# What's Culture Got to do With It? Ethnicity, Culture and Women's Experiences of Child Sexual Abuse

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**ABSTRACT**

There is a limited amount of research that considers the impact of ethnicity on women's understandings and experiences of childhood sexual abuse (CSA). Feminist research has been central in raising awareness about CSA and in advocating for services to support victims. However, feminists have been criticised for assuming a universal experience of oppression amongst women explained through patriarchal power and intimate relations. More recently, feminism has looked to describe different women's experiences of oppression, which include intersections of gender with race or ethnicity and class. In this study I aim to explore and analyse the impact of CSA for different ethnic women, specifically focusing on how ethnicity shapes their understandings and experiences. I therefore attend to similarity through feminist ideas of gender oppression, the female body, and the material reality of sexual violence, but I also explore differences in understandings and experiences by attending to how women's experiences of CSA are framed by ethnicity.

The research design was a qualitative feminist study using semi-structured in-depth interviews. Two interviews were undertaken with each of the nine participants, who came from diverse ethnic groups. I analysed the data using an inductive thematic process and intersectional analysis. An intersectional analysis provided a multi-dimensional lens through which I examined the intersections of gender, ethnicity, culture and childhood sexual abuse. The findings show that gender is the overarching category of similarity that emerges, but ethnicity and culture lend particularity to women's understandings and experiences of CSA, which has implications for CSA research and feminism.

This study demonstrated the multiple layers of silencing that impact on ethnic women who experience CSA in ethnic communities. The findings suggest that cultural practices and constructions of gender, and male and female sexuality, both frame and situate blame and responsibility with women who experience CSA, leaving male perpetrators invisible. Further the findings suggest that the emotional consequences of experiencing CSA are similar for different groups of women.

A particular finding that emerged in this study was the way that women engaged with a process of selection and rejection in relation to their culture and its relationship to their

experiences of CSA. The women grappled with understanding their experiences of CSA within the context of their culture and as a result questioned culture and ethnic identity as they searched for answers for why they were abused. They critiqued the gender practices within their cultures and engaged in a selection and rejection process in relation to their culture, which enabled them to retain their ethnicity whilst at the same time enabling them to reject the more gender-oppressive elements of their culture. The study demonstrated how the women talked about culture, not ethnicity, as the overarching frame for CSA in communities, showing how important gender practices and relations are to the issue of CSA. I discuss the concept of 'cultural patriarchies' as a potential corrective to the broad paradigm shift that focuses on diversity and difference at the expense of similarities. Cultural patriarchies acknowledge that there are similarities across groups and communities without dismissing differences. I argue for a re-establishment of feminist research that considers cultural patriarchies across both ethnic groups and non-ethnic groups, particularly in relation to CSA.

**CANDIDATE DECLARATION**

*I declare that:*

1. *this thesis presents work carried out by myself and does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university;*
2. *to the best of my knowledge it does not contain any materials previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; and all substantive contributions by others to the work presented, including jointly authored publications, is clearly acknowledged.*

*Date:*

*Signed:*

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# CHAPTER ONE

# Introduction

Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA) experienced in ethnic communities has not received much attention in academic literature, despite evidence of the sexual exploitation of children across the globe over hundreds of years (Finklehor 1984:6, Breckenridge & Carmody 1992, Smart 2000:57). I am an ethnic woman from a working-class family living in Australia, the first in the family to complete a university education. I am a social worker and have worked in the field of CSA for 15 years. The existence of the 'other' in Australia has a long history and over time I have watched the Australian landscape change in its xenophobia towards eastern/southern Europeans and Asians to now those with a Muslim background. More personally in my work as a social worker practising in the field of CSA I have also felt like the 'other', because there are not a lot of ethnic practitioners in this field. It was this feeling or sense of being the other that set me on a journey which has lasted many years and that took me to the development of this research and the investigation of how ethnicity affects CSA.

Attention to CSA in the public space has been controversial when compared to other forms of abuse (Finklehor 1984:10). CSA has been and continues to be an emotive topic, but particularly so in ethnic communities. Studies in Western countries focusing on CSA in different ethnic groups do not necessarily identify specific participant ethnicities across research studies (Miller & Cross 2006:19) and prevalence estimates in Anglo-dominant countries rarely include the various ethnic groups present in that community (Tyagi 2001). Studies have shown that the proportion of CSA articles that focus on ethnicity remains less than 10 per cent (Miller & Cross 2006:20).This does not mean CSA does not happen in those communities (Okamura et al 1995:67). Indeed studies across Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and many other areas of the world show that CSA is under-reported, underestimated and rendered invisible (Chan 2009, Elbedour et al 2006, Chen et al 2004, Lalor 2004a, 2004b, Richter 2004, Lamers-Winkelman 2002, Nhunda & Shumba 2001, Baker & Dwairy 2003). Despite the lack of information in this area, research has confirmed that CSA is a global problem of considerable extent (Modelli et al 2012), is widespread, occurs in most places at most times and is a particular issue for women and girls (Stoltenborgh et al 2011, Finkelhor 1994, Pereda et al 2009, DeMause 1991 cited in Finkelhor 1994:413). Studies suggest that at an international level, 7.9 per cent of men and

19.7 per cent of women have suffered some form of sexual abuse prior to the age of eighteen and there is a general pattern which "remains more or less constant over the years, especially in women" (Pereda et al 2009:337), indicating the gendered nature of CSA.

Studies focusing on CSA have not only attempted to determine prevalence but have offered explanations for why CSA occurs (Ward & Siegert 2002:319–320, Finkelhor 1984). These theoretical models informing perpetration of CSA are important because they influence dominant social ideas about whether CSA exists, if it is harmful and who perpetrates it. Many models focus on individual explanations for CSA, that is, they look to biological determinates to explain men's sexual abuse of children. Such explanations can be understood as yet another form of minimisation and silencing about the effects of CSA on individuals. As an ethnic woman I know these discourses are dominant in my community. Through my work with ethnic survivors of CSA I became curious to see whether other ethnic groups had similar ideas. As an ethnic feminist I have an ongoing commitment to maintaining the visibility of perpetrators within all contexts. CSA is overwhelmingly a male activity in that the majority of CSA offenders are men irrespective of the sex of the child they abuse (Cossins 1999, Itzin 2001:37). This focus enables the ordinary heterosexual man who sexually abuses his own and others' children to be located correctly and visibly in the same conceptual frame as men who are presented as perverts or monster paedophiles in the media (Marr 1998). Itzin (2001:44) argued these men are actually often the same individuals.

Radical feminist scholars have been central in raising attention about the unrecognised suffering of victims and survivors of CSA. Radical feminists have focused on issues such as male sexual violence (Dworkin 1974; Brownmiller 1975) and pornography (Dworkin 1974; MacKinnon 1977, Califia 1981) in addition to mothering and reproduction (Rich 1986) . This groundbreaking work wasinstrumental in naming the suffering of rape and CSA as trauma (Armstrong 1978, Butler 1978, Herman & Hirschman 1977). Research has examined how being subjected to CSA impacts on victims and has confirmed that CSA can have serious consequences, evidenced in the many studies conducted (Gould et al 2012, Dinwiddie et al 2000, Bebbington et al 2011, Lobmann et al 2003). This trauma has often been exacerbated by the social stigma attached to victims and the social taboos about discussing rape and sexual assault (Armstrong 1978, Butler 1978, Herman & Hirschman 1977, all cited in Finklehor 1984:188). The stigma and social taboos surrounding sexual abuse can be powerful, particularly in ethnic communities, and studies show that this type of silencing is a

powerful mechanism that impacts on ethnic communities themselves (Rodriguez-Srednicki & Twaite 1999:2, Clear et al 2006:82).

Despite feminism's central role in elucidating the issue of CSA in the public realm as a valid experience, feminism has been challenged by black, ethnic and post-structuralist feminists who suggest research in the area of violence against women does not attend to "the variety of experiences that women from different communities encounter" (Ahmed et al 2009:8). Feminism has come under fire for assuming a universal experience of oppression amongst women based on Western models of patriarchal power and intimate relations. Thus, feminists have been accused of viewing the group of women they speak for as undifferentiated (Warner 1996a cited in Reavey, Ahmed & Majumdar 2006:172). The perhaps inadvertent consequences of this are that culturally sensitised and ethnically focused research on women's experiences of childhood sexual abuse is limited (Levett 2003, Ullman & Filipas 2005a:68, Mennen 1995). Any such research has predominantly been conducted in the United States and has focused on broad ethnic groupings such as Latin American, Asian American and African American (Fontes 1993, 1995, 2001, 2002, 2005, Fontes, Cruz & Tabachnick 2001, Ullman & Filipas 2005). These studies have examined cultural norms and values which impact on disclosure of CSA, treatment, prevention and intervention with ethnic minority groups (Clear et al 2006, Ullman & Filipas 2005b, Feiring, Coates & Taska 2001, Suchting 1999, Mennen 1995, Noh Ahn & Gilbert 1992, Heras 1992, Thomas 1992, Hamelin et al 2010). However, little research has been undertaken outside of these broad groupings (Kenny & McEachern 2000). Some studies of CSA have aimed to compare or examine differences across ethnic groups, and hence ethnicity has been identified as a broad category of enquiry (Mennen 1995, Feiring, Coates & Taska 2001, Sanders-Phillips et al 1995, Shaw et al 2001, Rodriguez-Srednicki & Twaite 1999, Katerndahl et al 2005, Clear et al 2006, Lowe et al 2005). These studies have shown that there are continuities in relation to CSA that women identify across different cultures, suggesting that culture has something to do with the way CSA is understood and responded to, and its effects on women.

As such there is little in the way of exploration of ethnic women's experiences of CSA within their own ethnic groups, and how their ethnicity in turn affects their understandings and experiences of CSA. In summary, the aims of this thesis grow from my own lived experiences of being an ethnic woman in Australia, working as a social worker in the field of CSA, as well as from my desire to contribute to the broader feminist project of recognising differences of experiences and understandings for women. My aim in this study was to

explore and analyse the effects of CSA on women from different ethnic groups, and at the same time consider how ethnicity shapes women's understandings and experiences of CSA.

The overarching research question guiding this thesis was: How does ethnicity and culture frame women's understandings and experiences of CSA?

In this research I aimed to:

1. examine how women construct and understand their ethnicity and culture; and
2. explore how this has shaped or influenced their understanding and experiences of childhood sexual abuse.

## Research Design and Methodology

The research design is a qualitative feminist study because of the significant sensitivity of the issue of CSA within ethnic communities in Australia (Kumar 1996). Nine women self-selected to participate and were each interviewed twice, hence eighteen semi-structured interviews were undertaken with participants. I analysed the data using an inductive thematic process and intersectional analysis. An intersectional analysis identified preliminary categories of gender, ethnicity and CSA (Fernandez 1997, Glen 2002, both cited in McCall 2009:58), and I developed further themes alongside these through the use of thematic analysis (Ezzy 2002:10). This process showed the relationships between these multiple and possibly conflicting dimensions, and revealed the phenomena the women were describing to me (McCall 2009:50–51). Data analysis specifically demonstrated how constructions of gender relations in ethnic communities impacted on the lived experiences of CSA survivors.

I am a participant in this study. As mentioned above I am an ethnic woman, social worker, feminist and also a survivor of CSA. As a participant and researcher within this study it is necessary to delineate between these two voices, although it is important to recognise that they are in fact one voice. For the purposes of this study, when I write as the researcher throughout the body of the text I will use the term 'I'. This is congruent with feminist qualitative scholarship (Webb 1992, Ezzy 2002:153, Berger 2001:505). However, because this thesis also incorporates the researcher as a participant, in the data analysis chapters when referring to the data from my interview I will refer to myself in the third person as 'Tanja'.

## Terminology

The three main concepts used in this thesis are ethnicity, culture and CSA. I will introduce these concepts in this section, as well as discussing them further in the literature review and methodology.

Ethnicity is defined as a politicised social action or a process whereby elements of real, actual and lived cultural differences are politicised in the context of intensive group interaction (Malesevic 2006:27). It includes cultural values, attitudes and behaviours and the subjective sense of ethnic group membership held by group members. Ethnicity recognises the experiences associated with minority status, which includes powerlessness, discrimination and prejudice (Phinney 1996:919). This context translates to the ways in which ethnic people go about and live their lives outside of their countries of origin.

Culture is defined as an often silent and invisible presence, which dictates the norms of behaviour for men, women and children across ethnic groups (Hall 1959, Levy 2007). Often it is not overtly taught but rather it is covertly learned through watching and through the way in which you and others are treated by the family and community (Matsumoto & Juang 2013:15).

CSA is defined as both contact and non-contact abuse involving a person who is in a position of power using that position to involve a child in unwanted sexual activity. This research defines CSA as an adult or adolescent involving a child in sexual activity that the child does not fully understand, is unable to give informed consent to, or is not developmentally prepared for (Schonbucher et al 2011, Hoch-Espada et al 2006, Modelli et al 2012). It reflects an unequal power relationship (Hoch-Espada et al 2006). Sexually abusive behaviours can include but are not limited to vaginal or anal penetration, penetration with digits or other objects, the child being touched or touching the adult, viewing or participating in pornography, exhibitionism, flashing, bestiality, the child being watched inappropriately and sexual language (Schönbucher et al 2011, Hoch-Espada et al 2006, Modelli et al 2012), including both contact and non-contact forms of sexual abuse. All of the participants' experiences conformed to this broad definition.

## Outline of Thesis

The thesis has eleven chapters. In Chapters 2 and 3 I review the literature pertaining to CSA and the increasing research attention over three decades. An overview of the prevalence and

incidence of CSA is presented in both Western and non-Western countries. I also investigate how ethnic comunities have been represented in CSA literature. These chapters demonstrate how the silence surrounding CSA in ethnic groups is related to tensions and dilemmas inherent in focusing on CSA in specific communities and the increasing reticence to name and associate ethnicity and ethnic identity with CSA. I explore how ethnic communities themselves have been silent on CSA. In addition, these chapters conceptualise the term ethnicity and examine concepts such as race, culture and identity to argue for a social constructionist approach to ethnicity when exploring CSA within ethnic communities. Understanding women's experiences of CSA within the context of ethnicity requires theoretical engagement with feminism so that gender can be examined. Thus I discuss feminism's engagement with questions of difference and similarity amongst women. Specifically, these chapters examine similarity through feminist ideas about gender oppression, the female body, and the material reality of sexual violence. They also explore difference by attending to how women's experiences of CSA can be influenced or nuanced by ethnicity. This exploration is aided through the use of intersectionality.

In Chapter 4 I introduce the epistemological frame of this research, which includes feminism and the challenges of race and ethnicity to feminist epistemology. It discusses the application of intersectionality as a potential way forward for feminist researchers working in cross-cultural settings. This chapter also addresses the use of the self in research. I discuss the study design and methodology, and I argue that an interpretive paradigm, which pays attention to the subjective interpretation and lived experience of ethnic survivors of CSA, is the most appropriate for this research. Due to the significant sensitivity of research into CSA in ethnic communities, I outline specific sampling considerations and consider the complex nature of recruitment. The use of multi method data collection processes is discussed in terms of their relevance for this research study. The research tools are presented and the ethnic specific adaptations that I made to these. I discuss the data analysis method and processes followed by discussions of ethics and finally the limitations of the study.

Chapter 5, 'Ethnic Women's Stories of Childhood Sexual Abuse', introduces the participants, providing information on each woman including their demographics as well as the participants' stories of CSA. I set out the tactics used by the perpetrators to enable some comparison with the literature about perpetrator tactics used by non-ethnic and ethnic men. The chapter particularly focuses on the silencing of CSA within ethnic groups and its impact on the experience of CSA, the effects of the CSA at the time, and women's experiences of

disclosure or not disclosing. The chapter aims to provide a complete picture of the women's experiences of CSA as children, with their experiences as adults to follow in subsequent chapters.

In Chapter 6, 'Cultural Constructions of Gender, Gender Practices and the Female Body: Blame and Responsibility for CSA', I examine the ways that participants described women being held responsible for CSA within their ethnic groups. I identify multiple layers of responsibility for CSA in the women's interviews. This chapter focuses on showing the cultural construction of gender and how it influences responses to CSA and constructs women as responsible for it.

Chapter 7, 'Cultural Constructions of Sexuality, Blame and Childhood Sexual Abuse', continues with the broad concept of responsibility for CSA, but its focus is on cultural constructions of female and male sexuality and their relationship to blame and CSA. In this chapter I explore how chastity, promiscuity, virginity and female sexual desire are practised in many cultures and maintain and reinforce the blaming of girls and women for CSA. I also show how certain constructions of male sexuality contribute to locating responsibility for sexual violence with its victims. I also explore constructions of male perpetrators of CSA in ethnic communities and the repercussions for ethnic survivors of CSA.

In Chapter 8, 'Ethnic Women, CSA and Their Emotional Wellbeing', I discuss the emotional wellbeing of the participants and the active processes they engaged in to cope with the effects of abuse. The chapter also explores the participants' search for answers about why they experienced CSA, through this showing how they questioned the gender practices of their own culture, gained a feminist consciousness, reframed their experiences, and at the same time maintained their ethnicity. In this chapter I also demonstrate the different ways the participants managed the effects of the CSA within this gendered cultural context.

Chapter 9, 'What has Culture Got to do With It?', focuses on the concepts of ethnicity and culture to demonstrate how the participants describe and understand their ethnicity. I discuss the way in which the participants spoke about ethnicity and culture as two separate concepts because it has significance for the ways in which they survived and managed the effects of CSA in their lives.

In Chapter 10, the discussion, I bring together the findings of the study and the literature. I explore the importance of gender in research on childhood sexual abuse not only to women's

stories but to the theoretical paradigm of feminism. In Chapter 11 I provide concluding thoughts on the findings of the study and consider a way forward in relation to feminist research and practice with ethnic women. This study provides an original contribution to empirical knowledge and feminist theorization by providing a space for ethnic women to tell their stories of child sexual abuse. It does this through considering feminism, ethnicity, culture and csa.

# CHAPTER TWO

# CSA and Ethnicity

As I have noted, CSA experienced in ethnic communities has not received much attention in academic literature. The public visibility of CSA has gone through many stages, with feminism predominantly bringing this issue into public consciousness via political movements (Herman 1998). Without minimising the harm of CSA to individual victims/survivors, feminists have argued it is imperative to focus on the social climate in which abuse against women and children occurs (Scott et al 1990). While this chapter examines the increasing attention to CSA over three decades and identifies the important contributions of feminism, I will also investigate how ethnic communities have been represented in this growing literature, including silences about CSA in this context. I will demonstrate how this is related to tensions and dilemmas inherent in focusing on CSA in specific communities and the increasing reticence to name and associate ethnicity with CSA. Finally, it will also explore how ethic communities themselves have been silent on CSA.

## Emergence of CSA in the Public Realm

Childhood sexual abuse has been a phenomenon in human societies around the world. Children were used as prostitutes or favoured as sexual companions in Greek and Roman times (Finklehor 1984:6). Records exist as far back as 1658 when Mandelso, a historical traveller through India, wrote of ten children aged six and several aged nine to ten and older being sexually assaulted (Breckenridge & Carmody 1992). In 1847 Savonarola, a priest in Italy, wrote about a child who was pregnant at the age of 9 (Breckenridge & Carmody 1992). In the 1860s Ambrose Tardieu, the Dean of Forensic Medicine in France, published an expose about the rape of children in Paris, including vaginal and anal intercourse. He cited 11,576 people accused of completed or attempted rape in France: of these victims 80 per cent were children, mostly girls aged four to twelve years (Hobbs et al 1999:17). In 1869 in New York children no older than 11 were trapped in prostitution houses (Breckenridge & Carmody 1992) and in 1897 in Germany 3085 convictions for childhood sexual abuse were made and by 1904 this had increased to 4378 (Breckenridge & Carmody 1992). Between 1827 and 1887 evidence shows that France had 36,176 cases of child sexual assault

(Breckenridge & Carmody 1992). In July 1925 *The Lancet* carried a report that read: "On Jan. 26th, 1924, 17 girls between six and ten years old, living in an exceptionally well-administered home, were notified as suffering from gonorrhoeal vulvo-vaginitis …" (11 July 1925, p. 101 cited in Smart 2000:57). It seems that such outbreaks were not uncommon because they were mentioned in the Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases Final Report in 1916 (Smart 2000:57). Thus there is evidence of the sexual exploitation of children across the globe over hundreds of years.

Attention to CSA in the public realm has been a contentious issue. Sexual abuse has not been afforded the same attention as physical abuse of children, which has been adopted by paediatricians as a medical problem, resulting in it becoming a major public health issue (Finkelhor 1984:5). For example, with sexual abuse there is often no medical trauma visible that doctors are able to tend to, coupled with the fact that the definitions of what is and what is not sexual abuse are more contested than for physical abuse (Finklehor 1984:10). CSA has been and is today an emotive topic due to the various ideological foundations of those researching it. For example, Freud has been a dominant figure in explaining CSA as children fantasising about sex with their father/mother as the Oedipal/Electra conflicts (Lundqvist 2005).

CSA was also theorised in the public realm through the diagnosis of hysteria. Jean Martin Charot (cited in Herman 1998:10) focused on documenting the characteristic symptoms of hysteria and demonstrated that these symptoms were psychological. Freud (1953b:34–35 cited in Gatens 1991) 'discovered' that the vast majority of his patients who were presenting with hysteria disclosed incestuous sexual abuse. At the time he was certain they were telling the truth (Segal 1996:291). Furthermore he identified this as the cause for their neurotic symptoms. Some authors suggest he was the first to put forth the idea that "sexual assaults in childhood provided the original trauma paving the way for neurosis in later life" (Segal 1996:291). He later retracted this idea, replacing it with the Oedipal and Electra complex and the sexual fantasies of children. Freudian theory has been actively used to silence children and women who disclose sexual abuse and assaults (Driver 1989, Scott 1988 cited in Smart 2000:56). It has influenced both legal and medical systems that respond to CSA over time. For example, as stated in the NSW Parliament in 1985:

> Children sometimes do have a fantasy level that crosses over into reality; indeed most people have that same problem in some sense. We must ensure that we do not enshrine a

> child's evidence as being more significant than any other evidence. (Parliament of New South Wales, Hansard, 19 November 1985, at 9878)

Despite such claims about children being disputed, this has produced a longstanding discourse that focuses on children's seductiveness. The fantasy discourse has continued to dominate explanations of CSA and this has compounded silencing because speaking publicly about such issues invites humiliation, ridicule and disbelief (Herman 1998:28–32). Other common theories have put CSA down to particular perpetrator personalities or hormonal imbalance in male abusers (Finklehor 1984). These notions misrepresent abuse and abusers and ignore adult power, control, and the irresponsibility of the perpetrator (Finklehor 1984:11).

Feminism is an intellectual personal and political theory. It is a not one single theory but made up of many different theoretical ideas, all of which describe the oppression of women and propose strategies for liberation (Tong 1989:1). Many feminists have undertaken to make visible the control of women through their bodies (Trepagnier 1994:199). For example, Ramazanoglu (1989:155) stated that feminist theory reveals the existence of 'sexual politics and the extent of male control over women's bodies and the prevalence of male sexual violence' (Ramazanoglu 1989:155). Over time feminism has focused on different elements of women's oppression and theorised women's oppression from different positions. For example, radical feminists have focused on reproduction and motherhood (Firestone1970, de Beauvoir 1953, Trebilcot 1984), understandings of femininity and masculinity (Millet 1970, Daly 1973, French 1985) sexuality (Rubin 1975, Barry 1979) and lesbian/female sexuality (Frye 1977, Rich 1980) ; male violence (Dworkin 1974, Brownmiller 1975, Wood 2009:78) and pornography (Dworkin 1974, MacKinnon 1977, Califia 1981, Samois 1981). Liberal feminists have focused on women's political and legal rights and equality with me; hence examined voting, land ownership and education (Wood 2009:78, Tong 2009:1 ). Socialist feminists, with influences from Marxism, have focused on the equality of rights in relation to employment and working conditions (Tong 2009:4). Psychoanalytic feminists influenced by Freud, have undertaken an analysis of the female psyche indicating that the roots to women's oppression laiddeep in a woman's psyche (Tong 2009:5). Multicultural, global and post colonial feminists have focused on the ways in which race, ethnicity, sexual identity, gender identity, age, religion, education and employment, marital status, and health condition separated one group of women from another (Tong 2009:8).

Thus, defining feminism continues to be difficult and positioning oneself in a specific school of feminism can be a complex endeavour. Despite the richness and diversity within feminism, it has been argued that the one thing that feminist share is the establishment of the understanding of what constitutes women's oppression. The difference is often seen in what feminism argues constitutes women's liberation (Ramazanoglu 1989:7-9).

This study was predominantly influenced by radical feminism. Throughout the thesis the broad term 'feminism' is used to depict the general feminist goals of examining women's oppression. However, when I am specifically refering to a particular feminist theoretical framework, this is named. The radical feminist movement swept across the West in the late 1970s and early 1980s and produced ideas such as 'consciousness raising' and 'the personal is political'. This political movement created a space that was safe where women could overcome the "barriers of denial, secrecy, and shame that prevented them from naming their injuries" (Herman 1997:29). It was in this safe space that women began to speak about rape, domestic violence and CSA. The New York Radical Feminists staged the first public 'speak-out' on rape in New York in 1971 (Herman 1998:29). By 1975 the first centre for research on rape was created as a result of feminist pressure, which had women as its principal investigators and subjects. During this period, feminist investigators laboured close to their subjects and rejected emotional detachment as a measure of the value of scientific investigation; they honoured their emotional connections with their participants (Herman 1998:30). In the early 1980s Dianna Russell (1984) conducted an epidemiological survey in the US with a random sample technique, interviewing 900 women. Russell defined extra-familial CSA as one or more unwanted sexual experiences with persons unrelated by blood or marriage, ranging from petting (touching of breasts or genitals or attempts at such touching) to rape, before the victim turned 14 years, and completed or attempted forcible rape experiences from the ages of 14 to 17 years (inclusive) (Russell 1984:136). She defined intra-familial sexual abuse as any kind of exploitative sexual contact that occurred between relatives, no matter how distant the relationship, before the victim turned 18 years old. Experiences involving sexual contact with a relative that were wanted and with a peer were regarded as non-exploitative, for example, sex play between cousins or siblings of approximately the same ages. An age difference of less than five years was the criterion for a peer relationship. She established prevalence rates for 13 years and under and 17 years and under. The results were alarming, showing one in four women had been raped and one

woman in three had been sexually abused in childhood (Herman 1998:28–32). There is now a significant body of research into the prevalence of CSA, which I will discuss shortly.

CSA entered the public consciousness because the feminist movement articulated rape as a crime of violence rather than a sexual act, which offered a counter view to Freud's fantasy theory (Herman 1998:28–32). Radical feminists defined rape as a method of political control which enforced the subordination of women through terror (Herman 2011:74); they articulated that patriarchal structures allowed and even encouraged the abuse of women and children (Finklehor 1984:4). With feminist explanations of rape and CSA came new responses and services to victims that did not blame victims but offered practical, legal and emotional support (Herman 1998:28–32).

An analysis of power was and is central to feminist theory (Kelly 1988). CSA was identified as a common event and was seen as a result of social organisation where there was unequal power relationships based on gender (Laing 1996). Feminists argued that, within these power relationships, there was a social definition of sexuality that eroticised male dominance and female submission (Herman 1998). Feminists identified that in a patriarchal society men have more power than women and children and this power is used to control women and children in the home and through social institutions (Rush 1980, Herman 1981, Ward 1984, Tyagi 2001:20). The feminist understanding of CSA explains why there is a predominance of male perpetrators, why it happens so frequently, and also why the legal and medical professions respond with disbelief, minimisation and victim blaming (Birns & Meyer 1993).

In addition to the centrality of power to its analysis of child sexual abuse, the strength of the radical feminist contribution lay in addressing of two key issues: secrecy and responsibility. The ongoing silencing of the issue of CSA is explained as a response from a society that is entrenched in male privilege (Laing 1996), that is, radical feminists expose taken for granted social attitudes which inform public discussion as being grounded in a male ideology (Kelly 1998). It is this ideology that enables men to commit CSA and keeps it silent and hidden. For example, perpetrators, families and community's may deny its occurrence, normalise it, or the offender or victim may be pathologiesd as dysfunctional, which results in a shift in responsibility from the man and a denial of the child's experience (Kelly 1988 34-46). Feminist theorists have also argued that ideologies of male privilege have positioned CSA as something perpetrated by particular men on particular girls so that offenders and victims are pathologised in particular ways, making CSA an individual problem that only happens

occasionally. This individual explanation shifts responsibility to address CSA away from society, communities and men and minimises the high prevalence of CSA perpetrated by men (Kelly 1988:34–46). The radical feminist movement challenged these ideologies and insisted on men being held accountable for CSA.

## Prevalence and Incidence of CSA

The number of children who are sexually abused is the subject of continuing debate and controversy. Statistics, for example police recorded offences, rarely reflect the true number of people actually sexually abused (Allnock & Barns 2011, Stoltenborgh et al 2011, Pereda et al 2009). Two types of studies dominate statistical data on CSA: prevalence studies and incidence studies. Incidence refers to the rate of occurrence of CSA per unit of time (Fergusson & Mullen 1999:14) from studies extrapolated from reported incidents of sexual abuse of children. This type of study uses official records or agency samples of children who are confirmed to have been sexually abused and compares them to children within control series (Fergusson, Horwood & Woodward 2000:529). These studies may not be representative of all cases of CSA, with some researchers suggesting incidence data only reflects about 10 per cent of actual cases (Fergusson & Mullen 1999:15). Prevalence studies are less common than incidence studies (Goldman & Padayichi 2000:305). Prevalence refers to the portion of the population who have been sexually abused at a given time (Fergusson & Mullen 1999:14). This research is often in the form of population studies where adults are surveyed to provide retrospective evidence of their sexual experiences as children (Fergusson, Horwood & Woodward 2000:530). These studies show much higher rates and confirm that the majority have never reported the CSA to authorities (Fergusson & Mullen 1999).

While there is consensus that CSA occurs across the world, there is controversy about the overall prevalence rates (Finklehor 1994, Stoltenborgh et al 2011, Pereda et al 2009, Allnock & Barns 2011) because of the variance in the data. Estimates range from 1 to 61 per cent (Wyatt et al 1999:46, Stoltenborgh et al 2011, Pereda et al 2009, Kenny & McEachern 2001:58, Kalof 2000:77, Finklehor 1994, Goldman & Goldman 1988, Goldman and Padayichi 2000, Stoltenborgh et al 2011, Pereda et al 2009). There are a number of reasons for these widely varying estimates of prevalence (Stoltenborgh et al 2011, Pereda et al 2009, Wyatt et al 1999:46, Fergusson, Horwood & Woodward 2000:540, Allnock & Burns 2011) including the definition of sexual abuse used, sample populations and research methods

(Stoltenborgh et al 2011, Pereda et al 2009, Wyatt et al 1999:46, Fergusson, Horwood & Woodward 2000:540, Schönbucher et al 2011).

Fergusson and Mullen (1999:26) pointed out that three definitions of sexual abuse are generally used. The first definition encompasses a wide range of both contact and non-contact forms of abuse including pornography, photographs, flashing, watching and making the child watch sexual activity. Second, some studies use a definition that encompasses contact CSA, that is, only physical sexual contact occurring between the adult and the child is included. The third definition is sexual penetration, which is the narrowest of definitions because it only includes either attempted or completed vaginal, oral or anal penetration (Fergusson & Mullen 1999:26).

Studies which use non-contact abuse definitions produce higher prevalence rates (Goldman & Padayachi 2000:307, Patton & Mannison 1996:6). Studies using the non-contact definition suggest the rate is between 8 and 62.1 per cent for females (Fergusson & Mullen 1999:14), whereas studies using the contact definition of sexual penetration only suggest a rate of 1.3–28.7 per cent for females (Fergusson & Mullen 1999:14). Disparate definitions have resulted in incongruent conclusions (Goldman & Padayachi 2000:307) and paved the way for misunderstanding about the rates at which CSA occurs across countries. Not only does the way studies define CSA differ (Stoltenborgh et al 2011:80, Schönbucher et al 2011, Newcomb et al 2009), but also the age at which someone is defined as a child (Stoltenborgh et al 2011:80, Goldman and Padayachi 2000:307, Fergusson & Mullen 1999:27). These two variables are often dependent on the researcher, community and/or country in which the research is undertaken (Schönbucher et al 2011).

Sampling is also identified as contributing to the wide range of CSA prevalence rates (Goldman & Padayichi 2000, Fergusson, Horwood & Woodward 2000:530, Wyatt & Peters 1986, Stoltenborg et al 2011, Schönbucher et al 2011, Newcomb et al 2009). The range of sampling methods employed include random sampling, non-probability sampling, and convenience sampling (Goldman & Padayachi 2000:311). For example lower prevalence rates are found in convenience samples such as college students (Stoltenborg et al 2011:80) and convenience samples can lack diversity in composition, including ethnic diversity (Kenny & McEachern 2001:59, Wyatt et al 1999:46).

Different methods such as self-administered questionnaires, face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews also appear to glean different rates (Fergusson & Mullen 1999, Pereda

et al 2009:332, Schönbucher et al 2011, Newcomb et al 2009). Some authors suggest that face-to-face interviews glean higher reporting rates (Wyatt & Peters 1986), whereas others argue questionnaires cause less embarrassment for respondents (Tang 2002). Some argue that using questionnaires for such personal experiences as CSA increases the risk of false negatives, which affects estimation of prevalence (Berliner & Conte 1995, Oates et al 2000, Wolfe & Birt 1997). Furthermore using broad rather than specific questions is also associated with lower prevalence rates (Fricker et al 2003). Similarly the context in which questions are asked (Koss 1993) and the number of questions asked (Finkelhor 1979) are suggested to affect rates (Pereda et al 2009:332). Finally there is debate about whether those who participate are truthful or accurate (Fergusson & Mullen 1999:15). There have also been some concerns regarding the memory recall of abuse events, suggesting such memories may be unstable or unreliable (Fergusson, Horwood & Woodward 2000:540).

Despite the difficulties in determining incidence or prevalence of CSA, researchers continue to make estimates. For example, Pereda et al (2009) carried out a meta-analysis of prevalence of CSA to establish an international figure. This included papers published in scientific journals whose main or secondary objective was to determine the prevalence of CSA. They include studies that used and reported non-clinical samples, reporting prevalence of CSA data separately for men and women. Sixty five articles covering 22 countries were included. They suggest that worldwide 7.9 per cent of men and 19.7 per cent of women have suffered some form of sexual abuse prior to the age of eighteen. In a subsequent study replicating Finklehors' 1994 study, Pereda et al (2009) concluded that prevalence distributions had not changed significantly in that time and that there is a general pattern that "remains more or less constant over the years, especially in women" (Pereda et al 2009:337). This underscores the gendered nature of CSA.

Stoltenborgh et al (2011) undertook a meta-analysis into prevalence around the world. The aim of the analysis was to provide an estimate of the worldwide prevalence of CSA by integrating prevalence figures from a large body of research on CSA and its correlates (Stoltenborgh et al 2001:81). They combined prevalence data reported in 217 publications from 1980 to 2008, which included 331 independent samples with a total of 9,911,748 participants. Stoltenborgh et al (2011) estimated that a global prevalence of CSA was 11.8 per cent or 118 per 1000 children. Similarly to Pereda et al (2009) and Finklehor (1994) before them the prevalence rates were higher for females. They suggest that the rate for females is 180 per 1000 and for males 76 per 1000. This meta-analysis confirmed that CSA is

a global problem of considerable extent and again particularly for women (Stoltenborgh et al 2001:79).

Stoltenborgh et al's (2011) study has identified CSA as a global issue, confirming the findings of Finklelhor (1994) and Pereda et al (2009) that CSA is widespread, occurs in most places at most times (DeMause 1991 cited in Finkelhor 1994:413) and is a particular issue for women and girls. Finkelhor (1994) noted in his research into the prevalence and incidence of CSA in the US that professionals trying to raise the issue in other countries would often have to contend with the assertion that CSA was a particularly American problem that predominantly happens in Western countries. This argument was raised because of the relatively low reporting rates of other ethnic groups but also because of the limited research available in other countries at the time (Finkelhor 1994:409). Not only do researchers encounter difficulties in raising the issue of CSA but victims themselves may be reluctant to disclose because of their concerns that the reputation and position of their ethnic group would be jeopardised if it became known that they were sexually abused (Fontes 1995b cited in Fontes & Plummer 2010:505).

While prevalence data is limited in countries outside the West, some researchers have nonetheless attempted to access information on this issue. For example, in Serbia, it is seen as a problem of certain individuals or families and remains under-reported, underestimated and invisible (Popadic 2001 cited in Lamers-Winkelman 2002:115, Mrsevic 1997). In the Netherlands there is no registration system and the topic of CSA is trivialised and viewed as insignificant, with CSA cases being registered as 'family problems' (Draijer 1990, Lamers-Winkelman & Buffing 1996, van Montfoort 1993 all cited in Lamers-Winkelman 2002:119).

Tang (2002) undertook a study looking at prevalence rates of CSA and victim and abuser characteristics. The sample was a convenience sample of 2147 Hong Kong Chinese college students, who completed questionnaires. This research indicated an overall prevalence rate for various forms of CSA of 6 per cent: again the rates were higher for females (7%) than for males (4%) (Tang 2002:28–29). The average age of victims was 11 years old and only 39 per cent of victims had reported the abuse. Chen et al (2004) also examined prevalence rates across four provinces in China by using an anonymous self-completion survey of school students. This research suggests that the prevalence of sexual abuse before age 16 was 16.7 per cent for females and 10.5 per cent for males. Speizera et al (2008) looked at three countries, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, using only female participants. They used

nationally representative data and estimated the prevalence of CSA as varying from 7.8 per cent in Honduras to 6.4 per cent in El Salvador and 4.7 per cent in Guatemala. In their sample the women reported the first sexual abuse incident occurring before aged 11. Edgardh and Ormstad (2000) used representative samples of seventeen-year-old boys and girls who attended and did not attend school in a national sample in Sweden. 3.1 per cent of school attendees and 11.2 per cent of non-attendees acknowledged sexual abuse. Again there was a significant difference in gender rates, with girls reporting higher rates. Alikasifoglu et al (2006) presented the results of a school-based study conducted in Istanbul, Turkey. Their research suggests that 13.4 per cent of female high school students disclosed CSA. In summary, it can be argued that across Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and many other areas of the world, CSA is predominantly under-reported, underestimated and rendered invisible (Chan 2009, Elbedour et al 2006, Chen et al 2004, Lalor 2004a, 2004b , Richter 2004, Lamers-Winkelman 2002, Nhunda & Shumba 2001, Baker & Dwairy 2003).

Adding further complexity in determining prevalence of CSA across different ethnic groups is the lack of uniformity in the way participant ethnicity is identified (Miller & Cross 2006:19). A process termed ‘ethnic lumping’ occurs. Even authors who have undertaken culture-specific CSA studies encounter the problem of grouping large ethnic groups into broader categories because of the inadequacy of current terminology to describe the diversity of ethnic groups (Fontes & Plummer 2010:513 fn2).The use of this ethnic lumping and the potential to create an us–them binary between the West and other countries should be viewed as a barrier and a further silencing of the issue of CSA in ethnic communities. For example grouping large and broad ethnic groups together is frequent in the US studies where dominant or major ethnic groupings are used such as white, African American, Latino, Asian American, Native American and other (Miller & Cross 2006:23). This does not allow for exploration of the nuances of experience in different ethnic groups. For example, a person might be grouped as ‘Latin American’ but identify as ‘Spanish’, which is quite a different ethnic identity to Columbian. Similarly, Newcomb et al (2009) found a higher CSA prevalence rate for ‘Latinos’; however there was no breakdown of the ethnic groups within the Latina grouping. Using large ethnic groupings, some research compares ethnic groups with white Anglo-Saxon groups. For example, studies have found CSA prevalence is similar in African-American women to that reported by white American women (Drake & Pandey 1996, Finklehor et al 1990, Russell, Shurman & Trocki 1988, Wyatt 1985, 1990). Despite ethnic grouping, prevalence estimates in Anglo-dominant countries rarely delineate the

various ethnic groups present in that community and so assume a homogenous experience of all survivors (Tyagi 2001). However, as Okamura et al (1995:67) point out, an absence of data reflecting prevalence rates amongst different ethnic groups does not mean an absence of the problem.

As the above discussion has outlined, ethnicity rarely features in prevalence studies into CSA (Miller & Cross 2006:22, Stoltenborgh et al 2011). In comparison, Behl et al (2001) undertook a content analysis of research using 'ethnicity' as a category in child maltreatment studies during a 20-year period. They found only 7 per cent of published articles during 1977–1998 focused on ethnicity. Miller and Cross (2006) replicated the study conducted by Behl et al (2001) and analysed studies from 1999 to 2002 in three major speciality child maltreatment journals. They argued there is confusion in the use of the terms race, ethnicity and culture in this research and while these terms are not interchangeable they are not completely independent of each other either (Abney 2001, Cohen et al 2001, Miller & Cross 2006:19). As a consequence, Miller and Cross (2006:19) decided to narrow the focus to ethnicity. They defined ethnicity as the character, background or affiliation of an area in which a person identifies (Miller & Cross 2006:19). They coded articles as having a focus on ethnicity if the term ethnicity, race or culture was mentioned as an area of interest in the title or in the abstract of the article. Within the broad term ethnicity, they then coded particular ethnic categories: these were white (including European American, Caucasian, Anglo), African American (including black), Latino (including Hispanic), Native American, Asian American, and then 'other' for those who did not identify in the above. The authors recognised that this perpetuated the practice of ethnic lumping but argued not doing so would have been unwieldy (Miller & Cross 2006:20). They found the percentage of articles that focused on ethnicity remained less than 10 per cent.

The prevalence data available on CSA, while problematic, does indicate that CSA is a significant problem not only in non ethnic groups in Western societies but across the world. Moreover, there is limited prevalence data available on different ethnic groups within different countries. Instead, the process of ethnic lumping occurs whereby broad categories are used to describe minority ethnic groups from similar regions. Whilst this provides broad data on the issue of CSA, it does not allow for the nuances of difference or similarity across ethnic groups.

## Theoretical Models of Perpetration of CSA

Studies focusing on CSA have not only attempted to determine prevalence but also offered explanations for why CSA occurs. In recent years a number of multifactoral theories of CSA have been developed (Ward & Siegert 2002:319–320). A brief discussion of these models is important because they influence dominant social ideas about whether CSA exists, if it is harmful and who perpetrates it. The most influential is Finkelhor's (1984) precondition model of CSA, and recent additions include Hall and Hirschman's (1992) quadripartite model, and Marshall and Barbaree's (1990) integrated theory.

Finklehor's (1984:53–68) preconditions model argues, first, that sex with children is emotionally satisfying to the offender (emotional congruence), second, that men who offend are sexually aroused by a child (sexual arousal), third, that men have sex with children because they are unable to meet their sexual needs in more socially appropriate ways (blockage), and fourth, that men become disinhibited and behave in ways they would not normally behave (disinhibition) (Ward & Siegert 2002:324). Finklehor's model is used to explain why some men develop a sexual interest in children and why this interest is manifested in sexually abusive behaviour (Ward & Siegert 2002:324).

The quadripartite model of sexual aggression against children (Hall & Hirschman 1992) is also based on four components: physiological sexual arousal, cognitions justifying sexual aggression, affective dyscontrol, and personality problems (Ward & Siegert 2002:325). This model is used to argue that men sexually abuse children because they have a vulnerability to it, that is, there are motivational precursors which increase the possibility of the behaviour happening. The model therefore defines offender and offence subtypes based on the relative prominence of each factor (Ward & Siegert 2002:325). The model proposes that physiological, affective and cognitive factors are all dependent on state and situation, whilst personality problems are an enduring vulnerability. In sum, the model argues that personality deficits are a source of offender vulnerability to sexually abuse children (Ward & Siegert 2002:325).

The integrated theory model (Marshall & Barbaree 1990) suggests that CSA is a consequence of a number of interacting distal and proximal factors and has been used to explain the development, onset and maintenance of CSA (Ward & Siegert 2002:327–328). This theory suggests the transition to adolescence is challenging for the vulnerable individual and negative childhood experiences leave offenders without the social capacity to develop and

maintain heterosexual relationships (Ward & Siegert 2002:327–328). The onset of puberty represents a "critical period for the acquisition of enduring sexual scripts, interests and attitudes" (Ward & Siegert 2002:327) and so this theory indicates that biologically these men have a predisposition to sexually abuse children.

What these models have in common is they focus on individual explanations for CSA, that is, they look to biological determinants to explain men's sexual abuse toward children. The focus of explanation then sits with predispositions to abuse because of a personality type, or male hormones and male adolescent development. Such explanations that focus on male biology then become powerful discourses to excuse men under the guise they are made and socialised differently to women. This then promotes an 'abnormal' or 'sick' view of child sex perpetrators, thereby not holding them to account for their actions (Laing 1996:9). Furthermore, individual-focused theories of CSA limit and shift the focus away from power (Laing 1996:9) within families and societies and simultaneously influence dominant social ideas about the existence of CSA, its harm and who the perpetrator might be. Individual-focused discourses also give voice to authors such as Malon (2009) and Rind et al (1998) who argue that the community's responses to 'erotic experiences' between adults and children are puritanical, victimistic and anti-erotic (Levine 2003, Malon 2004, Money 1985, 1999 all cited in Malon 2009:79, Underwager & Wakefield 1993). They argue that sexual activity between an adult and a child can be consensual and not harmful to the child (Constantine & Martinson 1981, Goodyear-Smith 1993, Nathan and Snedeker 2001, Ofshe & Waters 1996, Rind et al 1998 cited in Malon 2009:79, Underwager & Wakefield 1993). These researchers suggest that consensual and positive sexual experiences between a minor and an adult are possible (Malon 2009:80). Such research suggests that feminist researchers, child protection advocates, the moral right, and an over-exaggerating media are responsible (Malon 2009:78) for inhibiting free-flowing erotic experiences between children and adults. This discourse provides for yet another form of minimisation and silencing about the effects of childhood sexual abuse on individuals.

In comparison to this, Catherine Itzin's "Nosology of a sex offender" (2000) provides a feminist perspective on sex offending. Feminist theories explaining CSA clearly identify men as predominantly the abusers, arguing men abuse because they are able to within the power structures of societal institutions, and therefore place the responsibility of such abuse solely with the perpetrator. The prevalence and incidence studies described above showed that child sex offenders are predominantly men and current data on sexual offending still draws a

sobering picture: “it appears to be a highly compulsive and repetitive behaviour, the tenacity of which is truly impressive” (Salter 1995:33). Certainly what can be seen from the work of Salter (1995), Cossins (1999), Itzin (2001) and Laing (1996) is that men who sexually abuse children overwhelmingly do it because they can because of the patriarchal structures that support men’s dominance over women and children. A continued feminist analysis of CSA, its effects on victims and survivors, and understandings of it in society is essential because it centralises the issue of men and power.

## Feminist Understandings of CSA Perpetration

As I have noted, studies have shown that CSA is overwhelmingly a male activity in that the majority of CSA offenders are men irrespective of the sex of the child they abuse (Cossins 1999, Itzin 2001:37). CSA is primarily committed by adult men and male adolescents against both male and female children, unlike other forms of child abuse (Itzin 2001, Cossins 1999, Newcomb et al 2009). Moreover, the data presented earlier suggest it is primarily female children who are violated and hence the gendered nature of CSA warrants ongoing attention. Feminist researchers have been instrumental in offering alternative explanations of CSA that move away from and challenge the individualised focus of those models described above. For example, feminist writers such as Kelly et al (2000) identified the continuum of complex and interlinked experiences of harassment, violation, abuse and assault in the lives of individual women and children. Itzin argued “that paedophile typologies and sex offender classifications contribute to constructing the invisibility of the normal, ordinary, heterosexual family men who sexually abuse their own and other people’s children on a very substantial scale” (2001:35). Furthermore, Itzin (2001) argued that notions of a sexually deviant man construct paedophilia as a specific and minority ‘sexual orientation’, and in fact this dominant discourse distracts attention from the ‘widespread sexualisation of children’. It also focuses attention on a kind of person rather than kinds of behaviour that are widespread and common in CSA such as entrapment, grooming and control of children, and the production and consumption of child pornography (Kelly et al 2000:19 cited in Itzin 2001:38, Lang & Frenzel 1988, Salter 1995).

This thesis is influenced by the work of feminists, particularly Itzin (2001), and hence draws on feminist principles of identifying the perpetrator age as both adolescent and adult, the perpetrator gender as primarily male, the perpetrator–victim relationship as both intrafamilial and extrafamilial (see Itzin 2000) and the victims as male as well as female children. There is

also evidence of a higher than previously recognised level of intrafamilial sexual abuse of boys (Watkins and Bentovim 1992, Itzin 2000). Itzin's (2000) nosology captures the crossover and connections between incest and 'paedophilia' whilst at the same time making incest more visible. The stigmas and social taboos surrounding sexual abuse can be powerful; hence this thesis is particularly focused on how this is experienced in ethnic communities because studies show that silencing is a powerful phenomenon that impacts on ethnic communities. For example, Rodriguez-Srednicki and Twaite (1999:2) argued that victims of CSA from different ethnic groups may be stigmatised as a result of their experience; hence clinicians working with victims should routinely assess the culturally related attitudes of a victim's family toward the victim, the perpetrator and the meaning of the sexual abuse. Similarly, Clear et al (2006) argued that a child's ethnicity can influence the way in which the experience of abuse is processed, its severity and the symptoms the child may develop (Clear et al 2006:82). As such, an understanding of both gender power relations and ethnicity is vital to any exploration of CSA in ethnic communities.

## The Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse

Researchers have studied the prevalence and incidence of CSA and theorists have explained why CSA occurs. Finally, research has also examined how being subjected to CSA impacts on victims, and has confirmed that CSA can have serious consequences. For example, studies have shown that CSA survivors have increased anxiety disorders, antisocial behaviour, substance and alcohol abuse, eating disorders, suicidal behaviour, post-traumatic stress disorder, and neurological effects (Peters 1988, Bushnell et al 1992, Fergusson et al 1996, Gould et al 2012, Bebbington et al 2011, Dinwiddie et al 2000, Mullen et al 1994). Studies have also found insecure and disorganised attachments (Alexander 1993, Briere and Runtz 1988, Jehu 1989); increased rates of relationship breakdown (Beitchman et al 1991, Bagley & Ramsey 1986, Mullen et al 1988, 1994, Fleming 1997); problems with sexuality and sexual adjustment (Herman 1981, Finkelhor 1979, 1984, Finkelhor et al 1990, Mullen et al 1994, Fleming et al 1998); and research suggests survivors of CSA are at an increased risk of revictimisation (Mouzos & Makkai 2004). Finally, Mullen and Fleming (1998) argued that a major effect of CSA is reduced development of capacities for trust, intimacy, agency and sexuality for a child. They argue the subsequent mental health problems associated with adult life result from a lack of appropriate social and emotional support immediately following the assault and later in life. Lobmann, Greve, Wetzels and Bosold (2003) suggested the child

receiving support from close adults can minimise the impact of the CSA and assist in managing its effects.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, radical feminists have had a central role in bringing the issue of childhood sexual abuse into the public consciousness through consciousness-raising groups and enabling victims of sexual violence to speak about their experiences. This has enabled women to voice the stories of abuse perpetrated at the hands of fathers, brothers, uncles, cousins and friends (Warner 2009:4). Furthermore, in examining the impacts of CSA on women and children, feminism has also often challenged existing beliefs around pathologising constructions of victims of CSA. Feminists have argued that the symptomology identified above in mainstream academic research as typical to a survivor of CSA is not a 'pathology' but rather a normal response to an assault on the soul of a child (Warner 2009). In so doing they have provided broader explanations about women's experiences which include resilience and agency, that is, women's self-confidence and self-worth, while simultaneously pointing out that the medical dominance of naming effects of CSA produces lists of symptoms that are gender blind and often hostile to women (Warner 2009:119). By focusing on women's resilience feminists have argued that effects are not inevitable or enduring and that women can recover from CSA.

