married, separated, or divorced** (*if separated or divorced, when did this occur [be mindful of how this might influence BI]*): **Separated 4 years now (started her freshman year of college)** **Miscellaneous:** African American One of 2 children, she's the youngest, older sister is 2 yrs older (strained relationship with sister because parents always explicitly favored sister) Jasmine lived w/ grandmother for a while bc parents had a druge problem; Mom "got clean", dad didn't. Junior year in HS, M started becoming violent too
P4 Barbara	**CCV or SCV:** CCV **Physical violence** (severity, frequency): High & frequent **Exposure type** *(direct, indirect, both)*: Direct **CAM** *(physical, verbal, or both):* Both	**CGC:** It seems like this could be present but is less apparent/clear. Barbara's dad almost made it seem like he was trying to get the kids to team up against their mother… Line 720: KH: Okay. You said he tried to get you and your siblings to live with him after the divorce. P4: Yeah. He… the last time he talked to us, he asked us to live with him and when we said we didn't want to, he asked why… We told him that we wanted to stay with Momma. He didn't understand that what he did to us growing up affected us hard. He figured that was our way of saying that we didn't love him, I guess, and he decided to disown us before we could disown him, I guess is what he was thinking. But I tried to have a relationship with him after the divorce. He made it hard, with the constant criticism of what we were doing and talking bad about our mother every once in a while and it was just hard to stay the way I was and the way (sister's name) was"	**Biological or stepfather** *(if stepfather, note when he came into the picture, so you can be mindful of how this might influence BI)*: **Biological** **Married, separated, or divorced** (*if separated or divorced, when did this occur [be mindful of how this might influence BI]*): **Divorced before 16th birthday** Mother is remarried now **Miscellaneous:** Oldest of 3 siblings, 1 sister (4 yrs younger) and 1 brother (12 yrs younger) – little brother called her Mama Ham; 1 step sibling, 2 cousins live w/ them.

Line 767: "was talking to us, asking us why we didn't want to live with him, why it took us so long to come to visit—even though he was always working, so we never really could visit him anyway. He was trying to say that he was the one who clothed us all those years, and he was the one who took care of us. He left out all the parts where he also disciplined us and tried to control us. And he tried to make it seem… make us feel guilty for not wanting to live with him and try to get us to live with him that way…and yeah."
Purpose:

Triangulation: Barbara did whatever she could to keep her sister from getting the punishment even if it was something her sister did like making bad grades. She basically would deflect anything that was meant for her sister by doing something worse to get her dad to focus on her instead. So in this way it's parentification but also runs into triangulation as she and her mom both try to get the dad to put focus on them, not the sibling. "his anger could easily shift to another person."

Line 453: "KH: Okay. Were either of your parents ever aware that you were kind of creating problems to distract away from your sister?
P4: My mom knew, and when she was home and I tried to do that, she'd try to draw the attention back on her so that I wouldn't get into as much trouble.
KH: So you were all kind of competing for your dad's attention in that way… His negative attention to protect each other…"
Purpose: Take pressure away from younger sister and putting self in the middle instead

Parentification:
Line 269: "I tried to protect my sister from knowing what was going on."
KH: Okay. Would you like a tissue? No? Okay. So how would you do that?
P4: Well I'd set up in front of the TV or I'd get my DVD player out, I'd get out whatever little MP3 I owned or I'd uh, sing to her.
KH: Scary. At that point in time were you trying to protect your sister as well like you said you'd done before?
P4: I tried, but she realized what was going on and she started crying.

Line 340:

Mother stopped working when Barbara was 17(ish) bc the doctor said she was "mentally unable"
Dad dropped out of HS to support mom, grandparents and daughter.
Took in cousins when she was in 7th grade.

*Barbara and sister heard their dad talking on the phone w/ another woman
Mom tried to pack her and sister up to try and leave

Barbara describes his behavior as unpredictable bc most of the time he'd come home just angry and then again it would build up. Additionally, she indicates that when she was younger, she was a daddy's girl then she realized what he was doing and so her sister became more of a daddy's girl.