### *Feminism, CSA and Ethnic Communities: The Same or Different?*

As I have argued thus far, feminism has been central to explaining CSA and how it impacts on women and children. However, in recent years black, ethnic and post-structuralist feminists have argued that much research in the area of violence against women does not attend to "the variety of experiences that women from different communities encounter" (Ahmed et al 2009:8). Feminism has been critiqued by different groups of women for assuming a universal experience of oppression among women and for adopting Western models of patriarchal power and intimate relations. Even though early feminists were central in raising public awareness in relation to sexual violence, they did not differentiate among the groups of women whom they spoke for (Warner 1996 cited in Reavey, Ahmed & Majumdar 2006:172). These early voices of feminism spoke for every woman, rather than differentiating among women according to their locations of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality and disability. The difficulties in differentiating among women were and continue to be compounded by prevailing attitudes towards girls, female sexuality and child rearing because they create conditions which prevent disclosure of sexual abuse. For example, researchers have argued

that attitudes and beliefs about the social and sexual conduct of boys and girls often construct women as the property of men (Karlekar 1995 cited in Tyagi 2001:21, Okamura et al 1995), and therefore encourage girls and women to subsume their needs to those of the males in the family (Edwards & Alexander 1992 cited in Tyagi 2001:21). Particular social and cultural attitudes, values and norms therefore legitimise sexual violence and make it very difficult for victims to disclose abuse, keeping perpetrators invisible (Tyagi 2001:21).

Despite the critique of feminism as universalising the experience of women, culturally sensitised and ethnically based research on women's experiences of CSA remains limited (Levett 2003). Specific research into the experiences of different ethnic groups is small (Ullman & Filipas 2005a:68, Mennen 1995). Research has predominantly been conducted in the United States and, as I noted earlier, has focused on Latin-American, Asian-American and African-American groups (Fontes 1993, 1995, 2001, 2002, 2005, Fontes, Cruz & Tabachnick 2001, Ullman & Filipas 2005b). These studies have examined some cultural norms and values that impact on disclosure of CSA, treatment, prevention and intervention with ethnic minority groups (Clear et al 2006, Ullman & Filipas 2005b, Feiring, Coates & Taska 2001, Suchting 1999, Mennen 1995, Noh Ahn & Gilbert 1992, Heras 1992, Thomas 1992; Hamelin et al 2010). However, limited research has been undertaken outside of the broad ethnic lumping of groups such as Latin American, Asian American and African American, or even European (Kenny & McEachern 2000). In the following discussion of these studies I will continue to use the broad ethnic categories used in this literature.

### *Examining the Effects of CSA across Ethnic Groups: An Overview of the Research*

Research that has examined the effects of CSA has predominantly been undertaken with minority ethnic groups living in Western countries, with some research coming from non-Western contexts. Research with ethnic groups in Western contexts has either used the broad category of 'ethnic' to differentiate different ethnic women in Western societies, that is ethnic lumping, or named specific ethnic groups, for example Latinas, African Americans, Asians. The research that is presented here is primarily qualitative in design and has used a range of methods such as questionnaires, surveys, in-depth interviews, self-report measures, case studies or ethnic-specific reviews of the literature. The breakdown of study types is presented in Table 1. In this chapter I aim to underline the common themes and findings from such

studies including ethnicity, disclosure, shame and blame, resilience, family and the question of culture.

**Table 1: CSA Study Types**

| **Interview** | **Survey/questionnaire/self-report measure** | **Case study** | **Data from records** | **Lit review/journal article/ book chapter** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kenny & McEachern 2007 | Sanders-Phillips, Moisan, Wadlington, Morgan & English 1995 | Baker & Dwairy 2003 | Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999 | Tang, Freyd & Wang 2007 |
| Mrsevic 1997 | Mennen 1995 | | | Wyatt 1990 |
| Mchichi-Alami & Kadri 2004 | Hinson, Koverola & Morahan 2002 | | | Abney & Priest 1995 |
| Feiring, Coates & Taska 2001 | Shaw, Lewis, Loeb, Rosado & Rodriguez 2001 | | | Tillman, Bryant-Davis, Smith & Marks 2010 |
| Ozbaran, Eremis, Bukusoglu, Bildik, Tamar, Ercan, Aydin & Cetin 2009 | Katerndahl, Burge, Kellogg & Parra 2005 | | | Okamura, Heras & Wong-Kerberg 1995 |
| Lundqvist, Hansson & Svedin 2004 | Clear, Vincent & Harris 2006 | | | Scully, Kuoch & Miller 1995 |
| Tyagi 2001 | Lundqvist, Hansson & Svedin 2004 | | | |
| Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999 | Mchichi-Alami & Kadri 2004 | | | |
| Singh, Hays, Chung & Watson 2010 | Kenny & McEachern 2007 | | | |
| Ahmed, Reavey & Majumdar 2009 | Lowe, Pavkov, Casanova & Wetchler 2005 | | | |
| | Plummer & Njuguna 2009 | | | |
| | Rodriguez-Srednicki & Twaite 1999 | | | |

## Ethnicity

A small number of studies have been conducted within particular countries across Europe, for example in Serbia (Mrsevic 1997), Turkey (Ozbaran et al 2009), Morocco (Mchichi-Alami & Kadri 2004), and Sweden (Lundqvist, Hansson & Svedin 2004). These studies show similarities in the effects of CSA across groups, and they particularly demonstrate the importance of ethnicity to these experiences. The findings from these studies show that the majority of perpetrators are male and are known to the victims. Research has also found that common effects of CSA are fear, anger, self-harm, suicide, prostitution, alcohol and drug abuse, depression, anxiety and guilt (Mrsevic 1997, Mchichi-Alami & Kadri 2004, Sanders-

Phillips et al 1995, Mennen 1995:116, Hinson et al 2002:835), shame (Feiring, Coates & Taska 2001:1321), loss of virginity (Shaw et al 2001), and self-blame (Katerndahl et al 2005) regardless of the country in which the study took place.

As noted above, research has also pointed to 'ethnicity' as a key influence in how CSA is experienced and responded to. For example, in the United States it was found that 'ethnic factors' are important to a child's mental health (Clear et al 2006). Clear et al (2006:82) argued that a child's ethnicity may influence the way in which the experience of abuse is processed, its severity, and the symptoms the child may develop. Other studies have pointed to ethnicity being a factor that silences the issue of CSA. For example, based on research undertaken in Serbia, Mrsevic (1997) argued that common community responses to the issue of CSA were disbelief and ignorance. Similarly, a study about community attitudes towards victims of CSA in the United States found that that Cuban Americans saw victims more negatively (bad, immoral, dirty, worthy of blame) than the Puerto Rican group. The researchers concluded that victims may be stigmatised because of their experience of CSA and the likelihood that this will occur can vary from one cultural group to another (Rodriguez-Srednicki & Twaite 1999). Therefore, some research has concluded that ethnicity is important in understanding the effects of CSA because it shapes not only an individual's mental/emotional health but also community and cultural understandings and responses.

Some studies have aimed to compare or examine a range of differences in experiences of CSA across ethnic groups. Hence, ethnicity has been identified as a broad category of enquiry to demonstrate the differences or effects found in and between ethnic minority groups and/or white Western women and girls. In the USA, where the vast majority of research has been undertaken with adult survivors and children from ethnic minority groups, Mennen (1995) examined the relationship of race/ethnicity to the severity of symptoms as a result of CSA in white, Latina, African-American and Asian-American girls. The results suggest that race/ethnicity alone did not significantly predict mental health outcomes (Mennen 1995). Research with adult survivors of CSA shows that mental health effects such as depression (May-Chahal & Herczog 2003:25, Mennen 1995:121, Feiring, Coates & Taska 2001:1322, Clear et al 2006:81, Lundqvist et al 2004:398, Bebbington et al 2011, Mchichi-Alami & Kadri 2004:240, Andres-Hyman et al 2004, Mrsevic 1997) appear to be consistent in findings of CSA across both ethnic minority groups in the West and those in non-Western contexts. Research with children paints a similar picture, with effects such as anxiety, depression,

limited attention, aggressiveness, social problems, social withdrawal and somatisation (Ozbaran et al 2009; Fergusson, Horwood & Lynskey 1996).

While depression is named in the literature as a common effect of CSA, research in the US with Latina/Hispanic women and girls suggests that they experience a higher severity than black girls (Sanders-Phillips et al 1995:701); are persistently more likely to report considerable trauma compared to African-American or white girls (Mennen 1995:116, Hinson et al 2002:835); and experience more emotional and behavioural problems than African-American girls (Shaw et al 2001). In contrast, research seeking to compare the differences between the groups found no significant differences in depression symptom levels and intrusive symptoms amongst Hispanics, African Americans and Caucasians (Clear et al 2006:91). Rather, these findings implied that reactions to sexual abuse may have universal characteristics that transcend culture (Clear et al 2006:91). Indeed, even the authors whose findings show higher depression levels in Latina/Hispanic girls suggest that this may have more to do with the social and cultural factors experienced by the girls as opposed to solely the ethnic group (Sanders-Phillips et al 1995:701).Thus, the social and cultural factors surrounding CSA should be addressed in further research because they may also influence other ethnic groups (Sanders-Phillips et al 1995:703).

### Disclosure

Another area of CSA research that has been explored in ethnic groups is disclosure. It has been suggested that disclosure in ethnic families generally is a process fraught with difficulty that can create a profound crisis for the family (Tyagi 2001). It is one of the first responses to CSA and is critical both in terms of stopping the abuse (for children) but also the way a disclosure is responded to can formulate either further abuse for the victim/survivor or provide support and comfort (Tang et al 2007). In considering the issue of disclosure, researchers have needed to examine whether there are any differences in what constitutes CSA across ethnic groups at a community level. Lowe, Pavkov, Casanova and Wetchler (2005:162) investigated whether the three largest ethnic/cultural populations in the United States, white Americans, African Americans and Hispanic Americans, entertain different notions of what constitutes CSA and subsequent disclosure and/or reporting. While they found no major differences in definitions of CSA between the three groups studied (Lowe et al 2005), the findings did show that Hispanic respondents were more likely than white respondents to recommend to a 17-year-old female that she report her 24-year-old adoptive

father to the police for having intercourse with her (Lowe et al 2005:160). Generally the research surrounding disclosure has shown community definitions of CSA appear to be congruent. Thus, the way a community understands what constitutes CSA would necessarily impact on how victims/survivors are treated.

Reactions to disclosure can include outrage, shock, denial, loss of family protection, the wrath of perpetrators (Herman 1981:131, Taylor, Wood & Lichtman 1983) and fear of retaliation and intimidation from the perpetrator (Browne 1987 cited in Tyagi 2001:21, Lundqvist et al 2004:400). Researchers have argued that public disclosure of CSA constitutes the greatest threat to a girl and her family in some communities and as a result the family will do everything within their power to maintain family standing, and in countries where honour killings occur, even kill the victim (Ginat 1997, Glazer & Abu Ras 1994, Hasan 1999, cited in Baker & Dwairy 2003:113, Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999). What is interesting here is the masculine nature of honour, that is, it is the female body that can dishonour her father, husband, family and community. Therefore her honour, attached to her body, reflects on those around her, not just her. It is no wonder then that victims/survivors will consider others' reactions to a potential disclosure, that is, whether they will help or take it seriously, and will make a judgement about whether or not to disclose based on these potential reactions (Ruback, Greenberg & Westcott 1984, Wyatt & Newcomb 1990, Lundqvist et al 2004:400). For example, research with African-American women has shown that they are less likely to disclose to nuclear family members and to police compared to white American women (Abney & Priest 1995). The authors suggest this is because of a long history of intrusion of state institutions into their families and family disruption; as well as not being aware of services. If the perpetrator was also African American, victims can fear that filing criminal charges against one of their own men is a betrayal because African-American men are over-represented in the US criminal justice system and receive harsher penalties (Abney & Priest 1995). While not specific to CSA, Tillman et al (2010) also suggested there are other socio-historical reasons why black women do not disclose any form of sexual violence. These included the legacy of slavery and the unabated commodification of African bodies which has legally and morally condoned sexual victimisation of African women to the point that sexual victimisation was identified as an occupational hazard for these women (Tillman et al 2010:60). African-American women often suffer in silence and accept abuse as part of their lives (Levy 1988, Okamura, Heras & Wong-Kerberg 1995:75, Gunawan 1994 cited in Tyagi

2001:18) because of devaluation and objectification by the dominant culture in which they live (Davis 1983, hooks 1982).

Similarly, a study with women from Chinese, Egyptian-cosmopolitan, Filipino, Peruvian, Jamaican, West Indian, Canadian and mixed race ancestry identified that they too rarely disclosed CSA (Tyagi 2001). In contrast to Abney and Priest's study above, which pointed to the historical implications of slavery as a reason, this study suggested that familial and cultural values, beliefs, community mindedness, social attitudes, negative consequences for victims, and other social and cultural factors made it difficult for women to disclose (Tyagi 2001). Tyagi (2001) argued that research needs to examine in more detail how family silences occur within different cultures in relation to disclosure of child sexual abuse, for example, how social, familial and cultural values and beliefs, culturally determined life scripts for women, and accessibility to resources shape the experiences of women and girls from diverse ethnic communities (Tyagi 2001:35). This demonstrates that ethnic women have different social and cultural dimensions to their experience, which impacts on the disclosure of CSA (Tyagi 2001:35).

Drawing on a study conducted in Palestine, Shalboub-Kevorkian (1999) argued that the socio-cultural and political context of countries will impact on disclosure or non-disclosure of sexual abuse for women and girls. While this study was specific to Palestine it echoes the research discussed above. This study found the main reason victims disclosed was because they sought to terminate a pregnancy (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999). Of the eleven, four pregnant victims lost their lives, one due to unsanitary abortion practices while three were killed by a family member when their pregnancy was discovered. The second reason the victims disclosed was the loss of virginity (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999). Twelve victims had perforated hymens, five of these were under house arrest for their own protection so as to avoid social/psychological derision, and the other seven were married, banished to another country or institutionalised in orphanages or centres for broken families (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999). The third reason for disclosure was a fear of loss of virginity. Fifteen of the victims sought assistance to get a confidential medical examination to ascertain the condition of their hymen (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999). Results showing no hymen damage led the family and victim to feel justified in ignoring the abuse. This meant the abuse could be hidden. Shalhoub-Kevorkian (1999:1282) concluded that disclosure of female sexual abuse causes social panic and public scandal because it touches on the most sacred and "untouchable"

value of Arab society, that is, inviolate female virginity and sexuality. Disclosure of abuse was therefore found to pose great danger to the victim.

In addition to those mentioned above, other barriers to disclosure for ethnic women in general terms have been identified in the research, and these are: issues such as language difficulties, feeling alone in the criminal justice system, lack of support from their cultural group, community distrust of police (McEvoy & Daniluk 1994, Danica Report Collective 1993 cited in Tyagi 2001:18), presence of extended family in the household (Herrerias 1988, Mindel 1980), respect for male authority (Derezotes & Snowden 1990), proximity of the perpetrator (Huston et al 1995), and filial piety (Tang & Davis 1996, Wong 1998 cited in Tyagi 2001:18). These all act as further barriers to disclosure of child sexual abuse. Despite these differences, research also shows that many ethnic women described difficulties in disclosure and coping that were similar to those of white women (Tyagi 2001).

While studies such as those above have concluded there are significant barriers to disclosure for women from different ethnic backgrounds other research suggests there are no significant differences in the disclosure patterns when women are compared by ethnicity (Wyatt 1990). What can be gleaned from this research is a common denominator: that women and girls from different ethnic groups would not or did not disclose CSA because of fear of not being believed, repercussions for and from the family, and shame (Singh et al 2013, Tang et al 2007:7, Lowe et al 2005:149–150, Tyagi 2001:30, Fontes & Plummer 2010:501, Kanukollu & Mahalingam 2001:223, Lundqvist et al 2004). Thus, it could be suggested there may be some common elements to why women do not disclose that may transcend cultures, ethnicities and communities including cultural views of a CSA victim and her family as shamed and dishonoured (Baker & Dwairy 2003:112). This is similar to the face-saving behaviour in some ethnic communities which can result in women denying what happened to them, their sisters, friends and even their children (Scully, Kuoch & Miller 1995:108, Tyagi 2001:21). As noted, silence may also affect disclosure through the tradition of filial piety (submissiveness, obedience, loyalty) which is very strong in children (Chen 1996, Wu 1981, both cited in Kenny & McEachern 2000:910, Okamura et al 1995:73). Further, keeping quiet about the abuse or accepting it as fate has been identified as a way of coping with trauma where the cost of disclosure (stigmatisation, social ostracisation, physical abuse) are too high to bear (Alleyne 1996, Hicks 1993, Wong 1998, all cited in Tyagi 2001:20).

### Shame and Blame

As I noted above, the issue of shame and blame is important and another consistent thread in CSA research. For example, shame has been found to be a significant issue in Latino cultures, that is, shame for the victim in being associated with sexual activity, and shame for the family, particularly if it instigates a response from child protection services (Fontes 2007:64). Shame and blame have been found to be effects of CSA in research in the US, with Hispanic children showing the highest family and community shame levels, whereas European-American children reported the highest level of internal blame for the abuse (Feiring, Coates & Taska 2001:1321, Katerndahl et al 2005).

Shame about CSA is strongly linked with traditional views of purity and the importance of virginity, which is significant for a number of ethnic groups (Padilla & Baird 1991, Pavic 1986, both cited in Mennen 1995:122, Fontes 2007, Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999, Baker & Dwairy 2003, Okamura et al 1995, Tyagi 2001, Kenny & McEachern 2000). A loss of virginity can compound a woman's trauma because she feels less valuable and desirable as a marital partner (Fontes 2007:69). The Hispanic concept of *Marianismo*, whereby female chastity is ennobled, may leave women seeing themselves as responsible for and damaged by the abuse because virginity before marriage is valued (Shaw et al 2001:1376, Comaz-Diaz 1995). In traditional cultures it has been found that sexual relations are seen as a fundamental struggle that women should avoid and men should try to obtain from women and girls (Santos-Ortiz & Munoz Vazquez 1989 cited in Fontes 2007:65), whereby the value of a man's masculinity can depend on the number of his conquests while the value of a girl's femininity relies on her chastity (Fontes 2007:65). Some researchers have argued that sexual acts outside of marriage for girls or women assume that she has made herself accessible and she is often held responsible, even if there is a difference in age or power, leading victims to feel shamed (Fontes 2007:66). Research in Sweden suggests similar findings, showing that survivors have feelings of guilt and shame, along with feelings of being dirty and bad (Lundqvist et al 2004:400). This particular effect has also been found in Arab society, which emphasises family and social norms like modesty, and where sexual feelings are unspoken and shameful (Baker & Dwairy 2003). Similarly research in Hong Kong also pointed out that the Confucian perspective in China has created a shame and guilt culture, and hence people blame the victim for CSA and the victim is more likely to experience shame and guilt (Tsun 1999).

The issue of shame in relation to CSA therefore appears to be linked with constructions of female sexuality and cultural sexual mores across cultures. Shalhoub-Kevorkian (1999) suggested the sexual conduct of a woman in the Arab world is viewed as significant; for example, if a woman is immodest or brings shame on her family by her sexual conduct it brings dishonour for all her kin. This is apparent through the Arabic language which has two words for honour: *sharaf* means honour in the broader sense, and *ird* is only for sexual conduct. Some women who are viewed as dishonouring their family have been killed (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999). Virginity is significant because a loss of virginity through CSA can be viewed as dishonour. Thus, surgical procedures such as hymen restoration are a common practice in some countries where virginity for the female is seen as crucial (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999). Research has shown that some Hispanic/Latina victims display higher levels of distress with a loss of virginity (Shaw et al 2001, Mennen 1995). Similarly within research with Asian and Arabic victims the loss of a girl's virginity outside the context of marriage brings dishonour to the self and the family and hence victims of CSA may deny or reframe the abuse (Okamura et al 1995:81, Tyagi 2001:21, Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999, Baker & Dwairy 2003). In situations of intrafamilial abuse, it has also been found that imprisonment of a perpetrator may result in social sympathy and support for him rather than shame and ostracism (Baker & Dwairy 2003).

In summary, research has often revealed that, rather than the girl/woman being protected, because of dishonour she will often be blamed for not protecting herself from the abuse (Baker & Dwairy 2003). Thus shame and blame and the issue of virginity and honour are intertwined across multiple ethnic groups and a woman who loses her virginity prior to marriage is seen as a disgrace to herself and her family across a number of communities (Okamura et al 1995 cited in Kenny and McEachern 2000:910, Shaw et al 2001, Mennen 1995, Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999).

### Resilience

Another area that has received some attention in research that focuses on different ethnic women's experiences of CSA is resilience. Resilience from a Western context can be understood as an individual's internal capacity to recover from extremes of trauma and stress. It is understood as characteristics of those people "who manage to endure and recover fully, despite suffering significant traumatic conditions of extreme deprivation, serious threat, and major stress" (Hastri 2013:225). Indeed this 'privelaged' view of resilience has been critiqued

because of the lack of attention to issues of privelage and oppression (Hartling 2005). Some research has sought to identify whether there are any resilience strategies particular to African-American women, or to South Asian women. Tyagi (2001:19) argued that resilience is a common theme in African-American women's experiences of child sexual abuse. She suggested that for black women cognitive reframing may manifest itself via defences such as 'looking at life realistically' and 'getting on' without complaining. She argued this has become a common survival strategy which has often been to the detriment of black woman, creating stereotypes of the strong black woman who can endure anything and carry on regardless (Tyagi 2001). Some researchers have suggested that in order to identify resilience in childhood sexual abuse stories, one should look to the survival abilities of the child to cope with the abuse. Thus, looking for themes of resilience in the survival stories is encouraged to highlight the active role played by the survival strategies of victims (Glicken 2006:114).

Singh et al (2010) identified particular resilience strategies that South Asian women used. Silence was identified as a strategy whereby the women reported they were socialised to be silent about many aspects of their lives, including the CSA. They therefore used this cultural command as a way to introvert and separate from others so they could heal from the abuse they experienced. However, no participant described feeling positive about being silenced and trying to heal on their own. Secondly the participants spoke about the importance of a sense of hope, which supported their resilience, and thirdly the participants noted that their level of access to positive, safe social support from family and friends in their community before, during and after their abuse was an important component of their resilience and facilitated healing despite the cultural taboos. Finally the participants indicated they sought ways to contribute in their personal and community networks, to do social advocacy and this assisted them to find a sense of purpose. The participants also reported that their culture's inclusion of meditation, yoga and other self-care strategies was a critical aspect of their resilience. They were able to care for their mind, body and spirit, indicating that active self-care strategies strengthened their confidence (Singh et al 2010:454). Resilience research with ethnic women is limited and as such so is our knowledge of the potential cultural factors that may promote coping, safety and strength.

### Family

Family has also been identified as a significant factor that affects the impact of CSA on victims and survivors across a number of studies with Latina/Hispanic, Asian, Arabic and

South Asian communities. For example for Puerto Rican communities, *Familismo*, or family loyalty, which is placed above other values, has been found to be a crucial component to any disclosure and/or intervention for child sexual abuse (Comaz-Diaz 1995:36, Hinson et al 2002:823, Kenny & McEachern 2007:34). '*Respeto*', deference to and/or fear of one's parents and older siblings (Comas-Diaz 1995 cited in Lowe et al 2005:161), can prevent a child/adult from disclosing and can also leave a child vulnerable to comply with a perpetrator and maintain the silence if the perpetrator has forbidden them from speaking (Fontes 1993, Comaz-Diaz 1995). Tsun (1999) also pointed out that Chinese expect their children to respect elders and obey authority's demands without delay, and identified notions of filial piety and the importance of maintaining family secrets to avoid shaming the family to the community. In addition to the cultural norm of discouraging the expression of emotion, disclosures that conflict with or disrupt the family unity and peace would not be viewed as appropriate (Sue 1989 cited in Kenny & McEachern 2000:910). Similarly research suggests that for Asian communities family plays a central role (Okamura, Heras & Wong-Kerberg 1995). For example, Singh et al (2010) found that family image is considered important in South Asian communities, that is, families valued the primacy of the family over the individual members and wanted to maintain a positive image of the family. Similarly, Baker and Dwairy (2003) found within Arabic communities that family reputation is one of the most important resources for an Arab family and that negative reputation impacts on all family members and can result in economic or social isolation. Fear of bringing shame to family is one mechanism that therefore controls the family: the individual is expected to suffer silently if their voiced suffering would bring shame to the family and hence victims of abuse can be harshly blamed.

In the same way that patriarchal societies are structured by defined roles and rules for men and women, family is also regulated by clearly defined roles and rules of interpersonal conduct (Ishisaka & Takagi 1982 cited in Okamura et al 1995:71), with each person having a role and a place in the family structure and social order (Ho 1987, Ishisaka & Takagi 1982, both cited in Okamura et al 1995:71). It has been suggested that these patriarchal contexts shape CSA understandings and responses. For example, research has suggested that Asian families and societies are patriarchal in nature and ascribe females and children to a subordinate position and hence to be controlled by males (Tsun 1999). Thus they maintain a patrilinial family structure where men, particularly the eldest men, have the most authority and responsibility (Nagata 1989, Tran 1988, both cited in Okamura et al 1995:72). Women

and girls are expected to obey husbands, fathers and eldest sons (Tran 1988 cited in Okamura et al 1995:71).

Similarly patriarchal gender norms such as male power and authority have been identified as significant in Serbia and influence Serbian women's decisions not to disclose or speak about the abuse (Mrsevic 1997). Hispanic children have been identified as at greater risk of abuse by a parent figure because of the power of male authority and a tradition of silence amongst women and children (Derezotes & Snowden 1990, Finkelhor 1994, Levy 1988, Sanders-Phillips et al 1995 cited in Feiring, Coates & Taska 2001:1321, Comaz-Diaz 1995, Kenny & McEachern 2007:31). Flowing on from this is the cultural value of '*machismo*', which identifies the roles a Latino male is expected to fulfil, for example, a dominant personality, particularly over women; an ever-ready lover and seducer of females (Comaz-Diaz 1995); and a model of virtue, courage and fearlessness (Abad, Ramos & Boyce 1974 cited in Lowe et al 2005:161, Comaz-Diaz 1995). Baker and Dwairy (2003) described that in most Arab communities there is also a patriarchal structure where women have an inferior role and are in the custody and control of the men in their families regardless of age, education, profession or social status (Walther 1995 cited in Baker and Dwairy 2003:111, Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999:1276). Women's sexuality is a highly sensitive issue and women are relegated to the domestic sphere with traditional ideas of femininity, motherhood, wifehood and sexuality (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999:278). Traditional views of motherhood have also been identified as impacting on the issue of CSA. As noted, in research with Latin/Hispanic communities *Marianismo* emphasises the obligation of mothers to endure suffering for the sake of their children (Lowe et al 2005:161, Comaz-Diaz 1995). One consequence of this could be that mothers are held responsible for the behaviour of their children; therefore the daughter's assault would be the mother's fault (Comas Diaz 1995 cited in Kenny & McEachern 2001).These are cultural norms that impact on experiences of child sexual abuse at a number of levels, personal, spiritual, social and political.

Cultural mores of behaviour such as the Asian view of stoicism (Berg & Jaya 1993 cited in Kenny & McEachern 2000:910) and acceptance of life's consequences (fatalism) can also impact on how a victim discloses and even reacts to CSA. The concept of fate or cultural fatalism has also been discussed in the literature in relation to Hispanic/Latino groups (Fontes 2007:68, Comaz-Diaz 1995) and is similar to the notion of the strong African-American woman who can bear all (Tyagi 2001). Thus family and culture are intertwined and influence how CSA is dealt with and understood and its effects on victims/survivors.

### The Question of Culture

The preceding discussion suggests that cultural norms and values have significance to the issue of CSA, as does the concept of culture itself. Some studies have reported on the influence and understandings of culture within the context of CSA. Ahmed et al (2009) analysed the construction of culture with British-born women identified as Muslim who had lived in the UK for most of their lives and were fluent English speakers. The women identified 'culture' as problematic and unchangeable, and Ahmed et al (2009) suggested that such constructions of 'culture' may imply that it is responsible for the problem of CSA and the silencing of CSA. For example, this study showed it was because of 'culture' that some family and community members were not supportive when the women wanted to deal with the sexual violence they were experiencing or to escape it. However, Ahmed et al (2009) pointed out that the women do not clearly define what 'culture' is. They argued that this type of construction is a sign of a taken-for-granted notion of 'culture', and that how 'culture' operates is assumed to be commonly understood. They postulated that this finding could be the result of the researcher being South Asian herself; therefore knowledge of what 'culture' is was presumed by the participants. Further they suggested this type of construction of 'culture' may be assumed to be inevitable, to the point of removing agency from those affected by it. The assumption that all South Asian women will have knowledge of this 'culture' and women's roles in it was a dominant theme. The authors indicated that a commonly held understanding regarding what it means to be a south Asian women dealing with sexual and domestic violence was simultaneously held and unspoken between the participants and the interviewer (Ahmed et al 2009).

In exploring how culture impacts on vulnerability and protective factors in CSA in Africa, Plummer and Njuguna (2009) concluded there were strong similarities across the ethnic groups in their study (Somali, Miji Kendas, Luo, Kamba, Kikuyu, Kalenjin, Kisii). The protective factors identified included gender separation, modesty, harsh deterrents, religious beliefs, sex and gender taboos, adult guidance and supervision, family ties, and valuing children. The risk factors identified included patriarchy (male dominance and violence), foreign influences, social changes, the role of children, sexual norms, gendered roles and practices, individual risk factors (orphaned, have a step-parent), a culture of silence and cover-ups, and poverty. All but one of the groups independently identified gender roles and sexual norms as risk factors for sexual abuse in their tribe and five saw the culture of silence as a risk factor. Plummer and Njuguna (2009) argued from these findings that, while cultural

traditional values may be a protective factor, they are also a risk factor, particularly patriarchy, lack of children's rights, sexual norms and attitudes, and defined gender roles. They argued that CSA is contextualised distinctively based on culture and hence this challenges the appropriateness of borrowing prevention or intervention approaches from Western cultures where the realities are quite different (Plummer & Njuguna 2009).

Research undertaken with South Asian survivors in the US demonstrated that the degree to which women felt pride in their ethnic identity as both an individual and group member provided either support or challenges as a survivor of CSA (Singh et al 2010:451). This study also identified that the stress of acculturation significantly shaped women's experience of CSA because exposure to Western values and belief systems in the United States created conflict with their ethnic world view (Singh et al 2010:452). These studies are significant, particularly Ahmed et al (2009) and Singh et al (2010), because they raise questions about how constructions of 'culture' or ethnicity influence or impact on women's experiences of CSA. They highlight that different groups of ethnic women share common cultural understandings and/or assume a shared identity that comes from their ethnic background. What can be seen from these ethnic-specific studies is that there are some commonalities that transcend ethnic groups. These appear to be lack of disclosure, importance of family, maintaining family honour, female sexuality and virginity, patriarchy (rule of the husband, father and son) and silencing of the issue. Despite this there was a lack of significant consistent differences in trauma among the groups, suggesting the experience of sexual abuse may have universalities that transcend culture (Mennen 1995:122), that is, the distress a victim suffers is more likely to be related to the particular experience of sexual abuse than to racial/ethnic factors. Thus in both research and intervention with ethnic communities in Western contexts, an understanding of the child's ethnic group should be cultivated including cultural belief systems, and the meaning of the CSA to the child and family (Shaw et al 2001).

This chapter has shown that CSA is now a public issue in Western cultures, but it is also researched across the world. The literature has shown that CSA is a common occurrence and that there are significant effects for child victims and adult survivors. These effects have both similarities and differences across the groups under study. Integral to this research has been the radical feminist view of raising consciousness about sexual violence against women which sits within the wider feminist agenda. Ethnic and black feminists have contributed to

this agenda by arguing that feminism has generalised the female experience and should focus its attention on difference and how different groups of women experience violence and abuse. Some researchers such as Ahmed et al (2009) and Singh et al (2010) have begun considering the impact of culture on CSA, that is, such research has named cultural values, attitudes and norms and how they shape gender relations in particular ethnic groups. Culture is a term that has appeared sporadically throughout the literature on ethnicity and child sexual abuse. Despite its broad application in the literature, as a term it provides for both the context for behaviour and the perspective from which the meaning of the behaviour can be understood (Lonner 1994 cited in Feiring, Coates & Taska 2001:1307). Fontes stated:

> Cultural issues are relevant to child sexual abuse in three major ways: how cultural beliefs or attitudes contribute to family climates in which children can be abused; how cultural organization prohibits or hinders disclosure; and how culture plays a role in seeking or accepting social service or mental health assistance. (1995:xiii)

Feiring, Coates and Taska (2001) argued that cultural processes are important to CSA research because they explain the variations in children's emotional experiences, attributions and support networks following child sexual abuse. Furthermore, Feiring, Coates and Taska (2001) recommended that future studies on CSA should include culture as a central explanatory factor through measuring cultural practices, not just ethnic labels. That is, careful and systematic assessment of the cultural context including psychological and social processes should be undertaken in research, not just categories reflecting ethnicity or race. They argue a clear conceptualisation of what the cultural factors are and how they operate to influence children's understanding of abuse is required to produce understandings of difference (Feiring, Coates & Taska 2001:1325). This is supported by Hinson et al's (2002:822) suggestion that unravelling the sequelae of CSA requires an exploration of cultural values and attitudes.

On the other hand, Kenny and McEachern (2000:919) cautioned that, whilst it is important to undertake research about experiences of CSA amongst different ethnic groups for the purpose of acknowledging differences and diversity, it is important not to overemphasise the differences and ignore the cultural similarities. Some argue people's attitudes toward CSA are less subject to cultural variations in values because, like murder, CSA is universally viewed across cultures as unacceptable or undesirable behaviour, rendering other cultural mores as secondary or irrelevant (Lowe et al 2005:162). In contrast, some have argued that debates surrounding CSA and cultural differences have unintentionally shifted the problem of CSA for different ethnic groups, particularly those living in the West, into the 'too hard

basket' (Miller & Cross 2006:17, Suchting 1999). Indeed, Suchting suggested disengagement has and is occurring because CSA

> is highly contentious because those who experience marginalisation based on 'race', 'ethnicity' or 'culture' in every aspect of their lives speak of not having such a choice. For it is the ability to choose that marks a position of privilege – creating an 'us' and 'them' debate. (1999:69)

Ahmed et al (2009:8) argued that working with ethnic groups about CSA has been constructed as problematic because professionals are seen not to have the expertise, skills or knowledge to tackle the perceived differences of experience of ethnic women. They argued the problem of culture becomes suffocating particularly for feminists and practitioners in the West working with women from different ethnicities (Ahmed et al 2009:8). Other writers have pointed out that many academics and practitioners argue that treatment and intervention for individuals with an ethnic background requires a different approach. However, there is little information available that identifies what this different approach might be (Miller & Cross 2006:17, Ullman & Filipas 2005b, Clear et al 2006:79). The arguments presented here all point to the need for studies such as this one which seeks to understand the experiences of ethnic women and how their ethnicity frames their understandings of CSA.

# CHAPTER THREE

# Reclaiming Ethnicity, Women and the Female Body

In this chapter I will explore the term ethnicity as a precursor to setting up the research. I will examine concepts such as race, culture and identity to argue for a social constructionist approach to ethnicity when exploring CSA within ethnic communities. Understanding ethnic women's experiences of CSA requires theoretical engagement with feminism so that gender in this context can be examined. Thus feminism's engagement with questions of difference and similarity amongst women, introduced in the previous chapter, is highly relevant and will be elaborated further here. Specifically, the feminist intersectionality enables an examination of similarity through feminist ideas of gender oppression, the female body, and the material reality of sexual violence, but also enables attention to difference by attending to how women's experience of CSA can be influenced or nuanced by ethnicity.

## Ethnicity and Culture

There is considerable controversy and overlap in terms used to describe race, culture and ethnicity in the literature (Helms & Tallyrand 1997, Phinney 1996, O'Donnell 1991, Wright 1994, Smaje 1995, Bhopal & Donaldson 1998). For example, in Australia there are currently a number of terms used to describe minority groups such as non-English speaking background (NESB), culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), new arrivals/new and emerging communities, migrants, immigrants and refugees amongst others. The purpose of this chapter is not to include an extensive conversation or debate regarding the use of these terms but instead to name and argue why I have selected the term 'ethnicity' for the purpose of this thesis and how I include the concept of culture within it.

Before discussing ethnicity and culture, I need to explore conceptualisations of race because it is a term used to distinguish groups and therefore intersects with discussions of ethnicity. Historically race has been primarily concerned with biology. However, during the nineteenth century this biological component was only part of a complex usage (Chapman et al 1989:1–22). Race was used to describe commonalities and differences of various kinds, and while the biological discourse was always present, other terms such as nation, society, culture, language and tribe were also used (Chapman et al 1989). Chapman et al (1989) suggested that

the interweaving of biology, culture and language in the concept had a very simple basis in experience, for example, the language one spoke and the society in which one lived was congruent with one's biological placing. Or to express it another way, you spoke the language you were born to and lived in the social grouping you were born to (Chapman et al 1989).

Race became a term used to differentiate between the various peoples that make up humankind (Gunew 1994:48). It was often used in essentialist ways to show difference because as a term it divided and labelled different groups according to a set of common biological traits by birth, like skin colour, and shape of eyes, nose and face (Billinger 2007). It has been argued these traits are literally superficial as they focus on surfaces of the body. Research has identified that no consistent racial groupings can be identified when people are sorted by their physical and biological characteristics (Lewontin 1972, Owens & King 1999). Only a small fraction of our genes are associated with physical traits, and thus genes are not a reliable method of differentiating between the social categories of 'race' (Paabo 2001). The concept of race and its use as a research category is especially contested (Osborne & Feit 1992). It enables a view that only 'this' particular group have 'this' problem. For example, in research about CSA if race is used as a research category it can potentially lead to an argument that CSA only happens in 'this' racial group. Due to the biological underpinnings of 'race' as a term, and the potential to 'sort' according to physical traits, I do not adopt the concept in this study.

In contrast, ethnicity has been seen as a function of sociology and culture rather than biology (Outlaw 1990:60 cited in Gunew 1994:48). One can be viewed as coming from a particular broad racial category, but one's identity may be located in very specific ethnic groupings, that is, the culture and the social environment within which one lives. The concept of culture has been debated for many years (Matsumoto & Juang 2013:15). For example, culture has been defined as: the capacities and habits that members of a society learn (Tylor 1865 cited in Matsumoto & Juang 2013:15); a social heredity (Linton 1926 cited in Matsumoto & Juang 2013:15); patterns of behaviour of human groups that are acquired and transmitted by symbols, which constitute distinct achievements, including their embodiments in artefacts (Kroeber & Kluckholn 1952/1963 cited in Matsumoto & Juang 2013:15); a descriptive term capturing not only the rules and meanings but also behaviours of groups of people (Jahoda 1984 cited in Matsumoto & Juang 2013:15); shared system symbols that transcend individuals (Geertz 1975 cited in Matsumoto & Juang 2013:15); a way of life shared by a

group of people (Berry et al 1992 cited in Matsumoto & Juang 2013:15); and an information system allowing people to live together and satisfy their needs (Baumeister 2005 cited in Matsumoto & Juang 2013:15). In addition Rohner added that culture is also "the totality of equivalent and complementary learned meanings maintained by a human population, or by identifiable segments of a population, and transmitted from one generation to the next" (1984 cited in Matsumoto & Juang 2013:15).

Culture can also be defined as the belief systems and value orientations that influence customs, norms, practices and social institutions, including psychological processes, language, care-taking practices, media, educational systems and organisations (Fiske et al 1998). Inherent in this is the acknowledgement that all individuals are cultural beings and have a cultural, ethnic and racial heritage. Culture has been described as the embodiment of a world view through learned and transmitted beliefs, values and practices, including religious and spiritual traditions. It also encompasses a way of living informed by the historical, economic, ecological and political forces on a group (Watt & Norton 2004). From this literature it can be said that culture is fluid and dynamic, and there are both cultural universal phenomena as well as culturally specific or relative constructs. However within this broadness, ethnicity disappears and ethnicity is treated as any other group that shares some patterns of normative behaviour (Verkuyten 2005:76). Because of its broadness and wide application, culture alone as a term is not very useful for this thesis (Verkuyten 2005:76). This broadness implies any group can distinguish itself culturally, for example 'stockbrokers in London' (Verkuyten 2005:76). Nagel (1994:152) argued that, while there has been an embrace of inclusivity and notions such as multiculturalism, assimilation and integration across the West, there is also a need to recognise differences among populations. Terminology is required that emphasises the socially constructed aspects of ethnicity, the way ethnic boundaries, identities and cultures are negotiated, defined and produced through social interaction inside and outside of ethnic communities (Nagel 1994:152). Thus ethnicity is the term that I use to recognise differences among populations; however, this does not mean the term culture is not also relevant and useful.

In elaborating ethnicity further, Nagel (1994:153) argued that the two basic building blocks of ethnicity are culture and identity, and that these are fundamental to the central projects of ethnicity, the construction of boundaries, and the production of meaning. Indeed, culture is an important issue to consider, as shown and argued in the CSA literature above. Furthermore,

Ahmed et al's (2009) research indicated that women had a resistance to a 'culture is to blame' discourse that is evident in many understandings and explanations of CSA. This poses an interesting challenge to service providers in that culture can be used as an excuse to exclude women from minority ethnic groups from services or it can be seen to be easier to avoid dealing with culture at all and to centralise women's experiences of abuse (Burman et al 2004; Reavey, Ahmed & Majumdar 2006 cited in Ahmed, Reavey & Majumdar 2009:22). So we either do not do anything or ignore a significant realm of survivors' experiences because it is all too hard (Suchting 1999). The term culture is significant because it informs ethnicity and hence I will use it in this thesis as an element of ethnicity and will define it further in the methodology.

The other building block of ethnicity is identity, as Nagel (1994) reminded us. However, the concept of identity can also be considered over-used or too broad like culture (Brubaker & Cooper 2000:3). It has been argued that identity is not fixed and singular, that is, each of us are located in and opt out of a number of differing and at times conflicting identities, which are dependent on social, political, economic and ideological aspects of our lives. The notion of one's identity as a real self is denied and what remains is a place from which we can present multiple and at times contradictory elements of ourselves (Bhavnani & Phoenix 1994:9). The ideas and influences of postmodernity have opened up space to critique essentialist arguments of identity, that is, that there is an essential self or inborn character. Instead, identity is constructed in the roles we take up, that is, we play a role relevant to situations that we are presented with (Austin 2005:10). This begs the question of how identity can also be used as an element of ethnicity considering its broadness and fluidity. Verkuyten (2005:75–76) suggests that authors who work within postmodern, post-structuralist and/or critical perspectives reject the notion of definitions or descriptions because they limit or obscure what we are trying to see. Using the term ethnic identity would be essentialist and would imply the need to show its essence or truth (Verkuyten 2005:76). I do not claim to be able to show the 'truth' about ethnic women's experiences of CSA. Brubaker and Cooper (2000) pointed out that identity is used in a number of ways in social science research including as a non-instrumental form of social action; as a collective phenomenon of group sameness; as interactive, processual, contingent products of social action; and as fluctuating, unstable and fragmented modes of the 'self'. They argued that identity is a category of social and political practice and analysis and that the term 'ethnicity' too can be understood and used in this way (Brubaker & Cooper 2000:4). I therefore engage with identity as a building

block of ethnicity for socio-cultural and political reasons because it enables an exploration of ethnicity from a communal, cultural and sociological understanding of how people come to be positioned in particular locations.

Austin (2005:10) argued that we often do not quite know how we get to that point of 'I', that is, the journey is often unconscious. People use a wide range of processes to develop mechanisms to identify themselves and others in relation to their environments (Ybema et al 2009:301). Using these processes allows a person to construct their personal identity as a human and their public identity as a social actor (Ybema et al 2009:301). These practices demonstrate the personal as it relates to the social (Ybema et al 2009:301). This dual nature enables us to understand how the bridge is built by an individual about how they relate to the society they live in. It shows us the tension that can exist between two conflicting or interacting forces, the self and social structures (Ybema et al 2009). Culture and a sense of identity are used by individuals to conceive and name their ethnicity, which can nonetheless be situational and changeable (Nagel 1994). The term ethnicity therefore allows me to work within a social constructionist framework, recognising the fluidity in which people construct themselves across time; yet it also enables me to name a group of people for social and political reasons. Culture and identity come together to allow me to name ethnicity and its potential impact and intersections with the effects of CSA.

Nagel (1994) pointed out that ethnicity is the product of social ascriptions, a kind of labelling process engaged in by oneself and others. Ethnic identity is the result of a dialectical process involving internal and external opinions and processes, that is, what you think your ethnicity is as opposed to what others think your ethnicity is (Nagel 1994:154). This argument suggests that ethnic identity is both optional and mandatory because individual choices are circumscribed by the ethnic categories available at a particular time and place. For example, while a person can choose among a set of ethnic identities, the set is usually limited to socially and politically defined ethnic categories with varying degrees of stigma or advantage attached to them (Nagel 1994:156). This example can be seen in my own ethnic group through the dismantling of the former Yugoslavia commencing in 1999, and subsequent ethnic categories of Serbian, Bosnian and Croatian. Thus the ethnicity of Yugoslavia no longer existed and those such as myself, who claimed this as their ethnic identity, no longer had a country.

I am therefore using the term ethnicity as what one claims for oneself based on a feeling or perception of commonality with others whose essential characteristics can be identified, named and compared and as such accorded value (Austin 2005:10). So in naming oneself one gives oneself an ethnic identity. For example, I am a white, Yugoslav woman. In doing this I am clearly stating what I am not male, black or Anglo-Saxon (Austin 2005:11). As such, in the process of defining myself, I am also defining the other, that is, the one that is different to me (Austin 2005:11). In the same way, the women who participated in this research undertook this process in which they were able to state who they are, to identify themselves as ethnic and woman.

In summary, ethnicity is not the expression of objective characteristics such as race, language, religion or origin, nor is it a broad concept of anything goes. Rather it is a politicised social action or a process whereby elements of real, actual and lived cultural differences are politicised in the context of intensive group interaction (Malesevic 2006:27). Ethnicity does not have the same meaning as cultural diversity because many cultural practices and beliefs are rarely politicised: the difference here is that one's ethnicity can be a political act (Malesevic 2006:27). For example, my choice in identifying as Former Yugoslav, rather than Serbian or Croatian, is a political act of resistance to enforced categorisation by war. In contrast culture is about real lived collective difference, while ethnicity is often about segments of that broader cultural repertoire which do not have to be real or lived (Malesevic 2006:27). Ethnicity is not the possession of cultural characteristics that makes social groups distinct but rather the social interaction with other groups that makes difference possible, visible and socially meaningful (Barth 1969 cited in Malesevic 2006:30). The call for further research about CSA experiences of ethnic women in countries like Australia, UK and USA, discussed in the literature review on CSA, has resulted from the social interactions of ethnic survivors of CSA with mainstream services and workers, whereby their needs have been identified as something different, either by the survivors themselves or by the workers. This social interaction between ethnic groups and mainstream society makes any difference visible and socially meaningful (Yick & Berthold 2005).

Before I close the discussion on how the term ethnicity is being used in the context of this study, I want to raise Phinney's (1996:919) point that ethnicity also has an important psychological context. Ethnicity can be used to include not only the cultural values, attitudes and behaviours that distinguish ethnic groups, but also the subjective sense of ethnic group

membership held by group members. This psychological context recognises the experiences associated with minority status, which includes powerlessness, discrimination and prejudice (Phinney 1996:919). This context translates to the ways in which ethnic people go about living their lives outside of their countries of origin, always knowing they can never truly be 'Australian' because they are the ethnic 'other'. For example, my father has lived in Australia for more than 40 years and he is still afraid of the government and what they can do to him because he is not 'Australian'. While other terms have been used to describe the 'other' in the Australian context, the term ethnicity captures this sense of being distinguished by minority status. Only another ethnic person can know the daily discrimination and 'othering' they experience when engaging with the dominant Anglo community. For example, my ex-husband speaks perfect English, albeit with a Serbian accent, yet when we are in a restaurant, once they hear his accent, the waiter immediately turns to me so that I can speak instead of him. This is a pattern that has occurred countless times over a period of nearly 30 years. An Anglo Australian will never know what this is like, but another ethnic person will relate to it.

As men and women interpret and express their collective experiences, this includes conflicts within any grouping or population thrown together by circumstances (Smith 1986:22). These interpretations and experiences are then crystallised over time and passed on to the next generations who modify them according to their own experiences and interactions. This is how certain ethnic features arise, because they are formed out of shared interpretations and expressions (Smith 1986). Ethnic boundaries are built by the actions of individuals and groups and their interactions with the larger society (Nagel 1994). The role of ethnic boundaries is to determine the options of identity, who and how many can be members, and the form of ethnic organisation. Boundaries answer the question: who are we? (Nagel 1994). Culture on the other hand provides the content and meaning of ethnicity. It brings ethnic boundaries to life and makes them authentic by giving them history, ideology, a symbolic universe and a system of meaning. Culture answers the question: what are we? (Nagel 1994). It is through the construction of culture that ethnic groups are created and maintained – by reinventing the past and inventing the present (Nagel 1994). The construction of ethnicity is therefore a major ongoing task facing all ethnic groups particularly those that are newly forming or resurgent or who live in dominant white Western communities.

In conclusion, the term ethnicity as I use it in this research allows space for women who do not identify as a member of the dominant Anglo-Australian community to tell their

experiences of CSA; hence women in this study were required to identify themselves as ethnic. To identify requires a dual process, that of forming what one's identity is, and what it is not at the same time (Austin 2005:12). This does not mean that at times identity will not overlap or run along multiple axes such as gender and class; identity is in constant flux, not absolute; it is always changeable (Austin 2005:12). I am using the term ethnicity to highlight that in the Anglo-Saxon Australian context at some time along the multiple axes of identity 'ethnicity' will become important for some women. Women can and do identify as being 'ethnic', that is, 'other' to the dominant Anglo-Saxon identity or, as Austin (2005:12) states, those on the periphery, those who do not fit into the dominant.

I will finish with a story to provide an example of how I am using the term 'ethnicity'. When I was a small child living in Australia I did not know I was ethnic until I started going to school. At school, I realised I was translating for my parents because they did not speak English, that I had a 'funny name' and I ate 'strange food'. My ethnicity became visible to me at school through those teachers and students who constructed me in that way and then reflected back to me that which I was not: Anglo Australian. This difference became even more apparent as I grew older. I began hearing the word 'wog'. I was this wog. What was a wog? I was being called this wog and not the other kids around me and my difference was reflected back to me by them. This was reinforced by teachers telling 'the wogs' to wash their hair regularly to help with not looking 'greasy' because somehow wog and greasy were synonymous. These are just a few examples but my whole family has experienced this. This awareness of difference resulted in me as a 13-year-old girl making the decision to change the spelling of my name so others could pronounce it. I stopped eating traditional foods. I accentuated my white skin, fair hair and blue eyes so I looked more Anglo-Saxon, that is, more like the dominant group. I was fortunate that my hair and skin were fair and my eyes were blue; many do not have this physical ability to blend in.

It was not until sometime later when I was aged in my mid 20s that I spent 12 months in Yugoslavia. I experienced being the majority; I reconnected with my ethnicity. I realised I should not be ashamed of my ethnicity and that I should be proud of that difference. I recognised examples of ignorance and discrimination in my life in Australia. I began spelling my name correctly again and began waiting for the person calling my name to attempt to say it, rather than rescuing them once I saw their mouths struggling with the pronunciation. I had somehow lost my ethnicity at both a conscious and sub-conscious level while trying to live in

a country where I was not part of the dominant. I experienced being the other. Thankfully, I reclaimed my ethnicity, but the war had commenced in Yugoslavia and people were made to choose which side they were on in this war of ethnicities. I refused to choose between the ethnic categories arising, Serbian and Croatian, because my mother is a Croatian, my father is a Serbian, my sister is a Serbian and my brother is a Croatian. How can you choose in a situation like this was my constant question and so again I felt like I had lost my ethnicity as a Yugoslav because the country Yugoslavia no longer existed. After much time and searching I have found peace with this now. But with each introduction to someone new who does not know me I still need to explain my ethnicity and in some cases still justify why I refuse to pick either Serbian or Croatian. Thus, in understanding ethnic identity within the context of Australia, it is through the eyes of the other that we see ourselves and vice versa: the dominant group shows us our difference. While I acknowledge the 'othering' tendencies of the term ethnicity in both contemporary and historical periods, for the purposes of this research I will continue to use the concept to denote a grouping of multiple ethnic communities as opposed to an ethnic category (Smith 1986:30). I am using ethnicity in the context of Australia which has a social context of multiculturalism and historical contingency. Ethnicity is the term best suited to describe those groupings of people that are not Anglo-Saxon/Anglo-Celtic and not Indigenous to this land, living in Australia.