She'd often be woken up in the middle of the night by the yelling and now she suffers from the inability to sleep deeply

Line 720: "P4: Well, I was always scared of making him mad and doing something he didn't approve of, and he rarely approved of anything that I wanted to do. I was always trying to do what he wanted to make him happy and it was never good enough. I love my father because he's my father, but he's terrifying to me."

		P4: My dad would… my dad's anger could easily shift to another person, so I was always scared to stand up and say something. KH: Right. Obviously you want to keep yourself physically safe. It sounds like you focused a lot of your energy, then, on protecting your sister. Can you tell me about why you thought it would be good to protect your sister? What was going through your head? P4: I just feel like that's what any sibling would do. I loved her and I wanted her to not know what it was like. "KH: So, you very much, it sounds like, took on the mothering role to both of your siblings. And then maybe even your cousins when they came in." P4: "I tried. So I could help Mom out." P4: Well, my sister and I were always doing stuff that he didn't like, so we were always getting in trouble. I would try to draw the attentions solely on me and sometimes it worked and other times it didn't. KH: What do you mean by draw the attention on you? Line 419: "Well, (sister's name) would get a bad grade and I'd try to get his attention by doing something he didn't like at home. She'd get off with a warning and I'd be sat on my knees in the corner somewhere. The only times I couldn't keep her from getting the attention on her is if she bit me or punched my nose. That was the only time I couldn't draw the attention off of her." *Purpose:* Protecting sister / protecting & helping out mother	
P5 **Sarah**	**CCV or SCV: CCV** **Physical violence** (severity, frequency): High & frequent **Exposure type** *(direct, indirect, both)*: Indirect **CAM** *(physical, verbal, or both)*: Verbal	**CGC:** Sarah explained how her mom would always intervene when Tom was yelling at Sarah by trying to redirect his anger back towards her / taking power away from him and placing more power within herself(mom). Line 412 "She always stood up for me. She always said don't talk to her like that, that's my child, don't do that. So, she always tried to stand up for me." **Line 422:** "LM: You were saying how your mom would try to protect you. And, like, stand up for you. P5: Yeah, she would always just say "No, don't do that." And she would tell me like go in your room, shut the door, and don't come out. Just stuff like that. You know, she was always ready to take my spot getting yelled at."	**Biological or stepfather** *(if stepfather, note when he came into the picture, so you can be mindful of how this might influence BI)*: **Stepfather (since age 3)** **Married, separated, or divorced** (*if separated or divorced, when did this occur [be mindful of how this might influence BI]*): **Married** **Miscellaneous:** Youngest of 3; one older brother and older sister

Line 228:
Even now her mom rarely admits to the physical abuse and Sarah said, "She's not much better about it now. Like, she'll call me and she'll be like, 'Yeah, he's in one of his moods today and he did this and this and this.'" It is apparent that Sarah knows what this means and her mom knows she knows what this means, but it appears like this phrasing may be easier for the mom to say as opposed to the actual violence or abuse.

Other times Sarah notes that Tom tried to use his power against her mom:
Line 764: LM: Do you feel like he ever used you, like, against your mom? Does that make sense?
P5: Yeah, like, like trying to kick me out and stuff he knew would make my mom upset. Like, I remember someone like plugged their phone charger into my bed and it sparked kind of, and the outlet turned black, and I didn't know – like, hey, whatever, and he saw it and was like "you're trying to burn my house down, you're going to live with your dad" and packed my room again. So he was always like that because he knew it would push my mom's buttons.
LM: So he would try to push your mom's buttons by saying things to you.
P5: Right.

Purpose:

Triangulation:
It appears that since Sarah has been living away from home, that she really tries to stick up for mom and Tom. Almost as if triangulation is going on…Especially between Sarah, her brother, and mother against her sister since her sister refuses to accept Tom's changing. Now they don't speak to her (the sister).
Line 849: I told her, I was like, you know, you need to tell her that he's a part of your life and he's making an effort to change and you're willing to accept it, Russ and I are willing to accept it, and if she doesn't want to that's her decision. You're done begging her to let you be a part of her life. Cause, I mean, how long have you been doing this, where are you getting? So for me personally, I'm kind of fed up with her and I'm done with her and my brother is the same way. And so my mom is just trying to fix it. She's always been like that. That's kind of why…I know not to talk to her about stuff like that.