## Ethnicity, Feminism and the Female Body

In establishing the term ethnicity for the purposes of this study and therefore inviting ethnic women as a group to participate in the research, the question of sameness or difference amongst women is highly relevant. This includes the similarities and differences among women, but also as a feminist researcher those between men and women. The question that immediately comes to mind is whether or not the experiences of ethnic women are different or the same as those of Anglo-Australian women who have experienced and survived CSA. Radical Feminist scholars were central in raising public awareness in relation to sexual violence and child sexual abuse, as discussed earlier, however, they did not differentiate among the group of women whom they spoke for (Warner 1996a cited in Reavey, Ahmed & Majumdar 2006:172). These early voices of feminism spoke for every woman, rather than differentiating women according to their locations of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality and disability. The question of difference has been debated within feminism. For example, difference between women has been discussed and debated by black and ethnic feminists, exposing racism and ethnocentrism. Black and ethnic feminists identified power differences

between women and how some women (white/Anglo) can oppress other women (black/ethnic) (Francis 1999:383). The debates within feminism about 'difference versus equality' are not new; they have been present in feminist theory for decades (Delphy 2000:183). Black and ethnic feminists, although suspicious of feminism, engaged with it and exposed its homogenous representation of women (Mohanty 1991). They argued that the assumption in feminist theory of a shared 'female' experience within the category of woman did not describe the experiences of racism and ethnocentrism for black and ethnic women (Bing & Trotman-Reid 1996:183). They questioned whether it is possible to claim a similar woman's experience, and in so doing raised the issue of whether feminist theory which includes all women is even possible.

The other type of difference debated within feminism is, of course, the question of difference between women and men; however, these debates also have significance for understanding difference among women. The social and political arguments raised by the second wave women's movement in the US, for example, were related to the idea of a society that is not divided by sex. The two dominant arguments present in the second wave included that, firstly, men and women are different, with this difference seen as deeply rooted in nature and, secondly, that women and men are basically the same (Nicholson 1997:2). The latter of these two positions received most attention amongst the different schools of feminism (Nicholson 1997:2) as it was used to argue equal opportunity between men and women to participate fully in social life (Goss 2013). Feminists across the world challenged the prevailing ideology that limited women to a separate 'feminine' sphere as a constraint to the right of self-determination (Knopp 2004). Equality meant that sexual difference was irrelevant therefore could make no difference to how one participated in society: hence women would be free to participate in the world and sexism would end. Alongside this radical feminists considered the differences between men and women (Nicholson 1997:3). However one significant criticism, of this was that, this focus denied the differences among women (Nicholson 1997:3). Instead, these debates about difference have included attention to biological sexual differences between men and women pertaining to different genitalia, chromosomes and other bodily functions (Gowland & Thompson 2013:16–22). These discussions debated biological determinism and the use of concepts such as gender and sex. It is also important to note that, at this time, a little know element of second wave feminism, is the racial/ethnic feminist component. Black and ethnic feminists stratified by class organised themselves in a range of contexts. They argued and therefore exposed economic inequality among groups of

women,  and formed relationships with activist men in their communities to expose oppression based on ethnicity and race (Roth 2004:2).

Feminist theorists such as Irigaray (1985, 1993) have argued that recognition of difference between the sexes (male and female) was needed first so that equality could be based upon and within these differences. Postmodern feminists criticised this search for one true feminist story of reality (Tong 1989:7). They argued that women's experiences differed across class, race and culture and pointed out that explaining woomen's lives under one 'truth' dismisses the differences that describe the human condition (Tong 1989:7). In summary, postmodern feminism highlighted the limitations in 'speaking for only one kind of woman' (Tong 1989:7). However, under the influence of postmodern/post-structuralist theory, a de-gendering movement commenced in that what was being questioned was the very existence of woman herself. Despite the benefits of this approach to feminism, some feminists feared that this over emphasis on difference may lead to an intellectual and political disintegration, where by there was no woman's ground to stand on (Tong 1989:7). In the following section I will further discuss these elements of difference, their impact on the feminist movement in a general sense, ethnic women and the issue of CSA, and attempt to see a way forward in applying a feminist perspective to understanding the experiences of ethnic female survivors of CSA.

## Difference between Women: Can There Be a Shared Women's Experience?

In an effort to be inclusive of all women, early feminist writing propagated the use of words that suggest a unity, that is, as women we are all the same and have a shared gendered experience. However, as noted, the last three decades have seen major challenges to feminist theory from women of colour and ethnic women (hooks 1990, 1992, Hill-Collins 1986, Hurtado 1989, Zavella 1987, Kaplan 1997), and third world feminists who insisted on the complex relationship between feminist, antiracist and nationalist struggles (Mohanty 1991:10). As mentioned earlier in pointing out the criticisms of postmodern feminism, this question of difference was becoming somewhat problematic for feminist theory and actionbecause it was argued that if women do not exist as a group, then it is hard to fight against their oppression (Tong 2009:8-9). Third wave feminists wanted to re-think the categories of woman and women, arguing that conflict and self-contradiction are the way of the world as new identities are created (Tong 2009:9).

Black and third world women have a very different history to white Western women, one that includes the inheritance of slavery, enforced migration, plantation and indentured labour, colonialism, imperial conquest, and genocide (Mohanty 1991:10). Postcolonial feminists have argued that feminism takes on many different forms depending on the context of contemporary nationalism (Alexander & Mohanty 1997, Heng 1997, both cited in Olesen 2003:341). They have argued that Western feminist models are inappropriate in informing research with women in postcolonial sites (Olesen 2003:341) because of the undesirable effects of 'othering'. Thus the problem faced by feminist theorists in relation to women from different ethnicities is how to describe their cultural experiences with reference to both sex and race/ethnicity (Crenshaw 1991:1242).

This has created what some have called a paradox in feminist theory, in that the intention to reflect a collective voice has resulted in negating the voices of culturally diverse women (Bing & Trotman-Reid 1996:188). Razack (2002) argued that it is problematic to assume that black and Indigenous women's lives are as structured by 'gender' as white women's lives, since many structures, such as race, class and ethnicity, overlap with gendered processes. Bulbeck (1998:30) argued that when you consider women from different ethnic groups there are some specific issues that need to be addressed. These are: power vs. custom; individual vs. community; mothers vs. wives; and sexual identities vs. social identities. Women are often considered the standard-bearers of their nation's culture, and are encouraged, at times even forced, to uphold their traditions. Therefore, ethnic women have not only to negotiate their identity in relation to gender, but also in relation to culture and ethnicity, with significant intersections between gender identity and ethnic identity (Bulbeck 1998:30). Further, tradition can be seen as a 'sacred weapon' used by oppressors whenever they need to maintain their privilege, imposing the fear of the old ways on the content of the new ways (Trinh 1989:106). Indeed for ethnic women research has repeatedly shown that tradition is often what binds women to roles which inevitably make them choose between their culture and themselves. Trinh T. Minh-ha (1998) has argued that fear and insecurity lie behind each attempt at opposing modernism with tradition, and likewise at setting up ethnicity against womanhood.

This construction of ethnicity and culture as something 'othered' may result in Western women positioning themselves as liberated in comparison to women who are bound by the traditions of their cultures (Bulbeck 1998:30). In fact, the opposition between self and community, a Western construct, is often used in ways which assume that white Western

women are independent individuals who know their rights, and ethnic women are bound to their communities through their cultural roles and responsibilities (Bulbeck 1998:58). In the US, African-American women "consistently struggled in subservient and second class roles and could not take refuge in the role of the 'weaker sex'" (Bing & Trotman-Reid 1996:183) as many Anglo/white women could. This is very similar to the roles that migrant women played in Australia in the past and that some continue to play today. For example, when my family arrived in this country in the late 1960s immigrant women were forced into the labour market to make ends meet because their husbands often had low-paid unskilled jobs (Kilic 1997:15).Women such as my mother, and many others, from countries that were seen as 'less desirable', such as Italy, Greece, Malta, the Middle East, Yugoslavia, Latin America and South East Asia (Kilic 1997:16) were given the worst and most tedious jobs, performing tasks that were repetitive and monotonous, quite different to their Anglo sisters. These women, our mothers, were seen to be better suited to these jobs because they were seen as not being intelligent enough or educated because most were peasants (Kilic 1997:16). These women faced a double burden of being an ethnic woman in employment and being a woman at home. These types of views still linger and can result in white Western women thinking they need to educate their ethnic sisters on their rights rather than asking, how does this work within your life context (Bulbeck 1998)?

In many countries women *do not* want to be equal to men because they see men as inherently sexually different, for example, only women experience menstruation, pregnancy and breastfeeding (Iwao 1993:13 cited in Bulbeck 1998:77). Even though I recognise that not all women experience these physiological processes, no men do. Thus equality on the basis of being the same as a man sexually is not considered helpful to their plight as women:

> For many non-Western countries rights are not necessarily about being equal or the same, women's rights may include acceptance and guarantee of their differences ... the right to be different may be required before equality can be gained. Rights are also more likely to be framed in terms which include obligations or commitment to others. This sexual interdependence is not seen as oppression, as white Western feminists so often see it, but as a right, as a process which constructs the person rather than diminishes her. (Lam 1994:877 cited in Bulbeck 1998:78)

Indeed some ethnic feminists would argue that there is a need for reciprocal obligations, with men and women supporting each other and men having obligations to women and women to men (Bulbeck 1998:78–79). This is another example of the difference debate, that is, recognition of difference of the sexes and their mutual obligations to each other. An illustration of this difference can be seen by Japanese women seeking a formal apology from

the government to Korean women who were abducted and used as comfort women (Bulbeck 1998:78–79). This is in contrast to the US response to a similar situation for Filipina women who had children fathered by American soldiers, which was a class action (Bulbeck 1998:78–79). The Japanese government at least accepted some responsibility and obligation in comparison to the American individual legal response (Bulbeck 1998:78–79). Even though the Japanese male dominated government never accepted that the women were victims but rather argued that they were prostitutes (Oh 2001:15). Furthermore, the Korean government was weak in its support for the comfort women in their claims against Japan (Stetz & Oh 2001).This Western view suggests that Western legal formulations and only autonomous individuals have the capacity for agency (Moore 1994:33 cited in Bulbeck 1998:79). As feminists it is therefore critical to understand that not all women envisage their interests in the same way. Further, these different ways may even conflict (Delphy 2000:185). Bulbeck argues that feminists can develop more subtle and complex political actions by exploring the tensions between individual rights and collective obligations (1998:79). Similarly, Trinh T. Minh-ha argued:

> It is indeed somehow devious to think that WOMAN also encompasses the Chinese with bound feet, the genitally mutilated Africans, and the one thousand Indians who committed suttee for one royal male. Sister Cinderella's foot is also enviably tiny but never crooked: and, European witches were also burnt to purify the body of Christ, but they do not pretend to self-immolation. (1989:97)

With this recognition of difference, Ahmed et al argued that much research in the area of sexual violence does not attend to "the variety of experiences that women from different communities encounter" (2009:8). Indeed some have suggested that feminist research assumes Western models of patriarchal power, and that Western discussions of intimate relations are not always appropriate for non-Western women (Ahmed et al 2009:8). On the other hand culturally sensitised and ethnically based research on this issue is minimal (Levett 2003 cited in Ahmed et al 2009:8).

Despite this call to explore the different experiences of sexual violence for non-Western women, feminist researchers in this field continue to argue that "women who have experienced rape continue to be held to account for the rape" (Gavey & Schmidt 2011:434), and those who report to the police still face a high chance of not being believed (Jordan 2004 cited in Gavey & Schmidt 2011:434). Those seeking support from community services more widely can sometimes receive negative responses that are akin to a "second rape" (Gavey &

Schmidt 2011:434). This thesis sits within this space, that is, exploring how ethnicity frames women's experience of being subjected to CSA.

In summary, feminism has been challenged on the basis of cultural imperialism (Mohanty 1991:7) and these challenges have moved feminist research into a greater recognition of the interplay of race, class, ethnicity and gender in shaping women's oppression. These writings not only remind us of the diversity among women but also illustrate that multiple identities are constructed in particular historical and social contexts (Olesen 2003:340). However, Daly (1997:27) raises the point that, just as feminists began to claim a 'woman's' knowledge, the ground on which it was built began to dissolve. The focus on difference amongst women and a turn to identity politics, naming who one is, social location, experience and viewpoint, are important and have advanced feminist theorisation. However, I as a feminist, social worker and ethnic woman find myself asking the question, particularly in relation to sexual violence and CSA, are our differences the only point of reference and our locations as 'women' necessarily so dispersed?

## Difference, Sex/Gender and the Disappearance of Woman

I will now examine the issue of sex and gender specifically because the female body and the effects of CSA on this body appears to have lost favour in academic research. The term 'sex' has been used as a biological reference to the genitalia that a person is born with (Holmes, Hughes-Pritchard & Roberta 2007:115). Thus if you have ovaries, a uterus and a vagina you are female and if you have testes and a penis you are male (Holmes, Hughes-Pritchard & Roberta 2007:115). However, feminists have also argued that a sole focus on the biological can mean women are depicted as passive victims of their biology in a way that men are not. For example, women have been portrayed as having an underlying biological nature, femininity, which they cannot escape, resulting in a social position determined and limited by their biology (Birke 1986:2 cited in Willmott 1996:728). In addition this sex distinction has also been used to assign a value to the life of a child, for example a male child has been historically more valued than a female child in most cultures (Holmes, Hughes-Pritchard & Roberta 2007:115). In a discussion about language and naming of children, Bulbeck (1998) demonstrates this value by showing how girls' names like "Little Mistake" often express the desire for a son. Historically this was often cited as being because the birth of a son meant that the father's name and property would continue, whereas the birth of a daughter did not (Holmes, Hughes-Pritchard & Roberta 2007:115).

Gender, on the other hand, has been used to describe the behaviours of masculinity and femininity, not necessarily a direct result of biological sex (Coltraine 2000:7). Freud (1905 cited in Gatens 1991:141) was one of the first to try to find suitable definitions of masculinity and femininity and their relation to men and women. This saw the rise of his famous theories of Oedipus and Electra with all their related ideas about sexual fantasies as discussed earlier. However, his theory of sexuality has been critiqued by feminists such as Irigaray (1985) for ignoring the position of women in society and the social implications of their bodies. Sometime after Freud, Stoller (1968 cited in Gatens 1991:141) published his research on biological anomalies: neuters, hermaphrodites, and then transsexuals (Gatens 1996:5, Gullickson 2000:45). He argued that biology has some role to play in understanding gender, but that post-natal psychosocial influences are most important and can override the biology of one's body (Gatens 1996:5). For example, he argued that male transsexuals were caused because of the mother's attitude to the child from birth, a neatly packaged form of mother blame. Stoller's work has often been cited as a breakthrough in sexuality and socialisation theories (Gatens 1996:6). Gatens (1996:6) argued that it was taken up by some feminist theorists as offering theoretical justification for the right to equality independent of sex. These were what might be termed 'equality feminists' (Gullickson 2000:44), as opposed to the difference feminists mentioned earlier.

What we find generally today is that sex is viewed as a biological concept, independent of the cultural construction of gender. Gender is understood as fluid and includes various forms of masculinity and femininity and male or female sexualities (Webster 2000:2). There is a rejection of the conceptual framework that sex is a fixed category that pre-exists the social and is a passive basis for cultural construction of gender. For theorists of gender, the mind of either sex is a neutral, passive entity, a blank slate on which is inscribed various social lessons (Gatens 1991:140). The body, in this account, is the passive mediator of these inscriptions (Gatens 1991:140). The result of this is a simplistic solution to female oppression: re-education, unlearning patriarchy and re-learning politically correct and equitable behaviours and traits, which lead to the whole person, the androgen (Gatens 1991:140). However, sex itself is subject to cultural construction (Webster 2000:2). That is to say you are born with particular genitalia, which in and of itself is benign, but it is this specific genitalia that is socially constructed in a particular way, and your sex is constructed as male or female. On the other hand, the concept of sex being an unstable category is

problematic (Webster 2000:2): for feminism it could mean that there is no such thing as a woman.

Post-structuralism's influence in research and academia (Clarke et al 2010:266) has resulted in questions of whether women can claim any similar experiences at all. The question of difference has ended up challenging the very existence of woman herself because 'she' lacks a stable and unified referent (Daly 1997:34). Peeves (2003) has pointed out that, because of the constant gender discontinuity that runs through the hetero, gay, bi and trans communities, gender does not follow from sex; a significant tension within and outside of feminist theories in relation to sex/gender has therefore been created. Thus

> As a gender, our experiences, power or lack of power, relationships to men, economic activities, beliefs and values are all historically and culturally variable. Our sex is what all women have in common, but it is as a gender that women are oppressed by men. (Ramazanoglu 1989:60)

Butler's (1990) account of sex and gender as performative has been particularly influential in contemporary Anglo-American feminist theory, and is the subject of considerable debate (Webster 2000:2). Butler (1990) argued that sexual identity is performative rather than given or socially ascribed and thus undercuts a dualistic conception of gender that had informed feminist thought for decades (Olesen 2003:342). Butler (1990) suggested that the term woman fails to be exhaustive. This is not because a pre-gendered person transcends the specific paraphernalia of their gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently (Butler 1990:3). Gender intersects with race, class, ethnic, sexual and other boundaries of discursively constituted identities (Butler 1990:3). She argued that because of this it is impossible to separate out gender from the political and cultural intersections where it is produced and maintained (Butler 1990:3).

Butler's attempts to understand how sex and gender are performatively constituted attend to the repeated and violent circumscription of cultural intelligibility, that is, she argued that certain kinds of bodies – white, male, normal, heterosexual – matter more than others. Thus when gender is theorised as independent of sex, gender becomes a free-floating concept meaning that a man and masculine may just as easily signify a female body as well as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one (Butler 2006:9). However, Bradley (2013:23) argued that, while Butler's work has challenged us to think about gender as unfixed, the obstinacy of bodies and genital difference is underplayed in this type of theory. The facts of menstruation, conception, pregnancy, lactation and menopause

have powerful effects on women's lives which are distinct from male experience (Bradley 2013:23). Moreover, the gender description 'man' implies a social position of power that is quite different from that implied by the gender description 'woman' (Connell 1995 cited in Cossins 2003a:83). Men as a group have different types of masculinities and social practices (Connell 1995 cited in Cossins 2003a:83) which represent different social positions of power. Women as a group have different types of femininity or social practices according to the specific cultural values placed on factors such as class, race, ethnicity, age and religion such that different femininities also represent different social positions of power, none of which are fixed or immutable (Connell 1995 cited in Cossins 2003a:83). Thus, the very same behaviours in men and women, boys and girls have quite different personal and social significances when acted out by a male or female. Identical social training or conditioning has different significance when it is applied to male or female bodies (Gatens 1991:145). Thus Butler's theory of perfomativity is an interesting theory for adults who have the ability to choose and consider their 'gender', those able to step out of their sex, by virtue of their location in the West. However, how would a girl child who has been repeatedly raped by a male family member, and remained silent because of all the cultural implications of her female body, choose not to be in her female body? Where is the child's choice about the gender of her body in this violation and its implications for her life?

It is not my purpose in this thesis to engage in the theoretical arguments related to the questioning of gender identity. Rather it is to explore the lived experiences of ethnic women who identify as women and were sexually abused as girl children, and the implications of this violence against their bodies and minds. This means a theoretical paradigm is required that enables the description of a violence perpetrated against a girl child's body and mind and the subsequent effects of this on her. It has been argued that the notion of gender as performative does not attend to the materiality and material practices of the body (Bordo 1993:36) and this argument has important implications for how we consider CSA.

One example of the pervasiveness of the socially constructed female body and its abuse is the consequences of armed conflicts and refugee situations across the world where women and girls are regularly sexually violated. Pittaway and Pittaway argued that

> It is their identity as women which exposes them to attacks on the 'honor' of their communities. It is their identity as women which makes them vulnerable to attack by males in times of social instability and family fragmentation, and denies them the means of economic independence. It is their identity as women which makes them dispensable objects in the male struggle for power, which has systematically subordinated women

> worldwide by the very means of imposing a gendered identity onto them. It is the intersection of refugee women's socially subordinate status as women compounded by the discrimination against their other marginalised identities that results in the deplorable atrocities committed against them. (2004:np)

Butler wrote that the

> "political assumption there must be a universal basis for feminism, one which must be found on an identity assumed to exist cross culturally, often accompanies the notion that the oppression of women has some singular form discernible in the universal or hegemonic structure of patriarchy or masculine domination" (1999:6).

But I ask, what if one such singular form of oppression is sexual violence against women and children? What if sexual violence is a place in the universal structure of patriarchy and masculine domination where women from different ethnic groups can come together because of a shared lived experience?

The identity woman/girl child brings with it a particular position across the world that is one of vulnerability to sexual violence by the very fact of being a women/girl child. Sexual violence occurs to both girls and boys; however, as the previous chapter showed, women and girls are raped, sexually abused and sexually assaulted at a much higher rates than men and boys across the world. This violence is perpetrated because their female bodies are saturated in similar meanings across cultures. Women's bodies are sexualised in a way that men's are not. Most communities and certainly the ones in this study are historically and culturally situated in societies that are divided and organised in terms of sex (Gatens 1991:147). This research requires the use of the category of woman to mean one that is of the female sex, that is, born a girl in a female sexed body that is culturally saturated in particular gendered meanings. In summary, in this thesis I ask how ethnic women experience CSA, and how ethnicity frames this experience. That is to say, how does ethnicity affect women's experience of CSA?

This recognition of the female body is particularly important in relation to the problem of CSA because for ethnic women their experience of sexual violence may be deeply connected to both their female bodies and their ethnicities and cultures (Harris 1990:598 cited in Cossins 2003a:90). Hence, "if men rape women, it is precisely because they are women in a social sense" (Plaza 1980:31 cited in McNay 1992:45). That is to say, they have been socially constructed as women with female bodies that are saturated in meaning, that is, women's bodies are sexualised. While a rigorous engagement with sex, race and gender requires a movement beyond essentialism, the way forward still requires thought about how to avoid

essentialism while preserving the category of 'woman' "as a meaningful and political concept" (Harris 1990:607 cited in Cossins 2003a:91). For example in this research it is necessary to maintain the concept of woman with a central focus on her body and the impact of CSA without going to the extreme of suggesting all women are the same because all the women in this research come from different ethnic groups. Further, they are identified as different within the context of the dominant society in which they live. So theory requires a flexibility which acknowledges both similarity and difference simultaneously.

The fact that the male body and the female body have quite different social values and significance cannot help but have a marked effect on male and female consciousness (Gatens 1991:145). For example, heterosexual intercourse is an ideologically laden activity which constitutes as well as expresses a sexual subjectivity, and this is in turn linked to a gendered subjectivity (Kaler 2006: 54). Focusing on the female body as it exists in societies, its biological process and their subsequent cultural meanings enables me to bring to light the category of women and its entanglement with sexuality and bodily practices (Kaler 2006) for the issue of CSA. Sexuality and certain bodily practices are privileged sites of significance by virtue of the fact that these bodily practices only occur in female bodies (Gatens 1991:146). Menstruation, pregnancy, birth and lactation are all very specific female biological process that cannot be replicated in men without some form of medical intervention. These are all biological phenomena mediated and experienced by women socially as well as physically (Lorber 1997:121). This specificity of the intervention of female biology on the female body and lived experience must mean that women live out femininity quite differently to men (Gatens 1991:146, Lorber 1997). Adding the female body to the experience of living as a female constructs the specificity of the female experience, which can then describe the female experience of femininity as opposed to the male experience of femininity which would be qualitatively different (Gatens 1991:146). Female bodies are imposed upon by their biology in a way that male bodies are not. This imposition of biology is socially constructed and has meaning that affects these female bodies. As McNay argued, "the female body and the feminine gender are not radically discontinuous as the sex/gender distinction implies" (1992:23). I would argue that these biological processes have norms and values attributed to them which in turn lead to women's bodies being viewed in particular ways across cultures. For example menstruation, across the world, is influenced by religious views that position it in a negative light, that is, it is dirty. This view has led to prohibitions regarding physical intimacy, cooking, attending worship and even requirements on women to live separately to

men during the time they are menstruating (Guterman, Mehta & Gibbs 2008). Women's bodies are produced by disciplinary practices which are recognisably female (Bartky 1997:132). Therefore we may be born male or female but we become masculine or feminine (1997:132). These disciplinary practices imposed upon a woman's body are vital in understanding experiences of CSA. In order to describe ethnic women's experiences of CSA, I argue the female body is centrally located in this description because it is "a body on which an inferior status has been inscribed" (Bartky 1997:139).

Women's experiences of how the body informs personal experience and identity within the context of CSA have largely been ignored (Sutherland 2002). By centralising and making the body visible I seek to challenge representations of the body which implicitly deny its sexual specificity. In this thesis I therefore seek to break this tradition of silence and bring ethnic women's bodies into focus in terms of the effects of childhood sexual abuse.

I came to this thesis immersed in the tensions within feminism, that is, if ethnicity is ignored and the focus is only on gender, the validity of ethnicity is denied, yet if the focus is only on ethnicity and gender is ignored, the validity of gender is denied (Crenshaw 1991:1252). Therefore if we as feminists fail to interrogate ethnicity the risk is to replicate and at times reinforce the subordination of black and ethnic women. However, if we as black and ethnic women fail to interrogate patriarchy the risk is reproducing the oppression of women (Crenshaw 1991:1252). Finally in relation to CSA, if the female body and how it is constructed across cultures is ignored it is impossible to observe the pervasiveness of patriarchy across cultures and the impact on women's lived experience. In the same way that Nixon and Humphreys (2010:138) argue for the importance of a social movement to an effective response to support survivors of domestic violence, a social movement is also central in identifying and providing an effective response to support survivors of CSA from different ethnic backgrounds.

Recently it has been noted that the concept of "intersectionality" (Crenshaw 1991, 1994) provides a way to consider the intersections between all of these points. Intersectionality enables us to "capture the intricate interplay of social forces that produce particular women and men as members of specific races, classes, ethnicities and nationalities" (Hawkesworth 2006:13). Intersectional analysis prevents researchers from using reductionist explanations which are often utilised in the mainstream to treat gender and race (Hawkesworth 2006:13). Intersectionality suggests that the process of racialisation and gendering are specific yet

interrelated. Racialisation may produce marked commonalities of privilege between men and women of the dominant race/ethnic groups and of disadvantage among men and women of the subordinate racial/ethnic groups. Gendering may produce particular commonalities (deportment, adornment, stylisations of the body, voice intonations and inflections, skilling or deskilling, interests, aspirations) among women across race and ethnic groups and among men across race and ethnic groups (Hawkesworth 2006:214).This therefore enables sites of commonality and sites of difference. Hence I will use an intersectional analysis to explore the intersections between ethnicity, culture, gender and CSA and consequently I will elaborated on this further in the methodology chapter.

This chapter has established ethnicity as a relevant term to be used when researching multiple ethnic groups living in Australia because it allows for discussions of culture and identity. The use of ethnicity as a term establishes a political element to the development of one's ethnicity that can at times be overlooked in research. Further it has shown that while ethnicity and culture may overlap they can also be separate entities with which individuals may or may not choose to engage. Due to my research focus on childhood sexual abuse with ethnic women, I needed to consider feminist theories of sex and gender, as well as feminism's engagement with questions of difference and diversity. I argued that focusing on one element such as ethnicity without considering gender renders the latter invisible and vice versa. Thus in this thesis I aim to consider the impact of multiple intersections on the lives of ethnic survivors of CSA including ethnicity, culture, sex and gender. In addition I have placed on the agenda the centrality of the female body and how it is socially constructed and saturated with meaning, and with it the material reality of childhood sexual abuse in the lives of ethnic women. An approach that enables this consideration of multiple sites of inquiry in the one context is intersectionality, and I will discuss this further in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# Methodology

This chapter will introduce the feminist epistemology of this research and explore the application of intersectionality as a potential way forward for feminist researchers working in cross-cultural settings. In addition, I will discuss the use of the self in research, informed by ethnography. I will also outline the study design and methodology, arguing that an interpretive paradigm, which pays attention to the subjective interpretation and lived experience of ethnic survivors of CSA, is the most appropriate for this research. Due to the significant sensitivity of research into CSA in ethnic communities, I will outline specific considerations for inviting women to participate and identify the complexities of the process. I will discuss my choice of a multi-method data collection process and its relevance for this research. I will present my research tools including the ethnic-specific adaptations that I made to these. I will outline the data analysis method and process then discuss the ethical dimensions of the research and the limitations of the study.

## Theoretical Perspective

As I noted in the previous chapter, feminism has been challenged to include women from different races and ethnicities (Bing & Trotman-Reid 1996:175). However,

> "The point of feminism is not to produce an abstracted theory of society only intelligible to intellectuals but...to change societies for the better. Feminists, therefore, are necessarily engaged in understanding, more or less scientifically, the societies in which women and men now live, and in which they have lived in times past. They are also engaged in the practical transformation of societies so that in future women can live without oppression. Feminism is then partly a lived experience, a political struggle for liberation, but it is also an intellectual activity. There is no point in engaging in a political struggle if we do not have an accurate understanding of what to struggle against. This intellectual activity is the development of a critical understanding of the nature of society, and thus of the sources and mechanism of the oppression of women. it is the development of ideas which are rooted in women's daily experiences, but it is also the impact of ideas on these experiences. Feminist thought gives women new knowledge of social life, the power to think about our circumstances, and the power to act upon them. Feminism then has a claim to exist as scientific knowledge. In common sense terms it is a form of the pursuit of truth. Existing knowledge of the social world has failed to identify and account for the power of men over women and so needs to be improved upon" (Ramazanoglu 1989:45)

This challenge has produced ideas from black and ethnic feminists that try to incorporate the intersections of these 'left-out power relations' in women's lives. Utilising an intersectional

analysis changes the way in which the world is understood and related to by an individual (Hawkesworth 2006:209). In adopting the criticisms of black and ethnic feminists, in this thesis I will apply an intersectional analysis because it will provide a multi-dimensional lens through which to observe and examine the intersections between gender, ethnicity, culture and childhood sexual abuse. An intersectional analysis of an individual's life has the potential to demonstrate how multiple elements overlap and cross over in people's lives and often create multiple inequalities and multiple sites of injury (Olsvik 2007:8, Essed 1991, Crenshaw 1994, Easteal 2001, Bograd 1999, Weeks 2000). An intersectional analysis enables me to retain a focus on the specificity of the female body, while attending to gender, ethnicity, culture and CSA. Further the literature review showed that CSA occurs across ethnicities and classes, and that class is important to these experiences because at times ethnicity is accompanied by poverty or low socioeconomic status (Nixon & Humphreys 2010). While I will present examples of the influence of class in the findings chapters, the primary focus of this research is the intersections between gender, ethnicity, culture and CSA.

Intersectionality provides a position from where research that crosses over many aspects of women's lives can be undertaken. Kimberly Crenshaw first introduced the concept in 1989 and it was originally used to focus on the relationship between race, gender and class (Jordan-Zachery 2007:254). Intersectionality is both an analytical tool (Simien 2007:265), and a theoretical perspective that enables simultaneous consideration of separate multiple identity categories (Simien 2007:265). It is rooted in experience-based epistemology and encompasses a perspective which maintains that identity categories like gender, ethnicity, culture and class are mutually constituted and cannot be added together (Hill-Collins 2000, Crenshaw 1991, Wing 1997 cited in Simien 2007:265). As such, placing a particular emphasis on the simultaneous nature of oppression moves beyond simplistic additive models and does not reduce gender and ethnicity to individual attributes which are assessed as separate categories. For example, it does not separate black/white or male/female but instead takes ethnicity as 'gendered' and gender as 'racialised' in such a way that it creates distinct opportunities for all ethnic-sex groups in various contexts (Simien 2007:265–266). In line with the arguments in the previous chapter, though, in this thesis I am not looking at race specifically but rather at the concept of ethnicity and, as such, I will examine how ethnicity is gendered and gender ethnicised in the context of CSA.

Through the use of intersectionality researchers are able to become more attuned to the social construction of identities across time, geographic space and cultural contexts (Smooth 2010

cited in Smooth 2011:439). In so doing researchers are able to develop an analysis that shows how power relationships between socially constructed categories are fluid and unstable. This consideration of the intersections of ethnicity and gender can then trouble ideas of privilege and oppression, and by doing this show how either groups or individuals are at times privileged and oppressed depending on the context. The fluidity of intersectionality has therefore provided for divergences according to context, including across time, culture and geographic space, and opened up women's interests (Smooth 2011:439). The treatment of inequality as determined and deriving from multiple systems and structures of oppression can guide research issues that cut across each other, rather than just focusing on a singular system (Smooth 2011:439). Because the purpose of this study is to offer preliminary ideas about how the intersections between ethnicity and CSA impact on women's lives, a feminist intersectional epistemology can provide a useful framework.

Furthermore, this study is influenced by a social constructionist approach and interpretivism. Lorber (2001:121) argues that the content of difference depends on the society's culture, values, economic and family structure, and past history. The resultant gendered social order is based on and maintains these differences. Thus, there is a continuous loop-back effect between gendered social institutions and the social construction of gendering in individuals. In societies with other social divisions, such as race, ethnicity, religion and social class, gender is intricately intertwined with these other statuses (Lorber 2001:21). Furthermore, considering femininity and masculinity through a social constructionist lens shows patriarchy as an ideology, a set of beliefs and expectations about how men should think and behave (Pérez-Jiménez 2007:359) and how women should think and behave and this extends to their bodies and their sexuality. It therefore rejects the objectivist view that meaning resides within the world independent of consciousness, but posits instead that it is created through social constructions like shared meanings (Myers 2008: 38, Collins 2010:38)

In addition to the above, this research was also influenced by ethnographic epistemology and its emphasis on including the researcher as researched. Indeed it has been identified that researching the researcher is a much needed new area of investigation (Campbell 2002, Dickson-Swift et al 2006). Ethnography provides researchers with a full range of methods "in a way that is obvious to common sense, is close to the way we all make sense of the world around us in our daily lives, and yet can be scientifically rigorous and systematic at the same time" (O'Reilly 2005:1). In this way a researcher is able to be transparent about their position and location within the research (McNamara 2009:164) which is consistent with feminist

methods. My research combines design, field work, data collection tools and personal experience into a politically, historically and personally situated description and interpretation of a group of ethnic survivors of CSA and their lived experience (Tedlock 2003:165). Through this process CSA theories can be reshaped in dialogue with the experience of those who are being studied (Ezzy 2002:62). Thus in asking questions of the women in this study, I also ask the same questions of myself. Therefore

> in writing close to the other of the other, I can only choose to maintain a self reflexively critical relationship toward the material, a relationship that defines both the subject written and the writing subject, undoing the I while asking 'what do I want wanting to *know* you or me'. (Trinh 1989:76)

In addition to transparency, I would like to contribute to feminist methodologies by experimenting with a form of analysis in which the researcher is both object of research and researcher (Mulinari & Ranthzel 2007:89). Through this process the researcher transgresses the "binary oppositions between researcher/researched and challenges the traditional understanding of social science, where researchers provide analysis and informants have 'experience'" (Mulinari & Ranthzel 2007:89). Use of the self through a reflexive process has been described as enhancing authenticity (Mischler 1986 cited in Ezzy 2002:154); however, it has also been considered self-indulgent by some (Vickers 2002:615). This research project has required much reflection because of my dual positioning as both a researcher but also a woman who was subjected to CSA. This included reflecting on the following questions: why am I doing the research? Why was this research so hard? Who will show these stories if I do not? What is the personal cost to the women participants? What personal risks do they take in speaking to me? In comparison, what do I risk in speaking to them? Am I a hypocrite? They can risk, but I cannot? What if I do, what happens then? In the context of this research my increasing discomfort with the invisibility of my dual positioning and reflection made me realise that in engaging with the 'other' I was actually engaging with the 'other' in me (Berger 2001:508). Through this reflection and consideration of my sample I decided to include myself in the research as a participant because it felt unethical and unfair to have women similar to me share their most intimate and personal stories, but for me to remain silent about my own. When this research began I knew I would be touched and affected by the stories of other ethnic women but never imagined it would change my world view so dramatically (Ghorashi 2005:369).

## Method and Design

I used a qualitative feminist methodology for this research project. The qualitative research process is defined by interconnected generic activities. These are theory, method, analysis, ontology, epistemology and methodology (Denzin & Lincoln 2003:29). Behind these terms stands the reflexive story of the researcher (Denzin& Lincoln 2003:29) and, given that I was personally involved as a participant in this research, this method was most appropriate. A qualitative approach assumes all research is interpretive and guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied (Denzin & Lincoln 2003:33). Some beliefs may be taken for granted, invisible, only assumed, whereas others are highly problematic and controversial (Denzin & Lincoln 2003:33). My professional experiences as a practitioner, therapist, researcher and project worker in the area of CSA have significantly influenced my commitment to undertaking this research. I am interested in the effects of ethnicity on the experience of CSA for women and children and an interpretive paradigm with its attention to subjective interpretation and lived experience was therefore most appropriate (Connolly & Reilly 2007:525).

Feminist researchers identify themselves as feminist, as I have done in this research, and by doing so, I am clearly articulating myself and this research as attending to gender. Gender has a pervasive influence on culture and on one's beliefs and values which cannot be isolated in the social process of scientific inquiry (Neuman 2000). Feminist researchers do not sit outside of those they research. They are not objective or detached; rather they interact and collaborate with their participants, fusing their personal and professional lives (Neuman 2000:83) as I have done in this research.

Qualitative research is a positioned activity through which I am located as a feminist researcher who is also an ethnic women who was subjected to sexual abuse in childhood. This location has enabled the world of ethnic women survivors of CSA to become visible through a different lense and through this the meanings participants brought to the research have been brought to light (Denzin & Lincoln 2003:4–5). I identified women's experiences through interviews and considered the issues within a broader context of ethnic communities (Denzin & Lincoln 2003:4–5). The broad aims of this research were to access a richer picture of the issue of CSA for ethnic women and thus the use of qualitative methods enabled me to use a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices to increase understandings of CSA (Denzin & Lincoln 2003:4–5).

### *Aims*

The research question guiding this thesis was: How does ethnicity and culture frame women's understandings and experiences of CSA?

This research aimed to:

1. explore and analyse how women construct and understand their ethnicity and culture; and
2. explore how they think these shaped or influenced their understanding and experiences of childhood sexual abuse.

### *Sample and Recruitment*

I used a mixed sampling method because of the significant sensitivity of the issue of CSA within ethnic communities in Australia (Kumar 1996). This included interviews, journal feedback, ethnography and researcher field notes. I invited women to participate across four states in Australia including South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland for two main reasons. First, Adelaide is a small city and I had concerns regarding anonymity and also that the small amount of participants would be limited within Adelaide only. Second, at the time of data collection I had contacts and networks across these four states in the area of CSA, sexual assault and domestic violence; therefore I could use these networks for inviting women to participate. For the purposes of this study, only women who had been subjected to sexual abuse as children, from different ethnic groups, aged 18 and over were invited to participate. I aimed to invite 15–20 women to participate; however, due to the significant barriers to recruiting, which I will discuss shortly, this was not possible.

#### Inclusion Criteria

- aged 18 and over
- female
- identifies with an ethnic group
- has been subjected to CSA either in their country of origin or in Australia.

#### Exclusion Criteria

- under the age of 18

- Anglo-Celtic/Anglo-Saxon Australian.

Due to the sensitive nature of this research it was not desirable to invite women from specific ethnic groups to participate, because the research did not seek to identify the effects of CSA on a particular ethnic group per se, but rather focus on ethnicity as a broader concept, as discussed in the literature review. Therefore, participants from any ethnic group currently living in Australia were invited to participate. Two phases of recruitment were undertaken. The first used purposive sampling and the second, snowball sampling (Kumar 1996). Purposive and snowball sampling have been used with difficult-to-reach specialised populations such as this (Neuman 2000). In addition I have been involved in the area of CSA in South Australia for a number of years as a social worker; therefore the steps taken were based upon what I knew about the field at that point in time.

Firstly, I identified key mainstream (not ethnic-specific) stakeholders and services in the selected states. I cast a broad net. I did not target specific individual colleagues known to me; rather I asked organisations and services to help advertise the study. I used this tactic to try to access as many different services and participants as possible. I developed a letter informing services about the project (see Appendix A). I contacted those services I knew personally directly by phone or email. In addition I developed a flyer (see Appendix B). The development of the flyer required considerable thought because of the potential limitations of participants' English language skills. I consulted a number of colleagues who worked in the human services from the four states about the language to be used in the flyer and hence the language used was everyday English. In addition, I avoided loaded language; for example I did not use the term 'subjected to CSA' at the advice of ethnic workers, and instead I referred to 'experiences of unwanted sexual contact'. This is because they suggested that using Western language terms loaded with meaning might deter people from participating. The gender of the perpetrator was not mentioned so that those abused by both men and women had the opportunity to participate. In response to points made in the literature review and by ethnic colleagues no reference was made to feminism in order to avoid excluding women who did not have a feminist understanding of CSA (Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002:157). This inclusive strategy also comes from years of experience in the field and discussion with numerous ethnic workers about the negative reputation of feminism with ethnic groups.

It was not possible to have the flyer translated into different languages due to the cost and so I decided to use an English-language flyer, limiting its use to those who can read English and

those who would be told about the research by a worker or English speaking friend. I then distributed the flyer to the organisations. Four services agreed to support the research and to provide women with information and the flyer in addition to discussing the research with them. Two services also invited me to present information on the research in their organisation. In order to be inclusive of potential participants who had no English skills, I sought support from Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS). Due to my experience in the field I developed two forms relating to confidentiality specifically for interpreter use (see Appendices C & D) as a result of concerns amongst ethnic groups regarding the confidentiality of interpreters. TIS generously agreed to provide free interpreting services for participants. However, this was not required because all participants spoke sufficiently good English to participate without the need for an interpreter. I invited potential participants to contact me directly via a confidential mobile phone number. In this initial phone call I answered questions about the research and set up interview times, interview venues and support networks. Due to my therapeutic background, I decided to provide each participant with a debrief session after each interview (Alty & Rodham 1998).

In addition to the above, I approached ethnic-specific community organisations and groups that represented ethnic women and ethnic media. Of the specific ethnic organisations approached, two agreed to support the research; the rest refused. These two organisations provided me with time to go and speak with the staff about the research and respond to any questions or concerns and they were extremely supportive of the research. Two participants self-selected in this way, one a worker in the organisation, the other a client of the service. Two groups representing the interests of ethnic women agreed for me to attend a meeting and speak with the network; however, neither supported the research. In all I approached approximately 49 organisations, both mainstream and ethnic-specific, but only six supported the research.

Organisations that were unable or unwilling to assist indicated that (1) placing a flyer in their waiting area would offend their clients; (2) that CSA does not happen in their community therefore there was no need for such research; (3) that CSA was not relevant to the service of the organisation therefore they would not support it; and (4) of the two groups representing ethnic women, one agreed it was an important issue but felt it was not the group's role to consider supporting research in this area or raising it as an issue within the group. The other group did not provide a reason. My field notes during this time indicate that many of these organisations had previously encouraged me to undertake this research.

Due to the poor response to the above recruitment efforts, I applied to the University of South Australia Ethics Committee to place flyers (Appendix B) in the toilets of the three campuses. Ethics approval was gained and flyers were placed in the women's toilets of only one campus over one weekend with the intention of placing further flyers on subsequent weekends. This resulted in a complaint being made to the Ethics Committee and one of my supervisors and I were required to meet with the Chairperson in relation to this. The complainant indicated they were offended by the use of the term 'ethnic'. It was noted that any more complaints might jeopardise the research. After discussion and reflection with supervisors I decided not to continue with the flyers at the university.

As this first recruitment phase was unsuccessful, I reflected carefully on what the barriers might be (Pitman 2002:284). In discussion of this with supervisors and other colleagues I began to wonder: what am I doing incorrectly that is stopping this project? (Pitman 2002:284). I wondered why people who were so supportive before had suddenly withdrawn their support. Through this reflective process I began to consider that it might not be me but rather the issue of CSA that was stopping the project. My field notes were crucial in this process of reflection and I came to understand these processes of resistance or refusal as a further form of silencing around CSA. I became aware of the potential for gatekeeping in this area and the role of certain individuals in their communities in this regard. Gatekeepers move between cultures, linking members (Kurtz 1968) but they also act as intermediaries between formal and informal networks (Booth & Owen 1985), public agencies, ethnic citizens (Borowiec 1975) and their communities and the dominant society (Duran 1977 cited in Agada 1999:75).

Gatekeepers provide researchers with access to participants and at times hold positions of authority within an organisation. However, they can also hold positions of less authority but have access to the community (Bowman 2008:519). These individuals can be very protective of their communities and as such researchers can encounter a variety of reactions to their studies, as was the case with this project. One reaction may be support in principle but not in practice which means that gatekeepers understand the value of CSA studies and support this type of research but withhold approval for the study to be conducted in their facilities (Bowman 2008:519). It was only through reflection and re-visiting my field notes that I came to understand the processes in these terms. Bowman suggested (2008:519) that gatekeepers unwilling to grant approval may deny access and explain why, or alternately implicitly do so by not returning phone calls and/or emails. They suggest it is up to the researcher to

determine between missed communication and implicit denial of participant access (Bowman 2008:s19). In this study in the vast majority of cases it was explicit denial. Through my field notes it was clear that (1) people were concerned about the ability of minority communities to handle the problem of CSA; (2) people were concerned about the stigma associated with CSA and the effect of this on the service or community where data would be collected (Bowman 2008:519); (3) people were afraid of repercussions from within the community if it became known that they were making visible such a taboo topic within their community; and (4) people did not like my usage of the term ethnic: they either saw it as discriminatory to people from minority groups or to the Anglo majority. This preliminary analysis of my field notes led me to consider who or what such views benefit or make invisible. I will discuss this level of silencing of the issue further in the analysis; however, to provide some description of the tone and manner of these denials, some brief examples that I wrote down in my field notes included:

- "You cannot raise this issue because it might offend our workers or community members."
- "You cannot talk about it by referring to specific ethnic groups, for example, and also you cannot talk about it by generalising and saying in some ethnic groups."
- "The community isn't ready to hear this."
- "There are other pressing problems for migrants/refugees."
- "There isn't a language to describe CSA in this ethnic group."

I commenced the second phase of recruitment using snowball sampling (Kumar 1996). Snowball sampling is a process of selecting a sample using personal networks and starting with a few individuals in a group or organisation and asking them to refer further individuals or groups to the research (Kumar 1996:162). Kumar indicated this sampling technique is useful if there is little knowledge about the group available to the researcher. In this phase, unlike the first, I used my personal networks. In total, I made 71 personal contacts with workers in the field via email during the data collection phases. I sent the research flyer to 245 individual professional contacts in SA, Victoria, NSW and Queensland, which included sexual assault services, domestic violence services and community health services. This does

not include the specific email distribution lists that these contacts used and there was no way of knowing how many people are members of these lists.

Through this method six other participants accepted the invitation to participate. These women workers agreed to participate during discussions with me about the complexities of recruitment I had encountered. Initially I was taken aback because I knew many of these workers in a collegial way. They disclosed to me that they had experienced unwanted sexual contact during childhood and were voluntarily choosing to be in this study. Four colleagues were known to me; the other two contacted me via a mutual colleague. Eight of the nine women in this research are therefore human service professionals. All indicating they chose to participate because they want to break the silence about CSA in ethnic communities. Each participant understood exactly what my usage of the term ethnic meant and identified themselves as such. Each participant also understood the usage of the term unwanted sexual contact. For the interstate recruitment I estimated that I would travel to each city for two weeks, providing enough time for meetings with key stakeholders and community members interested in participating in the research. However, I travelled to the different states a number of times over a 12-month period of recruitment.

## Method

I used multi-method data collection processes for this research including semi-structured interviews with participants, journal writing by participants, and my field notes. This provided me with multiple ways of looking at my research question and data. Denzin and Lincoln (2003:8) suggested that using multiple methods and tools enables an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. This method was driven by the difficulties encountered in the recruitment process itself and the complex nature of connections between feminism, ethnicity and CSA. As such it was important to use a strategy that added rigour, breadth, complexity, richness and depth to the inquiry (Flick 1998:231 cited in Denzin & Lincoln 2003:8).

### *Interviews*

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding about how ethnicity frames women's experiences of CSA. I developed this understanding by talking directly with women, hearing their stories, and giving them voice. I selected in-depth semi-structured interviews because, as I argued in Chapter 1, there has been little research that accesses the

voices of ethnic women about their experiences of CSA. Due to the lack of information on ethnicity and CSA and the sensitivity of the topics I decided that two interviews with each participant would be preferable. I developed a semi-structured interview guide for each interview with a total of 10 questions in each interview. While the interview schedule guided the interviews it also allowed flexibility to adapt or add to these within the context of the interview (Kumar 1996). For a full list of the questions please see Appendix E.

Each interview focused on one major element of the research, that is, either ethnicity or CSA. The rationale for doing two interviews was so that firstly participants' meanings in relation to their ethnicity, culture and community could be understood and hence the first interview focused on understanding women's ethnicity and the views in their ethnic groups about women, children and CSA. I sought to establish understandings about ethnic identity and how each woman described the culture within their community and what that meant to them personally. During this interview I sought specific data on the roles of men, women, children, sex, sexuality and CSA within their ethnic groups.

Interview two focused on CSA. The questions were designed to establish each woman's story, whether or not they ever disclosed and how that disclosure was received. I also sought to identify the relationships between ethnicity and culture and CSA. This strategy of two separate interviews enabled me to develop a stronger rapport with each participant, thus establishing safety and trust in preparation for the second interview which might have been challenging or difficult. This method was also enhanced by pre- and post-interview discussions with each participant about the research, their involvement and their questions about me, if asked. This resulted in a number of conversations before and after each interview with each participant over the 12-month period of data collection. Each participant was provided the opportunity to add or remove anything they said after each interview and after the review of each transcript. No participant removed any elements of their interviews.

As Nelson et al argued, the "choice of research practices depends upon the questions that are asked and the questions depend on their context, what is available in the context and what the researcher can do in that setting" (Nelson et al 1992:2 cited in Denzin & Lincoln 2003:6). The order of questions (see Appendix E) was a logical progression based on the objectives of the study (Kumar 1996). This enabled the progression of the interview from simple themes to more complex ones (Kumar 1996:123). This was why the first interview focused on ethnicity, culture and community, and the second on women's experiences of CSA. I also used my

discretion in ordering questions across the interviews based on whether the next question to be asked was conducive to the conversation or whether I should just let it flow and ask the question that was relevant to the conversation at the time. Many factors can affect the reliability of a research instrument, like the wording of questions, the physical setting, a respondent's mood, and the nature of the interaction, among others (Kumar 1996:140–141). As an ethnic woman who is bilingual, I was acutely alert to language barriers, how language was used to convey meaning, language distinction and status, differences in cultural language as well as spoken language, and differences in learning and understanding (O'Reilly 2005:95). I approached each interview from a position of curiosity, that is, if I did not understand something or felt I was not understood I reframed and asked again.

The language I used in the questions was simple and easily understood. All interviews were tape recorded with the consent of the participants; none of the participants declined the use of the tape recorder. Eighteen interviews were conducted with the nine participants. All interviews were carried out face-to-face by me (Kumar 1996) and, where I was the interviewee, by one of my supervisors. Each interview was undertaken in environments which recognised the need for anonymity, safety and comfort. Two of the interviews were conducted in the home of the participant, five interviews were conducted in my home or the home I was staying in whilst in the field, and nine were done in a room at a supportive organisation. I was interviewed twice by my supervisor in her office at the university. All of the interviews were conducted using the interview schedule.

Feminist researchers have raised concerns that in-depth interviews are impersonal, hierarchic, and have an inherent power imbalance between the researcher and researched (Doucet & Mauthner 2008:332). The argument suggests the differences among women are too great to join woman as a category, and that other structures like ethnicity, age, class, sex and language matter in how power imbalances play out in the interview process (Doucet & Mauthner 2008:332). I was therefore transparent with the participants about the research and what would or would not come from it. I was honest if asked personal questions (Berger 2001:507, Campbell et al 2010:62) including disclosure of my own experience of CSA (Watts 2006:387, Dickson-Swift 2006). One participant asked me whether I was sexually abused prior to having any further conversation about the research and subsequently told me that if I had not been, it would have affected her decision to participate. As a result I was open and transparent with each of the other participants in relation to my own positioning. I acknowledged that I retained the power in what would be published and part of including

myself as a participant in this research sought to place me in a similar position of disclosure and openness and somewhat diminish this power imbalance (Doucet & Mauthner 2008). Other researchers have disclosed their insider status after interviews (Shah 2006:211); however I chose to do so when I was asked because to lie to my participants and hide my truth would not have been in the spirit of why I did this research in the first place. So I undertook some level of self-disclosure; however, at no time during the interviews did my story intrude on the interview process (Dickson-Swift et al 2006:856). The women who asked about this did so either before or after the interviews or indeed during the first conversation that we had. In this way I was able to further break down the power relationship between me and them (Cotterill & Letherby 1993:71 cited in Ezzy 2002:155) and gain slightly more understanding of what drove them to speak with me about their experiences.