pull in information re: siblings. Her brother seemed to be parentified, he just was out of the home because he grew up. She said: She confided in her brother and sister whenever there were issues in the house. She said that her brother was also the go to person to talk to for her mom, so he may have experienced some of the parentification. Sarah explained:

> "I always used to call him, he's my hero and my best friend. I go to him for everything, just because he has always been there for me. He is my rock. I wouldn't have made it through. Like whenever I got pregnant, I flew up to see him and I stayed there for a week. I wouldn't be where I am without my brother. I love my brother. So that's really like, my confidant. That's really who I go to whenever stuff like that happens."

She goes to her sister and brother a lot to confide in but for different reasons based on their relationship with Tom. Sarah explained, "My sister is anti-Tom. So she's like 'Well, mom needs to leave him,' and It's like, 'Okay, I agree but it's not really helping my situation. You're just complaining and that's not going to get me anywhere.' I call her to vent and call him to actually try to do something about it.

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		Purpose: Unsure about this…	After Sarah's abortion, her relationship has been much more strained with her sister and they spent a year not speaking. She feels that her sister has held a grudge against Tom, but her brother and Sarah are trying to forgive him and move on since he is trying to change and get help. It is apparent that her mother staying with Tom, and Sarah and her brother giving him a chance has really created a wedge between the siblings, which highlights the complexity in how siblings handle violence within their family. Sarah explains that her mom tries to mend the relationships between everyone.
		Parentification: There's a bit of information regarding how Sarah feels like she needs to protect her mother… **Line 458:** "I'm so protective of her because I understand the situation she's in. And I know, I feel like this: I can still get out of it, I'm still young, I'm not married, so that's why. You know, cause, I don't know, I don't want her to feel like she's alone in that." (See full quote in additional notes). Most of the parentification, however, goes on between Sarah and her siblings, especially with her brother. Her brother and sister take on type of parental support roles. Sarah indicates that at one point her sister was talking to her in regards to the pregnancy and telling Sarah, "If he is mean to you, call the cops." Full quotes in additional info doc: **Line 819:** "So, like, and I think my mom also felt like she could really talk to him, so…like I always used to call him, he's my hero and my best friend." "And, you know, I wouldn't be where I am without my brother. I love my brother. So that's really like, my confidant. That's really who I go to whenever stuff like that happens. I call him and I say this happened. Can you believe it? What do I do? What do I say?" *Purpose:* (sarah) → Give mom emotional support Sister: provide emotional support to Sarah Brother: More emotional and instrumental to both Sarah and their mom	
P6 Briana	**CCV or SCV: SCV** **Physical violence** (severity, frequency): Severe, frequent **Exposure type** *(direct, indirect, both)*: Both	**CGC:** This could be hard to argue, but it feels like Briana is closer w/ her father and believes that the relationship became less close bc of her mother. Throughout the interview, she discusses that she feels her mom didn't like the closeness of Briana to her father and Briana identified as being a "daddy's girl." However, I'm not sure this would actually be CGC as it doesn't appear that she has more "power" than her parents… **Line 496:** "Yeah when I was growing up I was kind of a daddy's girl. I guess as I got older I kind of drifted away you know what I'm saying? Now I would say it is kind of complicated."	**Biological or stepfather** *(if stepfather, note when he came into the picture, so you can be mindful of how this might influence BI)*: **Biological father** **Married, separated, or divorced** *(if separated or divorced, when did this occur [be mindful of how this might influence BI])*: **Married**