I have taken my history as a point of departure for why I disclosed to participants and why I wanted to undertake this study (Mulinari & Ranthzel 2007:91, Watts 2006). However it was mainly through the process of reflexivity, that is, observational, theoretical, methodological and personal reflection that I came to the decision (Connolly & Reilly 2007:531) to include myself in the research as a participant. I acknowledge I am still the author of this study and therefore the only thing that holds that power balance stable is my integrity and responsibility to the participants as a woman and as a researcher. My interactions with the participants were informed by mutual respect, kindness and genuine care for their wellbeing and safety (Connolly & Reilly 2007:529). I have had and continue to have deeply respectful collegial relationships with many of the participants, which is congruent with both my ethics and feminist methodology.

I was also transparent about my own ethnicity. Some women asked me my ethnic background in the initial phone call because of my long surname. However, the majority of women who participated in the research knew that I was an ethnic woman. This insider ‘ethnic status’ resulted in many of the participants speaking to me in ways that suggested that I was like them. I identified this through the transcripts when women would say things like ‘this is the culture’, for example, talking about similar cultural religious practices between the Greek Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox or the Catholic Church. This is because I was indoctrinated into both the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church. These types of discussions indicated to me that many of the participants felt there was a common understanding between us; that is, we were ‘ethnic’ within an Anglo-dominant society. When women were describing particular elements of their culture, they did so by giving me the name of that

event in their language and then they translated it for me. I mention this here because I believe my own ethnic and CSA background set the tone for the interviews for the reason that I moved from being a potential outsider trying to understand to an insider who had some understanding. The participants appeared to feel safe in discussing with me issues of discrimination as an ethnic woman in an Anglo-dominant society, but also issues affecting them particularly as a woman within their own ethnic communities. This sense of commonality enabled quite detailed and open discussions. For example, many of the women used the term 'wog' to describe both their treatment by Anglo Australians but also to joke when referring to themselves, for example, 'I am woggy', knowing that I would understand this meaning in both of its contexts.

It may be considered problematic that I was and am a double insider, so to speak, an ethnic woman who has also been sexually abused in childhood (Doucet & Mauthner 2008:334). However, being transparent about this means I have not hidden behind the veil of an objective researcher, non-existent in the text I am writing. I also recognise that being an insider does not guarantee a mutual understanding between the researcher and participants (Doucet & Mauthner 2008:334), despite women speaking to me in ways that implied that I understood what they meant by 'culture'. For these reasons, I continually engaged in processes of reflexivity as it is through reflexivity that I could check my own social reality and its influence on the data collected (Vernon 1997 cited in Shah 2006:211). Simultaneously, I continually thought about the vulnerability of the participants to ensure that I was not assuming too much commonality between us. Thus I checked and double-checked the meaning of terms whilst in interview but also post-interview during analysis to ensure that what I thought their words meant were what they actually meant (Shah 2006:212). As a final measure, I offered the women the opportunity to continue to be involved in the research process through reading the chapters and six women agreed to maintain their involvement in some way at that time (Kirsch 2005:2163 cited in Doucet & Mauthner 2008:331).

### *Journal*

Researchers can at times debrief their participants, but rarely do they ask about the benefits or harms to them from participating in the research (Fontes 2004:164). It is likely that the experience of trauma as well as its expression varies by culture and therefore research into this issue would not impact on culturally diverse participants uniformly (Marsella et al 1996 cited in Fontes 2004:164). Cultural groups can value a range of behaviours such as catharsis,

emotional expression, stoicism and emotional containment (Fontes 2004:164). In order to ascertain the benefits or harms for those participating in this research I chose a journal to be used by participants as a tool. The journal was provided to all participants prior to commencing the first interview. Each participant was also provided with an information sheet and verbal instructions about the use of the journal (see Appendix F). Each participant was asked to write notes in this journal about how they felt about the interviews and the researcher. The intention in using the journal to collect data was to ask the participants "who was I for them?" and what was this research process like for them (Dumont 1978:200 cited in Tedlock 2003:184). Seven participants took the journal and agreed to use it. I and one other participant did not. I felt that my participation and reflecting upon this inclusion and its impact throughout the research process would provide enough information without the added need for a journal. Upon completion of the interviews the seven women who took the journal indicated they rarely used it. One indicated that it invited too much reflection about the CSA and she did not want to go there once the interviews were completed; however, she was happy to let me know how she felt about the interviews, her participation and myself as the researcher. One participant wrote a brief synopsis responding to the questions the journal was trying to elucidate. The others agreed that initially they had thought they would use it, but had forgotten about it and preferred to tell me face-to-face or over the phone how it was for them. Not one of the women who took the journal returned it. Each women spoke with the researcher about their experience of the research after completion of the interviews.

The journal was not used by participants so there was no content to analyse. However, the fact that it was not used may suggest that for this type of research such a tool may not be appropriate. Nonetheless for this type of research I still consider it vital to provide participants with an opportunity to give feedback in relation to their experiences with the research process, interviewing and the researcher because it provides information for further researchers in the area and enables a refinement of research tools. Participants provided feedback through either face-to-face or telephone discussions with me.

### *Field Notes*

The significant difficulty I encountered in undertaking this research and the sensitivity of the topic within ethnic communities led me to include a third method of ethnographic data collection – field notes – to enrich the findings. My field notes were not ethnographic in the pure sense, but rather they were a part of my research process which enabled transparency

and a richer description of the process I went through. This provided a view of the larger picture than would be possible with other methods. This was undertaken through writing notes to myself, records of my meetings with supervisors, discussions with the participants but also other human service professionals, email conversations and discussions with numerous workers (Richards 2005:39, Ezzy 2002:68).

These field notes provided for a further reflexive process in relation to the complexities of researching CSA in ethnic groups in Australia. I have used them throughout the research and writing process to ensure an ongoing reflexive process and they were instrumental in my choice to include myself in the research.

## Data Analysis

### *Interviews*

The interviews were analysed using a thematic analysis informed by an intersectional framework. I transcribed all interviews except my own because I did not want to re-hear my own story. The data was then read and re-read. Firstly data was sorted via the questions from the interview schedule (Braun & Clarke 2006:87). Through the use of intersectionality, I developed the preliminary categories of gender, ethnicity, culture and CSA (Fernandez 1997, Glen 2002, both cited in McCall 2009:58). Further themes developed alongside these categories (Ezzy 2002:10). Preliminary analysis demonstrated dominant constructions of gender relations across the sample and how these impacted on the lived experiences of CSA. The dimensions of ethnicity, culture, gender and CSA therefore became central to the analysis.

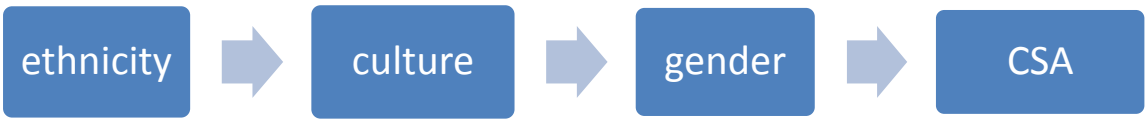


**Figure 2. Thematic Dimensions**

These thematic categories were not static (Evelyn Nakano Glenn 2002:14 cited in McCall 2009:59) and hence my analysis concentrated on the relationship between the dimensions of

ethnicity, culture, gender and CSA survivor (McCall 2009:59). The relationships between these social groupings are therefore not a background to the research but were a focus of analysis (McCall 2009:60). Through this process I attempted to document the relationship of these multiple and possibly conflicting dimensions, and used them strategically to reveal the phenomena the women were describing to me (McCall 2002:50–51). I specifically considered the complexity of the relationship between these groups within and across analytical categories and not only the complexities within single social groups, for example only gender or ethnicity (McCall 2009:60).

The second method of analysis I used was thematic analysis. Thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool that can provide a rich, detailed, yet complex account of data analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006:78). Braun and Clarke (2006) argued that thematic analysis is widely used in qualitative research; however, there is not a clear definition about what it is and how one should go about it. Thus researchers should be clear on the assumptions informing their analysis, so that if required other studies on similar topics can be guided by this information in the future (Braun & Clarke 2006). I have discussed the assumptions and lens through which this research was undertaken in the literature review and above in the methods section, and hence through the use of ethnographic reflection my personal and political views have been made apparent. I chose thematic analysis because it is more inductive than content analysis (Ezzy 2002:88) and is a tool used for identifying, analysing and reporting themes within data. This type of analysis enabled interpretation of various aspects (Boyatzis 1998) of how ethnicity frames CSA for women.

To conduct thematic analysis, I applied open coding first to the interview data to reduce it into broad codes (Richards 2005:85) whereby I named categories until saturation was reached (Richards 2005:95). After this I reduced and organised data for further analysis (Campbell et al 2010:66) and identified more precise codes, also known as selective coding (Ezzy 2002:87). This enabled the development of a central story around which the thesis is focused (Ezzy 2002:87). In this process I was searching for themes, that is, collating codes into potential themes, then gathering all data relevant to each potential theme (Braun & Clarke 2006:87). This process confirmed the broad themes of gender, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, culture and CSA. Subsequently I reviewed these themes and performed another level of checking to see whether the themes worked in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1), and then the entire data set (Level 2), after which I visually created a thematic map of the analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006:87) (see Appendix I).

In the final stage I undertook a process of defining and naming major themes and sub-themes, that is, ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis was telling. This generated clear definitions and names for each theme (Braun & Clarke 2006:87). The last stage of this process was the final opportunity for analysis which included selection of vivid, compelling extract examples. The extracts chosen were those that were representative of the majority or clearly different to the majority. Through this process I performed a final analysis of selected extracts through which I related the analysis back to the research questions and the literature (Braun & Clarke 2006:87).

## Revisiting Ethnicity in the Research Process

Clifford and Marcus argued that "insiders studying their own cultures offer new angles of vision and depths to understanding" (Clifford & Marcus 1986 cited in Sherif 2001:438). While I am not from the same ethnic group as any of the women I interviewed, in the context of the dominant society I am in a similar location to them. It is within this context that I identify myself as an insider, that is, an ethnic CSA survivor. It became apparent there were certain words, tones and inflections that the women used to describe their experience, for example 'it's the culture', as mentioned earlier, with a tone that implied I understood what they meant. It was a kind of ethnic shorthand. I knew what they meant, that is, we had some form of a collective understanding about what it means when you say, 'it's the culture'. This created complexity for me in that initially I did not understand that I had this particular insider knowledge about what 'it's the culture' means, which would be different to an Anglo Australian. Therefore the way in which the term 'culture' was used by the participants needs definition. As mentioned earlier culture in this context is an often silent, invisible authority which dictates the norms of behaviour of men, women and children across ethnic groups. It is not taught to us overtly, but rather we learn it by watching our parents, families and communities, we also learn it by the way in which these very same people treat us and each other (Matsumoto & Juang 2013:15). This is not dissimilar to the definition outlined in the literature review with culture as the embodiment of a world view that is created through learned and transmitted beliefs, values and practices, including religious and spiritual traditions (Watt & Norton 2004). But it also encompasses a way of living informed by the historical, economic, ecological and political forces on a group (Watt & Norton 2004). As I noted in the literature review, ethnicity is a politicised social action or a process whereby elements of real, actual and lived cultural differences are politicised in the context of intensive group interaction (Malesevic 2006:27). It includes cultural values, attitudes and

behaviours and the subjective sense of ethnic group membership held by group members. Ethnicity recognises the experiences associated with minority status, which includes powerlessness, discrimination and prejudice (Phinney 1996:919). This context translates to the ways in which ethnic people go about and live their lives outside of their countries of origin. Thus ethnicity and culture can be separated from one another. For the purposes of this research an ethnicity encompasses a grouping of individuals who have arrived in Australia as either migrants, refugees or asylum seekers, not the dominant Anglo-Saxon majority.

## Ethics

This project was approved by the University of South Australia Human Research Ethics Committee on 8 May 2009, protocol P093/09. Feminist theory, politics and methodology has an ethical disposition because it responds to the sufferings of women and seeks to remedy this suffering by routing out injustice (Bell 2001:159). I relate to the words of Bell, who says she was "awakened by the other, summoned by another's suffering ..." (2001:161) and as such I could no longer resist my response to this suffering, which is this thesis. Research in the area of violence against women and children is a sensitive topic, a topic that can be confronting for both the researcher and researched alike (Lee & Renzetti 1990:512, Campbell et al 2010:61). Fontes argued that ultimately researchers "face ethical issues alone with their consciences and many ethical decisions will be based on the amount of overnight tossing and turning that a researcher can tolerate" (Fontes 1998:53 cited in Fontes 2004:144). Indeed the inclusion of myself as a participant was the result of such a process.

Potential for harm varies and can change depending on the person's coping mechanism and current circumstances (Fontes 2004:145). Prior to asking intrusive questions I informed participants that such questions were about to be asked and gave them the opportunity to opt out. Further, feminist researchers provide information, resources and supports to their participants and help normalise their experiences (Campbell et al 2010:62). Feminist researchers make a point of saying to participants who may be confused or unsure that they are not alone and that others too have had similar experiences, thus enabling the women to feel less isolated, which may be beneficial for women who are struggling with self-doubt and blame (Campbell et al 2012:62). As a feminist researcher and also a therapist I was attuned to the emotionality of women's lived experiences (Devault 1996, 1997, Fonow & Cook 1991, Jaggar 1989, all cited in Campbell et al 2010:63). In research such as this participants may experience a range of emotions, tears, anger and frustration, and when this happened I was

able to engage with those emotions, not just move on to the next questions but talk about those feelings and provide tissues and comfort. This also showed that as a researcher I was moved by those stories (Campbell et al 2010:63). In addition this was the first time many of the participants spoke about the abuse they experienced. I have had a significant amount of experience working with survivors and those for whom I am the first disclosure. I believe my capacity to handle this situation ethically was and is exemplary.

The cost to participants does not just include the potential for physical or emotional harm, but also the psychic cost, which includes guilt, shame or embarrassment, and any unwelcome or unforeseen consequences (Lee & Renzetti 1990:511). In considering this potential I was alerted to the need to be sensitive across cultures. Lee and Renzetti (1990:512) suggested a criterion for research that is considered sensitive, namely research intruding into the private sphere or into some deeply personal experience or research that deals with things sacred to those being studied which they do not wish profaned. Within the context of this research there was the possibility for both of the above. I sensitively intruded into some deeply personal experiences not only about the sexual abuse itself but also about the participant's ethnicity which included cultural beliefs and sometimes their religious beliefs.

Fontes (2004:142) argued that the concept of sacred can be extended to concepts such as family relations, love, sexual integrity and power. The disclosure of childhood sexual abuse to a stranger is something that participants may not want to be profaned due to the highly emotive and sensitive elements that are often discussed. Due to the significant time spent with participants in pre-interview discussions I was able to ascertain a significant amount of awareness about the women's culture and their beliefs and values prior to embarking on the interviews, which enabled a heightened awareness about the potential for harm. Further I acknowledged that the research itself might be traumatic because it would bring up memories about past traumas (Fontes 2004:165). Some researchers have suggested their participants reported "experiencing flashbacks, loss of sleep, and increased tension as a result of the interview" (Bergen 1993:198 cited in Fontes 2004:165). On the other hand Straus (1981 cited in Fontes 2004:165) and Newman et al (1997 cited in Fontes 2004:165) indicated there is no empirical evidence for the idea that participants in research can be harmed psychologically through discussing sensitive issues. Despite this, given the limited amount of research on this issue and given the potential for participants to experience some distress upon reflecting about their subjection to sexual abuse, I considered how to ameliorate some of these potential effects of participation. I gave each participant the option to be given the name and contact

details of a counsellor in their area that they could access for a debriefing session should they require it. I also provided each participant with a debriefing session after each interview myself. This debrief did not constitute data for the research. In addition I offered participants information about the issue of CSA in English and, where possible, translated material in their language (Fontes 2004). I did not impose any of these strategies on participants; I respected their capacity for agency and resilience.

### *Informed Consent*

Research has clearly shown that being subjected to childhood sexual abuse can have a significant effect on a person's mental health and so this raises the question about the capacity of a participant to give informed consent (Fontes 2004:145). A researcher must be able to differentiate between participants who can and those who cannot give informed consent, and must provide sufficient decision points throughout the process giving each woman the ability to give and or withdraw her consent (Fontes 2004:145). The participants in this study were given the information sheet (see Appendix G) and consent form (Appendix H), and I discussed both thoroughly with each participant well before each interview. In addition I stressed the voluntary nature of the study regularly throughout the process (Ford & Reutter 1990 cited in Fontes 2004:148).

### *Confidentiality and Anonymity*

Linked to the issue of informed consent is the issue of confidentiality. Concern about confidentiality was primary for the participants (Watts 2006:394). In order to ensure their confidentiality and anonymity no identifying information was stored or recorded. Each participant was given a pseudonym and all identifying information removed. I also believe that the geographical choices I made in recruitment strengthened confidentiality. No references have been made which connect the city to the participants in the thesis. Similarly the organisations I approached specifically will not be identified due to concerns regarding the anonymity of the participants. I eliminated any potentially identifying verbal signs or landmarks from the data. All information with the participant's confidential details is being stored in a secure facility for seven years.

Research in sensitive areas, which in this case involves the sexual abuse of children, can harm the reputation of an ethnic community (Fontes 2004:167). Working together with communities can reduce this risk (Fontes 2004); however, due to the significant resistance

encountered in this research this has not been possible. Nonetheless I have utilised other measures to protect ethnic groups, including undertaking the research across nine different ethnic groups, which limited the potential to isolate one particular ethnic group as the one where 'it' happens. Therefore the findings will only ever be used as a guide to what a woman's ethnicity might mean to her in the context of sexual abuse. However, due to the political commitment I have in raising the issue of CSA in ethnic groups and therefore challenging the ethnic code of silence and gatekeeping that surrounds the issue, I have spoken with each participant in relation to whether or not I can use their specific ethnic group or the broader region. Where permission has been given I will use the specific ethnic group; where not the broader region.

### *Limitations*

The study design and methodology of this project were appropriate for gaining increased understanding of the impact of ethnicity on women's experiences of CSA. The inclusion of myself, the researcher, as a participant enabled experimentation with such a method, providing food for thought for other researcher insiders and also challenging the dominant academic method of the invisible objective author. This might be seen as a limitation, but in a feminist study this kind of creation of equality and balance between the researcher and researched is supported. Nonetheless each study has its limitations. It is a limitation that this research excluded men as victims of CSA and hence further research would be significant with men particularly in light of the findings. The sample size within this research was small and this in itself is a limitation, although the method requires depth not large samples. Only having nine participants in the study has limited certain aspects of the findings, particularly the capacity to generalize beyond the lived experiences of the nine women and the fact that the ethnicities they represented were geographically and culturally diverse but not comprehensive. A further limitation may be that the women who came forward may be more assertive and willing to challenge their ethnic groups and cultures on the issue of CSA. A significant limitation for this study was the silencing of the issue of CSA in ethnic communities and gatekeeping because this potentially limited the breadth of the sample, and may have restricted access to those women most able to speak while preventing participation from those in the most oppressive circumstances. A further limitation was the exclusion of other intersectional categories such as sexual preference and ability; however, focusing specifically on gender, culture and ethnicity allowed for a level of depth and complexity in the analysis.

This chapter has discussed the theoretical influences of feminism, social constructionsm, interpretivism and intersectionality on the development of the methodology for this study. I have demonstrated the challenges in recruitment and described the potential influence of gatekeepers on research such as this. I have identified the study tools, confidentiality, ethics and discussed the limitations.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# Ethnic Women's Stories of Childhood Sexual Abuse

## Introducing the Participants

As established in the literature review, CSA in ethnic communities is an under-researched area. This research explored the intersections of ethnicity, gender, sex and CSA, and in this chapter I present the first of five findings chapters from the analysis of the interview data. While the research has a focus on the impact of CSA in adult women's lives, to fully explore the effects of childhood sexual abuse, it is also important to examine its impact on the women when they were children. This reminds us that when we talk about the issue of CSA, it is a child that was violated and the child's experience of this violation that frames their understanding of it. I have divided this chapter into two sections. In the first I will introduce the participants, providing information on each and their demographics as well as the participants' stories of CSA. In the second I explore the themes emerging from the interviews about the women's experiences of the sexual abuse itself. These include perpetrator tactics, resistance as a child, effects as a child, the norm of silence on sex and CSA, disclosure at the time of abuse, and disclosure as adults and teens. In presenting these stories, in this chapter I aim to provide a complete picture of the women's experiences of CSA as children, and their experiences as adults are to follow in subsequent chapters.

In presenting interview data I have edited quotations to shorten them; however, I have maintained the context and content of meaning in each. In some situations I have used a particular participant's quotation to articulate a specific point because she had the language capacity to articulate what the others spoke about but had difficulties articulating in English. Where there were differences in their experiences I have identified these as such.

Many of the participants spoke fluent English, others broken English: in presenting their quotations I have stayed with their words and only changed them slightly to avoid confusion. Where I have added words, I have put them in brackets to show they are not the interviewee's exact words. In addition I have removed words such as um and ah and repetition of words for ease of reading. Where participants have agreed to identify their specific ethnic group, I have done so; where they have not, I have used a broader ethnic grouping, for example, 'in Arab culture this is what happens'. This is for two reasons: first, it is important not to buy into the

idea that particular norms and roles are only relevant to a particular ethnic group, and second, it is important not to disregard any potential similarities. Where participants have identified their ethnic group in a quotation and have agreed I can use it, I have left these as they were spoken. This enables a continual discussion on both similarities and differences.

### *Background: Experiences of CSA and Ethnicity*

As I mentioned earlier each participant in this research comes from a different ethnic group. In most of the cases the perpetrator of sexual abuse came from the same ethnic group as the participant. Five participants were sexually abused as children in their countries of origin. The other four were abused in Australia, with three of these sexually abused by men from their own ethnic group. Only one participant was sexually abused by men from a different ethnic group. Eight participants experienced contact abuse. One identified both contact and non-contact. Five participants identified the abuse as long term, which is for longer than one year, with the other four ranging from one-off incidents to short term, which is less than one year. In only two of the 16 incidents of CSA the perpetrator was unknown to the participants. The participants identified 16 incidents of CSA between them. All the perpetrators were in a trusted position, which is consistent with the literature (Richardson & Bromfield 2005, Mouzos & Makkai 2004). Five perpetrators were related to the participants by blood including father, cousins and grandfather; one through marriage, one involved older peers, and seven were known men trusted by their families. The numbers may not correlate because some women were abused by more than one perpetrator and the identity of one perpetrator was not indicated. Nine participants were abused by male perpetrators and one also by a female.

This section presents information on the women's ethnicity, as they have identified it; their current living situation, marital status, children and the CSA. Their specific professional status has been intentionally left broad for confidentiality reasons. Further information is available in Table 3. The women's stories will be fully described shortly. Ethnic groupings presented are as per my earlier explanation regarding women's preferences. Where the age at onset of CSA was remembered clearly, this is the age written. If the participant was not sure and gave an age range, this is shown. Where the participant could not remember their age at the time, but knew they were young, this is shown as 'unsure'. Each incident that occurred at a different age is presented sequentially; for example, if there are two different ages beside a

participant's details under the heading CSA age, this means one incident of CSA occurred at each age. Duration of the sexual abuse is represented as:

1 = one incident;

LT = longer term – longer than 1 year;

ST = shorter term – less than a year.

The type of sexual abuse perpetrated against the participants has been grouped in the table to show only contact or non-contact. These are defined as:

- Contact = masturbation of perpetrator and perpetrator masturbating child, penetration of child's vagina with penis, touching of child's genitalia or breasts or child being forced to touch perpetrator's genitalia, intrusive medical procedures into anus.
- Non-contact = being watched repeatedly, being forced to sleep naked.

The gender of the perpetrator is shown as M = male or F = female. The age range of participants has been left broad due to concerns about confidentiality. The participants' religious orientation is shown as it was as a child, and may no longer be current. Sibling status refers to the participant's birth order in their family of origin (FOO). Marital status reflects the current marital status of the participant. 'Migrated to Australia' means the age at which the participant migrated to Australia: this too has been left broad for confidentiality reasons. 'Children' refers to how many children the participant currently has. 'Relationship that the perpetrator had to the child' has been shortened to 'R'ship'. Education refers to whether the participant has completed a tertiary education or equivalent and is signified by a Y = yes or N = no. When the information was not available in all sections of the data this is signified as N/A. Pseudonyms chosen by myself or the women have been allocated.

### *Participants*

Nguyen Thi Oi is a Vietnamese woman. She came to Australia as a refugee in her teens. She was sexually abused as a child by her male cousin while living in Vietnam. She is a professional woman, was married at the time of the interviews but has since separated. She has two children.

Astraia is a Greek woman. She was born in Australia after her parents migrated. She was sexually abused by a Greek male piano teacher when she was a child. She is a professional woman. She is single and has one child.

Ligaya is an Asian woman. She migrated to Australia as an adult. She was sexually abused by her grandfather in her country of origin (COO). She is a professional woman. She is married and has two children.

Zaina is a Congolese woman who arrived in Australia as an adult refugee. She was raped by her uncle in her COO. She is a professional woman. She is married and has five children.

Zita is an Italian woman. She migrated to Australia with her parents as a small child. She was sexually abused by her brother-in-law and this continued into adulthood, in Australia. She is a professional woman. She is divorced and has two children.

Anechka is a Russian woman. She arrived in Australia as an adult on a spousal visa after marrying an Australian man. She was sexually abused by her father as a child in her COO. She is separated and has two children.

Doortje is a Dutch woman. She came to Australia as a toddler when her parents migrated. She was sexually abused as a child by men known to her family, a stranger, and her brother-in-law in Australia. She is a professional woman. She is married and has one child.

Sameera Abdi is an Arabic-speaking woman. She migrated to Australia as a skilled migrant. She was sexually abused by her male cousin and a priest in her COO. She is a professional woman. She is married and has two children.

Tanja is a Yugoslav woman. She came to Australia as a toddler after her parents migrated. She was sexually abused by male family friends and a female in Australia. She is a professional woman. She was married and has three children.

**Table 3: Participant Demographics**

| Name and ethnic group | CSA age | Duration | Type | Perpetrator | R'ship | Age range | Religion | Sibling status in FOO | Marital status | Age migrated to Australia | Children | Education |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ligaya<br>Asian | 8–9<br>unsure | LT<br>1 | Contact<br>contact | M<br>M | Grandfather<br>Older peers x 2 | 40–60 | Catholic | Last girl, 3rd youngest | Married | 25–35 | 2 | Y |
| Nguyen Thi Oi<br>Vietnamese | 6 | LT | Contact | M | Cousin | 30–50 | Christian/ Buddhist | N/A | N/A | 16–17 | 2 | Y |
| Anechka<br>Russian | unsure | LT | Contact<br>Non-contact | M | Father | 30–50 | None/ orthodox | Only child | Single | 30s | 2 | N |
| Sameera Abdi<br>Arabic speaking | 13<br>7–8 | 1<br>1 | Contact<br>Contact | M<br>M | Cousin<br>Priest | 30–50 | Christian | Oldest daughter | Married | 20–30 | 2 | Y |
| Zaina<br>Congolese background | 13 | 1 | Contact | M | Uncle | 30–50 | Christian | Twin | Married | 25–35 | 5 | Y |
| Astraia<br>Greek | 7–8 | LT | Contact | M | Piano teacher | 30–50 | Orthodox | Oldest of 4 | Single | Born in Australia | 1 | Y |
| Zita<br>Italian | unsure | | Contact | M | Brother-in-law | 50–70 | Catholic | Second youngest of 5 | Single | Small child | 2 | Y |
| Tanja<br>Yugoslav | 8–9<br>11–12 | ST<br>1 | Contact<br>Contact | M<br>F | Family friend<br>N\A | 30–50 | Christian | Youngest of 3 | Married | 2 years | 3 | Y |
| Doortje<br>Holland | 5–6<br>8–9<br>12<br>13<br>13–14 | 6–8mths<br>?<br>1<br>1<br>1 | Contact<br>Contact<br>Contact<br>Contact<br>Contact | M<br>M<br>M<br>M<br>M | Father's boss<br>Farmer<br>Farmer<br>Acquaintanc<br>Sister's boyfriend | 50–70 | Christian | Youngest of 2 | Married | 20 months | 1 | Y |

## Stories of Sexual Abuse

By telling their stories of sexual abuse the women articulated key features of abuse they experienced as children, described tactics used by the perpetrators, identified ways they tried to resist the abuse as children and talked about effects the abuse had on them as children. I present these themes to open up the women's discussion about the norms of silence in relation to sex and CSA and their impact on the experience of CSA and to highlight the women's stories of disclosure at the time of abuse and their experiences of disclosure as adults.

Nguyen Thi Oi was sexually abused as a child by a male cousin while still living in Vietnam. He was also Vietnamese. Nguyen Thi Oi was about six or seven when the sexual abuse began. Her cousin would encourage her to play hide and seek, up and down the stairs to get her to come to his room.

> I remember he use his penis ... playing with my vagina. I am not sure that he did put it in or not or just playing with it ... it happened almost every time I come over to my grandparents ... So he stay upstairs ... in his little room at my grandparents' house. Every time I go over there he took me up there and abuse me ... he say, "come in", "come on", "come up stairs". I just follow him. I don't know why, I just follow him.

Astraia was sexually abused by a male piano teacher when she was a child in Australia. Like Astraia, he too was Greek. This man would come to the family home and teach piano to Astraia and her sister. Astraia was about eight when the abuse started. She said:

> He never said a word; all I remember was we go in [to the room with the piano] ... him standing there ... I would be standing at the keyboard and he would start putting his hands inside your clothes and rubbing himself ... I remember the insides of his pockets ... I don't know if I blocked out what happened but I remember those, but I don't remember anything else ... I remember it hurting when he put his hands down my pants or down my top and I remember the pain.

Ligaya was sexually abused by her grandfather in her country of origin. Ligaya talked about being around eight years old, and living with her grandparents at the time. The abuse occurred over a period of time within the context of daily hygiene routines.

> My grandfather have in a form of, like sexual education to prepare us ... he would masturbate me and say that "this is because then you are prepared for your husband". I have no understanding of it [the sexual abuse].

Zaina was raped by her uncle in her country of origin. Zaina spoke about how her mother was unwilling to leave the house alone and that when her parents were away in another village Zaina was required to stay in the house with her sister. Her mother asked her uncle to stay with them at their house so they were not alone. Zaina was thirteen years old.

> My uncle was about 21 years old and we slept together but in different bedrooms at night time so it was raining and my uncle came in and I couldn't because he was powerful and how can I say, he was old enough than me so he could do anything he wanted so he raped me at that night.

Zita was sexually abused in Australia by her brother-in-law when she was a child and this continued into adulthood. Her brother-in-law is an Italian man. Zita spoke about how the abuse started when she was about 13 years old. She talked about how the abuse continued into adulthood with her feeling unable to do anything to prevent it.

> We would go to the pictures, we would sit my sister, him and me, or younger sister, and as soon as the lights went off he would trap your hand and start massaging his penis with your hand there with his fiancé on his other side. You couldn't pull it away because he was strong and then I don't know why but it just seemed not possible to pull away from him ... even after I got married I used to go to his place to do the [paperwork for the business] and I would be in the shed with him ... he would kiss me and he would want to kiss me, and I think, how am I gonna say I don't want to do this anymore? What reason am I gonna give my sister, my husband that I don't want to do his paper work? We never actually had sex.

Anechka was sexually abused by her father as a child while living in Russia. Her father was also Russian. Anechka talked about how as a small child she had to be given enemas regularly because of constipation. Her father administered the enemas, and she felt this was a form of abuse. She also described how her father would not allow her to sleep in underwear and through the night she would wake to see him watching her naked. Her suspicions about her father's intentions were confirmed when she was older and he told her he should have raped her long ago. Anechka said:

> So I have been forced to sleep without underwear by my father because this rubber [around the legs of her underwear] will prevent blood flow at night, body should be totally relaxed and nothing should disturb. I had to show him that I don't wear underwear; till I was about 14. Once I started to have periods my mum said she has to wear some underwear ... I was little, you know how children sleep, move around the bed ... I had a night dress, and so it was usually up, and blanket down and I remember I woke up and he was standing and looking at me. I was basically naked and he was observing me, I don't know how old I was. I didn't know what to do, should I pretend like I didn't see him? Or should I pretend like I am going continue to sleep? Or should I cover myself? I felt very uncomfortable; I felt somehow this tension and his [sexual] interest all the time.

Doortje was sexually abused as a child by men known to her family, a stranger, and her brother-in-law in Australia. The men were not from her ethnic group. Doortje identified a number of incidents of sexual abuse during her childhood. She recalls she was aged five or six in the first incident, living in a caravan with her parents. On this particular day her mother had a migraine and was lying down in the caravan. A local wealthy farmer had brought a new car and had offered her father a drive of the car whilst he waited in the caravan. Doortje explained:

> So I am alone in this caravan with mum from here to the wall away and he says to me "do you want sixpence" and I of course wanted sixpence for lollies. I went up to him and he put his hand straight into my pants and started playing with me. I was stunned and I didn't know what to do. I remember distinctly looking over at the curtain where mum was a few yards away and feeling totally helpless. I couldn't do anything about it so I just froze and then he got my little hand and he opened his fly and he got me to touch him. Again I just stood there and I didn't do anything, I didn't speak, I didn't say anything, I just stood there but I felt very scared of this man.

Doortje described the second incident of sexual abuse when she was about eight years old. Her family had moved to another country town and it was the first time she had a room and a bed to herself. There was a man who also worked on the farm who had many children, and Doortje used to play with them. This man would encourage the children to play hide and seek. Doortje went on to explain:

> Whenever I went over there and he was home, he would always try to encourage us to play hide and seek. Whenever we played hide and seek he would always find me, cos he was watching and then he would touch me, touch my vagina, stick his fingers up me and all this crap. So when I stopped playing hide and seek cos I figured you can't trust this man ... so then I had to sleep over there and every night he would make out to tuck us all into bed and he would then just fondle me, touch me, tell me how beautiful I was, how special I was, it was mostly digital touching.

The third incident Doortje spoke about happened when she was riding her bicycle in a small country town on a road and a man

> Leapt out of the road and grabbed the bicycle and ripped the front of my clothes off and was fondling me and I was about 12, I had breasts, I had to fight him off and I ran away.

The fourth incident Doortje talked about was when she was about 13 and accepted a lift from a known local man.

> We got out to a country road and he started kissing me, touching me and I fought him but then of course he was stronger than me. He grabbed me by the hair and pulled me out of the car and he hit me and was pulling my pants down and was going to rape me.

On that occasion Doortje escaped. The fifth incident Doortje spoke about happened about the same time and involved her brother-in-law. She said he

> Got me drunk and really got my pants down, put his penis, really tried to insert it, I pushed him off. I was looking after his children.

Sameera Abdi described two incidents of sexual abuse in her childhood. She was sexually abused by her male cousin and a priest in her country of origin. Sameera talked about the church to which her family belonged and the priest in this church would often call a group of girls together and give them free gifts, related to their faith.

> He called us and said "hello girls", I'm not sure whether he called us by the name, then he said "I've got something really, really special for you, only you two". And we left, and so we went and we were walking and he locked the gate. I wasn't even scared like nothing, I'm gonna get something, yeah sure I did, and he again wanted us to play with his parts and he was touching us.

The second incident occurred at the age of about 12. Sameera illustrated how when she was younger, as is the norm in her ethnic group, her parents and the parents of a male relative would joke that one day when she grew up she would become his wife. Sameera Abdi recalled that she did not mind this and felt quite safe with this person. Her male relative had been away for some time and had just returned home. She went on to say

> Well the very next day he called me to his study room which was underneath his parents' [house]. Again being young, naive I didn't think, so I went there and so he locked the door ... and then he laid me on his bed beside his desk and started playing, you know with my private parts and asked me to play [with his]. I felt really awkward, I felt hot, I felt odd, I said to him "get off me", but I felt I couldn't scream. It was quite embarrassing to do anything really, and all what I could think about is, just getting out of there and I did ... he was just fulfilling his own desire exposing himself so openly and ... literally taking my hand and put it on his penis and he knew what he wanted, it's to fulfil his own desire regardless of how I felt ... And I remember that was the first time I saw a penis that was so big and so hard and it was like something, scared the hell out of me as well, what was going on you know.

Tanja talked about four incidents of sexual abuse. She was sexually abused by male family friends and a female in Australia. Three people were from the same ethnic group as her; she did not know the background of the fourth. Tanja spoke about the first incident that she recalled, which she identified as the dominant incident in her life. She talked about a male friend of the family who would often watch her and her father wrestling and playing, which made her feel uncomfortable as a child. On one day when she was about 11, she recalled,

> For some reason I was in his lounge room watching TV, and everyone else was outside ... and he had come into the lounge room and was giving me lollies or something, and he put his hands down my pants, and I remember thinking that's a bit gross, but I know it wasn't the first time ... I went to have a look at the rabbit and he followed me to look at the rabbit. And I don't remember there, what he did, but I remember that he did touch me again.

In another incident Tanja spoke about being much younger, about five. She talked about how male friends of the family older than her had coaxed her into playing a game. The game involved her removing her pants and

> They pretty much tried to have sex with me. I remember it hurting, and it was awful, and I didn't like it, but there was no – they were there and there was no way out of it, there was no way I could get out of it. And that was just awful. It was horrible ... I really remember it being very painful and very uncomfortable, and not wanting to be there but not actually having a sort of – how to get out of it. It was somehow that that's just what you had to do; you just had to be there and shut up.

The third incident Tanja spoke about involved a female who would invite her into her room.

> She would make me masturbate her and that was pretty awful as well. She never touched me, but I would masturbate her ... I never quite understood what I was doing to be honest with you. But she told me exactly what I had to do and I never quite got the – why would I do that … why would I be doing that.

The last incident that Tanja spoke about was as a young adolescent: she was 13 years old and had run away from home. Tanja was hitchhiking with two male friends to get out of Adelaide. They were picked up by a truck driver who had agreed to take them to Alice Springs. Tanja relayed the story:

> I had fallen asleep in the cab [of the truck] … and woke up and he was using my hand to masturbate him, and touching me. So, I quickly got out of that situation and said to the guys who were with me, look I don't want to get back in that truck.

These stories are consistent with the literature on CSA, that is, the perpetrators are often in positions of power, trusted by the children and primarily male (Itzin 2001, Cossins 1999, Newcomb et al 2009).

## Perpetrator Tactics

Tactics are the actions perpetrators use to lure, groom and/or force children into silence and compliance. Tactics are the pre-abuse behaviour of the perpetrator, that is, the gradual sexualisation of the perpetrator–victim relationship (Laing 1996). This has not been explored in previous research. This raises the question of whether the tactics that

perpetrators use are similar across different ethnic groups and Western countries. Given the lack of literature available on the tactics of perpetrators from different ethnic groups I have included some discussion on this. This discussion will not use full quotations as per the rest of the thesis but rather I have summarised the participants' quotations and discussed what they said. A number of the women used the word trust to show their relationship to the perpetrator. Nguyen Thi Oi talked about how she thought the perpetrator would protect her, that she trusted him, because he was her older relative. Doortje spoke about the man who took her for a drive and said he was married; "I figured you can trust this man". Tanja talked about the perpetrator being in a "trusted position". As noted, this information supports the literature in relation to perpetrators in which it is suggested that the majority are known to and trusted by the children they sexually abuse (Mullen & Fleming 1998).

Many of the participants spoke about the tactics the perpetrators used in either grooming them for the abuse or justifying the abuse. Nguyen Thi Oi talked about how the perpetrator used to play a game of hide and seek with her, tricking her into thinking they were having fun.

> ...I remember he give me a lolly or a biscuit to eat during those time so I just laying there and he doing whatever he want...he encourage me to play with him, so we both have fun...[...]...maybe because when he give me something I have to give something back to him, which is I have to give him, but he abuse me

Astraia talked about how the perpetrator would try to distract her from the abuse by making her play notes at the piano and focus her mind on the lesson while he was abusing her, which resulted in her being confused and unable to concentrate.

> ...You try and focus you know it was "play this" and "try these notes" or "do this" and this stuff is happening and you're sitting there trying to concentrate and this is happening...

Zita described how the perpetrator would tell her she was being stupid when she resisted and was over-reacting, that they were not doing anything bad, which resulted in her doubting herself.

> ...oh god the way he if you would say "no oh don't be silly" it was that kind of thing that you felt like an idiot not to.... I couldn't say to him "I don't want you to do it" because he would always have a comeback to make you feel like you're being ridiculous... Oh he would say "don't be silly" "I'm not doing anything bad" "were not doing anything", just something like that and I would think...I always sort of think, doubt myself...

Anechka's father would blame her while he was administering the enemas and make her feel responsible for it.

> I have to lie down on my side, so he would put enema, and if I would cry or something like again I have to do it its if I don't want it's like again like I am lazy I don't want to go to toilet so they have to do this enema so it's my fault and I have to deal with this...

Doortje also spoke about being bribed with money for lollies, use of games such as hide and seek and sleepovers to outright violence.

> ...the farmer was very clever so then he started saying to my dad "why don't you let [Doortje] come and sleep over coz it will be good fun for her she is on her own" and dad really pushed me into that "don't be stupid it will be fun for you" so mum did too,... so then I had to sleep over there...

Sameera Abdi said the priest used the promise of gifts to lure her and the other girl into a secluded area to sexually assault them.

> ... every now and then he used to call us and...gives us free stuff ...something that is related to our faith...

Ligaya spoke about how her grandfather told her that he was preparing her to be ready for her future husband.

> I remember being hit by my grandfather because I went out of the house and I was wearing shorts. I was only I think 10 or less than that and he thought I was making myself attractive you know that I was attracting attention...Well it surprised me. I remember that slap on the face. I remember that because it shocked me, in front of everyone, maybe subliminally I was doing it...but it was just a strait away the guilt of maybe I was.

The tactics perpetrators used therefore ranged from coercion, making the relationship seem special, luring with gifts, medical procedures, and manipulation through guilt, to outright violence and threats. These tactics are all consistent with research undertaken with male perpetrators who sexually abuse children (Itzin 2001, Kelly et al 2000:19, Lang & Frenzel 1988, Salter 1995). This shows that perpetrators use very similar tactics (Itzin 2001:35).

## Resistance as a Child

I include a section on resistance to sexual abuse as a child to demonstrate any resistance strategies that the ethnic women in this study may have used as a comparison with other

studies. All of the participants described resisting the sexual abuse in some way at the time of the abuse or some time later whilst it was still occurring in childhood. They described resistance through telling stories such as verbally challenging the perpetrators. For example Nguyen Thi Oi said:

> When I was about 11 years old he, at that time my mum send me to a farm with him. So both of us go together, then on the way back he ask me to take my pants off. I said "no", he say "why not", "no I can't take my pants off". I say "no, no" and I run, and then he pull me, like try to grab me back and push me down and touch me and start touching me and I say "no", and I say "what are you doing I don't understand", ... then I screaming very, very loud cos I scare and then he threaten me, he say "he cut my throat if I say this to anyone" ... he try very hard to take off my clothes but he couldn't, because I screamed so loud. Then he start threaten me, he start telling me that he did to a few persons ... they are all my cousins ... So I didn't say it to anyone.

Some of the women spoke about how they would try to avoid being in situations where they could potentially be alone with the perpetrator. For example, Zita said, "When I stopped being in the situation with him alone, so eventually I did stop doing the [task] and I can't remember what excuse I gave".Doortje describes her resistance through avoidance as her 'self-survival instinct'. She described numerous situations where she managed to escape further sexual abuse. For the first incident she said:

> I wouldn't go at that age, I knew that it was not ok to go with this man. I knew I would be hurt so I said "I don't want to go" and dad said "stop being so stupid" and I argued ... I never argued with dad because I was terrified of him but I really was not gonna go with this man and in the end dad just let it go.

Sameera Abdi also spoke about her skill at getting herself out of both situations. With the male relative, she recalled looking at the door knob when he locked it and trying to figure out a way to get out. In the church incident she ran. She said, "in a creative way, smart way, [I] escaped". Without ever speaking about it, Astraia and her sister would stand behind each other during practice and as a result of this protection the abuse eventually stopped. Astraia said:

> I would have a lesson and then she would have a lesson, and it got to the stage when we would ask each other ... come in and stand behind me while I am having my piano lesson. We never said what was happening, but that coming to stand behind me it was how we protected yourself. Your sister is behind you so he couldn't stand behind you ... It wasn't until years later that we stopped having the lessons, and that's when I know he must have picked up that we knew something was wrong, because I remember mum saying he said at one stage that "we weren't talented in music so she shouldn't be wasting her money with lessons anymore".

Thus each participant found ways as children to try to resist or avoid the abuse. In reviewing the literature of resistance more generally (Leclerc et al 2010) it can be concluded that most children resist the abuse in similar fashions across cultures and ethnic groups. This is important because it shows that even in cultures where patriarchy is relatively traditional, girls fight back.

## Effects as a Child

During the storytelling about abuse, perpetrator tactics and resistance, most of the women identified and named effects the sexual abuse had on them. Doortje talked about how sexual abuse alongside extreme physical and emotional abuse made her anxious, nervous and suspicious. Sameera Abdi became more careful and cautious but also became more outspoken and confident, particularly in the presence of the perpetrator who was her relative.

> I didn't withdraw, I became stronger, I became confident, and maybe that was my coping mechanism. I place myself in much less risks, you know I am more careful, but I am also more confident. I started to speak out, like put him [perpetrator] down if we were in public so "what do you know" type of thing, and again that's why I said maybe that's what pushed him completely out of my life. Because even if we see each other we honest to God we do not look at each other straight. I look but he never does look straight into my eyes.

Tanja identified acting out as a teen and running away from home. She also undertook high-risk behaviors, placing herself in very risky situations, using drugs and alcohol and also attempting suicide. All of this eventually resulted in her becoming a ward of the state:

> I did try to kill myself when I was 13. I took an overdose of tablets. I got a really bad report card and I felt really bad. I thought my dad is going to get really angry and I'm useless anyway and what's the point. I'm disgusting as it is, and so, I took, I think it was Serapax ... I did another one at the end of that year ... the second one ... I would have been about 14 ... I took a lot of tablets and ended up having to be taken to the children's hospital to have my stomach pumped, and was in the psych ward.

Ligaya talked about how the abuse left her feeling isolated for fear of being found out. She talked about how she would pretend to be very well behaved as a child, but that she actually felt quite bad.

> So I was a loner. I was really a lonely child, not only a loner but a very lonely child. I was very lonely because of my own secret, and I knew that I was only pretending that I was really good ... And the guilt that I was keeping that [secret] the duality of this, you keep it and you protect yourself.

Anechka talked about wetting the bed until she was a teen, but also that as a very small child she acted out by masturbating in places where she would be caught. Doortje described how she had nightmares as a child, particularly after the second perpetrator sexually assaulted her. The fear of this place lasted into adulthood.

> I was screaming in the middle of the night "[name] don't do it, don't touch me, don't, stop, stop, stop" and mum said "there is something wrong here" and after that I didn't have to go. In this place I had a terrible fear for years about this place in this room where I stayed. All I can remember as a kid was a shadow that used to lean over me quite often at night. I would often wake up and I would wet myself or I was scared. I never felt safe in these quarters ....[...]... years later I found that place and I said "goodbye" to that ... I was so surprised how small it was, it was so big to me as a little kid and I said my goodbyes and it was over.

Doortje also described how as a child she would dissociate, which is a common psychological phenomenon in survivors of CSA (Neuman et al 1996, Kisiel & Lyons 2001, Atchinson & MacFarlane 1994, Calof 1995, Speigel 1990). She said that this enabled her to survive both the sexual abuse but also the physical and emotional abuse she was subjected to by her parents.

> But my mind has just been fantastic ... I just disconnected totally from body to mind, that was how I survived. How else would you survive that trauma of being on guard and not knowing if you were going to get a bullet or a knife? [Father] used to put the knife to my throat quite a bit, so how do you live in that terror.

The effects described by the participants are consistent with the effects described in the general literature on CSA (Peters 1988, Bushnell et al 1992, Ferguson et al 1996, Gould et al 2012, Bebbington et al 2011, Dinwiddie et al 2000, Mullen et al 1994, Feiring, Coates & Taska 2001, Mennen 1995:122, Ozbaran et al 2009).

## The Norm of Silence on Sex and CSA

Thus far, I have detailed the women's stories of sexual abuse and as shown the women were able to identify and name how CSA affected them. In addition to replaying stories of CSA the women continually gave examples and descriptions of silence, that is, silence about sex generally in their communities and family and particularly silence about CSA. Eight participants said that sex and sexuality as a topic was a taboo issue not discussed openly in their communities or in their families. Studies in different ethnic groups have shown that the issue of sex is sensitive, shrouded in silence and taboo (Shahidian 1999:193, Okamura et al 1995:81, Futa et al 2001:197, Kenny & McEachern 2007:28, Hinson et al 2002:839, Mchichi-Alami & Kadri 2004:240, Gilligan & Akhtar

2006:1370, Fontes & Plummer 2010:497), particularly women's sexuality (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999:1284, Sanders-Philips et al 1995, Shahidian 1999:215). The 'norm of silence' dominated the women's interviews. Firstly, the women highlighted that sex was not a topic that was spoken about and hence silence was formed around sexuality. For example, Anechka said:

> Zip, nobody was allowed to talk or think about it. Everyone did it but it didn't exist, ok probably children were brought by the bird. So nobody was allowed to talk about it ....[...]... and so basically it was like taboo, nobody were talking or thinking or doing it at all.

Nguyen Thi Oi said children had a very limited knowledge about sex or what would constitute CSA.

> No never, never say anything about it ... something about what is my private part, like that you not allowed to let people touch you ... I am not even know what is boobs, what is the private part. I may expose myself, but I don't know that it's important to not expose yourself.

Thus, secondly, the women articulated that a lack of sex education or understanding left them with limited knowledge about their bodies and what was happening to them as children. The women therefore emphasised that, with sex and sexuality being silenced in their family and communities, the issue of CSA was itself silenced too. This is consistent with other research findings across ethnic groups (May-Chahal & Herczog 2003:62, Cox, Kershaw & Trotter 2000:70, Singh et al 2010:452). This silencing of sex and sexuality contributes to a 'code of silence' regarding CSA across ethnic groups (Okamura et al 1995:81, Feiring & Taska 2005:337, Tyagi 2001:32, Mchichi-Alami & Kadri 2004:237, Fontes & Plummer 2010:491, Fayokun 2010:611, Bebbington et al 2011:259). For example, Nguyen Thi Oi explained, "in our culture, like we keep it that [CSA] very secret, we don't talk about it, we don't want to talk about it".

Tanja said:

> First it's taboo to talk about, but secondly, there isn't a space created for those conversations, but because of these views about sexuality and women, there isn't an understanding that's outside of this … there's no alternative view ... At all.

Eight participants spoke about how the lack of sex education resulted in them not knowing what was happening to them in relation to CSA. Nguyen Thi Oi, Sameera Abdi, Tanja, Astraia, Doortje, Zaina and Ligaya identified having no knowledge as children about what was happening to them, that is, they indicated during interviews

that they understood that it should not be happening but did not understand what it was, nor did they have a language to describe it. This may be seen as related to the age of onset of abuse; however, Zaina was 13 years of age, but still had no concept of what had occurred to her. Similarly, Nguyen Thi Oi described this:

> That older mother or older sister doesn't teach anything for younger sister or younger child to know which one is our private parts. Which one you don't let people touch you. If I got that teaching then it wouldn't happen to me. So I am angry with my culture that people don't teach us how to know, to know which one is our private parts ... if people touch me, I let them touch me because I don't know what is that. I thought even they take my clothes off and touch me, I don't see it, I don't know what to do with it.

Nguyen Thi Oi said that this lack of information about sex and sexuality resulted in her having absolutely no idea that she was sexually abused until she was in her 20s during a lesson on virginity.

> Believe it or not on that day I realise that when I was young I was sexually abused. So I am not knowing I am sexually abused until I am 21. So what does it mean, I never has been taught about it or understand about sex.

In summary, many of the women said they had an internal knowledge that what happened to them was wrong, consistent with other studies (May-Chahal & Herczog 2003:7). However, because of the absolute silence in relation to sex and sexuality, they did not have a way to express what was happening to them.

> I think CSA is really interesting because you know what is happening is wrong but you don't have the way to express it, it's just there. (Astraia)

> I knew it wasn't right, and I was shocked I didn't know what to do ... I just knew he shouldn't be doing that. I didn't have enough words to express it. (Doortje)

Despite the women describing not knowing what was happening to them, they all described a 'knowing' that sex and sexuality and therefore CSA cannot be spoken about and therefore they could not tell anyone. This layer of silence was so pervasive that it was unspoken yet deeply known by all the women. Zita spoke about this:

> Because I knew I couldn't tell anybody ... I think where the culture comes in is, I couldn't talk to mum about anything anyway that personal ... because personal things were things that you didn't talk to her about. That's definitely very cultural, maybe generational but I think that is very cultural as well. I wouldn't tell my big sister even if it had been someone else. I wouldn't have been able to tell her ... No, no. Those sorts of things you didn't talk to anybody and I don't know how you're expected to deal with them.

In addition to a lack of knowledge about their bodies and the events they were subjected to the women also described another 'knowing' which related particularly to gender understandings in their cultures. The women spoke about how as children they were aware that boys and girls were valued differently, but they did not understand why. For example Sameera Abdi described this 'knowing' in the following way.

> Again so naive, I mean we have never been educated about any of those, up until that time I had no idea what sex is really. I had no concept of what a penis was, or what sex was, or what anything was at that age at all ... other than this is wrong because of gender issue, the fact that he was a man. Female and a male together playing with my private parts and me playing with his private parts, I knew this is major wrong. But I could not think of anything else, why was it wrong I had no idea, what was it doing to me I had no idea. I do remember experiencing a bit of pleasure but I had no idea what it was, that scared the hell out of me.

In summary, during the storytelling about their experiences of CSA, the women illustrated how the norm of silence about sex and sexuality influenced the silence about CSA and these silences affected them as children and growing up as women. Indeed research has shown that incomplete or inappropriate sexuality socialisation in childhood can affect a child's ability to identify abuse (Tillman et al 2010:62). The women's stories showed how the norm of silence surrounding sex can result in girls not understanding their own bodily integrity or having a language to describe it. Consistent with other research, all the women in this study said that providing children with appropriate information regarding sex, sexuality and CSA was very important (May-Chahal & Herczog 2003:29, Gilligan & Akhtar 2006:1370, Andres-Hyman et al 2004:321). In addition the absolute silence which surrounds sex, sexuality and CSA showed one of the multiple layers of silence that ethnic survivors of CSA face in relation to disclosure. The silencing makes disclosure extremely difficult but also enables and provides opportunities for perpetrators to further silence and minimise abuse.

## Disclosure of CSA

As discussed in the literature review disclosure of CSA is often fraught with difficulty (Tyagi 2001:18, Gilligan & Akhtar 2006:1373, Fontes & Plummer 2010:494). Specifically, Shalhoub-Kevorkian (1999:1275) has argued that little is known about patriarchal cultural aspects that influence social reactions to disclosure. Through this discussion I will demonstrate some of these. Most of the women in this study, similar to other studies of both non-ethnic and ethnic-specific groups, did not disclose at the time

of abuse (Tang et al 2007:2, Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2005:1285, Fontes & Plummer 2010:493). At the time of the abuse only two women disclosed, Zaina and Tanja, and therefore seven did not tell anyone about the abuse at the time. Six women specifically said they did not tell anyone because they did not want to make trouble in the family. For example:

> I guess if I did, how many people would have been hurt, and I think that that is always the problem ... [...]...all these adults would have been upset, I don't think I could have dealt with that ... So there was so much about keeping up appearances that everything was right and then nobody would get hurt ... Except me ... So you just put up with it. (Zita)

The majority of the women said that fear of gossip in the community would prevent disclosure because of shame and family standing; this has also been raised in other research with ethnic groups (Tyagi 2001:33, Shahidian 1999:205, Accad 1991:241) and I will discuss it further in the following chapters. Seven participants also said that they did not disclose because they knew they would not be believed. More specifically, two women said they thought they would not be believed because they were poor kids, reflecting intersections between ethnicity, gender and class; which is consistent in research across ethnic groups (Singh et al 2013, Tang et al 2007:7, Lowe et al 2005:149–150, Tyagi 2001:30, Fontes & Plummer 2010:501, Kanukollu & Mahalingam 2011:223, Lundqvist et al 2004). For example Doortje said:

> Why? Because nobody would believe me because I was a caravan kid from a poor migrant family and I knew that without articulating it and secondly he was a respectful rich man, a well-established community member in a [country town] and I just had no voice. That's what I felt, so even at that age I never told anyone.

Doortje's comment brings class into the frame in addition to ethnicity (Hawkesworth 2006), showing how it can go hand in hand with ethnicity. Nguyen Thi Oi explained that the fear of not being believed kept her silent.

> But I mean that [silence] is part of our culture. Why people don't believe that a man doing this to young people to a young child. It's there many years, it's there already [CSA] but no one believe. It make me more scare to tell people because I am not sure they will believe me, so instead of I keep quiet. That is one thing I need to add here because I keep quiet because I don't know they believe me or not. Instead I keep quiet and nobody know about it rather than tell people and they don't believe it.

Nguyen Thi Oi's quotation above reinforces the importance of believing being linked to a child's safety in disclosing. She went on to say how this silence even prohibited her from providing support to her niece and publicly believing her, when she knew the

abuse was true because it was the same man that abused her. Nguyen Thi Oi told a story about when the perpetrator's wife came to visit her recently and informed Nguyen Thi Oi that her daughter had disclosed that the father had sexually abused her.

> I didn't tell her anything, I just listen, but then I am thinking in my head, I understand you very well, and I believe that it happened to his daughter and she say she doesn't believe her daughter and I saying inside "I believe your daughter but you sound like you don't believe your daughter", make me angry. I can't say it, that why I say part of our culture is I can't talk on my niece behalf that I believe her.

Fearing to disclose because of cultural taboos and hence risking not being believed can build trans-generational silence whereby older generations of survivors are forced into silence and in so doing maintain the silence about CSA across generations.

The power of males in families and communities was a consistent theme across the women's interviews and has also been a common feature of research about CSA in ethnic groups (Okamura et al 1995:72, Chan 2009:78). For example, Ligaya said that because of the power that her grandfather had in the household she believed that nothing would have happened if she had disclosed. She said, "He was the king of the household. I would have a suspicion now and reflection that it happened also to my mother from him". All of the women talked about male power, that is, the power that the male perpetrators had either in their household or community, as being a significant factor in their silence and non-disclosure as children. In addition a number of authors have shown that traditional patriarchal cultural values significantly inhibit disclosure (Comaz-Diaz 1995:36, Singh et al 2010:451). Some authors argue more generally that traditional gender role socialisation, with men maintaining power and women remaining subordinate (Chan 2009:81), results in a social and cultural acceptance of women's subordination and is a factor contributing to sexual violence (Chan 2009:78, Liu 1999). I explore the issue of male power and CSA further in Chapter 6 because cultural imperatives for women that arise from ideas of honour, respect, modesty, shame and embarrassment (Gilligan & Akhtar 2006:1361, Fontes & Plummer 2010:497, Kanukollu & Mahalingam 2011:224) have specific cultural relevance for women's and girls' sexuality and sexual integrity. However, I wanted to highlight the theme of male power in this chapter because the women identified it as a reason for not disclosing sexual abuse as children.

Seven participants described feelings of shame and concerns about blame as significant barriers to disclosure, which is also consistent with other studies (Feiring & Taska 2005:337, Luo et al 2008:729, Singh et al 2013, Tyagi 2001:30, Lundqvist et al 2004, Reavey, Ahmed & Majumdar 2006:177, Haj-Yahia & Tamish 2001:1305, Lowe et al 2005:149–150, Gilligan & Akhtar 2006:1369, Fontes & Plummer 2010:500). Nguyen Thi Oi talked about the shame she felt about the abuse and how that impacted on her not disclosing.

> I am scared to tell them because of shame and because of no one say "he wrong". No one say my [relative] is wrong, no one say my [relative] will be shame, shame on him, so that why I am scared to tell them.

In addition this relates very strongly to the participants' perspective that men have not been held responsible for the abuse they perpetrate. For example, Sameera Abdi said it never even crossed her mind to tell anybody at the time because even as a small child she knew that what had happened had transgressed some gender norms and roles, which meant she would be blamed.

> You know and I never spoke about it to anybody and because I know I would be blamed for it ... it's purely because there is a lot of responsibility placed on the women. It just automatically, you just don't think about it, you're on your own, it's your fault you were there, you cop it.

She went on to say that, as a norm, women/girls would be blamed for any sexual impropriety simply because they were there. This was also consistent across the women's stories:

> It's my responsibility, I shouldn't have gone there, it's that simple ... And who to, you know. I would think now if there was anybody to talk to, probably it might cross your mind somehow. I don't know, but it's just no place, not even within the family ...[...]... You know my mother, look the role never includes this type of thing. My aunty just has a role very clear tell me about the period, tell me about that and that's it. There is that limit of how far you can access the information, they don't, it's not like you're free ask question.

This too is consistent with other research in ethnic groups suggesting the significance of shame in relation to being involved in a taboo issue (Feiring & Taska 2005:337, Luo et al 2008:729) including shame about a loss of honour (Reavey, Ahmed & Majumdar 2006:177, Haj-Yahia & Tamish 2001:1305, Lowe et al 2005:149–150, Tyagi 2001:30, Gilligan & Akhtar 2006:1369, Fontes & Plummer 2010:500), and fear of being blamed (Singh et al 2013, Tyagi 2001:30, Lundqvist et al 2004) and its role as a barrier to disclosure. The women referred to societal and familial attitudes, especially gender-

specific ideas that influence a girl's ability to disclose, that is, patriarchal relations played out between couples are exacerbated by assumptions in communities and reproduced in families (Ahmed, Reavey & Majumdar 2009:17). I will discuss this argument further throughout the subsequent chapters. But what this chapter has shown thus far is that women's perceptions about reactions from family and society, such as not being believed, hurting family, male power and gender differences, come together to build and result in shame and blame for victims. This then acts as a mechanism that silences abuse and prevents disclosure (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999:1276).

As mentioned early, two women reported that they did disclose at the time of abuse. Tanja disclosed one incident to a family member, and at the time she thought it was acted upon because that male friend of the family seemed to disappear.

> I said to [person] this fellow's doing this stuff, and they said, "Oh don't be stupid, he is not." They didn't believe me. And I said to them, "No, no, he is, watch." And so, that was when I went to have a look at the rabbit and he followed me to look at the rabbit ... I remember that he did touch me again ... and then I came back, and the person I told was sort of going "oh". And I thought they told my mum, because after that, I have very little memory of seeing him again at family functions.

However, during the interview Tanja said as an adult she learned that the person she disclosed to never mentioned it to anyone. On the other hand, Zaina's story of disclosure did not happen immediately but as a result of pregnancy three months later.

> In the morning I didn't tell anyone ... I was worrying to tell anyone, so I couldn't say anything. I stayed and my uncle stayed like that, but after a few months they realise that I am pregnant ...
>
> My mum ask me by herself and I said "it was my uncle" because I didn't know how women can become pregnant and I said "no I don't understand" but my mum just try to explain "if a man came and do sex with me" and I said what happened with my uncle and my mum start crying.

Research in highly patriarchal cultures has shown that pregnancy is often the way in which disclosure is precipitated (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999:1284). After this Zaina's mother had a meeting with relatives regarding the rape, confronting the uncle who would not take responsibility. Zaina explained that a family feud emerged after this confrontation and the uncle killed himself, writing a note admitting to the rape, which further enflamed the feud because Zaina was blamed for disclosing the abuse and causing trouble.

> My uncle killed himself and he was refusing before it was not him, but when he killed himself he wrote a letter and say it was him because people were fighting because of him, and when he kill himself so the fight became again, they wanted to kill me because I didn't listen for what they wanted.

The notion of killing the victim, which was a real risk for Zaina, is not limited to Africa. Other societies do this too (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999:1283, Purcell-Riederer 2013) and these are commonly known as honour killings (Welchman & Hossain 2005, van Eck 2003). In order to save her, Zaina's father took her to an enemy village where he had a friend. She lived with this man and his family as their daughter and her name was changed. No one but the man who took her in knew she was not his child. Zaina said that traditionally a girl would be given to the perpetrator in marriage; however, because it was her uncle this was not the case for her. This is also a response to CSA and rape in other cultures (Nhunda & Shumba 2001:1528, Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999:1278, Sharf 2013:201, Gharim 2013:51). Thus, despite the apparent extreme reaction in Zaina's case, the response of blaming the victim appears to be common across cultures, and this was strongly supported by all nine women in this study. The issue of blame in relation to sexual violence is gender specific and I will discuss this further in the next chapter.

Consistent with the literature the women in this research talked about considering others' reactions to a potential disclosure, that is, whether they would believe, help or take it seriously, and made a judgement about whether or not to disclose based on this (Ruback, Greenberg & Wescott 1984, Wyatt & Newcomb 1990). Thus, there are many common elements in relation to lack of disclosure that transcend cultures, ethnicities and communities. Lowe et al (2005:149–150) also suggested that shame associated with abuse, fear of not being believed, fear of being removed, and fear of destruction of the family are all barriers to disclosure. While I have not discussed fear of being removed, four participants indicated that removal of the child from the community was a common response to CSA in their ethnic group. In addition Lowe et al (2005) indicated that there are additional barriers for ethnic communities, such as harsher court penalties for minority groups and a betrayal of family and culture.

Further, when one considers the dramatic outcome for Zaina of disclosing in the form of threats to life, it is important to be cognisant of the specific cultural consequences for ethnic women. As mentioned earlier issues such as language difficulties, distrust of the criminal justice system, lack of support (Danica Report Collective 1993 cited in Tyagi 2001:18, McEvoy & Daniluk 1994), extended family in the household (Herrerias 1988,

Mindel 1980), male authority (Derezotes & Snowden 1990), proximity of the perpetrator (Huston et al 1995), and filial piety (Tang & Davis 1996) all act as barriers that prevent children disclosing sexual abuse.

## Disclosure as Adults and Adolescents

So far the data has shown that a complex web of silencing surrounds ethnic survivors of CSA when they are children. I will now turn to the experiences of disclosure for some of the participants as adults and adolescents. Seven of the women did not speak about the abuse until they were adults or teenagers because they continued to feel they would be blamed for it. Five have disclosed some information about the sexual abuse to their husbands. Each woman's experience was different. For three women their husbands were understanding and supportive at the time of disclosure. Two women had negative responses. One has never told her husband. The other two participants did not discuss this. Zita said she was sorry she told her husband because he blamed her.

> He said, "why did you let him". I thought I just want to hit you ... I told him and he said, "why did you let him do it". I thought, you bastard, like it was my fault that it all happened, that I let him. So well I am not going to tell you anything anymore am I. So he was like, he didn't get angry with him he didn't, he was just angry with me because I let it happen.

Nguyen Thi Oi told her husband before marriage because she was terrified that she was no longer a virgin, and knew that virginity was prized in her community, as it was in the communities of seven other participants. She said to him

> "If you married me you have to aware that I am not sure that I got virginity", and he say "why", because I know Vietnamese man they very precious about married a girl who is still got virginity, so I say to him "that if you are that person if you very precious about a girls who is still virgin have a second thought about getting married with me" because I am worry because seriously I don't know if I still had virgin or not and he say "why" and I say "because when I was very young I had", I didn't say my [relative] I say "I think I got sexual abuse when I was young" and then he say "how do you know" and I say, "because when I was very, very young I remember someone put his hand into my vagina and it's constantly happen". He say "oh don't worry about it". "That not an issue for me". That what he say ... In my memory I remember that he didn't question a lot when I told him. Very quick like 10 minute talk and that's it gone, gone since then.

Here when she said "it's gone, gone since then" this means that neither she nor he ever raised it again for the duration of their marriage. She found this very difficult to deal with. Astraia and her sister disclosed to their mother when she was about 16 years of age.

> [She] was really angry, she couldn't understand. I never forget her saying, "why didn't you ever tell me" and that to me was you know ... "why didn't you ever pick it up", [Astraia thought in response] "how could you", "what was I supposed to tell you". I knew something was wrong, but you can't articulate it as a child ... I feel "you didn't do anything to". I don't know, what did I want, payback? Did I want my Mum to confront him? Did I want my parents to go and punish him for doing that to me? I don't know.

However, Astraia went on to say that her mother did believe her and felt quite guilty because she was so trusting of this Greek piano teacher and that Astraia's disclosure has changed her Mum so much so that "She is a very different person now". Tanja disclosed again as a young adult to another family member while her brother was present, but only about the incident with the adult male:

> [He said] ... "Oh well it wasn't that bad, he just touched you, it's not a big deal". And I thought, oh okay, it's not a big deal, then why was I so fucked up, if it's not a big deal – I couldn't quite figure that one out.

Outside of these intimate experiences of disclosure with families and partners, some of the participants said they spoke about it to friends. For some I was the first person they spoke to about the sexual abuse they were subjected to as a child. Sameera Abdi said, "You are the only person I have ever in my life said that to, like not even to my best friend. Nobody, nobody, nobody, on this earth knows about this". Disclosure has often been understood as an individual choice made by victims; however, as shown here, it is really much more complex than that. It is influenced by family relationships, family culture, ethnic culture and the broader society within which one lives (Tang, Freyd & Wang 2007:5). Social practices such as traditional patriarchal roles which position women as subordinate and men as superior provide shared cultural frameworks of meanings (Gavey & Schmidt 2011:435), as I will elaborate further in the next chapter. Tang, Freyd and Wang (2007:3) questioned whether disclosure was always helpful to victims. We can see from the participants' discussions of their own experiences, but also of how they perceived it would have been handled by their family and community, that disclosure would most likely not have been helpful for them and resulted in further shame, blame and stigma. Studies have largely found that there are no differences in the psychological functioning of those who did or did not disclose (Ruggiero et al 2004).

In closing, some of the women disclosed CSA as teenagers and/or adults and others did not. Disclosure has often been understood as an individual choice made by victims; however, the women's stories thus far have shown that disclosure is influenced by

multiple factors that include traditional patriarchal roles (Gavey & Schmidt 2011:435), which then influence understandings and interpretations of CSA. As the women's stories are beginning to show, these meanings appear to have some consistency, particularly as they relate to gender and women's sexuality. Fear of disclosure has within it cultural, social, religious and political elements (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999:1289) which cannot be placed outside of a woman's experience but rather they are the very considerations that formulate that experience.

# CHAPTER SIX
# Cultural Constructions of Gender, Gender Practices and the Female Body: Blame and Responsibility for CSA

This chapter examines the themes of blame and responsibility for CSA because they dominated the women's stories and reflections about their own experiences but also in their descriptions of culture within their own ethnic groups. This analysis therefore comes from the women's own experiences, but also their reflexive talk about their communities. In their interviews the women identified multiple layers of responsibility for CSA and I will unpack and discuss these throughout this chapter. The different ways women were blamed fell into three thematic categories which I have entitled: 'girls and women as responsible for abuse'; 'the female body, shame and responsibility'; and 'the stamp of stigma: abused women as dirty and damaged'. I will discuss the impact of these cultural constructions on the individual women, their families and communities within the context of each theme.

## Girls and Women as Responsible for Abuse

The interviews were saturated in constructions of blame and responsibility, that is, the women told specific stories about 'feeling' or 'being' blamed; hence the sub-themes in this chapter reflect such descriptions. Feelings about having responsibility for the CSA emerged through the discussions about blame and shame.

### *"I Let Him do it": Failing to Prevent Abuse*

One way that responsibility was constructed was through the women blaming themselves for not preventing the abuse. For example, the women frequently used phrases such as 'I didn't refuse it', 'I didn't scream', 'I didn't stop it', or 'I should not have been there in the first place' during the interviews. Nguyen talked about her experience and how she felt that because she did not do anything to stop him, she came to feel that she had allowed it to happen.

> During those time I didn't refuse, I let him do it. So he feel very comfortable doing it all the time. I didn't refuse, I didn't push him, I didn't scream, I didn't say anything. I remember he give me a lolly or a biscuit to eat during those time, so I

> just laying there and he doing whatever he want. I didn't scream or do anything so he feel very comfortable doing it. So when it was the last time, I refuse screaming then he start like say "oh ok this girl she knows something so I have to stop".

Astraia also described how she felt in some way responsible by not speaking up, by continuing to let it happen in spite of the fact that she and her sister had developed the strategy of trying to prevent the abuser's access to their bodies while sitting at the piano.

> I think back now and I think why didn't I ever say to mum "I'm not having these lessons". You just did it cos you were told cos that's what you do, it's your lesson time and we never ever said "no I am not doing this anymore". That's what I can't understand in my head, why didn't I say "I am not doing this anymore"? ... Maybe I felt that I did [was complicit] by continuing to let it happen. I know now at this stage of my life that I didn't have the language or the skills set to say something then but how did I know? I kept asking my sister and she kept asking me stand behind me.

Sameera Abdi also spoke about how in some way she felt responsible because she had accepted the abuser's invitation to go to his room. She described particularly how the cultural gender norms relating to women influenced this feeling of blame.

> The fact that I accepted his invitation to go there, when I know that a good female don't do that, even though he is your [relative], you just don't go out, because you're then placing yourself at risk. So it's never his fault, it's always my fault. So I would feel embarrassed to explain what was I doing there. So I didn't want to put myself in that situation and it will damage relationships because sex is most precious private thing and when it becomes a public issue then it is not just embarrassing for the person but for the immediate family members of the person.

Zita spoke about how she had difficulty understanding why she could not put a stop to the abuse because it lasted so long.

> ... obviously many times I felt that I was weak not to put a stop to it but I couldn't understand why I couldn't put a stop to it....

Within these quotations it is evident that the participants felt responsible and held a level of guilt for failing to prevent the abuse. Sameera Abdi's went on to say that this was influenced by cultural gender norms and practices.

> You know and I never spoke about it to anybody and because I know I would be blamed for it.... I didn't want to really cause any trouble in the family... it's purely because there is allot of responsibility placed on the women. It just automatically, you just don't think about it, you're on your own, it's your fault you were there, you cop it.

Other research into ethnicity and CSA has similarly identified guilt among abused women (Feiring & Taska 2005) and self-blame for the abuse is a consistent feature in women's responses to CSA (Fontes & Plummer 2010:501, Reavey & Gough 2000:330,

Feiring, Coates & Taska 2001:1321, Okamura et al 1995:83, Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999:1287, 2005:1276, Ullman & Filipas 2006:666, Katerndahl et al 2005, Tillman et al 2010:62, Sgroi 1982).

Ligaya approached guilt and responsibility from a slightly different perspective when she described how community norms regarding chastity and promiscuity, to be discussed shortly, played into her feelings. She reported that she felt guilty because there were elements of pleasure in the abuse, which she felt confused by.

> I think the guilt that I have allowed it, I have never really talked about it. I have just accepted it, but maybe there was pleasure for me too. I have felt that guilt ever since, to think that I was becoming like my mother.

Ligaya linked the guilt to pleasure because she was aware that her mother had been viewed as promiscuous in the family and community because she had affairs, and to her own fear that she was heading down a similar path. The presence of pleasure during abuse, as well as accepting gifts or treats and participating in multiple episodes, is known to contribute to feelings of self-blame (Fontes 2005:139, 2007:69, Reavey & Gough 2000:330, Fontes & Plummer 2010:501).

### *"What Did You do You Little Tart?" Being Blamed by Others*

Responsibility was also constructed through the fear the women had of being blamed outright by their families or others in their community. In the previous chapter I discussed how the fear of blame prevented participants from disclosing their experiences of abuse. Here I show how direct blame for CSA is linked with the sexualisation of women and girls in many cultures and the gender norms and practices surrounding them. The women described being blamed through both reference to their own experiences and to other incidences of CSA they were aware of in their communities. Seven participants noted a total of 20 separate incidents of CSA they were aware of in their families and/or communities. Doortje talked about how her cousin responded to her disclosure of an attempted rape.

> When I was nearly 14 my brother-in-law tried to get me drunk and tried to rape me, and I was telling my cousin about this 3 weeks ago, [he] come over from Holland and he said to me "well you were pretty hot looking". So there you are, that answers the question about blame, well I was hot looking so what did I expect?

All participants emphasised practices of blaming girls for sexual abuse in their communities. Ligaya said:

> .... to be a good girl, to be good is to not divulge that, then I am revealing that I am not a good girl, that sort of thing.... I think there is an expectation there an unspoken expectation; it's very much it permeates everything...

In an earlier quote Sameera Abdi said, "I never spoke about it to anybody because I know I would be blamed for it". This statement shows no doubt about the possibility of blame but rather certainty, which is consistent across the sample.

Similarly Astraia goes on to say that in some way she felt she had a role to play in it because she let it happen.

> ...Guilt... It tells me that, why am I feeling that I had a role to play in it ...I could have said "my mother was in the next room" I could have said you know the minute he touched me "what are you doing", or called my mother.....

Indeed in relation to community attitudes Astraia stated, "A girl would never raise it because she would be blamed ... you know, what did you do you little tart?" The only example given by the women where a girl may not be blamed and a male perpetrator would be held responsible was in relation to a very young child. Tanja said:

> ... under 10 I reckon people would pretty much be horrified but if there was any sign of development I reckon it would be the girl it would be her fault she would have done something to elicit it by the very fact that she was developed or whatever...So, when I think about culturally, the way that it's viewed it is very much that girl, particularly if you're a young pre-pubescent or pubescent teen; it's that stuff about women's sexuality, you know. You are somehow responsible, that there's something about you that does it. Yeah, you, it's your fault that temptation.

Therefore for a younger female child there was some recognition of the perpetrator's responsibility but not for an older girl. Similarly some of the women suggested that there would be differing notions of the perpetrator's responsibility in intrafamilial versus extrafamilial abuse. Sameera Abdi suggests that:

> ... a male member of the family [abusing a girl child of] 7 yrs old or 8 it will be a disgrace that your able to do such a thing to a vulnerable girl.... there is a recognition that she is young, but for him it will be "that's wrong what you're doing", "don't do it", that's if it's a male, " what are you doing are you out of your mind"...but if its happen outside by all means she will be blamed, what was she doling there, she is not allowed to go there, you know um, like the fact that she was alone with him, she should have run she should have yeah definitely...[...]...

Blaming the victim is a common feature of women's experiences that is identified in CSA research in general (Salter 1988:60, Fontes 2005:137, 2007:65–66, Shaw et al 2001:1376, Schneider et al 2009:412, Thapar-Bjorkert & Morgan 2010:51, Krause & Roth 2011:34, Reavey, Ahmed & Majumdar 2006:175, Okamura et al 1995:83, Haj-

Yahia & Tamish 2001:1304). This includes blame because of what a woman was wearing, where she was located and behaviours that are considered alluring. Girls blame themselves for participating in the abuse (Fontes & Plummer 2010:501) as well as because others blame them (Reavey, Ahmed & Majumdar 2006:175). Blame is also a tactic used by offenders to justify the abuse (Salter 1988:35–42). Blame is constructed around social and cultural gender norms and practices that make perpetrators invisible (Reavey & Gough 2000). Indeed research has found that some women continue to blame themselves throughout adulthood (Ullman & Filipas 2006). These practices of blame along with the norms of silence and secrecy about sex, sexuality and CSA discussed in the previous chapter serve to reinforce guilt and isolate victims (Yuksel 2000). While Ullman and Fillipas (2006:666) suggest that self-blame is a common effect for survivors, with one third still blaming themselves into adulthood, my participants no longer do and I will explore this further in subsequent chapters.

### *"There are so Many Unspoken Rules": Shame and the Unspoken Rules of Gender*

The theme of responsibility was constructed by the majority of the women around the unspoken rules of female sexuality and gender, and specifically linking these to feelings of shame. Throughout the interviews the women discussed unspoken, implicit rules in relation to gender norms and practices, and sex and sexuality. These were strongly linked with the fear of gossip as discussed earlier. The women talked about how these unspoken rules relay and reinforce how women and girls are expected to behave, where they were allowed to go and with whom, what they wore and how they should demonstrate their sexuality. Throughout their discussions about their communities and their lives it was evident that these unspoken rules reinforced blame and responsibility for women in most areas of domestic life but particularly for sexual violence, including CSA. These unspoken rules are interwoven with the concept of a good girl. Ligaya explained:

> It's those unspoken rules, there are many unspoken rules ... But you know it's a rule and that you're not supposed to be doing it ... where does it start, where does it end? I really can't tell you because I know they are there, but ... they been really spoken about no, but you know.

> Nguyen Thi Oi reflected that within her culture boys and men are directly taught what appropriate behaviour is for boys and men, and what is expected of them. ...[...]... as a parent they don't say "you should cook this or that", instead of encourage they go "you a man don't do it"," you go cut the lawn", "mowing the lawn", "not here

> to wash the dishes go go away", so kind of like that... Father teach my brother like man has to be like a man. Kind of like women job "you don't cross that women job". Women job is women job, man job is man job. That is the dominant teaching that I can tell you.

Similarly girls are taught both overtly and through unspoken rules what the definition of a good girl entails, as mentioned by Ligaya earlier. She said:

> ...and there is a definition of what is good...so the definition of what is good is that your a bit more obedient to the parents, obviously a bit more modest, to this modest and chaste, so in all of that being a virgin when you get married is something ...it's less talk about but that is an expectation, so that I would call that subtleties that you know when in a cultural group, you know that is the expectation you don't need to discuss it...

While this norm of 'the good girl', was common across the sample, none of the participants discussed the norm of a 'good boy'. A 'good girl'was expected to be obedient, modest, quite, undertake domestic chores, nurture and care for other siblings and be chaste.

Astraia picked up on the concept of the 'good girl' but expanded it to expectations of education; however, she pointed out that the educative process was believed to contribute to her finding a suitable husband.

> Respectable good girl, doing all the things you need to do as a girl, your role get married, all those things... And good girls know how to cook and like you have to be everything like got to have an education. But you just go to uni and get your qualifications so you can find a really good educated doctor or lawyer to marry. You just got to have the bit of paper but you don't actually have to have the career. You know on graduation day, you have to have your groom next to you ... coz your ready to marry you now, you've got to be a good cook and um I know it's very stereotyped but I think it's quite real um and I don't think for me that it was a culture, that there was encouragement to get an education, and to be educated. But no one really understood what that meant because with education comes off course comes knowledge and ...[...]...

These unspoken rules infiltrate every aspect of a woman's life as.. Sameera Abdi said that

> You know how we spoke about there are roles for girls and boys and you learn what your role is sometimes through what your told but often through just what you see, [the] unspoken rules...

Eight participants identified that knowledge about sexual abuse in their community would result in shame and/or blame for the girl child and her family. Astraia explained how this layer of responsibility for the abuse left her feeling shame.

> That was really hard to even acknowledge to myself. I think that was probably the hardest thing of all, you know, "what took you so long to say anything?", "why did you let it go on?", "did you want it, did you like it?" and then there is that embarrassment and shame, the shame.

Similarly, Nguyen Thi Oi distinguished that it is the girl and her family who will be shamed, not the male perpetrator. For example, she said, "Not the man [perpetrator], it will shame the family and it will shame the girl". Ligaya described how the shame is linked to blame which is then linked to female sexuality.

It's your shame ... Yes, if you're wearing more revealing clothes and you also happen to be sort of sexually abused it's your fault ... Well you know you're asking for it.Doortje described the various excuses that would be made for sexual abuse, all related to what a girl was doing, wearing or how old she was. For example,

> She was probably provocative or she probably didn't have her pants on or maybe she is very early sexually aroused, would be easily said, but maybe she's hotter past her age.

Sameera Abdi reflected on how these specific expectations of girls affected her growing up in her culture. This is part of the 'unspoken rules' many of the other women mentioned as well. Here she described how she learned what the limitations were on girls through the experiences she witnessed of other girls in her school. It taught her not to question further, or seek other answers in relation to sexuality.

> ... [another girl] she was punished by her parents for the relationship that she had with an older man, another student in fact at high school and literally was stopped from going to the school and then they changed school. That reinforced things about for me as a female that how wrong it is to even be with a man or be seen with a man or talking about a man. Let alone anything else so that just confirmed things to me that was the time when I put it in the jug and lock it up and off we go, and it wasn't until I went to university that I got my full on education, believe it or not...I had no idea before...

Such a focus on what girls and women are wearing and doing is consistent across cultures (McMahon 2007) and was described in various ways by all the participants in this study. Fontes (2005:135) suggested that the issue of shame for ethnic survivors of CSA is linked with honour.

Sameera Abdi described from a personal experience how her father treated her after one particular incident which in her 'culture' may have been seen as a threat to her honour and therefore potentially shameful for the girl and her family.

> There are certain things that allowed or not allowed to do and so they are quite clearly defined. I remember one day I wanted to go somewhere, and I did and I didn't really make a big deal out of it I just asked mum and mum said "yeah go". I was with my cousin, and um when I came back oh boy my father find out that I went and um and that was my cousin and my father just hit the roof. Like it's "how dare you", "what would they say about you" and I said "dad what did I do for goodness sake?", "what did I do? I just went to the beach". So it was a big deal for him and I didn't understand why he was acting this way and in a way it is you feel angry because what did I do to deserve that cannot be trusted.

Ligaya said that protecting the honour of the family was a central factor in CSA in ethnic communities. She said: "That is definitely the status of the family, have to protect the honour of the family". Honour has linked to it a claim of worth that comes with social acknowledgment. Shame is also linked with worth; the feeling of shame itself is one of no worth, which is enhanced by the lack of social acknowledgment of worth by others (Fontes 2005:135). Thus the person not only feels shameful and unworthy within themselves, but also in the eyes of others (Fontes 2005:135). Shame too is a consistent feature of research with survivors of CSA (Reavey & Gough 2000:329, Reavey, Ahmed & Majumdar 2006:175, Feiring, Coates & Taska 2001:1321, Okamura et al 1995:79, Chan 2009:79, Tang et al 2007:7, Fiering & Taska 2005:337, Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2005:1276, Futa et al 2001:195, Fontes 2005:139, 2007:63, Andres-Hyman et al 2004:321, Fontes & Plummer 2010:496, Briere & Elliott 2003). It can be argued that this layer of shame is developed by the norm of silence regarding sex, sexuality and CSA, which means children feel like they are participating in a taboo activity.The layers of gendered responsibility placed on women and girls regarding their sexuality (Fontes 2005:136–158) in culture compounds this shame.However, this is but one layer of shame the women discussed and I will identify further layers throughout the subsequent chapters.

Shame for family and community is framed by cultural norms and values related to both gender and the family. Eight participants said that family was very important in their culture. Ligaya's quotation earlier talked about honour and the importance of maintaining family honour. Similarly, Sameera Abdi described the role of family in her culture.

> The family is extremely important, we have a saying in Arabic which says ... no matter what happens you always stand by your family, for whatever reason, wrong or good you know you always stand by your family. Everyone else outside the family is an outsider and as a result of that no one shares, people don't talk and share their problems, the friendship is a very superficial one ... but when you're experiencing taboo issues ... like sexual assault ... those are extremely important issues taboo, they are kept in behind closed doors.

Thus the family is crucial and taboo issues like CSA should be kept secret. The women spoke about the influence of cultural values such as obedience and respect for elders, also known in some communities as *respeto* or filial piety (Okamura et al 1995:75, Comaz-Diaz 1995:39, Lowe et al 2005:161, Kenny & McEachern 2007:27). Nguyen Thi Oi described this:

> Respect older and respect people who has a higher position. In our culture no matter what the higher position person talk to you if you are lower you can't really say it back, argue back, that would be the word argue back but you can have a conversation and show respect otherwise you will be tell, if I am not respect they will tell me off.

Family and community are the central organising role for ethnic people not just specific ethnic groups (Okamura et al 1995:71) and the expectation of loyalty to parents, elders and culture was present in seven of the women's stories (Okamura et al 1995:73). The importance of family in ethnic groups extends beyond the nuclear unit and involves the subordination of the self for the family (Comaz-Diaz 1995:35). This importance of family alongside gender norms and practices, unspoken rules, and concerns regarding gossip in the community means that women survivors of CSA often wear the blame, shame and silence alone. Further to this, in ethnic cultures, one daughter being victimised can result in the whole family being tainted (Fontes 2005:145). Astraia described this:

> People didn't want to draw unnecessary or negative attention or worry about the future marriage potential of their daughter it would be suppressed and kept quite they would do nothing about it they would just hush it up, especially if it were penetration, she lost her virginity, there would be real problems marrying her off then because who would want her if she is not a virgin...[...]...

Researchers have argued there are cultural imperatives that arise from norms of honour, respect, modesty, shame and embarrassment (Gilligan & Akhtar 2006:1361, Fontes & Plummer 2010:497, Kanukollu & Mahalingam 2011:224) and these prevent disclosure of CSA, as discussed in the previous chapter and shown here. The women in this study referred consistently to these unspoken rules of gender and their links with the shame and embarrassment that would result for the family if the CSA was known about

publicly. What is interesting is that in other research on CSA this link was found only in specific ethnic groups for example Palestinian or Asian (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999:1280, Haj-Yahia & Tamish 2001:1305, Chan 2009:80). However, in my study it was consistent across eight different ethnic communities. The one participant who did not describe these cultural imperatives was from the Netherlands, a northern European country that considers itself progressive. Thus eight participants said that public knowledge of CSA would result in shame and blame for the girl, and shame for her whole family. The question of family reputation and honour therefore resulted in significant pressure for the women to remain silent, but also placed the responsibility for abuse squarely at their feet (Ahmed, Reavey & Majumdar 2009:18–19).

Shame is therefore a common effect of CSA for women and results from feelings of self-condemnation about being involved in behaviours considered dirty or bad (Feiring & Taska 2005:337). However, unlike guilt or self-blame, which involves a focus on one's own actions as mentioned earlier, shame permeates one's entire being (Feiring & Taska 2005:338). The commonness of shame in relation to CSA therefore transcends ethnic groups. However, in some cultures it is understood as a loss of face (Futa et al 2001:195, Okamura et al 1995:74), or *sharam*, which is behaviour that brings shame to the family and community (Kanukollu & Mahalingam 2011:224). These are different terms used to describe the same thing. Shame is a mechanism that controls the family and ensures adherence to such damaging cultural views and responses to CSA victims/survivors.

Blaming women in these ways is also a tactic often used by perpetrators of CSA to justify their behaviour (Salter 1988:60). Some authors argue that there are no differences in victim blaming between ethnic groups and the wider community in Western countries (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999:1287). However, what is different is the repercussions for victims in ethnic communities (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999:1287) because these include multiple layers of shame and blame that extend to the whole family. The analysis of the findings thus far shows very powerful links to gender norms and practices, some of which I identified in Chapter 5, and I will elaborate on them in this and the subsequent chapters. These gender norms and practices play out in responses to women and men in relation to CSA whereby responsibility for abuse is on female victims and male perpetrators remain invisible.

### *"Home is the Mother": Mother Blame*

All of the women spoke about women as mothers and the expectations they and other women in their communities felt to take on domestic tasks and nurturing of the family. All participants positioned women as having a great deal of responsibility within the home but little power. These themes also informed and presented this as informing practices of mothers being held responsible for any bad experiences in the home. Given that all of the participants were girls at the time of the abuse, the data shows that regardless of age, females bear the responsibility for carrying these experiences into their womanhood. Thus the participants' stories captured mother-blame in their communities, however, the women themselves did not participate in blaming practices in offering their narratives of their childhood experiences.

Zaina talked about how mothers and daughters are relegated to the same domestic sphere within her ethnic group from which boys and men are excluded.

> ...because always women and mother and daughter they have a same job in the house, they don't include boys cooking cleaning something like that ...

Sameera Abdi described an incident where she was forced by her father to serve her brother food.

> ... I grew up with a lot of sisters and two brothers and when my gosh it remember very very well one day my brother came back from work and he said can you put me dinner and I said dinner is on the stove in the pot, you've got legs you've got hands go for it, my father wasn't here he was in another room but he heard, what did you say to him, I said, yeah he can do it, its heated everything all he needs to do is just put it in the plate, it was not acceptable at all he made me get up and do it, now that is learnt behaviour

Doortje said:

> ...In work in the house and fix problems it's your responsibility to make harmony within the house.... if there is disharmony then you fix it ... That's right got to keep the peace...

Astraia reflected on how in her personal relationships with men she took on the roles and norms identified in relation to housekeeping, caring and pleasing the man.

> I remember with 'el creapo' [her ex partner] I call him now, when we were living together and he came from a very traditional family ...he would say "when my parents come I'm not gonna get up at all" he wouldn't even come into the kitchen. I had to wait on his father hand and foot and his mum would go around and inspect. I remember I would be in this panic before she would come about everything being clean because I knew she would go into an inspection and she never asked permission and I never said anything...

Hence women in their roles as mother and wife were responsible for family harmony, child rearing, and domestic duties. Nguyen Thi Oi described this:

> ... as a women we are in a position that we always have pressure about nurturing the family always, I can tell you until the rest of our life we thinking that way... I can tell you I still got that in my mind. That I still I need to nurture, like look after my family as a women...

Nguyen Thi Oi goes on to describe that if anything within the family went wrong, it would be the woman as mother or wife that would be blamed. This was a consistent theme across all nine interviews. The women were positioned as having much responsibility in the home such that if anything went 'wrong' they were blamed. Astraia described this theme of responsibility.

> The mum fault....Its mum, but if they do something really good it's the dad ...He gets you know, they are my children, see they get that, oh see the fathers get "he's a good dad" "he educated his children" "they all married well", "they respect their dad", "they are a good family", oh but "she s not a good mum", "she let that girl run wild", "she didn't do a good job"...

Nguyen Thi Oi talked about how she often continued to take on these roles within her marriage and how both her and her husband blamed her if there is anything wrong.

> I remember one day he [husband] say it's your role to follow up this, it's your role to contact this. It's built in me so I take too much, I am working and doing house work and I never go to bed before 12 o clock....Yes I take this [blame] , as a women as a wife. I remember, yes I take it in, and some time, or most of the time, yes, I blame myself.

These statements reveal clearly defined, longstanding patriarchal gender roles in communities and families. Men had power and women were expected to acquiesce to this power. However, despite this dominance of male power in many cultures, the women emphasised that if anything went wrong in the family, for example divorce, violence or CSA, it would be the mother's fault. Thus responsibility, blame and shame for CSA were not limited in women's accounts to themselves as victims/survivors, but extended to their mothers. In reflecting about their own and/or other incidents they were aware of, the women talked about how as a rule in their communities mothers would be blamed if a child was sexually abused. Zaina said her mother was immediately held responsible for what happened to her.

> But when my father came and my aunties knew that I am pregnant they came to my Mum because if a daughter is pregnant it's a Mum's fault, so they fight with my Mum and they ask me and I say "it's my uncle".

In Zaina's extract the father is absent from blame, but the mother is instead responsible for failing to prevent the pregnancy. Even though eight of the other women did not disclose to immediate family, they were very clear about the mother's role in such situations. The mother would be blamed for not protecting the child, or not educating her about how to protect herself. This expectation is in contradiction to the norm of silence about sex, sexuality and CSA. Fathers and the perpetrators remain invisible in expectations surrounding sex, sexuality and CSA. Ligaya described this:

> It's not openly said, it's such a taboo. In a way that when it happens it's never spoken about, it's a shame for the family but the guilt will be with the mother and the child.

Here she refers to the taboo nature of CSA and the veil of silence surrounding it, but also links this with shame and guilt for both mother and child. Tanja described an incident she was aware of where that a girl had disclosed as an adult and confronted her mother and grandmother with this information.

> She was very much encouraged by her grandmother and mother, and family to forgive her father and to move on, and the excuse her father had used was "well I had to show you what to do as a young woman because you had a really bad relationship with your mother, so she would never tell you". And [the young woman] was really, very, very unwell, very, very mentally unwell in a lot of ways.

Most of the participants in this study said that women were expected to sacrifice themselves and their needs for the benefits of their children, but they were also blamed for problems. For example, Sameera Abdi reflected on how women are praised for such sacrifice, but at the same time blamed if anything goes wrong with the children.

> In Arabic there is a saying ... OM ... home is the mother ... Which means ... whatever happens in that particular home is because of the mother for good or for bad, and we know so many families that father is so bad and violent and gambling, and yet you have a very successful children and they do give the credit to the mother, but equally so if anything happens to the kids, it's the mother's fault. So the mother has a huge responsibility in society you know.

She goes on to describe how it was in her family:

> My mum had many many kids and always she was praised my dad wasn't, although my dad worked really hard and all that, he rarely had anything to do with our discipline and our upbrining, but when it was an issue for him (honour) like me going out with my cousin, that's when he would interfere and my mother would cop it and she did, you know "how dare you?", "what are you thinking?", "are you stupid?". I heard my dad saying this.

Ligaya summarised how a mother is ultimately responsible for what happens to her children even if power within the family is positioned with the man. She said:

> Society will say the mother has not been good, because the mother was not properly taking care of them, if socially thought the father will be the one who's going to be the disciplinarian, so whose ego is going to surer, it's the fathers…I think all ethnic communities will say this.

Zaina also said, "Always women, always women are responsible". Similarly Doortje said "oh it's always the mum's fault…there is a strong motherblame".

Mother blame was identified as a common response to CSA in all nine groups in this study; indeed it is a consistent feature across CSA research in general (McGuffey 2005:629, Lundqvist et al 2004:400) as well as ethnic-specific research (Sanders-Phillips et al 1995:702, Comaz-Diaz 1995:38, Kenny & McEachern 2000:914, Lundqvist et al 2004:400, McGuffey 2005:629, Cosentino et al 1993:946). Childbirth and mothering are biological phenomena mediated and experienced socially (Lorber & Moore 2002:4, Bordo 1993) and are surrounded with cultural gender norms and practices. It has long been argued that these gender norms and practices, whereby men maintain power and women remain subordinate, are embodied in the work of families and result in cultural acceptance of women having lower status (Chan 2009). Sameera Abdi described this:

> Why is it that the male is valued so much more than the female culturally...[...]...religion has a lot to do with it, the fact that men are stronger physically means they are able to do different types of work they can carry, they can do, that's one, initially it was a burden to have a women because women ... and we bought into it, it's like the circle that never got broken. Women became a burden on the family, you know, it's like women can only be protected if she was with a man, to protect her, and that is no.1 priority for any parents to ensure that their women are safe before they leave this world, today, but unfortunately some of that is still happening today...

Tanja reflected on a cultural saying about the female child and how this related to the value and preference for the male child because he inherits and carries on the family home and will look after the parents.

> …men are just so much smoke is blown up a man's arse really as a child because he is the man and ...in the traditional way, the son stays in the home to look after the parents and the daughter leaves so ... as a female you are the other person's child, you're never your parent's child... she is "tudja kuca" translates to "someone else's home", your daughter is someone else's home, so she goes away, because I think [of] that whole idea of the male staying home looking after the parents ...

Mother blame validates this type of patriarchal family structure (McGuffey 2005:622–623). Gossip was identified by the participants as a method for maintaining the gender/sex norms and roles within ethnic groups and reinforcing mother blame. Gossip

is when the word is spread throughout the community about a person with indicators of whether they are 'bad' or 'good'. The participants identified that within the context of CSA, the risk of gossip was a means of ensuring the ongoing silencing of the issue because of the implications for the girl and her family regarding virginity, marriage, shame and damage. The majority of participants identified that silence about CSAis perpetuated through their ethnic groups by the power of gossip. Paricipants referred to this through the use of words like *"people will talk about you"* . Nguyen Thi Oi described how within her ethnic group such taboo topics like CSA are talked about amongst the community.

> And people in our culture they don't keep secret. As soon as everything they know, they talk about it, they talk, they pass one message after another, some time they say "don't get married to that girl because she been raped", thing like that.

Astraia wondered whether the reason that her mother may have not told her father about the sexual abuse to this day is because of the influence of gossip and the gendered expectations and responsibility of women as mothers.

> I think one of the reasons my mum never might not of gone anywhere with this is because and I think she said it to me many years ago. I think she was scared she would get in trouble from my dad that she had exposed us to that. Because again that reflects on the family, you don't want anyone to know that this has happened to your daughters cos the community is very small ... but we are talking about 30 years ago, everyone knew everyone. I think it was a lot of that too, she will be in trouble from my dad, "where were you, weren't you at home?"

Astraia showed here how the community's knowledge of such things is a crucial factor in responses to CSA. The issue of gossip was also significant in familial responses to CSA. Maintaining a positive family image within the community (Singh et al 2010:451) often comes before the protection of girl children.

The theme of 'girls and women as responsible for sexual abuse' has demonstrated how cultural gender constructions place girls and women in the central role of responsibility for sexual abuse. This role continues to be reinforced through cultural constructions of the female body, shame and responsibility.

## The Female Body, Shame and Responsibility

I have already shown how women linked shame to blame, responsibility and unspoken rules about gender, and women's and girl's responsibilities in their communities. I will now turn to the ways the women talked about their bodies as being responsible for the

abuse. The sub-themes in this chapter reflect such descriptions. I will show in particular how these sub-themes are strongly linked to norms of silence about sex, sexuality and CSA, but also the traditional gender norms and roles identified by the women in their communities. The analysis shows the ways that the female body was constructed as significant to blame, shame and responsibility.

### *"I was Attracting Attention": The Sexualised Female Body*

All nine women's accounts captured the way the female body was sexualised in culture. Specifically, five women described the notion of the female body as responsible for abuse because of the clothing which is worn by that body. For example, Nguyen Thi Oi spoke about how now as an adult she does not like wearing skirts because if she had worn pants when she was younger it might have been harder for men to abuse her.

> I don't know why I always remember, my mum always let me dress a dress instead of a pant, and I am not sure if that is a problem for me now since I grow up I like pants not dress, not skirt ... I thinking if my mum wearing my pants then, it may be less opportunity for him to do that to me.

Ligaya described the confusing messages she received from her grandfather who was abusing her and how they made her feel that her body was responsible for the abuse. Where as in the previous quotation the clothing worn on the body was more about ease of access, in this quotation it is more about attracting sexual attention. Ligaya said:

> I remember being hit by my grandfather because I went out of the house and I was wearing shorts. I was only 10 or less than that, and he thought I was making myself attractive ... that I was attracting attention.

Ligaya said these messages resulted in "shame in me, an extreme shame". Similarly, Tanja spoke about how the sexualisation of female bodies left her feeling responsible for the abuse. This also led her to make some conscious choices about the way her body looked.

> In some way my body – me – was the cause of it. If it didn't look like this, then it wouldn't have happened ... as I got older, I never felt comfortable with being sexy. I never felt comfortable with looking whatever it was that I was – … you're being seen as sexy well and truly before you even know what sexy means. I felt that my body was the vessel; that it caused this and continued to cause it through my teens. I remember distinctly, thinking I can't wait until I get fat and no one will ever look at me again. Wherever you went you were watched, you were looked at, it was such a burden for me, that attention. I can now articulate as being objectified – was such a burden that I did set out quite intentionally to get fat, so that no one would ever look at me again.

Indeed research has shown that sexual violation, either as an adult or child, has a significant correlation with adulthood obesity (Felitti 1991). Further research has shown that adults who reported more severe forms of abuse were significantly heavier than those reporting less severe forms of abuse (Williamson et al 2002). Binge-eating disorder has been associated particularly with CSA (Stunkard & Allison 2003, Grilo & Masheb 2001).

All the women spoke about the ways in which female bodies were constructed culturally, showing how the female body was saturated with sex. They spoke of their bodies as the site of abuse, but also as responsible for the abuse. The sexual nature of CSA and the sexualisation of a female body and its worth (Fontes 2007:69) has a significant impact on survivors. For example, Astraia said:

> Shame I think, definitely embarrassment, any sort of attention towards your body which I think is really interesting because you know, I think that goes back to that stuff that your body is something to be covered up and it's shameful too ... That dirty thing absolutely so you just don't go there.

In the previous chapter I showed that there is a norm of silence about sex and CSA in many cultures, with the women receiving little or no information about their bodies, resulting in further silence. Even though as children the women did not have the language to describe their status as sex objects they knew that somehow their female bodies had a role in how their lives were structured. These views come from traditional patriarchal gender practices regarding female and male sexuality which objectify women (Szymanski, Moffitt & Carr 2011).

### *The Body as the Site of Abuse*

A number of women spoke very specifically about their bodies as sites of abuse. For example, Tanja talked about gaining weight and Doortje spoke about how she felt that her body absorbed the pain of abuse and her weight was the result of the abuse.

> I know that's not scientific but I honestly believe that my body is so full of pain and abuse ... I got bigger and bigger, and as soon as I start to relive it and I am getting bigger and feeling it.

Nguyen Thi Oi spoke about how she felt shamed by her genitals as they were the site of the abuse. She said, "if I look at my private parts, I am not proud of myself, I don't feel good about myself, I am not happy with myself". In addition she told me that she was afraid that a vaginal childbirth would damage her genitals so she had her children by

caesarean. This fear is the residual effect of the shame she felt about her genitals due to the CSA. Because she already felt damaged by the abuse, she feared further damage during birth which would result in her husband further rejecting her. Nguyen Thi Oi said:

> So I request to have a caesarean, the hospital didn't like it but I am crying and I keep request, because I am scare to ruin ... it will be different and he doesn't like it anymore. I am scare he doesn't like it anymore, so I am living for him not for me. ... always worry, always scare about my private parts, my private parts it will be looked bad, ugly or something like that.