	CAM (physical, verbal, or both): None	Line 512: "MH: Now tell me about how your relationship is more complicated or kind of do you remember why you started to drift away? P6: Well I would say because I think it has a lot to do with my mom, for real. I kind of tried to stay out of the way, you know? So I don't kind of talk to them about a lot of stuff like money or issues." *Purpose:* Because I am unsure if this would be CGC, I'm not sure it serves a purpose other than this was a closer relationship than w/ her mom. However, if I wanted to speculate further, this could be a way to keep Briana on his side / see that he is right and that the reason things happen were due to her mom.	**Miscellaneous: African American Oldest sibling, 2 younger brothers and a younger sister**
		Triangulation: In this instance, Briana is elevating herself into a triangulation rather than her parents pulling her in. It's as if she's trying to even things out and let everyone see it from either side; **Line 214:** "MH: Why do you think you were the one that wanted to intervene or try to mediate the situation? P6: I guess I was the oldest. I had been in the ground the longest and I kind of knew more as far as the situation and what was going on. I guess I'm just oldest. I mean I understood what he was saying I guess. I kind of understood both sides, you know. You get tired sometimes and sometimes you just want to help. Or you want people to understand what you're going through. I don't think that physical violence is the way to handle it or let someone know that, but I get it. MH: You were able to see both sides P6: Yeah I kind of yeah I get both sides" Also, Briana sometimes involuntarily has to offer support/advice when her siblings call and say that the parents are fighting again… (see full description in additional quote doc). **Line 563:** "P6: Yeah, it is kind of like… I try to just be like okay (sister's name) because it's really nothing I can really do so I try not to think about it. I don't know or just kind of tell her to go to sleep or something. Try to help her or to tell her to just see what is going on or just kind of hear or just be aware, but I kind of tell my mom and them to not call me." **Line 572:** "…So I just told her to use your own discern. Just call the police if you feel like it is getting out of hand or if you think that somebody is in danger then just call the police. That is the only think that I can tell her to do."	Mom left for a couple of months and stayed in NY w/ family then came back and stayed in a battered women's shelter. Briana reports that she believes she came back bc M didn't have anywhere else to go. She emphasizes that the behavior was very cyclical between her mom and dad… sometimes the relationship was good, sometimes bad. He would apologize and say that he would make things good and then things would, "go back to being a frenzy" as she puts it. Line 356: MH: That kind of thing. So you're saying there were ups and downs and that kind of thing. He would apologize and that sort of thing. Was there a difference in how the family like how it was in the house when it was up and down? P6: Yeah I mean when he apologized everybody would kind of be quiet and kind of you know? It would be like they were all in love and stuff and then like we would be kind of like… because we've been there like this happens like all the time. You know what I'm saying? It just kind of gets old. So when he said that I am just like "okay". But I think that when he would apologize things would go okay and then it would kind of be in a frinzy again. P6: I felt kind of scared sometimes and afraid, you know? Kind of afraid to leave home

		Purpose: Diffuse conflict/emotional support for siblings	and come back and something might have happened or somebody may not be there or gone to jail. Maybe even dead or something. I was kind of afraid sometimes. Or nervous, I guess you could say.
		Parentification: **MH notes:** She remembers sitting at the top of the stairs and listening to her parents argue (she would tell her sister to go to bed). She remembers trying to mediate their fighting to a certain degree. Her dad thought she was taking her mom's side, but she said that wasn't always the case. Her dad would tell her to leave, and Briana would try and get her mom to leave, but Briana was too afraid to leave because she thought that her presence helped to assure that the violence would not escalate too much **Line 201:** P6: Yeah kinda sometimes. I would kind of get my mom to leave, but she didn't want to leave and I am just like just let him cool off, but she didn't want to leave so that was kind of hard to be in the middle. Sometimes I just tried to leave. My dad was the same way he'd say if you don't like it then you can leave, but whatever. I didn't want to leave them there because I felt like if we were there then there would be less chance of it going like super, super far you know? Like weapons and stuff would get involved, but." **Line 270: "**She'd say, "Go away!" But, I kind of wouldn't listen sometimes just because I just felt like I should stay. Sometimes she did wanna, she was like this is for us adults and I really don't want y'all children to get involved and it had nothing to do with y'all, but it did to a certain degree you know?" *Purpose:* Lessen conflict/protect siblings/protect mom	MH: Did you feel less afraid or less nervous when it was good? P6: Mmmm I kind of just stayed kind of on edge because I kind of felt like it wouldn't last you know what I am saying sometimes? *In other quotes doc: good example of child being conflicted about wanting to know vs. being "in the blind" as Briana identifies it.
P7 Mia	**CCV or SCV: SCV** **Physical violence** (severity, frequency): **Low CCV, frequent** **Exposure type** *(direct, indirect, both)*: **Direct** **CAM** *(physical, verbal, or both)*: **None**	**CGC:** *Purpose:* **Triangulation:** The way Mia describes her parents it seems that triangulation could've occurred as a way to kinda keep the family system moving… when things would go wrong, the children would be pulled into the argument as the target: **Line 177:** "Then my dad would threaten to leave… "Well, I'll leave and go and get out of the neighborhood and you'll stay here and I'll take (participant's name)" which I never understood, because it felt like he didn't really want me either." **Line 187:** "They didn't really own anything else of worth and their family was not in the area, so they only had each other and me. And they didn't like each other, so you know, it wasn't like either one of them would be mad and say "I don't love you anymore, I'm not staying with you" because	**Biological or stepfather** *(if stepfather, note when he came into the picture, so you can be mindful of how this might influence BI)*: **Biological father** **Married, separated, or divorced** (*if separated or divorced, when did this occur [be mindful of how this might influence BI]*): **Married** **Miscellaneous: Black** Oldest child, one younger brother who is 10 yrs old Parents moved from the Islands.