Nguyen's extract shows the very real and painful relationship that she has with her genitals. Although considerable research has been devoted to the effects of CSA, rather less attention has been paid to the effects of CSA on women's views of their bodies, specifically their genitalia. Braun and Kitzinger (2001:264) undertook to consider the ways in which women perceived their vaginas outside of the context of abuse. They found that many women have concerns relating to the constructions of vaginal size, that is, to say its tightness or looseness. This is similar to what Nguyen is alluding to above. They suggest that such concerns create "another site of bodily concern for women" and that constructions of vaginal size are used to control women (Braun & Kitzinger 2001:263). Thus if women who have not been abused have concerns regarding their genitals it is not difficult to see that abuse perpetrated on that site might influence women's relationships with their genitalia.

### *"She Made him Vulnerable Because of her Appearance": Puberty and the Female Body*

All women spoke very clearly about how CSA would be viewed in their community, particularly for a girl who had reached puberty. Doortje's example in the previous section where she was told she was "pretty hot looking so what did she expect" is also relevant here because it speaks to how the female pubescent body is interpreted as sexually alluring. All nine women said that a girl who had reached puberty, externally represented by growth and development of breasts and hips, internally by menarche, would be viewed as particularly responsible for any sexual attention or abuse within their communities. Consistent with Fontes (2005:140), Doortje's quotation represents this view. Similarly Tanja identified that within her ethnic group extra relevance would be placed on puberty, with less responsibility placed on younger children.

> Under 10 I reckon people would pretty much be horrified but if there was any sign of development I reckon it would be the girl, it would be her fault, she would have done something to elicit it by the very fact that she was developed or whatever ... So, when I think about culturally, the way that it's viewed, it is very much that girl, particularly if you're a young pre-pubescent or pubescent teen; it's that stuff about women's sexuality, you know. You are somehow responsible, that there's something about you that does it. Yeah, you, it's your fault that temptation.

Tanja was describing the age range within which female victims are held responsible for abuse and this was consistent across the sample. Other than in the case of a younger child, there were no instances where perpetrators would be expected to experience repercussions; hence they remained invisible. Men were therefore seen as having limited responsibility for the sexual abuse they perpetrate (Haj-Yahia & Tamish 2001:1304). Astraia relayed a story she was aware of at the time of the interview where a priest from a Greek Orthodox Church had sexually assaulted a young female parishioner. Astraia talked about how the girl was seen as responsible because of her appearance, and the priest seen as vulnerable because of this. She said that for him it was seen as

> A weakness and you know she asked for it, but she made him vulnerable because of her appearance and the way she went to church cos a 14-year-old child will do that of course. He got away with it and he has a full congregation every Sunday, people go and this is what gets me more that people will go and baptise their children, their mothers will take their daughters to baptise them there. I'm like how can anyone walk into that place and watch this fucker preach about how we should live our lives and be decent and have values, how do you do that ... and her parents tried to do something about it through the legal system and they were absolutely shunned by the community.

This extract shows the repercussions for an ethnic family should they choose to go against one of their own and seek justice for their daughter. In this case the repercussion was complete rejection by the community. This overlay of responsibility placed on girls because of their bodily changes comes not only as a result of the physical presence of breasts and hips, but also an implied knowledge that the girl is now sexually mature because she can become pregnant. Menarche has also been shown as an indicator of sexual maturation and impending motherhood which results in culturally compulsory heterosexuality and a cultural coital imperative (Rembeck et al 2006:712). Girl's bodies, through the development of breasts and hips, can also provide visual cues of sexual maturation. These bodies are highly constituted as objects of male desire and play a significant role in the experience of puberty for many girls (Shalit 2007 cited in Lee 2009:617). The women in this study argued that in cases of CSA, menarche and visible

sexual maturation would be used against the girl and she would be blamed for the abuse because of her physical sexual maturity.

Eight participants argued that if a girl child is in puberty, and is sexually abused, she would be blamed for the abuse. This is because she is seen as sexually ready, sexually provocative, dressed or behaved inappropriately. Astraia argued that for a pubescent girl:

> It would be 'what did you do to encourage him? Why did you let him? Coz of course a 13 year old would let him wouldn't she?

Ligaya argued that within her ethnic group this too would be the expected outcome.

> That's correct, because at the age of puberty then you say, you're not chaste, and that's the thing you being chaste you protect your own honour, you let it go...that is the dichotomy of being chaste and what is the definition of being a good women a good girl and at the same time the manipulation that you get your way through sex, through alluring gestures and sort of being feminine and to being feminine will be to provide sexual pleasure...

The women portrayed the age of puberty and menstration as linked with sexual maturity and 'becoming a woman' in their ethnic communities. For example, Tanja described how her mother asked her if she had been doing anything with boys when she voiced that she had started menstruating. Sameera Abdi was sent by her mother to visit her Aunty who then told her:

> …that when I become a woman I will see this blood thing and it frightened the hell out of me and it did even when I received it, you know, because what do you mean I am now becoming a woman there is blood coming?

Menarche has also been shown as an indicator of sexual maturation and impending motherhood which results in culturally compulsory heterosexuality and a cultural coital imperative (Rembeck et al 2006:712). Through the development of breasts and hips, girls' bodies are seens as providing visual cues of sexual maturation. These bodies are highly constituted as objects of male desire and this plays a significant role in the experience of puberty for many girls (Shalit 2007 cited in Lee 2009:617).

Indeed Fontes (2007:66) stated that blaming the girl for sexual abuse when physical maturation is evident is common. The responsibility assigned to the perpetrator therefore appears to have a complex relationship with the age of the child, the gender of the perpetrator, the relationship of the perpetrator to the child, the location of the child, and the gender of the child. It is clearly not a completely straightforward blame that is

located with female victims as discussed earlier. Again the links between cultural views about the female body and the way it is held responsible for abuse is clear. What is gleaned from this analysis is that at all times within the context of CSA, a woman/girl's reputation is in question, not the perpetrator's (Reavey, Ahmed & Majumdar 2006:178). She is held responsible for guarding her sexuality (Fontes 2005:141) and her sexuality is the location of honour and respect and dishonour and disrespect, not only for herself but her family and whole community (Ahmed, Reavey & Majumdar 2009:178, Okamura et al 1995:79, Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999:1278, Fontes 2007:65–66). As a result, restrictions are placed on girls and women that relate to their movements, dress and physical location which construct them in particular ways in the community, and I will discus these further shortly. Sameera Abdi reflected a view about her community that was common amongst most of the participants. She said:

> If you let your daughter go beyond [a] certain time, if she comes home after certain times of the night then she is a slut or she is not well behaved, she is not disciplined.

This restriction on the behaviours of girls and young women, because of how they will be viewed in the community, was also found in other studies, whereby if girls went out at night they were viewed as easy while boys were not (Pérez-Jiménez et al 2007:367). I will discuss how this relates to female sexuality and desire in the next chapter. However, this restriction is not just imposed from external sources but it is internalised and imposed by the women themselves. O'Grady (2004) has discussed women's self-surveillance as a form of oppression, pointing out that for those at the intersections of culture and gender this may be unrelenting.

This is a major aspect of ongoing victim blaming by communities and families, and contributes to the ongoing silencing of CSA in ethnic groups. The centrality of the female body to discourses of blame and shame in CSA has been neglected in this area of research because psychological theories and research on the impact of CSA have been prioritised over and above physical and bodily concerns. This has resulted in an obscuring of the ways that the body informs personal experience and identity (Sutherland 2002) and denies the body its sexual specificity. Sutherland's (2002:i) study shows how women's experience of their bodies following childhood sexual abuse is inextricably tied to their experiences about female identity and embodiment. The silence found in research on the question of the female body has reproduced a sexism that is

widespread (Bartky1988: 64 cited in McNay 1992:34). Failing to consider the forms of subjection that engender the female body perpetuates the silence and powerlessness of those upon whom this silence has been imposed (Bartky 1988:64 cited in McNay 1992:34), in this case survivors of CSA. This sub-theme has shown how the women described the particularity of the female body and its role in relation to the cultural constructions of responsibility for sexual abuse. It is a body culturally claimed as female as a result of its biological process such as menarche, pregnancy and birth, and certain norms, roles and expectations are placed upon it as a result. Unwanted sexual attention was therefore seen as a woman's responsibility in the women's ethnic groups because her body is culturally saturated in sex.

## The Stamp of Stigma: Abused Women as Dirty and Damaged

The themes above show that women's bodies were sexualised in such a way that they were either pure and good or dirty and bad. This is also linked with feeling responsible for the sexual abuse. In this section I discuss further the theme of stigma and how women who violate the sexual mores of their community are seen, including victims of CSA, and are framed as dirty or damaged in their culture. The women's stories included feeling dirty and damaged in relation to the CSA and their sexuality more generally. Thus sexuality and CSA were interwoven because of the silence about sex, sexuality, CSA and the vastly different expectations of women and men in their cultures. Eight participants said that a woman who was sexually abused would be denigrated in the community and seen as dirty or damaged. Astraia talked about how these cultural views on purity and dirtiness affected her in terms of her relationship with her father.

> I think it's my culture that is to blame for the fact that sexuality is suppressed and you just don't talk about it, you know anything to do with it ... that it's all kept quiet and everything about being a female you have to maintain that facade that you're pure and you're clean and if anything happens that, "what you're not pure and clean anymore?" I mean what's pure and what's clean? ... Anything to do with your body ... As a female ... just that whole thought that anyone had touched me like that, we were kids, we were his daughters, I don't know if it's that purity thing, will my dad still love me, will my dad still see me as his little girl?

Anechka described how this impacted on her.

> I am always bad, I was not allowed to wear stuff, I was not allowed to go out, I was always bad, so all my life I was bad, bad, bad ... I always feel like I don't deserve any good and so I am bad ... it's I felt like I don't deserve any good.

Zaina spoke of how in her ethnic group a woman/girl who has been sexually violated is denigrated and through this damage is implied, “The African community does not take you with respect. You are nothing”. Sameera Abdi described how the views of being damaged as a result of the CSA are linked to shame and how the damage from the CSA renders a girl incapable of fulfilling her role in culture. She said, “She is basically damaged and she won’t have the skill to carry on her duties as a mother or as a woman or as a sister, so she will be shamed for what has happened”. Further Sameera Abdi argued that, irrespective of the age of the girl and the response from the family, the consequences for her would be ‘permanent’ whereas a boy child would be able to move on with his life.

> No matter what he will find somebody as a partner or marry, in one way or another, he could work out in life and be successful and be educated and doesn’t take long for society to forget. A woman has to work 10 times, 100 times harder and it will always be a stamp on her forehead no matter where she goes people will see that stamp first time regardless.

Nguyen Thi Oi went on to describe the impact of this stamp on her forehead and why families remain silent about the abuse because of the shame and blame of the girl child and the consequences of this for her prospects of marriage.

> Either they keep silent, sometime the man they got protection from my family because if for example my family scare that if I get married with the other man and that man tell the other man that girl has been raped, maybe he not say that he rape that girl, but they scare that the message will be told to other people. It doesn’t matter that that man telling he didn’t do it, he may say someone do it, but that girl has been raped.

This is strongly influenced by views on virginity and sexual activity, to be discussed shortly, which locate it as bad and wrong for women to experience sex outside of marriage and to have desire. The issue of feeling dirty or damaged are common responses to CSA as shown in research amongst ethnic groups (Cox, Kershaw & Trotter 2000:xiv, Fontes 2005:145, 2007, 69–70, Feiring & Taska 2005:337, Shaw et al 2001:1376, Lundqvist et al 2004:400, Krause & Roth 2011:34, Singh et al 2013:1105). Moreover research has shown that victims/survivors define their very beings as dirty (Fontes 2005:145).

Specifically, two women argued that a girl child might become prey to further abuse because she would be already viewed as damaged. Ligaya said:

> Unfortunately I think, looking back I know that there is one incident like that and it would just subject the child to more abuse. Because [the child] becomes then an easy prey for others ... There would be more abuse because the child is already used ... There is a real thing about that the child is already damaged and therefore there is no need to protect them. It's already done; she will just be an easy prey.

Revictimisation of a child who has been sexually abused has been identified as common (Comaz-Diaz 1995, Rodriguez-Sredniki & Twaite 1999:20, Fontes 2005:140, 150, Okamura et al 1995:83, Chan 2009:80, Haj-Yahia & Tamish 2001:1304, Shaw et al 2001:1376). Whilst this issue was only raised by two participants I include it here because it speaks to the cultural value of a girl who has been subjected to childhood sexual abuse. It shows how little she is worth, which enables the consideration of other 'severe' responses to CSA by family members in some cultures as noted earlier, such as killing their daughter.

Honour and respect are linked with the view of women as chaste or virginal, while the idea of women as temptresses and whores is linked with being dirty and damaged (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999:1276–1279). This has been identified as the "damaged goods syndrome" which influences social responses to CSA (Porter, Blick & Sgroi 1982:109). Girls and women are stigmatised and shamed as a result of sexual violence perpetrated against them and encouraged to remain silent (Luo et al 2008:729, Shaw et al 2001:1376). While some research shows that the likelihood of stigmatisation varies from culture to culture (Rodrigues-Sredniki & Twaite 1999:2), my study shows that stigma is significant across eight of the nine ethnic groups. The issue of stigma for ethnic survivors of CSA is a significant one (de Zoysa 2002, Luo et al 2008).Thus women's bodies are active sites for maintaining the values that honour the group (Kanukollu & Mahalingam 2011:219). Women are blamed and seen as complicit in the sexual violence committed against them, which shifts the focus from the perpetrators to the victims (Thapar-Bjorkert & Morgan 2010:38). It is clear from the participants' stories that there is a culture of blame for sexual violence (Thapar-Bjorkert & Morgan 2010:38) on women and girls across eight different ethnic communities. Finally the issues of responsibility, blame, feeling dirty and feeling damaged are linked very strongly with the very specific female process of menses in puberty and the development of secondary sexual characteristics. These changes have specific cultural expectations and consequences attached to them, applicable only to women, that enables the construction of women as dirty and damaged.

In summary, this chapter has shown how cultural gender practices and values are used to make women responsible for childhood sexual abuse. The women demonstrated the very personal impact of this by discussing how they felt responsible because they failed to prevent the abuse. In addition they demonstrated how these practices and values tend to result in girls and women being blamed outright. I have also highlighted the impact of shame and the unspoken rules of gender which reinforce silence and situate blame for CSA with women and girls and how the blame for CSA extends to women as mothers.

The women's accounts also showed how the female body was constructed in their cultures to reinforce shame and responsibility for women and girls. The female body was shown to be sexualised in such a way that it could be blamed for inviting sexual abuse. In addition the women showed how the body as the site of abuse had particular effects in their lives. I discussed the issue of puberty and the female body to show how pubescent girls are at particular risk of blame because of the cultural implications of their changing bodies. Finally I have shown how the sexual abuse of a girl results in stigma within the community because abused women are constructed as damaged and dirty. A focus on the issue of virginity is intricately tied to this and I will explore this in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

# Cultural Constructions of Sexuality, Blame and Childhood Sexual Abuse

Due to my years of work in clinical practice with CSA survivors I had come to suspect that sex and sexuality were significant both in terms of the effects of CSA, but also in terms of ethnic community and family responses to CSA. As such my interviews included questions about sex and sexuality. Both female sexuality and male sexuality as they are constructed in relation to responsibility for sexual abuse were identified through the analysis as a dominant theme in the interviews with all the women in this study. Men's sexuality was discussed and understood in particular ways across different communities. Unlike the construction of women's sexuality and the sexualisation of women's bodies, which positioned women as responsible for CSA, the construction of men's sexuality and the different way men's bodies were constructed achieved the opposite, that is, it rendered them not responsible for CSA and invisible. A focus on how men's sexuality is constructed in culture, as discussed by the women in this study, is therefore necessary to make perpetrators more visible (Reavey & Gough 2000). However, specifically in relation to ethnic communities it also makes visible the cultural practices and values in relation to men and sexuality and shows how, through them, culture can be used to protect sexually violent men.

This chapter is divided into two broad themes, 'women's sexuality, blame and CSA' and 'men's sexuality, blame and CSA'. Within each of these broader themes there are a number of sub-themes that demonstrate how constructions of sexuality have a significant relationship with blame and effects of the experience of CSA.

## Women's Sexuality, Blame and CSA

Whereas the previous chapter concentrated on how the female body was constructed and used to shift blame towards women for CSA, in this chapter I aim to highlight how women's sexuality and how particular gender practices and values in relation to women's sexuality result in shame and blame for victims and survivors of CSA.

### *Chastity and Promiscuity*

Chastity and virginity for girls and women were dominant themes found in this study because most of the women identified them as norms in their communities. Chastity and virginity were also identified as major concerns for CSA victims/survivors and their families. Chastity and honour are significant norms which determine how CSA survivors are treated in their communities because these norms have a relationship to a woman's worth in her family and community as discussed earlier. Similarly, virginity and chastity are linked to purity and honour of girls/women and their families, and transgression of these, or the perceived transgression, have significant consequences for girl children who are sexually abused.

#### The Significance of Chastity

Specifically the norm of chastity and its opposite, promiscuity, was identified through the women's talk of growing up in their families and communities. Because in this study there was only one full disclosure of CSA at the time of abuse, in order to ascertain what the repercussions of these gendered norms and practices were, women were asked to consider what they believed the effects would have been based on their knowledge of their communities. In addition it was within this context that some of the women spoke about how these constructions of women as either promiscuous or chaste impacted on them. Discussion of such attitudes is important because of the limited knowledge available about CSA in ethnic groups, but also because it provides us with information which can assist in the prediction of potential responses (Tennfjord 2006:245). Examining the values and attitudes prevalent in a person's family, including their cultural milieu, gives us important information on the consequences of CSA (Hinson et al 2002:822).

Earlier I mentioned the restrictions on girls' behaviour. I will now explore these within the context of chastity and promiscuity. Sameera Abdi described the restrictions placed on her as a girl child because of the importance of a girl's chastity in her culture.

> There is a societal expectation about what a child can and cannot do, simple things like I am a women, I am going with my parents to visit friends, I am expected to 1. Not have a short skirt, not to put leg over leg, all of these that demonstrates my sexuality and my identity. I am not allowed to show them, I need to hide them so that's part of the behavior ... there is no such rules for men, there are general rules for young boys and girls, but when it comes to sexuality only the girls have to fulfil those expectations you know.

Other participants described restrictions on their sexuality based on the norm of chastity in similar ways; thus a girl's chastity was monitored via restrictions on behaviour that make visible her sexuality. For example, some participants described how culturally an unknown male was not allowed to enter into a married woman's house without the husband present as a method of preventing promiscuity. Further, the monitoring of women's chastity was relegated to the husband once she married. Some participants suggested that it was only when they did something that conflicted with this norm they became aware of it. For example, in this following quote from Zita described how she was going away with a group of people for work purposes and how the community were shocked that her husband had allowed her to go because other men would be present. .

> ...and he was like an Adonis and they would say, "my god you let your wife go with those men" and I thought it never occurred to us, it never occurred to husband to say "no you can't go", it was my job, and yet all these men would say "how could you" and he was ok with that.

In relation to girls these are gender norms and roles that involve honour, also known as *Izzat* in some communities, which is defined by what is honourable in terms of community standing (Kanukollu & Mahalingam 2011:224, Gilligan & Akhtar 2006:1361, Fontes & Plummer 2010:497). For women/girls only, this includes chastity, which is defined through their sexuality and virginity whereby any notion of promiscuity, CSA included, can dismantle a family's honourable status in the community (Schneider et al 2009:412). However, there was a contradiction found here in the interviews. On the one hand a woman is required to be chaste prior to marriage; however, in a marriage she is required to completely submit to her husband's sexual desires, as I will discuss in the next section. Further if a girl is abused she is constructed as promiscuous; thus there is no recognition of the violation of abuse.

Eight women argued that if a girl was sexually abused, particularly once she had reached puberty, she would be labelled promiscuous as mentioned earlier. Some of the women constructed their own experiences of sexual activity as promiscuous. Whether this was as a result of the CSA or of the cultural imperatives in relation to women's sexuality was not clear in their talk. However, through the analysis it is clear that the cultural imperatives in relation to women's sexuality have a significant impact on how the women constructed themselves and their sexuality. The women examined and questioned their own sexual lives when they were growing up and as adult women. Two women spoke about the issue of promiscuity in their own lives, describing how it

related to the way in which they viewed themselves as promiscuous; the others talked about chastity. For example, Doortje said:

> I think I was pretty promiscuous really ... I just liked sex ... I think I did? Did I like it because I thought it made me worthwhile is the question and I think it might have been a bit of that? I could be seen as really good at it because then I was worthwhile. It was that more than anything, so yes it did affect me.

In the above quotation we can see how Doortje was questioning herself as she spoke about promiscuity. This questioning of the self in relation to particular cultural values and one's own experience was common amongst the participants. Here Doortje was struggling with positioning herself as promiscuous because she liked or enjoyed sex at times in her life but simultaneously questioned whether she engaged in sexual activity as a way to 'please a man' or as a way to find self-worth. This is because the cultural value in her community was that by being good at sex you pleased the man and therefore were a woman of worth. Similarly Anechka talked about struggling with this when she as an adult.

> guys from Georgia, Armenia they like girls with blond hair so I was just having relationship here and there but on the other hand I wanted to be loved and every time it was idealistic, this guy if I would perform very good sex he would like me and so he would keep me ... sometimes when I didn't have work for few years, I slept just for food, and also I said "ok I would please this guy and he would take me", and one guy said "I will marry you" he was so happy with me and with sex, but after he wanted to married to go overseas but he started to use drugs and that was the end of it.

These quotations also show that women constructed themselves as promiscuous because they were good at sex and could please men sexually, hence making them worthwhile because they were wanted by a man.

Thus the good sexual behaviour of a woman adds to the status and prestige of the family in the community (Gilligan & Akhtar 2006:1370) and there is a constant effort to maintain honour and avoid shame (Gilligan & Akhtar 2006:1369). The women spoke about pressure on their parents to conform to these types of restrictions, because of the implications of gossip and the resultant shame a 'bad name' would have on their daughter's marriage prospects (Pérez-Jiménez et al 2007:367). Thus the women's stories in this study showed that chastity and promiscuity are constructed within gender relations. The women identified and struggled with their own sexual behaviour because it was often linked to finding value and worth through pleasing and being wanted by men in their culture. Indeed Fontes (2005:15) has also argued that chastity and

promiscuity are significant issues for survivors of CSA from ethnic backgrounds. This polarised form of positioning was common amongst the women's stories and shaped their ideas about sexuality growing up. Thus the sexual nature of abuse alongside the sexualisation of a woman's body results in value judgements being made about a woman's worth (Fontes 2007:69) by the women and their communities. Restrictions on daughters relate strongly to the issue of honour, the girl's honour, but most importantly the family's honour. Thus the daughter's honour is threatened by CSA and through this the family's reputation (Shahidian 1999:191).

### Virginity

Eight women confirmed the value placed on virginity prior to marriage and a corresponding norm of shame for a woman losing her virginity outside marriage in their culture. Tanja described how she left a relationship in her teens because of cultural norms and roles relating to marriage and virginity. She described the breakdown of a defacto relationship she had, and that culturally she was viewed as a married woman because she had sex with him.

> I didn't think I had the right to be in a relationship with a man who hadn't been married before. In our culture I've already been married [because I had sex] and therefore that's just not appropriate. I got the message that as a woman or girl having been married once [had sex] I couldn't go for a person who hadn't been married before. Somehow I was tainted.

Nguyen Thi Oi said culturally it is because virginity is "A prize for the man ... Yes and we feel proud to keep it for the man". Eight women said it was important for the husband to be the first. Doortje said:

> To be the first is very important to a man, and I have no grounds for this but get a sense from what I learnt from my family.

Ligaya said:

> It's a shame for a man and they might not talk about it outside and that would be a shame for a man and the woman would be treated not as priceless anmore by the husband, if only found out, then I think her prize goes down in his eyes, her value

However, seven pointed out that because of the norm of virginity if it became known that a girl child was sexually abused in their community, it would be silenced by the family because of the consequences for a girl's future marriage prospects. For example, Astraia explained:

> Future marriage, virginity, they are damaged goods ...[...]... people didn't want to draw unnecessary or negative attention or worry about the future marriage potential of their daughter. It would be suppressed and kept quiet, they would do nothing about it, they would just hush it up, especially if it were penetration, she lost her virginity, there would be real problems marrying her off then because who would want her if she is not a virgin.

Zita spoke about how it is the parent's responsibility to keep women virginal until marriage. She also articulatedthat the expectations on men to be sexually active continue even after they are married as does the expectation that women to not be.

> ...but yes they did feel a responsibility to keep this women pure until she is given over...[...]... the boys were allowed to do whatever they like, and in fact my cousin said to her father, who do you think these boys have sex with other peoples daughters, but not with my daughter...[...]...So the boys it's ok they go and have sex with every women that they want but then their wife has to be pure, I don't know what happens if they are not, but that's the general thing that they marry someone who is perfection and even after they marry it was alright for him to go to striptease clubs but if [she] was to read you know she actually was reading this book once but she had to read it without him knowing, it was a bit racy but it wasn't that racy but if he had known he would have hit the roof because she had to stay pure and lovely like his handbag ...[...]...

Nguyen Thi Oi described how a woman's lack of virginity is linked to promiscuity.

> Within the culture especially Viet men talking about 10 years ago, I am not sure how Viet man understand women issue now but 10 years ago 15 years ago, they very quiet, Virginity is a big issue, if I am not a Virgin, before married or after married they find out then um I will be name as a bad girl, very very bad girl, maybe, it's not a maybe its definite, that my husband wont trust me, if I lose Virginity...Because in our culture we only um I'm talking of Viet culture not at the moment now is so different, I can't explain it but Viet culture you only marry one and he um you have like when you married like that the man you first have sex so it being like that it being teaching Viet women that they need to keep their Virginity....Because in our culture if we sleep with more than one man or two men they call us a prostitute or a sex worker they will call us that name, no matter what ...That the immediate assumption Immediate strait away.

Zaina spoke of the impact of this on her personally because her husband was not the first to 'break' her virginity as is culturally expected.

> I don't feel I am really what I was, you know, for African culture your husband need to find you ... the sex, needs to find you for the first time, ... so emotionally I feel I lose something.

These statements show that the norm of virginity is prevalent and important so that it is expected that the husband is the woman's first and only sexual partner. In addition, as Zaina stated here, a loss of virginity can have a profound effect on women's lives

(Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999:1276, Sanders-Phillips et al 1995:701, Shaw et al 2001:1374, Mennen 1995:122, Schneider et al 2009:411, Bryant-Davis et al 2009:337).

The implications of a loss of virginity in the context of CSA contribute to the ongoing silencing of CSA in ethnic communities (Tyagi 2001:31, Fontes & Plummer 2010:499, Kenney & McEachern 2000, Reavey, Ahmed & Majumdar 2006:177). The silence becomes vital because community gossip about CSA would imply penetration and this diminishes a girl as a bride of value (Fontes 2005:146). A woman's virginity has to be intact, that is, reserved for the husband to be the first to 'break' the hymen.

Zaina said:

> Yes that [virginity] is a big problem into family and many people attend even to divorce even if they already have two or three children because of that, when man say I find you already know man, so nothing will stop you to know other man.

The relevance of virginity to CSA, honour and chastity and its subsequent relationship to promiscuity and the norm of marriage for women in ethnic groups relates to a woman's value in marriage, and this theme has been identified in other research (Fontes 2005:139, 2007: 70, Clear et al 2006:82, Okamura et al 1995:77, Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999, Chan 2009:80, Fontes & Plummer 2010:499, Yuksel 2000:157, de Zoysa 2002:110, Krause & Roth 2011:34, Tyagi 2001:22). Eight women agreed that within their cultures a woman who is a virgin is of higher value than one who is not. As a virgin, a woman's value increases, is said to ensure a good marriage, and preserves family honour (Siann 1994 cited in Haavio-Mannila & Kontula 2003:36). Thus in simple terms it signifies that if a girl is not a virgin she is not suitable for marriage (Fontes 2005:146).

Nguyen Thi Oi said the question of whether or not she was a virgin resulted in her not wanting to marry. She talked about how at the age of 21 she attended a lesson in which she was told the cultural importance of virginity and then realised that she did not know whether she was a virgin as a result of the sexual abuse. Nguyen Thi Oi said:

> So then I say wow, is that how the Vietnamese man or Asian man precious about if he marry a wife who is still virgin. Then I thinking, oh so that mean what my cousin did to me, that I lose virgin, then since that day I realise that. So I don't have virgin any more, I saying to myself, "oh dear my virginity is gone", so that, if I marry a Vietnamese man and he doing that, I am scare so I say "ok I may not getting married then".

Nonetheless she was pressured to get married because of the cultural norm of marriage for women. The norm of marriage has been found in other research (Reavey, Ahmed & Majumdar 2006:174, Shahidian 1999) and its importance is shown above in relation to virginity. In terms of the personal impact of this norm of virginity, Sameera Abdi spoke about how fortunate she feels that there was no penetration involved because had she lost her virginity through the abuse, it would have affected her life significantly.

> Had I lost my virginity to him, it probably would be a completely different. I often thought about it often, what would have happened? Oh my God, thank God ... considering I was very young, it's not a choice I made ... For goodness sake I didn't even have the period back then.

Research has shown that the effects of CSA are compounded by the perceived loss of virginity (Shaw et al 2001:1374). This leads one to ask what the cultural views are if there was no penetration involved in the sexual abuse. It is within this context that I discovered another perspective in the data. Some of the women said that there was a view in their communities whereby if penetration had not occurred the CSA would be minimised or it would not be viewed as a big deal and victims should get over it. For example, Zita described this within the context of a husband not knowing about the CSA.

> I mean get over it as long as your husband doesn't know, he doesn't realise that you have already been deflowered ... it hasn't affected you that you can't get married so don't fuss about it.

Astraia emphasised that "especially if it was penetration, she lost her virginity" the girl would be viewed as damaged. If there were no penetration Tanja similarly said:

> If there wasn't penetration, well it's not bad. So, move on. It wasn't that bad, so just get over it, sort of thing ... Whereas, if it were a violent rape, then it's – might be actually, believed and acknowledged as severe – but if it's anything else ...

The dichotomy here is either you are damaged or it was not a big deal. Research has shown that in some communities non-penetrative CSA is dismissed as less important because the girl remains 'pure' (Mennen 1995:122, Yuksel 2000:157) by cultural standards; the hymen is intact.

In trying to articulate why the hymen is important, Sameera Abdi reflected on some physical restrictions because of the fear of rupturing the hymen.

> …basically it's about virginity, every time my father saw me driving a pushbike, oh my god he would lose control and say what are you doing, it's not good, why

> it's no good, that's not for girls, are you tom boy and it's like, alright and I never understood until my aunty told me...[...]..

She also identified a link between virginity and purity which was similar to the other participants.

> I think virginity is a symbol of purity, you know like your pure, and if you're not pure then your dirty and dirty then I don't want someone who is dirty.

Indeed any knowledge of sexual activity prior to marriage would result in a girl being viewed as promiscuous, and this includes CSA (Fontes 2007:72). Thus the significance of avoiding shame for the family means that a girl's sexuality must be monitored. The restrictions on girls' movements, discussed earlier in relation to blame, shame and chastity, continue in relation to virginity and have a direct relationship to the value of an intact hymen. The value of the hymen and the restrictions placed on girls' movements and bodies as mentioned earlier was discussed in some of the interviews. For example,

Astraia said

> When I found out about tampons I asked if she (mum) could buy me some and she was hysterical saying that I would lose my virginity by using them…yes true!!

Tanja also said she was not allowed to use tampons because her mother was afraid it would rupture the hymen. These restrictions link very strongly with traditional views on the importance of virginity and purity for girls and women (Mennen 1995:122) and have been identified as consistent and pervasive in eight ethnic cultures in this study. The women in this study not only had to contend with their own confusion, shame and understandings of CSA but were also confronted with understanding the perceived value placed on certain parts of their bodies, especially their hymen.

All of the participants referred specifically to the breaking of the hymen as indicative of a loss of virginity. Three women discussed a specific cultural practice related to how women were identified as virgins in their culture. This is the well-known ritual of a white sheet being placed under the woman on the wedding night either by the husband or other relatives, with the expectation there will be blood. Nguyen Thi Oi called it the "white cloth ... so that will identify that girl never had sex before". Tanja described how this ritual checking happened to her on the evening of her marriage. Anechka said in her culture they did not have the 'sheet thing' but there was a way to know for women. She said:

> How can you check ... You can't check right, Maybe he was ... Probably in family she probably could say this but she can't prove anything but he can say here is the proof you were not virgin, and she can't prove anything right she can't.

In this quotation when she said 'here is the proof' she was directly referring to the rupture of the hymen as the proof, a social consequence rooted in a biological structure. Shahidian described the hymen as a symbol, "an actual gate whose existence proves that nobody was granted permission to enter" (1999:207). This specifically female phenomenon therefore has social implications only for those with a female body and a hymen. Sameera Abdi reflected on the personal implications for women within her culture who have lost their virginity prior to marriage and the lengths they go to to conceal it from their families and future husbands. This is both within the context of CSA but also outside of it.

> I used to work with a social worker who literally almost half of her time was spent on organising appointments [to re-stitch the hymen] for those girls in our society, that their parents, nobody knew...[...]...

Surgical hymen restoration is a common practice in societies that are highly patriarchal and where loss of a girl/woman's virginity can cost her life, including where there has been CSA (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999:1278). In restoring the hymen, the honour is restored (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999:1278).Virginity tests are also common throughout the world with significant repercussions for CSA survivors (Fontes & Plummer 2010:499). Presenting proof of virginity at time of marriage is a practice which has endured over time (Shahidian 1999:201–207). Indeed societies where traditional views of virginity are strong have a preoccupation with the condition of the hymen after abuse, with victims and families being relieved when the hymen is intact, which has the effect of nullifying the abuse because she is technically a virgin (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999:1288, Yuksel 2000:157, Mennen 1995:122, Fontes & Plummer 2010:499). This has been described as hymen worship (Fontes & Plummer 2010:500). Indeed this is why in some cultures when CSA is disclosed families insist on medical evidence of an intact hymen (Fontes 2007:71). This may astound Westerners but within the context of cultural gender norms and practices, many ethnic people would understand and know of this (Fontes 2007:71) as many of the women did in this study.

The findings that chastity and virginity are norms with significant consequences for ethnic female victims of CSA is consistent with other research (Shahidian 1999, Haavio-Mannila & Kontula 2003:36, Kanukollu & Mahalingam 2011:225, Chan

2009:80, Fontes 2005:139, Clear et al 2006:82, Okamura et al 1995:77, Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999). The norm of shame for a loss of virginity, or perceived loss of virginity, can have a profound impact on some women's lives (Fontes 2005). My analysis of the impact of cultural gender, sex norms and practices in relation to CSA questions whether it is the experience of CSA that makes girls and women feel they are promiscuous or damaged or whether it is the impact of the norms and practices in relation to women's sexuality that do so. Other studies have shown how women who have been subjected to CSA have struggled with the virgin–whore messages described here (Krause & Roth 2011:34). Unlike in Western contexts, ethnic girls who are sexually abused, and their families, are faced with choices that will maintain honour and avoid shame in the community at all costs (Gilligan & Akhtar 2006:1369). Often the price paid for this comes at the cost of the girl/woman.

### The Impure Woman

In the previous chapter, I discussed constructions of dirty and damaged as a result of the abuse. These constructions of dirty and damaged re-emerged and filtered over to discussions of chastity and virginity. It was in these discussions that the women associated virginity with purity and non-virginity with dirtiness. I examined these findings to highlight how they influence not only the way families and communities view and respond to CSA but the way in which the women view themselves. For example, Astraia talked about a link between virginity and purity in her culture, which was similar to seven other participants.

> I think virginity is a symbol of purity, you know, like you're pure, and if you're not pure, then you're dirty and dirty then I don't want someone who is dirty ... I did as a child pick up a lot of that stuff and that's how I interpreted it and how I responded to this situation, that you know that's why probably took me so many years to say anything this fear, "can I even tell mum that someone has done that to me?", "what's gonna happen?", "will she still love me?", "how dirty am I?" "what did I do wrong?", "will I be in trouble for not saying anything at the time?", "will they think I liked it and I wanted it?"

Sameera Abdi reflected that knowledge that a woman has been sexually active with another man affects any potential husband/suitor: this includes CSA. However, there is no similar consequence for a man.

> It's like psychologically they cannot sleep with her ... He cannot sleep with her because she is dirty, but he is ok to get dirty and bring whatever.

In addition to the cultural gender practices and values influencing these views, five women said that religion also played a role in reinforcing these ideas. For example, Ligaya said:

> It's not only culture but it's religion that will play on your mind that you have to protect your purity and your chastity, it's not about others protecting you but it's your responsibility.

Thus the cultural value attached to the norm of female virginity and chastity has implications of purity and dirtiness, which are not present for men. This damage discourse increases the cost of coming out as a survivor of CSA (Cox, Kershaw & Trotter 2000:xiv). A loss of virginity as a sign of promiscuity is linked with the fear of gossip in communities and results in CSA being further silenced. The issue of gossip was again raised in relation to virginity. Nguyen Thi Oi described how within her ethnic group taboo topics like CSA are gossiped about amongst the community.

> And people in our culture they don't keep secret. As soon as everything they know, they talk about it, they talk, they pass one message after another, some time they say "don't get married to that girl because she been raped", thing like that.

This example shows the significance of community gossip because gossip has been identified as a mechanism which reinforces the cultural gender practices and values within a community. Indeed "the watchful eye and gossiping mouth of the community reinforces traditional behavioral patterns among immigrants" (Accad 1991:241 cited in Shahidian 1999:205).

Unraveling the socio-psychological value of virginity placed on a girl, her family and the community is crucial to understanding the impacts and effects of CSA (Shaw et al 2001:1376). The values and consequences that are present for girls because of the norms of virginity and chastity are mechanisms through which a girl's sexuality is controlled (Fontes 2005:146). This sense of honour is not confined only to Asian or Muslim cultures, but has been ethnicised through the media, and linked strongly with certain ethnicities through the use of dominant stereotypes (Meetoo & Mirza 2007:188). As my research shows it is common in other cultural groups as well (Meetoo & Mirza 2007:188). Such views on virginity are not just common to ethnic groups but are also found in some groups in contemporary Western society. For example in the United States girls in particular are encouraged to make pledges of virginity (Fontes 2005:146).

Sameera Abdi talked about how within her culture the repercussions for girls/women are not limited to CSA; she said that she knew a woman whose

> boyfriend basically tricked her, slept with her and then left her ... she trusted the fact they will be married but he never married her ... she was in her early 20s ... at the end she married a man in his 50s [who] had 5 kids ... all because she trusted a man, and that man [was] never held responsible by anybody, and nobody, so those are the clearly defined expectations of the both genders.

Finally what can be seen from Sameera Abdi's statement above, which is echoed throughout this research, is that the perpetrators are not held responsible. All these rules, regulations and values that surround a woman's sexuality through practices of chastity and virginity are instead highlighted and placed as significant to men and families, yet men who abuse and rape women and girls are left blameless. There is something particular about the ways in which women's bodies are sexualised across all cultures that contributes to this lack of responsibility, and this is the view of woman as temptress, whose sexuality should be feared, monitored and suppressed. I will explore this further below.

### *Female Sexual Desire*

The dominance of and similarity in constructions of women's sexualities across the participants stories raises questions about how CSA impacts on female sexual desire and intimacy. Further it raises the question about how cultural gender practices and values in relation to female sexual desire impact on CSA. Thus I will discuss the theme of female desire and how it is constructed in culture and affects CSA experiences.

Eight participants identified that a woman having sexual desire and initiating sexual intimacy would be seen as inappropriate in their 'culture', identifying a sexual double standard, that is, women risk being constructed as promiscuous if they seek to fulfill desire. For example, Nguyen Thi Oi said:

> …if my husband touch me, I feel freely and ok and happy and maybe I initiate more so he will be happier, in our relationship ... I so cautious, I so tense. When in an intimate relationship I am so tense …[…]…I give you one example, I don't know why it born in me, like it's born in me that if I really want to have, sometime, women have a desire, I am scare to ask, I am scare to initiate.

How much of this is related to the CSA itself or the cultural norms constructing women's sexuality is difficult to tell; however, it can be argued they intermingle in ways that impact on how women experience sexual intimacy and desire as adult

women. A lack of sexual desire has also been suggested as an effect of CSA (Briere 1992:34). However, from the analysis of the women's talk, it can be argued that this lack of sexual desire is intricately connected with cultural norms and values that restrict and position woman's sexuality. Indeed eight of the women suggested that culturally it was not appropriate for a woman to initiate sex or have sexual desire.

To show this Ligaya talked about how her mother was viewed in her family and her community.

> My mother had lots of affairs,...[...]...and was never accepted...[...]... but my father was allowed to have so many mistresses and affairs.

Furthermore eightwomen described how a woman who had sexual desire would be viewed within their ethnic groups. Astraia reflected on how this might impact on a woman's sexual identity.

> Any women that wanted sex or was sexually active was considered to have a disorder, like she was mentally unwell, or yeah she was unwell, yeah she wanted sex she had to she was like a nymphomaniac ... Like yeah she had gone crazy ... so if a man needs to screw his brains out every day then that's quite normal, but a women wants to have sex, or to have sexual pleasure then...there is something not quite right the devil has got into her or she is unwell...I think it has impacted on my generation because we grew up with that, I think how a lot of Greek women from my generation experience their sexuality now has a lot to do with how positive or negative their experience have been I think that has a huge role to play on how much some of that cultural history impacts self sexual identity.

The participants described how even within the context of marriage, a woman's desire was seen as bad therefore she could not initiate sex with her husband. Ligaya said:

> No initiation of sex, it is typical sort of family, typical sort of you know, the women will cook well, prepare, beautify herself, but not to openly say I want sex now can you do it now, that no...[...]... you cannot have the pleasure because...initiating sex was never part of the culture, in that sense, in that openly initiating and saying that you actually enjoy it...[...]... even to think of different ways of having sex would probably be viewed not well even with your own husband, if you think of it ... I mean this kind of insight comes from you know sort of looking around and sort of reading about it and being open with the discussion around it, but I know that if I was married to my ex husband or to a filipine I would never do that, I would never even think about it...[...]...

The participants described that within their ethnic groups men's desire was seen as expected and normal. Woman's desire was misinterpreted as promiscuity. Zaina said:

> Not really, not really, because when they say you don't need to say no, that's mean that even if you're not satisfied you need to satisfy the other person...[...]... even if they want they will not say because of men will think they are showing, they will

> become prostitutes and also maybe if men they are not there, they can find other man... if man wants sex he can ask for his wife and if not, he is allowed to look for other women, but for women no ...[...]....

Sameera Abdi said, "many, many, many women even if they have a desire they will suppress it because it's a sign of being promiscuous or whatever". For some of the participants this cultural imperative was also present in their own relationships.

Ngueyn Thi Oi described how this restriction on sexual desire resulted in her being afraid of initiating sexual intimacy with her husband.

> I give you one example, I don't know why it born in me, like its born in me that if I really want to have, sometime, women have a desire, I am scare to ask I am scare to initiate...

Whereas other participants described that through the support and encouragement of their husbands/partners they no longer felt imposed on by this view. Sameera Abdi said that her husband, who was open to different ways of thinking, helped her to accept her desire by giving her control of the sexual relationship.

> .I must admit that I thank my husband for helping me it's like I really love it when you ask me, I really love it, I would die, when you, I will be your man...after so many years you would think that you would have an agreement like how we do, it's like, now it's my call, so I don't call we don't have sex, it's like is it time yet, when is it time, it's like, ohh and do you have a calendar have you lost track... but that took a lot of work before it wasn't easy...

Thus it can be argued that women's sexual desire or perceived lack of desire may not only be shaped by experiences of CSA, but also the cultural imperative of suppressing sexual desire that appears to be so often compulsory for women. Research has shown that in many cultures men are expected to initiate sex and women to react and comply (Rose & Frieze 1993, Shotland & Hunter 1995), and this difference is attributed to social pressures placed on women to contain their sexuality (Leiblum 2002). Women's sexuality is constructed socially as a thing to be stolen, bought, bartered or exchanged by others, that is, women never own it (MacKinnon 1997:43) and hence do not act on their own desire. On the other hand women also experience constructions that position them as sex objects who are inherently seductive, which results in women blaming themselves for abuse (Briere 1992:157), as discussed in the previous chapter. Women are constantly presented with these cultural messages about female sexuality and hence it is not surprising that the women in this study could identify and discuss these

messages. However, they clearly showed this navigation becomes much harder when the issue of CSA is also present.

Research in some cultures suggests that sexual pleasure is viewed as having very little to do with being a good woman (Shahidian 1999). Eight women in this study said that sexual pleasure for women was not part of the gendered practices that defined a good woman. Moreover, the women expressed concern that if they showed sexual desire and pleasure they risked being culturally positioned as promiscuous or a whore. It would appear that these gendered practices and values regarding women's sexual pleasure persist despite a supposed socio-cultural shift in the West towards the "eroticization of female sexuality" (Seidman 1991:124 cited in Braun 2005:408) which has allegedly provided the freedom to express female sexual pleasure. It is clear that this socio-cultural shift has yet to infiltrate the cultural milieu of many ethnic communities.

Such cultural views implicate women's bodies as desirable to men and position this desirability as potentially dangerous to men and needing to be controlled (Shahidian 1999:195). This is because her sexuality is where a woman's power is located, that is, women have an innate power to arouse men, and denying fulfillment of this arousal rationalises the use of force (MacKinnon 1997:45–46). These cultural constructions of female sexuality also suggest that "sex is what women are for" (MacKinnon 1997:51). However, women experience a paradox in these cultural constructions because, despite being positioned as a sexual object, if a woman shows any willingness, initiation or sexual desire, it is positioned as deviant and dangerous. Astraia described this:

> Any women that wanted sex or was sexually active was considered to have a disorder, like she was mentally unwell ... so if a man needs to screw his brains out every day then that's quite normal, but a women wants to have sex, or to have sexual pleasure then ... there is something not quite right, the devil has got into her or she is unwell.

Culturally a woman's desire is perceived as sick or dangerous (Maines 1999) and these constructions not only impacted on many women in this study as adults in relation to their sexual desire, but also positioned them as being responsible for the CSA. Consistent with other research, the women's stories showed that social judgements on sexually permissive women are much harsher than those on men (Milhausen & Herold 2001, Sprecher et al 1987 cited in Alexander & Fischer 2003:28) and that sexual abuse in childhood can result in a girl being viewed as sexually permissive, which travels with her into womanhood. This may be influenced by the social construction of men as being

able to separate sex from emotion, and women cannot, therefore women must remain faithful (Courtenay 2000, Mane & Agleton 2001 cited in Pérez-Jiménez et al 2007:373). Thus men are expected to be more sexually expressive (Alexander & Fisher 2003:27, Tillman et al 2010:62, Schneider et al 2009). Anechka too articulated this point:

> Also if like women they are allowed to have pleasure from sex as men do, and why is if women have open sex and have many sexual relationship why she is whore and why is he a hero, so why it's like this way.

Thus the sexual double standard which prohibits premarital sex for women but allows it for men (Milhausen & Herold 2002) is still accepted as common in many societies (Alexander & Fischer 2003:28) and has implications for how women understand and live with being subjected to CSA. These are traditional ideas common to most cultures (Milhausen & Herold 200) and they are present in the stories of many of the women in this study.

In summary, what this chapter has confirmed thus far is that cultural views of women as sex objects arise from culturally specific gender practices that enable sexual violence to be explained in socially acceptable ways, that is, women are responsible (Cossins 2000:44). Thus if the cultural views of men and women are attributed to rape and sexual activity, and CSA is also an activity which involves sexual behaviours, is it not possible that the same values that enable men to be blameless and women responsible for rape are also applicable to CSA (Cossins 2000:44)? A girl is constructed as sexually available long before she is physically, emotionally or psychologically ready for adult sexual experiences (Cossins 2000:139). There is a dissonance between being seen as sexual objects but being defined in terms of sluts and whores when women express their sexuality (Durham 1998). This can result in women developing a negative sexual identity (Katz & Farrow 2000), especially women who have experienced CSA. This is because cultural discourses and CSA discourse team up whereby cultural messages about CSA together with cultural constructions of female sexuality create a complex web for women to negotiate, while trying to understanding their own sexuality (Crawford & Popp 2003:24–25) as well as the CSA itself. The cultural practice of silence surrounding CSA and the sexualisation of female bodies reinforce the different ways girls and boys are expected to express their sexuality in culture.

Becoming a woman in patriarchal society requires a woman to embody the societal messages of femininity, and dissociate from one's own physical desires so that she can

conform to the hegemonic constructions of the feminine (Tolman et al 2006 cited in Jackson & Falmagne 2013:382). In all societies women are primarily defined in terms of their bodies which are seen to be unruly, out of control and inferior (Davis 1997 cited in Jackson & Falmagne 2013:380). This feminine body has rules and regulations which must be adhered to in order to be pleasing to the male gaze (McKinley & Hyde 1996 cited in Jackson & Falmagne 2013:380). These are disciplinary practices that are recognisably female (Bartky 1997:132). In this chapter, the women's stories about how they believed their experiences of CSA and their culture have impacted on them over time in terms of understanding their own sexuality has shown the female body is a site on which men exert disciplinary control and through which the norms of feminine behaviour are established (Bordo 1993 cited in Jackson & Falmagne 2013:380). The interviews showed particular norms regarding women's sexual pleasure across eight of the women's cultures.

The data shows a significant amount of commonality of experience amongst a diverse group of participants (Reavey, Ahmed & Majumdar 2006:173). The findings suggest that CSA responses within ethnic communities are located in gendered power relationships (McGuffy 2005). The cultural values placed on a girl/women's sexuality are relevant to the ways in which CSA is dealt with in communities (Futa et al 2001:196, Yuksel 2000:157, Lowe et al 2005:161, Fontes 2007, Kenny & McEachern 2000:912). Women's bodies are used as sites for maintaining values of honour within different cultures (Kanukollu & Mahalingam 2011:219). Cultural values that devalue women but at the same time place high value on chastity and virginity make women responsible for CSA and are linked to very negative effects for survivors (Bryant-Davis et al 2009:348).

The themes of chastity, promiscuity, virginity and sexual desire offer much in understanding how cultural gender norms and practices can impact on ethnic groups' responses to CSA. It also shows how these same practices can influence women's own views of themselves and understandings of the sexual abuse. Most feminists agree that normative heterosexuality is one of the key coercive and regulatory forces in nearly all societies (Kaler 2006:63) and this study has revealed this through the women's stories. CSA is a gendered issue and sexuality is an area of political struggle; hence CSA is immersed within this space. CSA is an affront to a woman's sexuality because she is constructed as either a virgin and pure, or dirty and a whore. The politics of sexuality

reveal that women's sexual safety, sexual desire and sexual pleasure have little social significance in heterosexual sexual encounters (Lees 1986 cited in Ramazanoglu 1989:65). Gatens argued that theorists of sexual difference "do not take as their object the study of the physical body, the anatomical body, the neutral, dead body, but the body as lived, the animate body, the situated body" (1991:147) as I have done in this thesis. In so doing I argue the female body needs to remain central to the agenda of feminist research about CSA. Gender and heterosexuality are sustained not only through the structural hierarchies and social norms but through our everyday sexual and social practices, as the women's stories have shown. Living gender and heterosexuality in the everyday impacts on how CSA is responded to personally, culturally and politically. Thus the ongoing use of feminist theory paying attention to the female body and the way it is socially constructed across cultures in CSA research enables the visibility of cultural gender norms and practices, which influence the way women, their families and communities understand and respond to CSA. Cultural values that devalue women, honour silent sacrifice and make women responsible for sexual violence can have devastating effects on a survivor's life (Bryant-Davis et al 2009:348).

## Cultural Constructions of Men's Sexuality, Blame and CSA

Thus far I have discussed the cultural constructions of female sexuality and demonstrated how these position women as responsible for the sexual violence perpetrated against them. I have also made visible how these same constructions maintain blame and silence about CSA within ethnic communities. In the second half of this chapter I will explore the cultural understandings of men's sexuality because they too position women as responsible for sexual violence. The women described male sexuality as uncontrollable and hence it was female duty to please men's sexual desires as well as male power. The women's descriptions formed the sub-themes below, which highlight how such constructions impact on women's experiences of CSA in the context of ethnic communities.

### *"They Can't Help Themselves": Male Sexuality as Uncontrollable*

All of the women spoke about the cultural belief that men cannot control their sexual urges. That is, the belief that men, for biological reasons, need to release sexual pressure and that women are therefore responsible for avoiding CSA or rape because men have no control. The supposed inability of men to control their sexual desires and needs

emerged and re-emerged throughout the interviews in different forms. For example some of the women specifically spoke about a biological drive which, if not fulfilled, could cause harm to the man. For example, Astraia said:

> They need it, that's right ... boy is that cultural too, cos that's very much I know in Greek culture, men need it ... if you don't want it you shouldn't put yourself in a situation because they can't help themselves. Cos like your husband can rape you whenever, it's not something that he has any control over. Cos men will get sick without sex, it can also do damage to their genitals if they don't release themselves. You know my mum still believes it ... That you know and you can't get it out of her head that that's true and that if you don't do something it can really damage it. Where has this stemmed from like through the generations it's like a secret message that mothers pass down onto their daughters.

Doortje described how men's inability to control their sexual urges is linked with their biology, suggesting that if a man is not like this then he is not viewed as 'normal'. She said: .

> Yes I think that is a strong theme in Holland because it's a male instinct they will go right back to animals, you think about animals, it's always the poor female animal that bloody has no say, birds, dolphins. A pack of dolphins rape a female thats well known, all the gorillas, all the animals you can think of all rape whenever they feel like, they take a female whenever they want to, and that has been equated to males, that there is a primitive instinct to have sex, you're not normal if you don't.

Anechka described what her son believed as a young man.

> It's what my son he said if man is not strong enough…it's like women's fault, because have a look everything sex is promoted on TV and everywhere and look in magazines and everywhere is naked bodies and man is not strong enough.They can't do anything about themselves, they just have to, only strong man can keep themselves. It's still its make women responsible because they don't wear appropriate clothes "have a look" he said "they were like this and everything you can see", "how you can stand out of this, how can you resist, you have to be very strong mentally not to do anything about it",

Sameera Abdi said.

> I have heard things like "the man's brain is in his penis", "give him", my mum told me "please him on bed and he will do anything for you". Those type of sayings ...[...]... Certainly there is a sense, family is monitored and controlled by the man, so the man has allot of power and that's one thing that he controls as well, and there is that acceptance. I mean why would my mother say that to me "just give him everything", so I think in my head that is a sign of the can't control themselves when it comes to sex and once you fulfil that it's OK.

Levant et al (2003) suggested that men acquire social norms regarding masculinity through cultural belief systems and gender ideologies (see also Pérez-Jiménez

2007:359). Viewing femininity and masculinity through a social constructionist lens shows patriarchy as an ideology, a set of beliefs and expectations about how men should think and behave (Pérez-Jiménez 2007:359) and how women should think and behave and this extends to their bodies and their sexuality. Tanja provided an example of her personal experience within her own marriage.

> As a young woman – I remember very distinctly, my husband saying to me "well you know a man needs to have sex because it can make him sick if he doesn't". And I remember thinking, "okay then", but in my head I remember going I reckon that's bullshit. I had no proof, but I reckon that's not true ... I remember saying to him after I had somehow found this information out, "that's not true, you're lying, that's not true, that's bullshit".

The idea that men's desire is the driver for sexual relationships is central to the biological imperative inherent in the male sex drive discourse. For example Astraia said:

> But the cultural stuff is just fantastic around men's sexuality, I love that, they have to have it, and my mum spent her whole married life thinking that. So you know I am sure my dad has raped her, um there is no doubt about it. But it's ok because you just have to sit there and put up and shut up...[...]...Yes, yes, that's where women have to submit because you can physically damage him, oh yeah that's definitely there...and that could be used as an excuse, because men, when they have to do it...you can cause damage, he can become sterile, because they have to, their bodies are different. I tell you what they have been clever in that shit heads. The conditioning of women to believe that is definitely true, its natural for a man .

This leads to a normalisation of male sexuality as uncontrollable and therefore men not being responsible for sexual violence. In the West this has been termed the coital imperative, that is, men possess a biological drive to have intercourse (Jackson 1984 cited in Gavey et al 1999:37). Male sex drive discourses are based on this idea, and they leave women as passive objects with an absent sexuality (Hollway 1984/1989 cited in Gavey et al 1999:37). This discourse persists despite the fact that research has shown that voluntary control over sexual arousal is possible for men (Mahoney & Strassberg 1991:12). The women confirmed that this view of male sexuality was common in their communities. This attitude is used to excuse sexual violence by men (Fontes 2007:66).

There were other ways that men were positioned as not responsible for abuse. For example ideas about such men being mentally ill were also expressed and are consistent with the medical theories on sex offending discussed in the literature review. Sameera Abdi specifically spoke about how within her ethnic group the invisibility of the perpetrator is reinforced through ideas about a perpetrator being mentally ill:

> They do reason it as it's sick in the head always, always, like no father, uncle, will do this to his kids, but surely he is mentally ill, there always must be a reason ... it's always about mental illness ... because it can't happen, there must be an answer, there must be a reason, and the whole society start searching for that reason, we have to reason everything, they don't accept that this is sometimes a power and control issue, certainly an issue of power and control, it's definitely not something that's talked about.

The use of mental illness as an excuse for CSA is another way that men's responsibility is evaded. This type of belief system excuses perpetrators of CSA by suggesting it is only 'sick' men who sexually abuse girls.

Levant et al (1998:234) found that gender has a larger effect on ideologies of masculinity than race. They found that, across different races, men are more traditional than women. That is to say, men across race and ethnic groups have more traditional views of the male role than women. While my analysis focuses on the women's views, it also includes how the women interpret attitudes and understandings more generally in their communities. That is, the views they express are not so much their own as located in their ethnic groups. My analysis suggests a particular attitude towards masculine sexual behaviour that is linked with a biological discourse of the male body in the ethnic groups of most of the women. This male biological drive discourse has been identified in previous research (Gavey et al 1999:40). It is essentialist in nature and suggests that sexual energy builds up in an individual and requires release (Jackson 1999). It is something men have little control over, with men being viewed in general as having a greater sex drive. This model appears to be quite established across the world and reinforces ideas that the male sexual urge is either uncontrollable or needs to be controlled by women, and when not satisfied causes sickness or finds outlets in sex crime (Jackson 1999). This attitude excuses men's sexual transgressions as a part of their biology and makes women responsible for it through gendered practices of blame and responsibility. The idea of an uncontrollable male sex drive as underpinning sexual abuse is also a widespread belief in popular culture (Cossins 2000:45). Male sex drive discourses have been used by perpetrators to justify CSA to themselves and others (Cossins 2000:46). Anechka described this from her own experience.

> But if you would behave very nicely and you would refuse to have sex and they would do something to have sex with you. I have been drugged few times to make sex with me, so was it my fault ... I didn't encourage them I know I didn't and even didn't look at them and didn't like them how could I encourage them. I didn't wear something very short or something I just wear normal clothes

The women's stories showed how they struggled with this attitude in trying to understand their own experiences of CSA, their own sexuality, and other forms of sexual violence they heard about in their families and communities as they grew up, for example sexual violence and coercion in marriage. The women were angered by this construction of men being unable to control themselves in their cultures and resisted it strongly in their own relationships.

Sameera Abdi spoke about her own sexual desire as a sense of pride in that she was not like a man.

> It comes from the fact that man is ...the head of the family so your subconsciously as a women, how on earth you're the head of the family when I am doing everything. So you want to prove that your capable of doing everything, so yes I need sex, but I don't need you, I can control myself, so that's where that pride comes from...That's for me anyway that's what it was, I don't need a man, that's it, and sometimes you masturbate, coz you don't want to ask... For me it was, you don't talk about it in public... we didn't ever dare to talk about it, but I am sure, like you know if I did it, and I am sure others, but I even did it at a time when I had the desire and I didn't feel that comfort level to ask for it...So stuff you I will do it for myself...[ many women] Would be the same... but its again, it's a survival thing, it's a standing up tall, for me it was anyway.

> Ligaya described moving away from her community to enable her to be comfortable with having a free sexual relationship. I was treated very well in the sense that you know. I could flirt with him, we will just have dinners, you know all that fantasy that you have ...[...]...I enjoyed it very much. At the end of course the feeling of guilt came in ...also the fact that of course it is never respectable for doing that. It was never accepted in my community. Although I flourished at that time, I totally took myself outside the community...[...]... I think it freed me sexually. I have experienced sexual pleasure, so I am almost grateful for that event and I became very confident...

Thus the cultural norms, roles and values surrounding the male and female body and sexuality have significant relevance to how women, their families and their communities understand CSA across ethnic and non ethnic groups alike.

The gender practices and values discussed thus far in this thesis allude to potential excuses that perpetrators can make for sexual violence. Indeed Fuller (1993:68–109 cited in Cossins 2000:45) indicated that perpetrators find a number of reasons to justify intrafamilial CSA, but these are equally applicable in extrafamilial abuse. I present these here to show how similar they are to the discussion earlier. These are that: a woman not giving a man enough sex means the daughter (or another girl) needs to provide it; a woman has rejected a man sexually (so he must seek sexual satisfaction elsewhere); a daughter did not say no (or a girl did not say no); the sexual maturation of the daughter

escalates abuse (the sexual maturation of a girl means she is ready for sex); the sexual titillation of daughter because of her sexual inexperience (virgin girl is seen as a prize for a man to be the first); a belief that women and girls are responsible for looking after a man's emotional and sexual needs; and the idea that a man is passive and was seduced or led on by a girl. In addition to excusing the behaviour, these also obscure the issue of power in relationships and render CSA a sexually driven activity. Such assumptions have been identified as vocabularies of motive used to justify socially unacceptable behavior (Matza 1973 cited in Cossins 2000:45). These vocabularies of motive are saturated in the gender practices and values discussed earlier about the male sex drive. Such discourses are linked with hegemonic masculinity and heterosexual relations (Cossins 2000:47) and have significant effects for the survivors of CSA, their families and communities. Thus if a survivor or her family internalises the view that men are unable to control themselves, then the woman would be blamed for the abuse, in addition to blaming herself, as the women described in earlier chapters. Further, girls with traditional gender role attitudes may internalise a powerless approach to their environments and simply submit to the abuser (Neal & Mangis 1995 cited in Unger et al 2009:650), and this reinforces the blame, shame and responsibility identified in earlier chapters. Thus the cultural attitude surrounding male sexuality as biologically driven with men being unable to control themselves has significant relevance not only to the understanding of CSA in individuals and communities but also to the ways it is responded to both by the survivor, and also their families and communities. The persistence of these types of views means that women continue to be blamed for CSA and reinforces the pressure not to tell.

### *"Please Him in Bed": The Duty of Sexual Submission*

A further consequence of the male sex drive discourse is the establishment of a norm that women as wives must sexually submit to their husbands' sexual needs. This perceived requirement had a varying impact on the participants. Eight women said that in their culture the duty of sexual submission was common for wives. Sameera Abdi described how she learned this duty:

> please him on bed and he will do anything for you, those type of sayings that again keeping me up to a man, ... [...]...there is that acceptance, I mean why would my mother say that to me, just give him everything, so I think in my head that is a sign of the can't control themselves when it comes to sex and once you fulfil that it's ok.

Through Sameera Abdi's talk quote earlier it is clear that it is culturally expected that it is a wife's duty to provide sex or the husband will stray. Nguyen Thi Oi reflected on this.

> If he touch me, even though I am very tired I can't say, or push him away, I find myself that at the moment, I still obedient him in that area, in that environment... Kind of like whatever he asks no matter what I am ready. And I always prepare myself ready for him, even though for a month he never touch me, is still prepare myself every night, clean myself before I go to bed kind of like ready any time... So because we are teach like we have to please I have you have to please your husband otherwise he will look for another women,

Heterosexual men of all classes are in a position to command sexual service from women through purchase, custom, force or pressure (Connell 1995:226 cited in Cossins 2000:116). Research has shown that if a woman's role in a heterosexual relationship is constructed around the necessity of pleasing a man, intercourse may not be a real choice (Gavey et al 1999:48) because sex is established as part of a role that women perform only for the pleasure, need and desire of men. This too is consistent with other CSA research (Ahmed et al 2009:16). Women who are socialised into a passive receptivity may see no alternative but to acquiesce (MacKinnon 1997:48). Some of the women struggled in telling their partner they did not want to have sex and reflected on whether this inability to voice their choices was an effect of CSA or of their culture.

This raises questions not only for survivors of CSA and rape but also for women in general. For the survivor this could mean potentially reliving traumatic childhood violations repeatedly. For woman in general this could mean ongoing, regular and repeated rape. Some of the women struggled to negotiate this duty with their own dislike of certain sexual behaviours that were related to the CSA they experienced. Indeed three women spoke about how their sexual relationships reflected this. For example, Nguyen Thi Oi said that she did not like it when her husband used his hands sexually because it reminded her of the abuse; however she never felt safe or able to tell him. She said, "I always remember his hand is in my vagina, so I don't like it ... even if my husband do that to me I don't like it". She was subjected to this practice that reminded her of the CSA for the duration of her marriage. Zaina also spoke about how CSA affected sexual intimacy with her husband saying, "I don't want him to touch me. But I used to explain to him when I am thinking about the rape that happen to me I don't feel I want to do sex".

Both Nguyen Thi Oi and Zaina gave examples of experiencing flashbacks of the CSA when involved in sexual acts, which has been found as a common effect for survivors of CSA (Briere 1992:34, Yuksel 2000:160, Andres-Hyman et al 2004:320). Doortje also identified how her experiences of CSA affected her sexual relationships:

> I can't give oral sex, I cannot do that, and I said to [husband] if you want oral sex now I am quite happy for you to pay and go and get a sex worker darling. I am not fucking swallowing anything! I feel it's beneath me to ever give any man oral sex ... I am sure I have had that many penises stuck in my mouth that I won't do that for anyone. When I was younger I would do it because you had to be a sex bomb, you had to be really good at sex cos that was my culture. So what I would do, I would get really stoned on marijuana or I would take magic mushrooms or get pissed cos that was the only way I would do it. Then I got to an age in my 40s and I thought I am not doing this for anybody, they can get fucked, it's beneath me and I will not suck another man's cock till the day I die.

Alongside her dislike of this sexual act, this extract also shows how angry Doortje was at her culture and how she resisted the cultural norm of pleasing a man. As the examples show, the women identified being uncomfortable with particular sexual activities because these activities reminded them of the CSA they were subjected to. The examples also show that some women were able to express their discomfort to their partners whereas others were not. How CSA impacts on female sexuality therefore cannot be ignored because, as the women showed in this study, it shaped how they understood and engaged with their own sexuality into the present day. This long-term impact is understandable in the context of other research that shows that, because it was the female child's sexual parts and their sexual availability that were sought by the abusers, this positioned them and their bodies as commodities (Briere 1992:55). Other research has also shown that CSA can have a significant impact on women's later sexual experiences (Sawyer & Durlak 1996, Feiring, Simon & Cleland 2009, Simon & Feiring 2008, Lemieux & Byers 2008, Meston et al 2006, Schloredt & Heiman 2003, Leonard et al 2008).

A consistent thread throughout this research was therefore the lack of blame and responsibility of men for their sexual actions including childhood sexual abuse, because of the male sex drive discourse that has been and continues to be used as an excuse for CSA. As Doortje said, "they couldn't help themselves". Such attitudes about men's sexuality and the male body provide men with greater freedom to explore sex and sexuality, placing them as the sexual experts while women are expected to refuse sex outside marriage, act as gatekeepers, and set limits and controls on men's access to the

female body (Crawford & Popp 2003:24). Indeed research suggests that girl children who are brought up surrounded by traditional patriarchal attitudes such as those under discussion here feel unable to say no to sexual advances of men (Neal & Mangis 1995 cited in Unger et al 2009:644). Conjugal duty therefore implies mutual and permanent consent (Bensussan 2009:183). Thus men always want sex, and women submit in marriage but should avoid it outside of marriage (Fontes & Plummer 2010:498).

The female body was again raised by participants but is discussed here in connection with the sexual service requirement. Some of the participants specifically described this sexual service requirement of women as a 'job done with their bodies', almost like it is separate to them as the man's property. Sameera Abdi suggested that some women in her culture would look at sex as "it's just a job that I have to do, it's just happen that that job is to do with my body, but no more no less, it's like oh yeah alright, I will do it". Anechka described how she gave her body to her husband for peace in the home.

> But I knew if I would not provide sex for him he would be grumpy, unhappy and so I would say I would give my body to him, doesn't matter I would not want to, I would give my body to him to make him happy and he would leave me alone and in peace.

This idea of a job done with one's body is an interesting one because it shows a psychological process similar to dissociation that is used to separate the mind from the body. Dissociation is a psychological process that has been identified in much research about CSA (Neuman et al 1996, Kisiel & Lyons 2001, Atchinson & Macfarlane 1994, Calof 1995, Speigel 1990) and has been defined as "the process in which information is not stored, associated or retrieved in the usual way and the psychic material is perceived to be compartmentalised and split off from consciousness" (Sutherland 2002:10). It has been seen as a helpful process for CSA survivors when they are overwhelmed by emotional or physical trauma, and may become a mechanism through which the child and subsequently the adult can deal with the experience (Talmadge & Wallace 1991:179). While perhaps not clinical in nature, here it is also potentially a helpful process to enable women to negotiate the duty of sexual submission.

In reflecting on the stories she has heard from women in her community, Sameera Abdi described the sexual degradation some women were subjected to because of this sexual service requirement.

> She said "if I only can tell you what he did to me it would make your hair stand up", and I said "what", she never told me, she said "something disgusting", um "and I have no choice" and I said "what do you mean", "oh I'm not gonna go there but it's disgusting, every time I remember it I feel like vomiting".

The participants suggested it was common for people not to view this duty of sexual submission as rape because it was a woman's role to provide sexual service to her husband; therefore it could not be forced. The vocabularies of motive discussed earlier are saturated with male sex drive discourse, women's sexual submission and women's responsibility and blame for CSA.

The participants believed this 'sexual service requirement' coupled with the views on men's inability to control their sexual desire results in rape. Rape in marriage was identified by eight participants as common within their cultures, because of the limited choices women had in relation to sex. Nguyen Thi Oi described how people responded to a woman she knew by saying:

> "How come husband rape you?" "Your husband have every right to have sex with you". So that is in my mind, because of our culture, if he even do that, I don't want, kind of like rape me, like push me down and finish it. I don't treat that as a [rape], because my duty is I am his wife, I have to do this for him.

This construction of rape in marriage through the idea of sex as the wife's duty has also been found in other research (Reavey, Ahmed & Majumdar 2006:177, MacKinnon 1997:47). It can be argued from the interviews of the women in this study that for women with CSA in their backgrounds messages such as these can reinforce blame and shame as discussed in earlier chapters. Cossins (2000:135) argued that the model for erotic love is signified by the heterosexual paradigm which is made up of a strong possessive male, and a submissive female who is sexually possessed by a man. This discourse appears universally in cultures across the world (Jackson 1999). Women who have been subjected to CSA grow up navigating their own particular cultures and the way they construct gender, sex and power around service to masculinity and the male body (Cossins 2000:55). For ethnic women, though, this includes both negotiating their own culture and the dominant Anglo culture within which they live, which are often in conflict with each other. I will discuss this issue of conflict further in the following chapter but, in summary, male sex crimes are a universal problem (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999:1290). The cultural configuration of gender and gender practice within hegemonic masculinity is crucial in the production and reproduction of male violence against women and children (Kordvani 2002:2). The construction of women as sex objects for

men is a fundamental component of hegemonic masculinity (Kordvani 2002:2). Thirty years ago Sgroi (1982) identified the requirement of women to sexually submit to men as relevant to CSA and my study has shown how these points apply to the ethnic identities represented by the women in the study. Exploration of the cultural and social elements surrounding CSA and rape are crucial in understanding its prevalence and responses across societies (Tennfjord 2006:247). Despite research showing that masculinity varies within and across cultures (Levant & Majors 1997, Levant, Majors & Kelley 1998, Abreu 2000, Levant et al 2003, Pérez-Jiménez et al 2007:360), the data analysis undertaken here suggests that particular forms of masculinity remain pervasive and consistent across the cultures represented by the research participants in this study. The women's stories show how they have navigated these culturally dominant forms of masculinity and femininity as girls through to adulthood in contexts of CSA, and also how these are significant to the phenomenon of CSA itself.

### *"It's a Culture Made by Men": Male Power and Violence in the Family*

Feminism has identified that CSA is a product of the imbalance of power between men and women and children. As shown in the literature on CSA, males are predominantly perpetrators against child victims of whom female children make up a majority. However, as also identified in the literature review, feminism has had a challenging relationship with ethnic theorists and ethnic feminists. I therefore needed to investigate whether gender power relations and power were relevant to the women's experiences of CSA in the contexts of ethnicity.

All of the women's interviews described gender relations in their ethnic groups as characterised by regulated spheres based on cultural gender norms and roles (Pérez-Jiménez et al 2007:376). In all of the interviews femininity was seen as located within the home environment and domestic sphere, while men were understood to have significantly more power within such spheres and to be able to exercise that power in multiple ways. However, all nine women questioned this power imbalance between men and women. For example Nguyen Thi Oi said:

> Show respect to husband ... when I look back I am a bit upset. When I was dating him we put I and him in the same level, but when I become his wife now I am kind of like lower than him. Kind of like, have to do thing, respect him, when I am upset, I answer back ... he call me that I am not a good wife ... I always asking myself about the question, I don't have an answer, but I am thinking this is from my opinion ... is I think when we get married we got a commitment, and I am

> belonging to him. The Vietnamese man thinks, because in our culture Vietnamese men have more power than the women, that is a fact, we have to accept it.

This extract shows notions of ownership, that is, once married a woman is owned by her husband as are the children, and ownership creates a power imbalance. Doortje specifically extended this sense of ownership to the issue of CSA and provided an example of this from her own experience with her father.

> There is this undercurrent of ownership, like my father said to me, when I tracked him down it was 21 years later, "I made you so therefore, I have a right to have sex with you" and that is probably putting it in a nutshell, that there is an undercurrent of ownership.

Sexuality is a major cultural site for the reproduction of masculinity, maintenance of dominant forms of masculinity and the perpetuation of the ongoing hierarchies between men and women (Cossins 2000:116). By considering these gendered behaviours of male sexuality and female sexuality along with considering the relationships of power in those contexts, it is possible to elucidate the connection between male sexuality, power and CSA (Cossins 2000). All the women gave examples of how male power is linked with male violence in their communities. One such example is from Nguyen Thi Oi:

> They proud to be a Vietnamese man who got more power than women. They feel very embarrassing if their wife is more powerful than them ... they always like to have a power ... So we symbolise man is everything. He is a king, he a prince or he everything, he husband. So even my husband hit me, it's ok ... Because he a man, he older than me, he power than me, he can hit me if I am wrong, either if I am wrong, if he think I am wrong, he can hit me, he can abuse me if I am wrong.

Thus, a man has power and authority over his women and children and can use this in whatever fashion he desires. Placed in conjunction with the idea of an uncontrollable male sex drive, this enables men to justify the perpetration of sexual violence against women and children, as well as other forms of violence.

Most of the participants agreed that men's power also extended to the role of disciplinarian within the family. Anechka spoke about how her father, who was also the perpetrator of CSA, disciplined her and how this violence also extended to her mother:

> He would punish me ...[...]... she never punish me, she would talk to me to say "how could I" or "did I" but he would do the physical punishment ...[...]... I would say definitely he did because my mum was always afraid of him ...[...]...Yes especially later on he was very violent.

Male gender socialisation has been associated with the abuse of women (Lisak 1996, Lisak et al 2006). All the women said that within their culture the use of violence

against women and children was common, even though it may not have been within their family of origin. For example, three women talked about domestic violence they experienced in their childhood homes. Doortje said:

> See my dad used to have a gun in the caravan, the little caravan, a loaded gun in the corner, all he had to do is look at it. We lived like that for 12 years, for the first 12 years of my life.

Ligaya talked about how a man's status, financial and otherwise, provides respectability to the whole family and that if a woman complained about beatings she would be seen as a bad wife. She said, "inside the community here we know that [there is violence] but the good standing of the father outside will lift him up". All of the issues discussed thus far regarding gender and sex norms, roles and values in culture implicate culture as colluding in abuse. These examples further underscore the power of family and community in shaping the needs and emotions of survivors of CSA (Reavey, Ahmed & Majumdar 2006:177).

Five participants suggested that the mother had some power in relation to the children in the family structure. However, the overall power rested with the father. Ligaya described this as "mother nurtures ... if the father is a little bit strong with his ego and wanted to show [his power], nothing the wife can do, it will be really taken over with the father". There is an implication here that even though the mother does have some power in the home over the children, if the man chooses to use his power, the mother has no right of reply. Thus regulation of the family's behaviour sits with the father and he is responsible for the maintenance of his wife and children (Shahidian 1999:195). Chan's (2009: 78) comprehensive overview of sexual violence against women and children in Chinese society found that the use of male violence towards women and children was common and that as a society the social and cultural acceptance of women's subordination is a contributor to the violence against them. In some cultures this principle of authority and power translates into the cultural and legal acceptance of wife beating (Kibria 1990:14). This is related to the norm of male power and male gender socialisation, as decades of research have established (Lisak, Hopper & Song 1996:723, Dobash & Dobash 1998:15–16). Furthermore, research has shown there is a complex relationship between rigid male gender roles and violence (Lisak, Hopper & Song 1996:737). Indeed research has shown that men who are sexually violent are usually also physically violent and many of those who use violence against adults do

with children too (Lisak, Hopper & Song 1996:738). Indeed Chan (2009) suggested that in most research with Chinese women patriarchy was not identified as a risk factor for sexual violence against them, but that it should be considered one. This is pertinent to other cultures with strong patriarchal attitudes, including those of the women in this study. Thus practices of sexuality are related to the social structures of power, and these frame women's experiences of CSA as well as other forms of violence in the home (Cossins 2000:116).

While male power was constructed in the women's accounts of their cultures in terms of physical power (Pérez-Jiménez 2007:367) they also mentioned economic power. Zaina spoke about how men retain power not only in the family but in the community because all the decision makers are men and they protect each other.

> If you say your husband is discriminating you, abusing you, because they are man they protect your husband as man ... traditionally it's a culture that was made by men and I think sometimes they don't understand, they don't know, they don't have a respect of human rights.

The well-known paradox here is that within families women have had very little power yet carry all the responsibility (Millett 2000, Firestone 1970, Allen 1998, 1999, 2008, Delphy 1984).Thus the gender and sex norms as they are constructed in culture require the silent sacrifice of women to practices of sexual and domestic violence and leave men blameless. Sameera Abdi said:

> I know of so many [women in my ethnic group] ...[...]... he is basically very abusive you know very physical, sexual you name it, and ... [she]... really wouldn't leave the situation because of what society will say about her ... so her way of dealing with it is I need to focus on my kids, I need to give them the love ... luckily the kids are quite successful ... now what society said is in Arabic, what that means is like "wow what a mother".

Thus the cultural gender practices and values that silence survivors of CSA are the same as those that trap women in abusive relationships. Wendt and Zannettino (forthcoming) argued from their research with different groups of women who have experienced domestic violence that being a good woman means silent sacrifice. This was described by all the women in this study. This notion of silent sacrifice, discussed in earlier chapters, reinforces the silence around CSA for victims, but could also result in mothers not supporting or responding to their daughters' disclosures for fear of gossip, shame and blame as discussed earlier. Research has shown that for many ethnic women, these cultural gender norms and roles reinforce their decisions to stay in abusive relationships

because they feel they are not fulfilling their role as a 'good wife' if they leave (Menjivar & Salcido 2002:905, Chan 2009:78, Wendt & Zannettino forthcoming). Further research has shown that one feature of working with child sex offenders is changing men's attitudes towards women and children (Lancaster & Lumb 1999:124). As I have shown here, these attitudes do have an impact; thus the same gender norms and roles that influence responses and reactions to domestic violence and rape in ethnic communities are also found to influence responses and reactions to CSA. When male dominance is legitimised by the social order, in this case across cultures, it is then translated into social reactions, as shown here, that stigmatise and revictimise survivors of CSA (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999:1290) and leave women with limited agency over their bodily integrity. Thus, investigating one's culture exposes the prevailing attitudes and beliefs that allow the double standards of sexual behaviour for men and women (Tyagi 2001:21). Drawing out this double standard provides a lens to understanding CSA in ethnic communities and in all communities, that is, the oppressive nature of patriarchy provides a licence for sexual abuse in all cultures (Tyagi 2001:21), including for ethnic communities and ethnic women.

### *"They Had Nothing to Lose": Male Perpetrators of CSA*

CSA offending has been considered mostly within psychology and psychiatry, thus reducing a historically widespread and socially tolerated cultural practice to the individual characteristics of the man (Cossins 1999:3), as discussed in the literature review. In order to challenge these views I have sought to consider CSA offending as a cultural gender practice (Cossins 1999:5) and have made reference to perpetrators throughout the findings chapters where applicable. Cossins (2000:129) argued that CSA offending as a gender practice is likely to represent different issues of power for different men practising different masculinities. However, the links between gender, power and masculinity are a consistent thread in men's sexual offending across communities. CSA is an overwhelmingly male activity irrespective of the sex of the child abused (Cossins 1999:1). One of the unexplored issues within child sex offending is the question of why the practice is not limited to a particular class, race, ethnicity or age group of the offender (Cossins 2000:147).

In Chapter 4 I discussed perpetrator tactics, showing that those used by ethnic perpetrators were similar to those of non-ethnic men. Chapter 5 showed the

complexities surrounding responsibility for male perpetrators of CSA which are rooted in victim blaming, gender and sex norms, roles, values and attitudes, and shrouded in silence. In this chapter I have shown that cultural constructions of male sexuality, including belief in an uncontrollable male sex drive, in excusing male perpetrators for sexual violence because they could not help themselves. They are also commonly constructed as sick. Further, female sexuality is used as the crutch to compel women into a duty of sexual submission to compensate for male sexual aggression. I argue these elements conspire to position men as blameless and invisible in stories of CSA in ethnic communities. Some women in my study even suggested this is why perpetrators are able to keep re-abusing children. Nguyen Thi Oi said:

> Because there is no punishment for the perpetrator ... So that why they do it again and again because who punish them? Who? They had nothing to lose, to do it again and again.

Indeed research has shown that perpetrators use silencing as a powerful tool to continue abuse and reinforce powerlessness (Kanukollu & Mahalingam 2011:223, Briere 2002, Herman 1998). Earlier chapters showed how shame for participating in a taboo activity, shame for wearing alluring clothes (Fontes 2005:137), physical maturation (Fontes 2005:140, Cossins 2000:137), the threat of lost virginity allowing non-penetrative abuse (Yuksel 2000:157), notions of children behaving sexually thereby initiating abuse (Krause & Roth 2011:34), ideas that men cannot control their sexual desire (Fontes 2007:66, Cossins 2000:45), and use of manipulation, bribery and threats (Tyagi 2001:26) were all vocabularies of motive for the perpetrators of CSA. Further the CSA itself was used as an excuse for ongoing victimisation because the girl has already been damaged and dirtied (Fontes 2005:153). Alongside the wider cultural gender and sex norms, roles and values that elevate a higher value of males over females (Fontes & Plummer 2010, Kanukollu & Mahalingam 2011:224, Rydstrøm 2002:360, Fontes 2007:67, Agathanos et al 1982:310) were present in the nine ethnicities represented by the participants in the study. These ideas maintain men as invisible and blameless in CSA and keep the focus on the victim.

Before I close this chapter, one final element to this discussion needs to be raised because it emerged in the interviews and that is the issue of cultural exclusivity of ethnic perpetrators of CSA. As an ethnic social worker I have heard many times from different ethnic groups the belief that men from their communities do not sexually abuse

children, that is, “it only happens in the West” is a common idea. This culturally exclusive argument completely denies the existence of CSA, and works to further keep victims silent. Ligaya said “They think it happens only in the West”. This view not only reinforces the silencing regarding CSA found in ethnic groups but is a mechanism which keeps ethnic perpetrators particularly invisible within and outside ethnic communities. For example, Sameera Abdi said within her ethnic community CSA is viewed as “oh that’s them, oh thank God we belong to our culture, and I was of that view, honestly for many, many years ... no it doesn’t happen in our society”.

We see here the dominance of this view in that Sameera Abdi believed it despite being subjected to CSA herself. In fact seven of the participants identified 20 incidents of CSA outside of their own experience either within their own families or incidents they heard about in the community. Tanja reflected how, despite her father knowing what had happened to her once she was an adult, he was still able to deny its existence in their ethnic community:

> When I was talking to my dad about how difficult it is recruiting and so I’m trying to explain to him the silence of it. And his response to me was ... “well I told you it just doesn’t happen in our culture”.

This belief can therefore be so strong that, even when presented with evidence to the contrary, people struggle to believe. The women were well aware of this belief system in their communities and families and had considered how this may have impacted on their parents’ views of the men who abused them. Earlier I briefly discussed the issue of trust and how the women described the men who abused them as men they could trust or who were in trusted positions. The issue of trust is also relevant to notions of the cultural exclusivity of CSA. Indeed four women spoke directly to this issue. Starting with Astraia who said, “you just trust this man because he is Greek and professional and well who the fuck says Greeks are all to be trusted?” Tanja talked about how this cultural exclusivity meant that her parents didn’t believe that a man from their community was an abuser, despite hearing gossip about his wife kicking him out because he abused their daughters:

> The fact that my mum said “we had heard that he had done something to his daughters and that his wife left him”. Just no concept, because in their mind at that time there was no thought to go, “so, his wife said he sexually assaulted his daughters, I have a daughter, I have grandchildren. Wouldn’t it be a good idea to keep him away from them, just in case?”

This issue of cultural exclusivity is not unique to this sample: May-Chahal and Herczog (2003:3) also found this. Migrants and refugees coming to Australia must build a new life, often within a radically different culture from the one they left behind (Herman 1998:196). Thus holding on to cultural beliefs such as those under discussion here is a form of cultural preservation because, as a small community within a larger dominant society, communities do not want their people labelled as child sex offenders. Further, this type of cultural exclusivity was a tactic used by gatekeepers in this study to deny access to participants, as discussed in the methodology. Studies with African-American people in relation to CSA found there was a cultural mandate on African-American women to protect their ethnic men (Tillman et al 2010:64). Earlier I mentioned that the good behaviour of women adds status and prestige to the family and community (Gilligan & Akhtar 2006:1370). This too is relevant here because women's and girl's silence in relation to CSA protects their men, their communities and their families but it also contributes to denying its existence. Indeed denial that CSA exists as a problem is a common feature of ethnic research (Futa et al 2001:197, May-Chahal & Herczog 2003:3, Tyagi 2001:21). Further, women who break the silence on sexual violence within their ethnic groups are seen as betrayers of their ethnicity (Bryant-Davis et al 2009:348). Indeed, the difficulty in recruiting I encountered could reflect the fear of this by gatekeepers and potential participants. Sameera Abdi, Nguyen Thi Oi, Ligaya, Zaina, Astraia, Anechka and Zita were all concerned about being identified in their communities; hence the significant measures taken to ensure their anonymity. I have chosen the alternative in not hiding my identity and recognise the potential consequences of this for me. Irrespective of this the courage shown by all the participants in sharing their stories of sexual abuse by men in and outside of their ethnic groups, means that the silence on CSA by ethnic men in ethnic communities is broken.

In this chapter I have discussed the cultural constructions of women's and men's sexuality and how these gender practices and values result in blame for victims and survivors of CSA and maintain the invisibility of perpetrators. The analysis of the women's interviews has shown how certain responses to CSA are framed in relation to these cultural gender practices and values. Beliefs about chastity, promiscuity and virginity are only relevant to girls and each of these has significant repercussions for CSA for women themselves, the family and the community. Further, these beliefs about chastity and promiscuity impact on CSA because victims and survivors are constructed

as dirty and damaged. Female sexual desire was also shown to be constructed as something abnormal and unwanted, further impacting on CSA both in relation to blame but also in relation to women's individual experiences of their sexuality.

The women described ways in which men were constructed as having limited responsibility for CSA. Men were culturally constructed as unable to control their sexual desires and by extension women were positioned as having a duty to sexually submit. Male power and violence in communities was also seen by the women as contributing to silencing, invisibility of men and men not being blamed for sexual violence and CSA. The analysis has therefore demonstrated how perpetrators of CSA within ethnic groups have layers of protection from responsibility; including that of cultural exclusivity and the belief that CSA only happens in the West. This results in ethnic women experiencing additional layers of silencing related to protecting their ethnic men. All of the findings discussed thus far lead me to consider the impact of such issues on a woman's emotional wellbeing, and I will discuss this next.

# CHAPTER EIGHT

# Ethnic Women, CSA and Their Emotional Wellbeing

This thesis has shown that the cultural gender practices relevant to the constructions of a woman/girl's body and her sexuality can impact negatively on the ways in which survivors of CSA understand themselves and experience their sexuality and body as they grow into womanhood. Furthermore these constructions also influence community and family responses to CSA. In this chapter I will focus more on the personal dimensions of emotional wellbeing that the women talked about, including how they felt the CSA impacted on their relationships with men. I will also discuss the significant impact of losing trust and how this affected their mothering. This discussion will demonstrate the active process they engaged in to cope with the effects of abuse. In contrast to the earlier findings chapters, which were remarkably consistent, the women's experiences of their emotional wellbeing varied.

However, before exploring the themes in this chapter, it is important to note that the majority of participants were not accessing mental health services at the time of the interviews. Some participants accessed a range of services throughout their lives; however, CSA was not always the presenting issue. For example, Tanja was the only participant who as a child experienced psychiatric services after a suicide attempt, but was never asked about CSA, and then as a young adult participated in counselling for a short period. Astraia and Zita attended only a couple of counselling sessions as adults for other reasons but did not view these as helpful and did not engage further. Anechka received counselling in relation to domestic violence as an adult and had just begun to consider the impact of CSA at that time. Doortje, Sameera Abdi, Nguyen Thi Oi and Ligaya had not accessed any counselling services for the effects of CSA before or at the time of the interviews. Thus, of the nine, only one woman had been involved in counselling related to the CSA.

## "The Deep Pit": The Emotional Consequences of CSA

For the purposes of this thesis I use the term 'emotional consequences' to describe the feelings the women talked about as an effect of the CSA. There were many different

ways in which women constructed the emotional consequences of CSA. These included experiences of depression, needing to be in control, effects on their decision-making capacity, lack of trust in men, difficulty trusting people in general, and the impact of the lack of trust and the CSA on their parenting. Five participants spoke about how they experienced feelings of depression. Ligaya spoke about her experience of debilitating depression and the ongoing challenge to manage it:

> It is so debilitating. I tell you Tanja it's almost like every time it happens I go that deep it's almost like going to my cave in the deep pit, going back there, and it takes a lot of hardship to go up again. No one knows, I deal with it myself ... had several episodes like that in my life, several ... Yeah that worries me, that eventually it will catch up.

Zaina said:

> Sometimes if I think about what happen, I don't even sleep, I don't even want to eat, I don't even want to talk to people, yeah, and before I was staying in my bedroom even for 4–5 days and children ask "mum what's happen?" I say "I am sick" but not really.

Both these quotations capture the depths of despair experienced by these women after CSA. Depression as a consequence of CSA has been found in both Western (Briere 1992:29, Sgroi 1982) and ethnic-specific research (May-Chahal & Herczog 2003:25, Mennen 1995:121, Feiring, Coates & Taska 2001:1322, Clear et al 2006:81, Davis et al 2009, Lundqvist et al 2004:398, Bebbington et al 2011, Mchichi-Alami & Kadri 2004:240, Andres-Hyman et al 2004). In addition to depression, three women spoke about wanting and needing to be in control of their lives because they felt they had no control during the abuse. Sameera Abdi described this:

> I don't give up my freedom that easily. I need to know everything. It's part of who I am now and many will put it down to control, it's not control, it's a safety thing. Control is what you do with the knowledge you have once you have it, and there is a difference between having the knowledge and having the knowledge and acting on and using it too. I just like to know and I don't want to be controlled by anybody, and I made it very clear to my husband, you know I have nobody to control me. Cos I felt although it was for a very short period of time, very short time, I felt my freedom was, I wasn't in control of the situation and running away was my option and I didn't want to be in that position ever again.

Here Sameera Abdi spoke about how the need to feel safe as a result of the abuse made her consider her safety at all other times and therefore ensure her ongoing safety because of her ability to control her circumstances. The literature on trauma related to abuse focuses on women's feelings of being out of control and helpless (van der Kolk,

McFarlane & Weisaeth 1996, Briere & Scott 2006, Briere 1992). However, Briere (1992:27) noted that some survivors deal with the powerlessness of the CSA experience through control. In this quotation it is evident that Sameera Abdi links the control to safety and to having knowledge about what can happen and being able to act on that knowledge to keep herself safe in the future. In contrast Ligaya talked about how the abuse impacted on her decision-making capacity and self-doubt, that is, she experienced nervousness and fear in making decisions about her life, perhaps because control was taken from her in childhood as a result of abuse. Ligaya said "I think people who have been abused always worry about decision making, that I want to cure [heal this], I really want to be working on that".

Zita talked about not being able to stand up for herself in her life and wondered whether the abuse had somehow affected this: "If anything it made me not able to fight for myself really". Yet as a worker Zita is a passionate advocate for the rights of others. Other research found that a loss of confidence and self-esteem can be effects of CSA (Kelly 1988:189). These quotations show the different responses the participants had to the powerlessness they experienced during the abuse as children. In the literature review I discussed the high prevalence of mental health problems of CSA survivors such as anxiety disorders, antisocial behavior, substance and alcohol abuse, eating disorders, suicidal behaviour, post-traumatic stress disorder, and neurological effects (Peters 1988, Bushnell et al 1992, Fergusson et al 1996, Gould et al 2012, Bebbington et al 2011, Dinwiddie et al 2000, Mullen et al 1994), so-called insecure and disorganised attachments (Alexander 1993, Briere and Runtz 1988, Jehu 1989), increased rates of relationship breakdown (Beitchman et al 1991, Bagley and Ramsey 1986, Mullen et al 1988, 1994, Fleming 1997, Fleming et al 1998), problems with sexuality and sexual adjustment (Herman 1981, Finkelhor 1979, 1984, Finkelhor et al 1990, Mullen et al 1994, Fleming et al 1998a) and increased risk of revictimisation (Mouzos & Makkai 2004). Whilst these effects may be common across communities, there was relatively little talk of these psychological problems by the participants in this study, with most only talking about periods of depression throughout their lives.

## "It's Affected All My Life": Relationships with Men

Some of the participants also spoke about the emotional consequences of CSA in their relationships with men. Here I will discuss the ways in which they feared that their

husbands viewed them differently because of the CSA. Two women specifically identified their concern about how their husband might view them knowing about the CSA. Nguyen Thi Oi said she felt her husband viewed her differently because he knew about the sexual abuse:

> If I'm not sexually abuse, he may precious me as a wife, and he will live with me forever, now I am thinking that he just need a wife for company, but he likes someone else better than me, not me.

Zaina too spoke about how she sometimes worries that her husband may think of her differently because of the rape.

> That's happen many times especially if he does something wrong to me you know sometimes he can say "you didn't do this", see and I think maybe he say that because I was raped, and since I think about that I feel thinking about what happened and why it happened to me, why? I know it's impossible to change, it's already happen, but I still ask that question why it happen to me.

This concern is strongly linked with the gender practices in their communities discussed earlier, such as the stigma associated with CSA for women. The raw power of these gender practices not only affects women who have been subjected to CSA but also those close to them. Zaina said that even though her husband was different to other men from her ethnic group, she believed that sometimes he had some problems with understanding the CSA:

> My husband is different to other because for other African husband he could divorce with me but he was just upset sometimes and don't talk and don't show you he is happy. But I understood it's the culture but he forced himself to understand and after few days he say, "I am sorry but I am thinking about how people feel with me, but I am sorry I understand it was not your fault, nothing wrong for me, since we are living together, I don't see anything wrong to you but sometimes I need you to understand too, it's not easy for African man to understand".

In this extract Zaina's husband said "it's not easy for an African man to understand", showing how connected his understanding of CSA is to a male cultural identity and the cultural gender practices which make female survivors of CSA responsible, dirty and damaged. This was implied when he said "I don't see anything wrong with you". This fear of how a woman's husband might view his wife was also been found in other research (Fontes 2007:70). Zaina said, "If your husband is in the meeting he feel like he was not respected too". Nguyen Thi Oi said the man is shamed because "He loses face cos his current wife was sleep with that man". The words participants used to describe this may be different but they are clearly referring to the fact that not only is the victim

disparaged, but the husband of a victim (Fontes 2005:148, Shaw et al 2001:1376). Thus an additional consequence for ethnic women subjected to CSA is further anxiety within the context of their intimate relationships alongside stigma in the community.

Two women also identified that their choice in men was affected by the CSA. For example, Anechka said she believed the abuse affected her whole life, particularly the types of men that she chose, mirroring the way her father treated her:

> I think it's affected all my life, I hated it and also it's like later on any relationship I chose similar guy, little bit different but the same and so I little bit improve in some stages, it's still the same type of man, abusive and in a way, in a sexual way or mental abuse or both so always abusive.

Astraia also spoke about how she feels that the CSA may have influenced her choice in men. She said:

> I always chose to go into relationships with older men that were divorced with families. I had opportunities to go into relationships my age especially when I was younger and independent I always chose these men, sought their approval … and I wonder how much of that was influenced by the fact that I thought, growing up in that culture subconsciously what was instilled in me that I was not this stuff around being a virgin, never being touched when young, get married, was around I was dirty, I was damaged because this has happened so I didn't have the right to have a relationship with someone who was, you know who wasn't, you know who was starting out for the first time.

Her long-term relationships were

> all with Greek men which is really interesting, they were all men significantly older than me. At least 10 years ... they were all men that had failed marriages, and children from previous marriages ... I went and lived with two of these men which is again culturally wrong that you don't live with a man before marriage so there is one side "oh yes the traditional Greek" and then the other side saying "no I am not going to do the traditional thing", I think they were traditional chauvinistic pigs and what was I thinking?

These extracts show how she was torn between complying with her culture and rebelling against it. Thus, Astraia's quotations demonstrate that, whilst the cultural gendered practices in relation to chastity and CSA may have affected her choice in men, this choice also reflected a challenge to the cultural norms she disliked so much. While other research also found that CSA survivors describe themselves as choosing abusive partners (Andres-Hyman 2004:320), only one (Anechka) of the nine participants in this study described herself in this way. In contrast Zita spoke about how she had always wondered why the CSA did not affect her relationships with men, despite the negative

reaction to her disclosure by her husband. She puts this down to her ability to understand that the perpetrator was a bad man, and that not all men are bad. Zita said

> I always wondered how come cos I honestly really never had any problems having relationships with men, even before, not at all, I never really had any problems that way ...[...]...No it was him, and it was like maybe that's what saved me because I don't hate men, although there is a lot of men I do hate but it's individuals that I do hate and it's bastards that I hate, I don't hate men in general ... I think the good thing is that I attributed those things to those people and not to men overall.

Whilst this was not a dominant finding in this sample I include it because it shows that not all women are affected in the same way as a result of CSA. There are different forms of resilience that enable individuals to survive and thrive despite adversity, and I will discuss this further shortly.

## "There is That Potential in All of You": Losing Trust

The emotional consequences of CSA extended to trust and this was discussed by the majority of the women, with eight women speaking about trust in three main ways throughout the interviews. First, they spoke about trust particularly in relation to their partners/husbands and other men, that is, losing trust in men. Second, they spoke about losing trust in people generally throughout their lives, and finally, they spoke about trust in terms of ensuring the safety of their children. Ligaya spoke about how difficulty trusting impacted on her relationship with her husband:

> The trust have to come in back in because I don't know why? ... because actually he is such a wonderful husband, really if you say walk the talk about equality and respect for women about unconditional love that was him. He loved me so much but I couldn't trust it, and he knew that ... he had to work with me, and he was probably my ... therapist. He had to walk with me through that up and down, up and down. Anything that he says will be interpreted by me, I was so defensive that sometimes I got, I don't know how he coped with it.

She identified that it was because of her husband's persistence that she was able to fully trust again.

> We have been married for 12 years now, and the constant, you know every day, he would tell me he loves me, that I am good, I am perfect, I don't have to change, I don't have to pretend. So it's a real lifetime therapy, long-term therapy that I gained from him ... And for that I am very grateful.

Three women reflected on their relationships with their current partners and, similarly to Ligaya above, said they were grateful for the love, patience, understanding and compassion they received in relation to the effects of CSA. Nonetheless most of the

women said they lacked trust in men in relation to further sexual violence, that is, they felt that every man has the potential for violence.

> I definitely have huge trust issues with men. I mean I can't ever see myself in another relationship and that scares me cos I think I am getting worse as I get older, it's like I am looking out for signs in the universe that no male on this earth is ever to be trusted with anything ... I think there is some genuinely decent males, but I always have this always this little thing at the back of my head about there is that potential in all of you, which is awful, I shouldn't but I just can't help it. (Astraia)

> But it has had an effect on me because I was always on guard with men, I have always been on guard with men ....[...]... I think it just made me very wary of men and saw them as beneath me in a way that you can't trust them, you expect them to be devious. (Doortje)

Distrust in men has been found to be a common feature of CSA experiences in the research (Briere 1992:51, Reavey & Gough 2000, Krause & Roth 2011:34, Lundqvist et al 2004:400, Sgroi 1982). However, this is often constructed as a deficit in women and as a pathology of CSA as if trust is 'normal'. Instead, distrust of men should be seen as a normal and understandable response to CSA and perhaps a normal state for women in general (Burstow 2003:1298).

The emotional consequence of lack of trust resulting from CSA was not limited to not trusting men. Some of the participants spoke about how the CSA impacted on their ability to trust people in general. Astraia described this:

> It made me very cautious and I don't trust people very easily ... I've never ever in my life been able to trust anyone completely and let go and completely be myself ... I have always had a sense of, I don't know if its fear but ... I've never ever completely been completely at ease with anyone in my whole life except for my child ... I think it's a wariness around vulnerability that ... if I let down my guard or if [I] trust ... something bad will happen.

This lack of trust can be understood as a protective mechanism the participants developed to ensure their safety and bodily integrity and this is how the women largely presented it. General loss of trust has also been identified in CSA research (Kelly 1988:189, Briere 1992:51, Mullen & Fleming 1998). This sense of vulnerability and its relationship to trust was present in most of the women's interviews. Similarly to Astraia above, Ligaya talked about how trusting left her feeling vulnerable and she did not ever want to feel that vulnerable again; therefore she did not trust. She said "I have not developed trust ... you feel your vulnerability, when you let that happen". Trust requires a suspension of defensive activities and safety at the hands of another (Briere 1992:51). The cultural gender practices could also reinforce these ideas of vulnerability and lack

of trust by particularly constructing women and girls as untrustworthy and responsible for abuse, and as simultaneously vulnerable. The women recognised that their lack of trust was directly related to the CSA.

This lack of trust extended quite significantly to the women's care of their children. Five women spoke about the fear that their children would be abused, which resulted in them having a heightened sense of safety for them. They said a priority in their life was keeping their children safe, because they know what can happen. They spoke about watching how people held their children, where their children were when they were out somewhere, and generally being very conscious of the potential for CSA and making sure it didn't happen. Astraia spoke about watching:

> even when they pick her up I am consciously just its like I have this radar ... You know I watch how people pick her up, where they touch her ...[...]... sometimes my sister will have my daughter and I have said to her, don't ever leave her, and I trust my brother-in-law as a person. I have known him since he was twenty years old, I've known him for 20 years and yet I don't feel comfortable leaving him with my daughter. I don't feel comfortable leaving her with my dad, he is 80-year-old man and he has never ...[...]... I don't know if that's normal either, I think it's good to be aware, but ... I would never say anything, goodness, they would feel so offended which I think is really interesting too, that you just, you know you look for excuses, "oh no don't take her to the park it's too hot".

Nguyen Thi Oi spoke about how she constantly watched to make sure her children were safe because the perpetrator was a member of her family.

> And even here he hold anyone, I got 5 niece so even he hold anyone, I always there I try to protect them ... I watch, I don't like him to kiss my niece, my children because we all girls, we all have girls, my brother and sister we all have girls, we don't have boys.

Here she refers to the gendered nature of CSA and her fear that because they had girl children this fear and distrust was more intense, whereas for boys she would not be so fearful. This too shows the influence of the cultural gender practices in relation to who is likely to be abused and how this framed the participants' notions of risk of sexual abuse. For all but three women, who also had boys, this was consistent; however, fear and distrust was the same with their boy children as it was with the girl children. Zaina spoke about how she too watches but also does not like her children being away from her:

> I don't want my children to go somewhere if I am not there ... If we have a party I want to be there, and even if I will be there I want to see them around here. I don't want to see they went outside for long or no no, I don't want that, because I think

> maybe even in the toilet they can be raped in the toilet, if they take long in the toilet I used to go [to check].