		I think they were both pretty aware that neither of them loved each other, so they just had me. So that was, I guess their leverage." *Purpose:* Used the child as a point of contention/argument	Mia indicates that the physical fighting happened very early on and mainly was verbal after she was 6 yrs old.
		Parentification: I didn't feel that this was very prominent in Mia's recollections, however, she did indicate that the mother didn't have any other relationships outside of the family and that she and her brother were he mom's best friends. This could stem from cultural background. **Line 132:** "sometimes I remember 2 or 3 times she would cry afterward and I would sit there and let her cry and try to comfort her…" **Line 576:** "I think she's very proud of me and my little brother and that we're her best friends, so… I don't think she feels like she doesn't need to be in that relationship, because I feel like she thinks she's fine, because she has us." *Purpose*: Connection and support for the mother.	Very little emotional disclosure in the household; didn't communicate much **MH notes:** She described having a close relationship with her mom while growing up and at the current time, but she also described how their relationship sits more at the surface level because of the lack of emotional connection and disclosure. She described her mom (or her mom described her) as being best friends given the frequency with which they talk, and they do have a closer relationship than she does with her dad.
P8 keli	**CCV or SCV: CCV** **Physical violence** (severity, frequency): Moderate ccv/ frequent severe **Exposure type** *(direct, indirect, both)*: **CAM** *(physical, verbal, or both):* **Both**	**CGC:** There are several instances that it appears father is bringing Keli & her brother up/giving them more power by discussing adults matters w/ the children, especially in regards to what he believes is their mother being crazy… Line 335: "He would kind of rationalize with like me and my brother and your mom says this it doesn't make sense. She is crazy. You know? And then he would you know… it is almost like he would say it so we would go back and be like hey mom this is that dad said just so you know you're the crazy one, almost." Additionally, Keli identifies her dad as "her favorite person" whereas she and her mother have a very "structure, business like relationship." She also indicates that her mother threw insults at her which she believes caused distance in the relationship. **Line 22 (interview T2):** "I can call my dad and we can talk about basketball or something. It's almost like we're friends more so than he's my dad." **Line 31 (T2):** "before he started drinking and stuff, I was daddy's little girl and everywhere he went I was always with him. I think that kind of progressed into our adult lifestyle, I just remember being a kid and	**Biological or stepfather** *(if stepfather, note when he came into the picture, so you can be mindful of how this might influence BI)*: **Biological father** **Married, separated, or divorced** (*if separated or divorced, when did this occur [be mindful of how this might influence BI]*): **Married** **Miscellaneous: Black – parents are from Haiti.** Youngest; older brother and older half sister – cousin lived w/ them for 7 yrs, and uncles in and out of the house. *Keli identifies her parents as almost strangers and that it appear her dad liked her mom but mom didn't like dad. *Dad drank a lot – went to AA & counseling Sister got pregnant @ 16 – cultural differences in dating

hanging out with my dad and stuff…it's always been the case."

Purpose: Father wanted to build a rift between children and mother/impact mothering capabilities/make children think M is crazy.

*Other purpose could've been to just have friendship w/ child rather than having to parent as much.. he allowed M to make all the decisions and parent more than he had to.

*Side note: There's a large rift between M and Keli… Keli hasn't forgiven her mother and her mother almost blames Keli for the way her life was. (Find info line 112 T2).

Triangulation:
Line 42: "And, it was also, like even after my parents stopped fighting, even now my mom will call me and "oh my god your dad is such and such." We were always being put in the middle of things and there was always something going on."

MH comments:
She also explained how she was the **family scapegoat** – her father was abusive, her mom would then blame her for any particular issue:
"We fell into a routine, like when the violence was going on, that my mom and my dad would fight, if it was physical or not physical, and all of a sudden I was in trouble. All of sudden I did something wrong. Like, it's my fault. Like any little thing. My mom would walk into my room – I'm not a messy person at all – and she'd walk in my room and all of sudden a sock on the floor translated to her going into my closet and throwing everything on the floor and telling me to pick it up. It was like…why are you doing this. You know? It was like, what is going on? So I just knew that no matter what there would be some sort of conflict."
"I think she blamed her relationship with my dad and staying in a violent relationship on me. And not my brother more so because I was younger and she was telling herself that she was being a good mother and being a good wife by keeping her family together, where she could have gotten out of that marriage three years earlier because my brother is three years older than me. Whereas she had to stay longer. I think she just blamed it on me."
Purpose: Sometimes it appeared that the parents used the children to diffuse conflict / take attention way from one another, blame it on the other, or just put them in the middle.

*M hit/terrorized her in retaliation to physical or verbal fights between M and F.

MH Comments:
Towards the end of the interview, Keli says that her mom has been really abusive to her – hitting her and "terrorizing her for no reason." She thinks that her mom did this because she was experiencing abuse herself and she took it out on her. Keli explained a little in the 1st and then the 2nd interview that she prefers her relationship with dad over her mom. She gave examples of her mom telling her she didn't like her dad, but she says that she never really talked to her mom – "like me and my mom never had conversations."

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		Parentification: *Purpose*	
		CGC: *Purpose:*	
P9 Ellie	**CCV or SCV: Moderate CCV** **Physical violence** (severity, frequency): **Moderate, infrequent** **Exposure type** *(direct, indirect, both)*: **Direct** **CAM** *(physical, verbal, or both)*: **None**	**Triangulation:** Possibility of triangulation existed here… Ellie discusses how her parents were really good parents and they were the focus and even says that, it may not have been helpful to their relationship. It's as if this was the way to ignore the conflict/violence/abuse that was occurring and focus on something else, the children. "They were good parents, they're not good married. He was a good dad to us, he was not a good husband." **Line 668:** "And as like parent, in that perspective, we were good. It's hard to say, because I know it kind of sounds like he is two different people, which like I said… marriage guy is different than parent guy. He would help me and my sister clean, he would cook breakfast for us sometimes. I don't know, he was a really good dad, but when it came to him and my mom, no." *Purpose:* Ignore real problems in marriage **Parentification:** After M realized that Ellie knew what was going on, after Ellie interfered, M started disclosing more and more to Ellie. **Line 161:** "she started talking to me about it, and she would be like "I know I shouldn't talk to you about this" or whatever, but... I don't know. I was old enough to where I knew what was going on, and she felt like it was better to let me know than for me to just… I don't know, sit there and know what was going on." **Line 417:** "the reason my mom would talk to me a lot is because my dad would just manipulate her, and not really want her to hang out with other women and stuff too. Because he just wanted her to stay at home and have things ready." **Line 815:** "Me and my mom are very close and we always have been. We were extremely similar in every aspect of like, looks, personality, everything. So, I really understand my mom's perspective on everything, because we feel the same, we understand the same."	**Biological or stepfather** *(if stepfather, note when he came into the picture, so you can be mindful of how this might influence BI)*: **Biological father** **Married, separated, or divorced** *(if separated or divorced, when did this occur [be mindful of how this might influence BI])*: **Divorced 2 months ago (Ellie was 20 yrs old).** **Miscellaneous:** Ellie is the oldest sibling, has 1 younger sister. Mom made more money than father until Ellie was in HS; dad got raise and made more. Dad had several affairs, one lasting about 5 years. Parents separated for about 1.5 yrs during her senior year of HS

		*Ellie also identified herself as a peace keeper… there were several instances in which she had to explain things to her sister or offer support to her sister: **Line 731:** "And I'm, I'm kind of the peace keeper too, in my family. So, I kind of help mellow my sister out a little bit, because she gets very mad and stubborn—which I can be too—but she's not as understanding about everything. So, I really have to help my sister be like, okay. Just don't hate our parents for this." *Purpose:* Emotional support for mother. Parenting behaviors toward sister (offering support/mediating).	
P10 Blair	**CCV or SCV: Moderate CCV** **Physical violence** (severity, frequency): **Severe, frequent** **Exposure type** *(direct, indirect, both)*: **Direct** **CAM** *(physical, verbal, or both)*: **None**	**CGC:** Blair discusses that there was little relationship between her and her dad especially because he was such a terrible alcoholic. It's as if they had a team against their father/M's husband. **Line 85:** "I cling more toward my mother because she does things with us and he's kind of just off on his own thing. The three amigos and then just the outsider." **Line 134:** "I watch my mom and okay, now I see what's really going on. And I think that it kind of creates some animosity towards him, which I know that that isn't right, but I just…because he can't acknowledge that he has a problem that's kind of a problem in my mind." **Line 285:** "And so I think me and her kind of get into saying things, I think that hurts – that makes it worse. But towards him, but for my mom's sake, I think it helps her because she's not saying anything back. And I don't think he understand how she feels and that we feel the same way that she feels. And when we do that, he feels that we're ganging up on him." *Purpose:* I'm not sure if this relationship was "purposeful" or just naturally developed due to the intellectual barriers between D, M, Blair, and younger sister. From a "strength in numbers" perspective, this could've been emotionally/mentally helpful. **Triangulation:** **Line 85:** *Purpose:* **Parentification:** Blair took on some instrumental tasks such as helping fill out her F's job applications and making sure he was up /going to work on	**Biological or stepfather** *(if stepfather, note when he came into the picture, so you can be mindful of how this might influence BI)*: **Biological father** **Married, separated, or divorced** (*if separated or divorced, when did this occur [be mindful of how this might influence BI]*): **Married** **Miscellaneous: Black** Older of bio children, younger sister; older half-brother (didn't live w/ Blair). Identifies dad as alcoholic Dad had HS degree; mother was speech pathologist

		time. Additionally, she notes some instances where she would try to get the arguments/violence to end by intervening. **Line 300:** "But as far as the violence, I would try my best to not let it get like that, because with me being older, I wasn't just going to stand there and just watch it happen. And you know, just do nothing. So I didn't want that to happen as I got older, but as far as the arguing, I couldn't keep my tongue to myself, because I wanted him to know how this is making me feel and why are you doing this to her and she's not doing anything." **Line 387:** "which this shouldn't of been our task, but it was me and my sister's job to wake my dad up to go to work. Okay, in the back of my mind, I don't want to do this already because I've been getting myself up since, I can't even remember how old, but I've always gotten myself up. And I have to come home and wake my dad up?" **Line 509:** "all of a sudden, it's my job to fill out his job applications for him. And I didn't think that was right." *Purpose:* Protect mom; instrumental tasks	
P11 Caitlin	**CCV or SCV: CCV** **Physical violence** (severity, frequency): **High CCV; Frequent/Severe** **Exposure type** *(direct, indirect, both)*: **Both** **CAM** *(physical, verbal, or both):* **Both**	**CGC:** *possibly: Caitlin identifies her mom as her best friend/really really tight relationship, however, throughout the interview, it appears that this has only developed in her years at college/after the last divorce and less during the time at home. This is a bit unclear. **(MH: I think we can exclude this because I don't think it shows a power shift given the relationship is largely after marriage. Not sure if it rises to the level of emotional parentification either.)** *Purpose:* **Triangulation:** Caitlin discusses how her dad's violence never disappeared as others may experience this to change over time in their lives. She also described that when her mother wasn't there, he just redirect his violence onto her and her brother. Line 184: "His violence just never ceased. Our first.. like when I was growing up I was like well … cause I hear all of these stories about when the object of their violence disappears and stuff that they change and they aren't violent anymore. That never really happened in my case. He just stayed violent except he just redirected it towards me and my brother instead. And I don't know if it was because we were there and he felt that that was the only thing he had control over then or if it was just we looked like our mother or I don't know what it was. That is just where it all redirected towards." *Purpose:* Place violence/anger/aggression onto someone else	**Biological or stepfather** *(if stepfather, note when he came into the picture, so you can be mindful of how this might influence BI)*: **Biological father** **Married, separated, or divorced** (*if separated or divorced, when did this occur [be mindful of how this might influence BI]*): **Divorced; divorced 2x (when Caitlin was 8 and again at 13)** **Miscellaneous:** Oldest child; one younger brother Caitlin's M left for a while but then took her and her brother with her when she came back. Caitlin's grandmother committed suicide when she was very young. *Hasn't seen dad since she started college. Caitlin was pretty young.. remembers her father telling her mom that she and her brother couldn't open Christmas gifts early and then he knocked over a picture frame onto her mother's arms.

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Parentification: Throughout her interview, there were several times that she took on a parent role either to protect him or calm him down, since her brother had some anger management problems.
*see extra sheet for another quote.

Line 331: "So my junior year of high school some girl went up and punched him because he said something she didn't like and I remember full on tackling her to the ground outside the bus stop and telling her that if she ever laid a hand on him again she would not be getting back up. And I think that that is the most aggressive thing that I think I have ever done. KH: You were protecting your little brother."

Line 622: "My brother and I, I brought my brother down to my room and I locked my door and pushed my dresser in front of my door. I locked my window and I just started packing all of my stuff up. He was like what about all of my stuff and I was like I will get your stuff and just put this stuff outside the window, stay inside the room, don't open the door unless you hear my voice and I am telling you to open it up."
Line 693: "Anytime my father or anytime that I saw my father to start to get into one of those moods or something I'd just tell my brother to go take a shower or go up to his room and play or do his homework or something and I will be in in a few minutes with either like candy or food or something."

Purpose: Protection of little brother; calming him down

F made M have very low paying jobs so that M didn't make more money than him/wasn't higher than him. F made M be very dependent on him; wasn't allowed friends or anything.

The last incidence of violence she really remembers was when she was about 13 – she describes that she finally had a grasp of what was actually going on and therefore felt more able to intervene. She intervened by coming out and yelling wherever they were. *Line 248
She describes the violence as him kicking her on the ground

Lots of manipulation by father even to outsiders of the family. Even people in the church community would say "he's changed."
*There are possibilities of CGC bc dad obviously takes power away from mother but the child doesn't team up with dad… ???

Line 316: "I knew how it felt to get pushed around and bullied. My father though, he never reacted well to it. I think I stopped after the first 4 or 5 times because I was tired of getting thrown. My dad would like literally pick me up and throw me across the room to get me out of the way."

Lots of power taken away from M due to F's behavior… Caitlin describes her mom as weak and submissive bc of her father's bx. Line 369: "That time in the court room was weird… Because my mom had never really been in my eyes that person who stood up for people or really fought for

| | | | themselves. In that court room she actually did and it was weird. I actually saw the stronger side of my mom which I don't know when or how she developed it, but that was definitely something that I remember vividly is sitting in the court room and my mom actually standing up for herself and standing up to the court judge."

Line 661: "KH: Can you tell me a little more about chaotic?
P11: The aftermath of them fighting was always like the worst time for my brother and I. My father always seemed calmer and he'd go back to watching TV or doing whatever. My mother was always a mess and for my brother especially because my brother looks up to my mom like nobody else in the entire world, and to see her like that, my brother was just always devastated and crying. I think I probably tended to be more neutral and try to balance everything inside the house. Cause I don't know. I don't do well with instability I guess." |
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