Research has shown survivors of CSA are significantly more anxious about aspects of their parenting (Douglas 2000 cited in Breckenridge 2006:60). Perhaps a heightened sense of safety for their children is one of these aspects. Earlier I discussed the cultural gender practice of mothering, and how mothers were held accountable and responsible for anything that went wrong with their children. It would appear that this cultural gender practice was taken up by the women with a particular dedication. For example, Doortje identified how fiercely protective she was with her son. She said

> I would kill anyone, his protection, when we used to have lots of parties and stuff, I always watched his door, you know I never left him with anyone ... I never left him with people that I didn't know and didn't trust, wouldn't let him sleep over people's, I was eternally grateful that he was a loner like his mum and didn't want to go and sleep over the neighbours' house. I was very nervous about him sleeping because of what happened to me as a kid, I was really grateful he didn't want to do that ... oh yes I was overprotective, I would stab someone that would hurt him, I have no qualms about that.

Tanja too spoke about how the CSA affected her parenting and how this caused arguments with her husband because he did not understand the risk like she did.

> I was very over-protective and had a lot of arguments with [husband] ... my kids are not to be around people I don't know, my kids are not to be – you know, these sorts of arguments. They've never been able to sleep over, I've always been hypervigilant when it comes to that sort of stuff.

Mothers' lack of trust of others in relation to their children has been found in other CSA research (Hall 2011:35) and was identified by the women as a significant effect of the CSA. The emotional consequences of this were described in terms of being 'always on guard' in relation to their children's safety and for some feeling 'hypervigilance', which sometimes created tension with partners and indeed their families. Mothers watching to keep their children safe have also been found in other feminist research (Kelly 1988:200, Tyagi 2001:29) and it can be argued that this fear is not an irrational one as it comes from firsthand knowledge of what can happen. Indeed Burstow (2003:1298) argued that a traumatised person may see the world more accurately. Thus rather than focusing on the negative elements of this effect of CSA, some of the participants reconceptualised this experience as one which gave them the knowledge and skills to ensure their children were safe. For example, Astraia said:

> If anything the only, I wouldn't call it a positive, that's come out of it. But my learning from it is, that it will never happen to my daughter and I know you can't say that but I will make sure that I will do everything in my power to make sure that it never happens.

This safety also included resistance and challenge to cultural gender practices such as providing their children with information on their bodies and education in relation to sex and bodily integrity, which I will discuss shortly. Nonetheless, despite this reframing three women identified that they worried that they may pass on their lack of trust to their children. Tanja, Astraia and Doortje all spoke about being concerned that their distrust of men, and distrust with people in general would somehow be transferred to their children. Doortje was concerned that her son picked up on her anxiety around his safety when he was younger. Astraia also spoke about a fear that she would be passing on her distrust of men to her daughter. She said:

> I worry about giving my daughter this pedophile thing [distrust of men]. That part of my conditioning that I am conscious of her getting it, but weighing that up and keeping her safe. I am trying to do that in a way that she doesn't feel fear or inhibited in her relationships with people but that she is also informed and empowered by what she feels is right. I want her to know that what she feels is right not what anybody else tells her and that her body is hers as is her life and her ideas.

These stories show that participants were acutely aware of their children's safety and went to significant measures to ensure that their children never came into contact with harm, particularly sexual abuse. This is in contrast to other research which suggests that a mother's history of childhood sexual abuse is one of the biggest predictors of sexual abuse in the subsequent generations. For female children this risk has been estimated at nearly *four times* greater (McCloskey & Bailey 2000, Oates et al 2000). Indeed research has shown that a person's developmental history, including sexual abuse in childhood, can have a significant influence on parenting skills (Belsky & Vondra 1989, Berlin et al 2011, Bromfield et al 2010, DiLillo & Damashek 2003, Ehrensaft et al 2003, Kim, Trickett & Putnam 2010).

In summary the emotional consequences of CSA for the participants of this research have been shown to be feeling depression, wanting to be in control (Briere 1992), a lack of confidence (Lundqvist et al 2004:400, Krause & Roth 2011:39), low self-esteem and self-worth (Mennen 1995:121, Feiring, Coates & Taska 2001:1319, Bryant-Davis et al 2009, Lundqvist et al 2004:400, Banyard et al 2004:224). Many studies have linked adult female survivors of childhood sexual abuse with high rates of mental illness,

suicidality, substance abuse, homelessness and domestic violence (AIHW 2007, Bromfield et al 2010, Henderson & Bateman 2010, Higgins & McCabe 2000, Lamont 2010). This is in addition to worry about the perceptions of their husbands or partners (Fontes 2007:70), a loss of trust in men (Briere 1992:51, Reavey & Gough 2000, Krause & Roth 2011:34, Lundqvist et al 2004:400, Sgroi 1982), a loss of trust in people generally (Kelly 1988, Briere 1992), and a loss of trust in relation to the safety of their children (Tyagi 2001). The similarity between the consequences of CSA for the women in this study and in other research is important to note. However, it is also important to note that, whilst they are similar, the women in this study have not identified considerable mental health concerns. They demonstrated strength and capacity in managing the effects of the abuse and indeed most have had significant and fulfilling careers. Furthermore, research on CSA and mothering has often argued that women who have been sexually abused are at a greater risk of perpetrating neglect or abuse toward their own children without appropriate supports (Levendosky & Graham-Bermann 2001). It has also been suggested that female survivors of CSA have less confidence and satisfaction with their parenting, because they are likely to be disorganised, inconsistent and lacking in emotional control (Cohen 1992, Cole & Woolger 1989, Cole et al 1992, Douglas 2000). I have simply not found that in this study. In contrast the participants were strong and powerful mothers and advocates for their children's safety, bodily integrity and wellbeing, while at the same time being concerned about how their own experiences may impact on their children.

Mennen (1995:122) argued that the distress suffered as a result of CSA has little to do with ethnicity or race and more to do with CSA, suggesting a universal response to CSA that transcends culture. Whilst the levels of distress and mental illness were not that severe in this study, I have shown that there are significant similarities in other effects such as shame, blame, feeling dirty and impact on sexuality which are consistent in CSA research across the cultural spectrum. I will now explore the women's understandings of their strengths and their links to culture and ethnicity, in an attempt to gain greater understanding of the impact of CSA in this context.

## Ethnic Women and Strength

A number of the participants spoke about the different ways that they managed the effects of the CSA within the gendered cultural contexts described earlier. I have

described this as resilience. The concept of resilience is important because it shows the ability of a person to live well despite adverse experiences in their life: it provides evidence to others that it is possible. I will now explore specifically how the women spoke about strengths they gained from their culture, and how they identified their own capacity and their resistance and resilience through parenting.

### *"You Can't be Weak": Strengths from Culture*

The women spoke primarily about the difficulties and challenges of their culture in relation to their experience of CSA. However, some also mentioned that there were strengths from their culture that helped them manage the effects of CSA in their lives. Many identified these as the cultural strength of 'just keep going', which also had links to exposure to strong women in their families and communities. For example, Astraia described how she was not sure whether it was from her culture or more specifically from her family culture but the norm of 'keep going' assisted her in relation to the CSA and her life more generally.

> In terms of strength, a cultural strength and again if this is cultural or if its familial, the environment that you're raised in, you have to get up and keep going. My culture or my environment never allowed for me to fall apart and become that victim. It was like you just get up and move on with life, there is no excuse for you know for wallowing in anything. Life is not like that. I think that has made me strong in a way, because I have never been allowed or given the space to just go "can I go to pieces as a person". I would like it sometimes ... again I don't know if that is cultural, you can't be weak ... You can't be weak.

She drew on this strength so as not to dwell on the abuse and its subsequent affects in her life. Similar to Astraia, Doortje and Tanja both talked about 'just keep going' as strength. Doortje identified that this is because within her culture there is a norm of soldiering on, and a strong work ethic. She said:

> The strength is for me to move on, in my culture the strength is to keep going, and I appreciate that, but the weakness is that you mustn't acknowledge anything, like you have to be dead to be sick so that was a weakness ... I can't stand being weak, that would be gutless; there is nothing that is so terrifying that you can't deal with it ... those sort of things I think helped me get through it, and the strong work ethic. Because I could have stayed at home, gone on the dole, smoked dope and never dealt with anything. So that work ethic is very important I think, very important to me anyway.

The commitment to work and drawing on strength rather than weakness helped her to keep moving on with her life. Two women spoke about identifying with strong women from their community or family. Tanja spoke about reconnecting with the strengths of

the women in her community, not only in managing the effects of CSA but also generally in life.

> I thought sometimes because my gypsy great-great-great-grandparent so I never met them, it's something in my blood, I am a fighter and also because my grandmother she is very, very powerful, she was very powerful strong woman.

Other research has also identified that a connection with a strong female role model is a component of resilience and coping with CSA (Singh et al 2010:446). However, Tanja went on to describe how that strength that she gained from her culture, that is, being a strong woman who just kept going, was a two-edged sword. She spoke about how later, when her marriage broke down and during the writing of this thesis, she found herself extremely emotionally vulnerable and was not able to ask for support from her family. During this time she reflected how as a woman she had taken the concept of strength too far and when she had no emotional reserves left to function, her children were quite shocked at seeing their mother so vulnerable.

> I later realised that that wasn't a good example to set for my daughters because they have no concept of what it's like for mum to be vulnerable. They do now, but when they were younger that wasn't an option for me ... I think I did take it a little bit far in terms of I'm this island that just sits there alone, that's a rock.

A cultural repertoire can therefore be enabling and oppressive at the same time (Potter 1999 cited in Ahmed, Reavey & Majumdar 2009:10). Allowing the women to describe how culture affects them was important (Ahmed, Reavey & Majumdar 2009:10), because culture provides a context for behaviour and a perspective from which the meaning of behaviour is understood (Feiring, Coates & Taska 2001:1307). I have shown in earlier chapters that the issue of CSA in ethnic groups is framed around cultural gender practices that hold women responsible for abuse and leave men invisible, framing survivors as dirty or damaged. In understanding how culture frames people's responses to CSA one can begin to look for ways of working within cultures in relation to CSA, for potential advantages not only disadvantages, enabling ethnic women to access their own cultural resources for healing and surviving CSA. Thus, culture is not only a negative and detrimental component of survivors' experiences of CSA but can bring strength and courage to them in difficult times, and through this an ability to cope better.

### *"I Have this Amazing Capacity": The Self and Resilience*

Alongside these strengths from their culture, it was also clear that the women identified particular aspects of themselves that helped them manage the effects of CSA within the context of their lives and cultures. Resilience is an emerging area of CSA research. The theory of resilience includes looking at positive outcomes despite adversity (Shoon 2007:7 cited in Phasa 2010:1235) .While earlier sections describing the impact of cultural gender practice on the participants in relation to CSA showed overwhelming similarity, here there were some differences. This speaks to an overarching theme in this study of similarity and difference co-existing across ethnic survivors of CSA. Three women spoke of having an optimistic outlook. Doortje spoke about her ability even as a child to look at life from a positive perspective.

> I had the amazing capacity, even depressed I can still find the best things in life. I mean I have been depressed for years but I never allow it to control me, I can always find good things in life, how lucky am I. I have got this amazing capacity to turn it around, I am so grateful, I don't think I would be here otherwise ... How did I come to that? I come from a really horrible evil place and I always had this optimism that's better ... I know I always believed it's better life out there, I didn't think anyone was as much of an asshole as my family.

Sameera Abdi too talked about an attitude of positivity.

> I am lucky in so many ways that it just, it's not right what happened, absolutely not right, I am angry about what happened [the CSA] but, um, I'm pleased that it didn't really leave ongoing mark on me, that like it's not something that I often think about which is great, absolutely great, and maybe because ... the fact that I have learned from it, I looked at the positive side of it, that that was a good thing to do, I rarely look at the half cup empty, rarely rarely as a person and that's my general rule in life, which helps me just move on and not really stuck in it.

Both these women were talking about how an optimistic view, as a part of them, helped them look forward and not dwell in the past abuse experience. Displayed optimism is a known indicator of resilience (Phasa 2010:1245). Similar to Astraia's point earlier about the influences of others on her construction of herself, Tanja spoke about the role that people she met as a teen runaway played in helping her and the impact of this on her ability to cope. The safety she found with them had a profound impact on her life by teaching her not to judge people by their jobs, sexuality or living circumstances, and that love and compassion can be found even on the streets.

> I think, what that experience [running away] did was it made me very understanding of difference, you know, like I had transvestites looking after me, and prostitutes who kept me safe, and people who (crying). These people were my

> friends, and they were where I found safety with society's most unsafe people ... for me, it would have been a lot worse if I hadn't had them around.

Ligaya spoke about an internal skill of stilling herself. She identified that she had this capacity to separate herself from what is distressing her.

> Like still myself, so in fact it has been a mechanism for me. I remember I am scared of worms and in high school teacher said "nope biology you have to handle it", so I would pretend that I am so confident ... sort of still myself, ok, I will do this, am so sophisticated around this and it doesn't matter and I think that it has been very effective ... [...]... I notice that when the situation extreme the more I can deal with it. I can cry with any little things just like that. When it is extreme, this is why I am good in emergency, when it is extreme; I almost can see myself doing things very detached.

The process sounds similar to the dissociative process discussed earlier but Ligaya presented it as controlled and effective rather than pathological. Ligaya also spoke about a strength which did not allow her to show her own vulnerability.

> I'm a kind person, I am empathise with that but not when it comes to my own vulnerability, I will never reveal that, I would never reveal that, I have never revealed that. I mean I went instead to an outcast myself ... I am quite amazed, I thought I was strong, I thought I was strong, I was just pretending I was strong ... the turmoil inside, ... a tsunami really all the time, and you just keep calm and say ok ... And the loneliness, I think it's pretty lonely, although now I am fifty, now I am thinking I'm actually ok with being alone, I am no longer lonely, I just want to be alone, actually, or do my own thing. I no longer need the acceptance.

When Ligaya said 'I no longer need the acceptance', she is referring to the acceptance of her family and community. This is in contrast to her statement in an earlier chapter about wanting to belong and shows how there was a shift in her thinking over the time period of the interviews, suggesting this process is an ongoing one. While many of the other women did not use the same language as this it was echoed by many women in the current study.

A number of the participants also spoke in ways that appeared to minimise the abuse. That is not to say they did not recognise the impact it had on them or that it did not have an impact. Doortje talked about how the extreme violence and fear for her life that she lived with as a child was much worse than CSA.

> So someone touching my fanny it hardly compares, I'm sorry it just doesn't ... it didn't kill me, that's it, it didn't kill me, for fuck sake so what, and so I'm blasé about it. Yet I was so passionate when I saw women and I could be so compassionate with them, yet for me it's just not in my world of thinking my life was life and death, so touching my fanny big deal.

Other participants described a similar analytical decision-making process about the effects of abuse. Sameera Abdi indicated that her ability to go on with her life and manage the affects is partially attributable to her skills of observation and how she managed to escape both abusive situations as a child.

> I am one of the lucky people that it didn't go any further and I put it down ... to the fact that I am a very observant person. I had the skills, I'm not a person like I go to a room but a lot of things enters my head when I go to a place and you make sense out of it for yourself. So you know like I knew even I remember very, very well, how when he turned the lock the key, I remember that was in my head, so when I wanted to escape, I knew exactly the key where to go, you know it's like if I was a naive person and didn't have the skills to smoothly get out of it I don't know what would have been, it wouldn't have been like this.

Tanja spoke about how she rationalised CSA in her mind, and identified this as a form of minimisation.

> Just hearing you say the abuse that you were subjected to as a child, I actually don't speak to myself in that language ... I think I minimise it, Sarah. I think that's what I do, I think I minimise the – oh you know, because it wasn't as bad as what other people's experience would have been, even though it changed me, but it wasn't as bad, it wasn't eight years of being violated by your father or your uncle – do you know what I mean, it wasn't that. There was a period of time with the man, and then there were these other incidences, and so, it wasn't as bad as what it could have been, perhaps, is the way that I look at it; it could have been worse. And I know that's – I would never agree with a client, if they had said that to me, but that's the way I look at it for me.

These three women show the thought process that some survivors go through in relation to the abuse and how they reframed the experiences that included the questioning of culture discussed earlier. This reframing could be for two reasons. Most of the women are also professional women working in the human service industry who have heard many stories about abuse and violation through their career. In reflecting on these stories they have made an assessment that the abuse they were subjected to as children was not as severe as it might have been, thus reconstructing the experience and living with its effects differently. Further, for some cultural views about virginity and the lack of penetration during abuse may have also contributed to this minimisation: they recognised in some way that they were lucky because it could have been worse. But some also recognised that as individuals we are all different.

Despite the negative aspects the women identified in their religions, three spoke of positive elements. Two women described how for them saints from their religion and

the belief in these saints helped them to survive their childhoods. Doortje spoke about what St Teresa meant to her.

> St Teresa was a saint that my mum introduced me ... she has come all the way on my journey with me, I hate Catholic religion, I hate what it stands for but St Teresa was my only friend, she was the only one that I could talk to, that and my dogs, and she was the only one ever there for me as a kid and so she meant something to me, I would talk to her all the time, and ask her to protect me and I still find myself doing that, when things are really bad I just say "please put a light around me and protect me", um, she has been my friend, that's the only way I can put it ...[...]... I won't travel anywhere without her so she has been very important to me and even though I wouldn't say I am Catholic at all ... she was there for me when I needed her and God I don't know what I would have done if she hadn't been there.

Similarly Ligaya too found comfort and compassion in a saint:

> Maria Gorretti it's a young girl that at the age of 16 was raped and then she killed herself to make herself pure ...[...]...She became a saint and I thought that was courageous and that played on my mind ... How did I cope when I was a child, my saving grace was Catholic Church ... age of 10 we were given these stories Maria Gorretti ... also Mary mother of God was protective of children, I decided she is going to be my mother, and I will talk every night to Mary and said "you are going to protect me now, no one is protecting me" ... that was conscious, very conscious, I said "ok I decided I am going to have you", and I don't pray the rosary, I don't pray as a religious prayer, I just talk, I will talk and it probably saved me ...[...]... If I didn't have that, I think that was a blessing.

It is clear from these women's stories that these female saints, with Maria Gorretti a victim of abuse herself, played a major role in their lives as children. So deep was their relationship with these saints that Ligaya said this relationship literally saved her life.

> I would not have survived otherwise I think I would have a mental illness ... I thought many times of how to kill myself but I am too scared because of my relationship with the God, that's the only one that stopped me there, I know I could have just annihilate myself.

It is interesting to note that the women were referring to female saints. Moreover, as a victim of sexual violence Maria Gorretti was nonetheless viewed as holy rather than dirty and damaged. Religion and spirituality has been found to be helpful to abuse survivors (Andres-Hyman et al 2004:320, Singh et al 2013, 2010:446, Bryant-Davis et al 2009:348) but this is complicated because of the patriarchal nature of most of the women's earlier religious affiliations, as discussed in earlier chapters. Nonetheless religion was a source of resilience for some women (Phasha 2010). As Doortje described earlier, this includes continued positive functioning in adverse circumstances (Shoon 2007:7 cited in Phasa 2010:1235), and as Ligaya described, recovery after significant trauma (Shoon 2007:7 cited in Phasa 2010:1235). Singh et al (2010) also

identified similar individual traits of resilience and coping and survival strategies after CSA. This does not mean the women were not affected but that they can function well and do better than many who have had similar experiences (Phasa 2010:1235).

### *"That's Where it Stops": Resistance and Resilience through Parenting*

Earlier I discussed the emotional consequences of CSA for participants' mothering experiences, which resulted in them having a heightened sense of safety for their children. However, there were also strong elements of resistance to the abuse and to their culture in their parenting practices which have supported their resilience. The women's experiences of mothering were related to their resistance to the cultural gender practices that affected them deeply as girls subjected to CSA. Eight women spoke about how they did not want to pass on the norms of silence about sex, sexuality and CSA to their children. The women stated that they realised that cultural gender practices were oppressive and damaging and left children vulnerable to childhood sexual abuse and to the compounding effects of the cultural gender practices post abuse. Many of the women were determined to institute change in the lives of their children in relation to this vulnerability by providing appropriate sex education. Sameera Abdi described this as "there are things that you would just learn to sacrifice [in your own life], and you would think, ok I accept it in my generation but that's where it stops, you know".

Many of the participants were very clear that their experiences of their cultural gender practices would not be transferred on to their children and that this was a direct result of CSA. Hall (2011:38) found that survivors of intergenerational physical/emotional abuse made similar vows. Whilst the context is quite different, the rationale is the same. Mothers vowed never to allow what they endured to be repeated on their children. All the women identified that sex education is important, as it relates to the protection of children from sexual abuse. As a result they actively resisted the norms of silence in relation to sex, sexuality and CSA with their own children. Most women talked about how they ensured their children were educated about sex, their bodies, their bodily integrity and their safety. For example, Astraia spoke about how she educated her daughter from a very young age.

> You know my mum has heart attacks cos [when her daughter] was 2.5 years, [she] knows she has a vagina, and she is allowed to play with it as much as she wants and no one else is allowed to touch it ... she says to her grandmother "this is my vagina and no one is allowed to touch it" ... sometimes she is changing her nappy

> and she says “no one is allowed to touch it” ... “just me and mummy to clean it” ... I feel I am really conscious that I want my daughter to grow up and love how she is and to know that it’s ok. That her pleasure is important and that her body is beautiful and that she has full control and ownership of it. No one else does and any one, you know, fucken attempts to, you will be seeing me on the front page of the news ... she has a little cousin who is a few months younger than her and when he is getting changed I say to her “now that’s a penis”, “see boys are different”, and I just don’t want it to be something that’s unspoken.

In this extract Astraia described teaching her daughter the things she was never taught about her body, its integrity, and appropriate age-related sex education. Tanja too spoke about educating her children by demystifying the body and having open and honest conversations about sex and sexuality and their bodies.

> It really changed how I parent, very, very much so ...[...]... telling them very early on about their body and that they should feel comfortable in being able to talk about their body ... so, the kids, I’ve been very open with them, when they’ve asked a question, I answer it, I don’t beat around the bush, I answer it to their level of understanding.

This teaching of their children is not only fostering education and promoting confidence in children in relation to their own bodily integrity; it is also a direct act of resistance to CSA and to the cultural gender practices that left the women feeling ashamed, damaged, dirty and without worth. Ligaya provided an example of this:

> Do you know what? My children are so honest with themselves, so open, sometimes it makes me cringe. Maybe it was a conscious thing for me, I wanted them to know, I wanted them to know, they don’t know anything about this thing [the CSA their mother was subjected to] but they know about themselves. If there is something good that came out of this, that’s the one, it’s my children, I want them to be free, really free, liberated and no expectations, be free.

This act of resistance promotes further resilience in the participants because they can see how it would have been different for them if they had had this information. Hence, Astraia compared her own experience with sex education and her daughters and wondered whether this would have made a difference to the CSA. This was echoed by the others who also had daughters. Astraia said “And you know I think, I wonder, if my mother had said to me, instilled in me from a very young age like I did with my daughter …” Here she was reflecting on how things might have been different for her if she had the knowledge that her daughter now has. Every participant in this study agreed that education in relation to sex, sexuality and bodily integrity was a crucial part of sexual abuse prevention.

In addition Tanja, Sameera Abdi and Doortje spoke particularly about raising male children and how they have placed a higher level of responsibility on them regarding their sexuality. Tanja spoke about how important it was to teach her son about respect:

> With [my son] it's been very important for him to know that respect is a really important thing, not only for women but in terms of girls and those sorts of things ... he'll wear a white ribbon to school on white ribbon day, and he'll wear a band – real men say no to violence – and those sorts of things ... so I'm trying to demystify it but at the same time for him particularly there's a level of responsibility that I place on him that wasn't there for the girls in terms of respecting women really. So he has that awareness.

Sameera Abdi also spoke about how she encouraged responsibility in her sons.

> I talk to my son all the time, you know about unplanned pregnancy and safety and "oh yeah she is taking the pill", it's like "where is your responsibility, where is it, how do, tell me how are you taking responsibility, what if she forgot to take one, one day, all it takes is one day, how are you taking responsibility", and that's not something that many women do, now this is something I didn't learn from culture, far from it.

These extracts demonstrate the actions taken by mothers who were sexually abused as children to educate their sons in relation to sex, sexuality and responsibility. These mothers are teaching their sons about equality and respect and through doing this resisting the impact of the sexual abuse in their own lives. For example, Tanja articulated why this was so important:

> I wonder if there is more openness around it and a willingness to be honest. I think it's more a willingness to be honest in our society that we would have been better equipped and we would have known that you don't stay silent and let things happen to you, that you stand up and you know your rights in relation to your own body.

In the above extract Tanja used the term 'we': here she was speaking as both the researcher and the participant to summarise what all of the women in this study argued, that is, the importance of sex education for children in the prevention of CSA. This is because children are taught to respect and obey adults and, in order to be able to say no to an adult, children must disregard what they have been taught. Through sex education children can be taught that it is acceptable to be assertive and that they have rights regarding their own bodies and sexual integrity (Horowitz 2011:79). Hacker and Rembor (1988) suggested there has been a failure of most experts to adequately explore the sexual nature of sexual abuse. They recommend sex education for children in relation to the prevention of CSA and this has also been identified in other research

(May-Chahal & Herczog 2003:29, Gilligan & Akhtar 2006:1370, Andres-Hyman et al 2004:321).

In summary, in this chapter I have shown how the emotional consequences of CSA impacted on the women's lives, values and beliefs and that these impacts were felt at a personal, everyday level including feelings of depression, wanting control, and feeling worried about a range of everyday practices such as making decisions and wondering how male partners perceive them because of the CSA. On the other hand, the women demonstrated how particular parts of their cultural repertoire provided them with strength in managing the effects of CSA and many identified components of the self which provided for resilience in their experiences. The data presented in this chapter challenged the overwhelmingly negative research undertaken with female survivors of CSA and mothering, which consistently assumes a deficit or negativity in mothers (Breckenridge 2006:58). It also showed how mothering can be an act of resistance to the abuse experienced, and another component of resilience. Mothers who were sexually abused as children and who have raised their children without such experiences are a valuable resource to both practitioners and researchers (Hall 2011:25). Firstly, they can provide information regarding prevention from first-hand experiences, such as those described here. Secondly they can also provide information on elements of women's lives that can be used to resist the impact of the abuse, like educating their children. The data presented thus far has demonstrated the various elements of culture that were shared and different in women's experiences. It is now important to examine how the women themselves understood their ethnicity and culture within the context of living outside of their Country of Origin.

# CHAPTER NINE

# What has Culture Got to do With It?

As I discussed in the literature review, ethnicity and culture can be understood as functionally independent (Miller 1994 cited in Verkuyten 2005:77). To recap, for the purposes of this research ethnicity describes the specific ethnic group, which involves the notion of a tie of kinship, ancestry and blood relationships (Bottomley 1997). People identify themselves as belonging to a particular group and the group recognises them as belonging to that group (Bottomley 1997). Language and religion can also commonly define different ethnic groups (Bottomley 1997). The context of ethnicity also necessarily includes experiences associated with minority status which include powerlessness, discrimination and prejudice (Phinney 1996:919). In contrast, culture provides people with the production of meaning within an ethnic group (Nagel 1994:153). Culture includes the appropriate and inappropriate content of a particular ethnicity (Nagel 1994:161). It indicates traditions, values, norms and ways of being as they are expressed in the ethnic group (Nagel 1994:161). Culture may be relatively stable whereas ethnicities may change, or alternatively, ethnicities may be stable whereas culture or religious practices can change (Bader 2001:261).Thus in looking at one's ethnicity, we are not simultaneously looking at culture (Barth 1969:38).

In this chapter I will discuss four themes identified in the women's interviews. The first is how the women described their ethnicity as the region their ethnic group comes from, based on the construction of both real and imagined boundaries (Nagel 1994:153), which were different for each participant. The second theme explores how the women experienced being the 'other' living in Australia, including how living and growing up in Australia can leave some ethnic women feeling that they do not belong to the mainstream culture, but they do not belong to their own as well. I then show how the women used the concept of culture as something both within their ethnicity and separate to it, thus demonstrating the way in which the women spoke about ethnicity and culture as two separate concepts. This has significance for the ways in which they survived and managed the effects of CSA in their lives, as shown in earlier chapters. The final theme, the search for answers, explores the consequences of CSA in the women questioning their cultures' gender practices and values including how the critiquing and challenging

of culture, gender discrimination awareness, development of a feminist consciousness, and the selection and rejection of cultural elements contributed to the women finding new ways of living. This in turn provided options for healing that were located in a sense of agency (Draucker et al 2009:375) for them as women.

## Ethnicity

In common with definitions in the literature outlined earlier, the women's descriptions of their ethnicity were based upon the regional and linguistic connections that identify their country of origin. They described these as Greek, Italian, Dutch, Vietnamese, Russian, Yugoslav and Congolese. The two women who preferred to keep their specific country confidential identified their regions as Asian and Arabic-speaking. However, despite being able to identify their ethnicity easily, the women often described how conflicting this ethnic identification could be in addition to showing how the concept of culture can differ to that of ethnicity. For example, Astraia said:

> I know that I am Greek, you know Greek background, my ethnic identity is Greek, that's where I come from, my cultural heritage ... I accept that on a factual level, but in terms of how I feel ... to me it's a stereotype to put myself in that category, I don't feel Greek. I feel like there is a lot of diversity in me, I feel like my identity has been formed by all my different experiences in life ... I have, I have been influenced by amazing and incredible women especially that I have been very privileged to learn from and to be mentored by, and that's what I see my identity as more than anything else. I don't reject the fact that I have Greek cultural heritage, I think there are some beautiful things in my cultural heritage, but I think they are more things, that are family values rather than, I don't know that they are necessarily cultural, I can say that I have a strong sense of family and love for family but is that Greek because you know that's across all cultures and there are a lot of Greek families where there isn't that sense of love, so I find that whole ethnic identity stuff really difficult to be able to, I find that categorising stuff really difficult.

This quotation reflects the conflict Astraia encountered between naming her ethnic heritage and what she considers her culture. She also articulated the difficulty in describing oneself as just 'Greek', saying that there is more to her than this alone. Three women sought to further define their ethnicity where there were ethnic differences within their country of origin. For example, Zita explained that within her dominant ethnic group there are regional differences.

> Zita: I'm Italian, I am south Italian ... Italy is a small place, it has lots of different regions and people are very different in each region, in fact we talk about racism, Italy practices it very well ... where I come from I come from the south, and we are seen as the pits. So even Sicily sees itself as better than us.

> Tanja: Why is that?
>
> Zita: I don't know how it developed but obviously the northerners think of themselves as better than us because they were more industrially developed and the people in the south were part of a, what do you call it, the feudal system for a very long time until very recently. So a lot of people where I come from didn't own any land, we did, but a lot of people didn't own land, they worked land for someone who owned it wherever, so it was very, very poor.

This quotation shows that ethnicity as a term enables broad ethnic identification, but also ethnic specificity such as described above. This is congruent with the literature where there are issues in relation to boundaries within ethnic groups (Nagel 1994:154). Indeed Tanja's description of her ethnicity shows how ethnic boundaries can be dismantled and rebuilt due to political motives, resulting in internal and external conflict amongst these groups (Nagel 1994:154).

> I identify myself as Yugoslavian because I come from a mixed marriage and my dad's Serbian and my mum's Croatian. I have a Croatian brother and a Serbian sister ... During the war ... Those distinctions never existed in our family before ...[...]...so when the war happened my sister automatically took sides, my brother couldn't really give a rat's arse and then this stuff started because of the community and the division that happened in the community ... my auntie and her children were in the worst part of what now fits under Croatia ... where all the really horrible war and killing happened ... and that affected me quite a bit. It made me very persistent in not letting go of that Croatian part ... the media was really adamant about how bad the Serbians were and yet we knew that in reality that wasn't what was actually going on. They were equally as bad as each other, doing equally as bad things to each other and so that made [husband] want to be more pro-Serb and I wouldn't take that stand. I'd keep going but they're just as bad as each other ... it was very hard and heartbreaking and the kids really felt it in school.

Here Tanja was describing the interfamilial conflict that can occur in families that are ethnically mixed such as hers. Zaina too described the ethnic differences across her country of origin and how, after a period of time spent in another ethnic group, she has claimed that culture as her own:

> My culture is [name]. I was born in [name] community ... I grew up a little bit in [name] community and after 13 I grew in [different name] community, which now I can say is my culture, because I know more about [different name].

These quotations show the specificity with which most of the women described their ethnicity. Thus despite the negative aspects of their cultures presented earlier, many felt quite strongly about retaining their ethnic identity. In providing the space for such discussions the specific character of ethnicity is made visible and it is clear that one's ethnicity is not just a group of people sharing normative patterns of behaviour (Verkuyten 2005:76), that is, 'culture': ethnicity is much more than this. For Zaina, Zita

and Tanja in particular, ethnicity includes politicised social action which is created within the context of intensive group interaction (Malesevic 2006:27) with its own people. Zita talked about land ownership and property as being the divider between north and south; Zaina described tribal differences; and Tanja spoke of religious differences. This would suggest that within a broader nation intensive interaction between groups results in specific ethnic identifications. Ethnicity as a term therefore enables consideration of socially constructed aspects of ethnicity, ethnic boundaries and identities, as well as culture, and how these are defined and produced throughout the social interaction both inside and outside of ethnic groups (Nagel 1994:152). This distinction between ethnicity and its relation to culture can be seen as important to CSA and the ways communities respond to it. As I have discussed in the previous chapters, while certain aspects of culture were unhelpful to women in their experience of CSA there were also elements of culture that the participants found helpful to their healing from CSA. Thus, the women have demonstrated a process of selection and rejection in relation to ethnicity and culture through a process of separating the two. They were therefore able to retain their ethnicity alongside some cultural values and practices, while they rejected other gendered values and practices.

Language formulates another important element of ethnicity, as discussed in the literature review (Malesevic 2006). All of the women who participated in this research are bilingual or multilingual, most fluent in their own language and some in other languages too. Different women described the importance of their ethnic languages in different ways. Doortje said that she had lost her language but now as she was getting older it was coming back and it was something that she valued. Astraia described the benefits of being bilingual:

> I love that it's given me the opportunity to be bilingual, and that's the only thing that encourages me in terms of wanting my daughter to learn another language because I think that as a bilingual it's given me a further understanding of how limited language is and how we communicate and knowing that, you know that you just can't, there are certain things that are, in terms of expression that are very closely linked to culture, you can't transfer, so I can understand it gives me a better ability to, um, know my limitations around difference and trying to engage with people who come from a completely different cultural context.

Five women identified they maintained their ethnic language within their homes and were committed to maintaining it in their children, showing that, despite all of the

negatives they found in their culture, they valued their ethnic identification enough to transfer its linguistic components to their children.

Nguyen Thi Oi, Sameera Abdi, Zaina and Tanja identified that their children were bilingual and their ethnic languages were spoken at home. The others did not address this issue, even though within the literature it is argued that language is an important part of ethnicity (Malesevic 2006). Within the group of participants in this study, this was not confirmed as the women had varying responses about maintaining their ethnic language. Research suggests that language contributes to the social and psychological processes involved in the formation of ethnic identity (Frought 2006).

## Being the 'Other' in Australia

In the literature review, I argued that ethnicity is the product of social ascriptions, a labelling process that is engaged in by oneself, and others (Nagel 1994). Thus, one's ethnicity is a mix of how one views oneself but also of how others view one (Nagel 1994:154). This internal and external labelling as the 'other' provides yet another element of ethnicity which requires exploration. I argue that the 'otherness' may be a familiar or collective experience for migrants and refugees within Australia, that is, there is a common 'ethnic' identification that indicates all those seen as 'ethnics', who are those who are 'other' to the dominant Anglo society. As I discussed in the methodology, my insider ethnic status affected the ways in which the women related to me, and their expectations that I knew what they meant when they used the term 'it's the culture', which I did. I include their experiences of being ethnic women in Australia to illustrate the intersections of ethnicity and the dominant society, because I have already shown the intersections of CSA, gender, sex and culture. This is important for CSA because it enables a more complete picture of the marginalisation of ethnic women in dominant society but also the potential for limited access to services and opportunities.

In the earlier sections the women's stories reflected their experiences as both children and adults within their culture and its impact on CSA. Here again their stories come from childhood and adulthood, but show the intersections between ethnicity and gender within Anglo Australia. Both the participants who came to Australia as children, and those who were born here, identified that they felt isolated and discriminated against

because they were viewed as ethnic. Doortje described how this discrimination impacted on her sense of self and her identity:

> The other thing was as a child we suffered a lot of racism as migrants, my mum was always made to walk in the backdoor of places as a domestic for rich people, we used to lie on the floor, not speak to their children, I wasn't allowed to eat in their kitchen, I had to sit out the back.

Tanja talked about the discrimination she felt as a child, suggesting it was this that led to her rejecting her ethnicity when she reached puberty:

> Back in those days it was embarrassing to be a wog, it was just you were a wog, you were different and so I really took on an Australian identity and tried to not be a wog for a long, long, long time. I even changed the way that my name was spelt ... I very much tried not to be an ethnic; very, very, very much wouldn't relate to it wouldn't talk about it, lost the language, very much anglicised myself in everything I did and that probably lasted until I was well and truly in my twenties.

In order to fit in Tanja went through a process of anglicising herself. Indeed, Barth (1969) has suggested that rejecting an ethnic identity is one of the ways in which people will seek further participation in wider social systems so as to obtain new forms of values. However, not all the women did this as children or young people, and certainly none did so completely in adulthood. Astraia rejected her ethnic community, culture and values, as did Anechka, but they still retained their ethnic identification, that is the ethnic identity of Greek or Russian. At the same time, they also took on new values and found further participation in wider society.

Five of the women came to Australia as adults; they too identified experiences of discrimination. Ligaya described how a person's ethnicity can often be the first and foremost characteristic that is noticed socially. She described the labelling process engaged in by Anglo Australians that pushes your ethnicity on to you, even if you do not identify with it as much as they think you do.

> Australians for example will get confused, I travel a lot and they get confused if I say I am an Australian, I have an Australian passport, they say you don't look Australian and you don't speak Australian ...[...]...I have been here in Australia for 20 years. The society itself will push you towards your ethnic identification.

Ligaya showed how the dominant society can push ethnicity on to a person, particularly when their physical characteristics are different to those of the dominant group. Thus, it is not the possession of cultural characteristics that makes ethnic groups distinct, but rather the social interaction with other groups that makes this difference possible,

visible and socially meaningful (Barth 1969 cited in Malesevic 2006:30). At some point as an ethnic person in an Anglo-dominated society a person will see themselves through the eyes of the dominant other, and in so doing identify themselves as 'other'. The risk of this 'othering' in cases of CSA is that it might inhibit seeking help.

Earlier I discussed the tension some of the participants experienced in selecting different cultural values and rejecting others, replacing them with a gender equality perspective. Here, I will show that this process of selection and rejection also had an effect on the women in terms of ethnicity. This related to both the migration experience but also taking up the norms and values of the dominant Australian community, which often contradicted those of the ethnic group. This demonstrates the tension that can exist between the self and the social structures one lives within (Ybema et al 2009). Ligaya described her experience of this:

> I realise that my interaction is not Australian toughie way, although I like the Australian values and I am very Australian ... my loyalty to Australia, really embracing the value of Australia, such as justice and equality and all that, but more and more I realise now my own ethnicity, my own culture, informs my way of dealing with people very strongly now.

In this extract Ligaya admitted to herself that, despite her agency in choosing different cultural values, her ethnicity and culture continue to inform her current way of being. Those women who came to Australia as young children talked about a time in their lives where they felt in limbo, not knowing who they were or where they belonged. Astraia described how this was for her:

> I think I went through a stage in uni where I started really identifying because there were a lot of students from my cultural background and I started identifying and feeling really strong and then within about two years I didn't you know, I thought I don't know if I identify with you either. It was really horrible, you know cos you're in this really limbo position, then I remember going overseas, at 17 or 18 ... I thought I would go cos we hadn't been since we were young children ... I thought I would go back to my home where we come from, I'm gonna learn all about my identity and I went back then and I didn't relate to them either and I went, oh shit, where do I belong?

This confusion about belonging appears to occur when the experiences of two cultures conflict and a woman is finding her way through a space where she appears not to fit anywhere. It seems that the processes of selection and rejection often occurred after such a stage of conflict. In the literature review I discussed a psychological context to ethnicity which recognises the experiences associated with minority status, including

powerlessness, discrimination and prejudice (Phinney 1996:919). This quotation from Astraia described this psychological context by showing the often-conflicting emotions that people experience in the ways in which they live their lives outside their countries of origin (Ybema et al 2009). Ligaya described the impact of the dominant cultural stereotypes she was subjected to based upon her ethnicity:

> I am thinking that you are stereotyping me and yet, I can understand why, you know the stereotype, oh you must be subservient, you must be this and you must be that, now I am more understanding, I am portraying that and yet I am against it.

She was describing a dual identity here which is both different to the stereotype and the same as it all at once. Some of the women drifted from their ethnicity either because of the discrimination they experienced or because they resisted their own culture, as discussed earlier. Moreover, while the women's sense of gender discrimination was present even as a child, their experience of CSA was a factor which heightened this. Their subsequent engagement with education and mainstream society made their own culture visible and at times unpalatable to them. The cultural gender practices and values in relation to chastity, virginity and promiscuity and the blame associated with them is a clear example. The women who had drifted from or rejected their ethnic identities spoke of how they reclaimed that connection. Doortje described this:

> I think because of my son I wanted the connection of family. We were such a small family so it became important because I just wanted to know where I came from. I had no memory, I was nearly two when we came out here, and I just all of a sudden had this longing that I wanted to know where I came from ...[...]... I never felt I belonged here in this country, now that is something I realised at 30-odd ... but I don't know why, I sound like an Aussie, spoke like an Aussie, but I never felt like I belonged.

Similarly to Astraia's quotation earlier, this sense of belonging appears to be a strong theme for the women. In the literature review I argued for the use of the term ethnicity to describe an 'othering' process in the dominant Anglo-Australian context. I also argued that there are multiple axes of identity whereby individuals claim themselves as the 'ethnic other', those who are on the 'ethnic' periphery of Anglo-Australian society (Austin 2005:12). Through the discussions around belonging it is apparent that these women struggled with this axis of identity, and at some point found the place where they belonged as the 'ethnic other'. By reclaiming the use of this term I have been able to capture not only women's experiences of being subjected to CSA within their own cultures, which is remarkably similar, but also a common sense of being other to the

mainstream. Thus for ethnic women subjected to CSA living outside their Country of Origin there is a double potential for marginalisation. That is, they are marginalised in their own cultures through CSA, but also feel marginalised from the wider society as the ethnic other. This adds another element to the issue of CSA and ethnicity because this double layer of marginalisation may increase women and girls' silence about sexual violence.

Seven participants specifically indicated their ethnicity was important to them despite their rejection of the cultural gender practices and values. Tanja explained:

> I think now it's very important, it hasn't always been, but the reason why it's very important is because it makes up who I am. I do things the way that I do them because of that ethnicity, because of that culture. I think the way I think because of that culture.

This quotation is very similar to the earlier one from Ligaya where she recognised that, even after the selection and rejection of aspects of culture, her ethnicity still formulates a large part of her life. Thus using the term 'ethnicity' has enabled the interviews to capture this sense of being other, of a minority status within a broader mainstream context. I have demonstrated that this adds an element of complexity to women's experience of CSA. Thus the term 'ethnicity' enables the research to capture this particularity as common amongst the women, living in Australia and engaging with the dominant Anglo-Australian community. The term ethnicity therefore has provided the scope for considering the complexity and similarities experienced by those deemed 'other' living outside of their countries of origin but also within them. The concept of ethnicity has therefore enabled me to demonstrate a specific character of ethnicity (Verkuyten 2005:76), showing how a person can be psychologically bound to a region (their ethnicity) but also how others bind you to that region (your ethnicity) when living outside your country of origin. Through this I have shown that ethnicity is just one component of the women's lives that has required some negotiation when they question their culture and its gender values and practices and how they link these with their experiences of CSA.

In establishing the importance of ethnic identity, I will now look at culture with the ultimate aim of drawing attention to how the women understood these separately and how these two concepts impacted on their experiences of CSA.

## Culture

While culture is an important component of ethnicity, it can also be understood as a separate one, as I argued in the literature review. This is relevant to CSA because throughout the literature in this area there is often reference to the differences amongst ethnic groups which implies a difference in culture. However, within this study I have shown thus far that, whilst the participants have different ethnicities, it is culture, particularly cultural gender practices and values, that has a significant similarity across ethnic groups when considered within the context of CSA. Here, I show the ways in which the women spoke about their culture and used the term to identify common ways of being within their ethnic groups. Sometimes they used the term 'tradition' to describe cultural ways of being and doing, and described traditions and values they see as a part of their culture. Nguyen Thi Oi spoke about how in her 'culture' there was a tradition of respect for older people and those with higher positions; this was common to a number of the participants.

> In our culture no matter what the higher position person talk to you if you are lower you can't really say it back, argue back ... but you can have a conversation and show respect, otherwise you will be tell, if I am not respect they will tell me off.

Similarly Zaina described how within her community there is a tradition of respecting elders, which she described as a traditional law made by village leaders. However here she also identified that this law is gender biased.

> We have law as Australian law [because they currently live in Australia] but we respect our traditional law and especially where I was living in remote area, people have their own law which is traditional law, and we need to respect as people who live in that area, and that law is made by village leaders and the law put down women.

While critical of the gender bias in their traditional laws, Zaina also spoke about the parts of her culture and the traditional laws which she valued, that is, communities were expected to stick together and support each other within her country of origin. Here the selection and rejection process is seen in action: in the quotation above she was rejecting; in the quotation below she was accepting and preserving.

> We have good things too ... the way children are looked after is different ... let's say for example, when I am away, and leave my children at home, ...[...]... your neighbour is responsible to look after your children ... and if something wrong happen to children, they will ask neighbours first and if they didn't do something for them [the children] they will be punished as traditional law ... they must give children food, it just happens.

In a similar way, Zita also described the cultural value of community sticking together and how this was translated when people migrated to Australia. She described how people from particular regions moved and lived in the cities where others from that same region were located.

> Where we came from [city name] there was a lot of people from where I come from so a lot of my villagers were here, and people tended to gravitate to [that] point, like where my aunty comes from, where they lived those people went to [city name], we went to [city name] ... so I remember the first year [of school] there was so many people of my background I didn't have to learn a word of English.

Astraia described that there are benefits of this 'sticking together' of communities but also it has its problems.

> I think there are benefits to the wider family circle you know, I think about collectivist cultures ...[...]... I think you know the issues they are experiencing around settlement and feeling that their families are falling apart because their children are being exposed to independence because there isn't those customary law practices where, you know the elders in the family made the decisions and everyone conforms ... you know people say that is quite different [across ethnic groups] and no, you know it's not. I see a lot of traces of that in the Greek culture and a lot of other cultures ... I think that exists in a lot of cultures where people have lived quite closely and lived as communities and stayed together, and I think it's unhealthy.

The women valued many cultural traditions such as respecting elders, but Nguyen Thi Oi also described how this can be problematic when living outside your country of origin. Again here she was showing the selection and rejection process.

> Actually I really like to follow my traditional way; I think when I show respect to people which is a good thing I like it. I still like to keep it. But ... when the parent is very unreasonable but they still can't say anything thing. Like that it will affect teenager and even people who are living in two different cultural [those living in Australia] because their parents are very unreasonable and they can't say anything.

Many participants talked about cultural traditions such as food and family gatherings. Astraia described these as the aspects she values most.

> Yeah I love all of that cos we do all of that together, like my mum and my sister and I we get together, and the girls and now my daughter is doing it and she is learning about all of that, I think that is beautiful cos it's about rituals that you do together and that sense of family connectedness. That's what I love about it ... those rituals come from the culture, um, but I love what they do in terms of family so I think that sort of stuff is really beautiful.

Through this discussion it is evident that the participants have gone through a process of full engagement with their culture, but also that there have been other influences which have made them consider the benefits and problems posed by some aspects of their

culture. The theme of family has been interwoven throughout earlier chapters. By way of consolidating its importance, I include it here as a part of culture because throughout the analysis I found that many of the women tied respecting and valuing family to culture. This has been referred to in different terms, for example, familism in Hispanic culture, and is defined generally as prioritising one's family over oneself, helping families to hold on to their heritage and protecting them from the destructive influences of the West (Schwartz 2007). This suggests that this cultural value sets Hispanics apart from other groups (Santisteban et al 2002). These values have been found in other ethnic groups too (Schwartz 2007), and certainly are evident in this study. All nine women said that family was very important in their culture. Family was identified as being a closed circle which stood away from the dominant Anglo community, but could also stand away from the ethnic group. Tanja described this:

> Very much family is a very important part of yourself and very similar ... so all of the rellies that we have are auntie, uncle irrespective of how far down the line it goes so you've got 159 aunties and so forth and whether they're directly related or distantly related the respect is equal and their ability to tell you off and sort you out is equal and similar with cousins, you know 500 million cousins and those sorts of things and cousins aren't called cousins, we call them sister and brother, however far that goes down the line and I really like that.

Most of the participants described their extended family in this way which is quite different to that of Anglo Australians. There is a closer relationship with extended families which includes the significant size of extended families. Thus, those who are understood in Australia as great-aunts or second and third cousins are not separated in ethnic communities in terms of lineage. Rather all were equal in terms of relationship and respect.

Sameera Abdi spoke about the cultural value of family within her ethnic group. However she also spoke about how this cultural value can mean that you do not develop relationships with outsiders, and do not discuss problems or taboo issues for fear of shaming the family.

> The family is extremely important, we have a saying in Arabic which says the exact translation to represent that family value is that it can't be translated but it's about no matter what happens you always stand by your family, for whatever reason, wrong or good you know you always stand by your family so everyone else outside the family is an outsider and as a result of that no shares of people don't talk and share their problems, the friendship is a very superficial one, it's a friendship is, you know to cook for you, help you in terms of sickness, in terms of other, but when you're experiencing taboo issues like relationship issues or, um, you know things like sexual assault or any type of assault or if your son has been

> engaged in an illegal activity and stuff those are extremely important issues, taboo, they are kept in behind closed doors, so in a way we are collective but we're not really collective in the way we address issues and societal issues.

The chapters on women's responsibility and men's lack of responsibility for CSA showed the significant impact of cultural values such as this. Here Sameera Abdi shows how closed off and isolated CSA survivors can become from support systems outside of their cultural network. Thus we see how culture impacts on and shapes experiences of CSA. Anechka spoke of the communist culture within her country of origin. Alongside a strong work ethic she indicated that there was an expectation of keeping up with the community and that if you did not you would be judged by the community for not doing so.

> Also what I find out here it's like in Russia, it was showing off, you have such furniture and yes we have it too, you have to have it, it's extended, house, yes we have to have it, you have to work your bum out to pay for this and rest of your life and so you have no social life, you can't enjoy yourself because you have to work ... some people say you have bought a new car so I bought a bigger and better ...[..]... Yes everyone should be the same, you shouldn't do anything besides this, you should do this and stand by step, do this, this and this, and if you do something different then you're bad, but if you don't care if you're bad, and if you try [to be different] then you're totally bad.

This is similar to the cultural pressure identified earlier in relation to keeping girls and women in particular roles as well as protecting their chastity and virginity, but shows that the same pressure can be applied to community members in other contexts. Doortje described a similar pressure that it was important to make a good impression and show yourself to others and, similarly to Anechka, if you did not you would be judged.

> My experience of when I went back for three months is that my aunties now if you go to deli or anywhere you dress up, you don't go in sloppy jeans or that, they were appalled at what I used to wear, they would even buy me a bag cos they couldn't stand my bags. But the curtains were open, they show what you have, they tell the neighbours, if a baby is born they hang out a stork. Everyone in the community has to know a baby is born, if they have gone and passed their exams they hang out pieces of paper, this is traditional stuff and they still do it, they hang out pieces of paper with a pen and ruler to say you passed your exams, so how is that so much pressure then if you don't, cos that's a community thing and even in 1994 they were still doing that in my country town where my aunties lived, they let everyone know that you pass your exams so if you're in the whole street and everyone got kids similar age and you didn't pass well then everyone will know, so it's that sort of pressure.

These quotations from Doortje and Anechka show the pressure on families to subscribe to particular ways of being within their ethnic group and how significant this can be at times. Thus if culture impacts on the way that you relate to your neighbours and family

when a child is born or an exam passed it is unlikely that it does not influence the way people relate to the issue of CSA and its victims and perpetrators. On the other hand, Doortje also spoke of the culture as being proud and strong, and also non-judgemental and quite open.

> You're pretty open in lots of ways, but you're also really uptight and repressed, cleanliness freak, cleanliness freak, had to have everything right, terribly organised unless you're stoned all the time then you won't be, but pretty open in lots of ways but repressed in others, it's a land of contradiction, and I am like that.

Tanja identified her culture as a bit rough and loud, but very passionate and loyal:

> Loyalty because I think we tend to commit to a relationship and whether it's a friendship or whatever it is and love very completely and I think when you allow that completeness, the passion for that relationship, the willingness to go to bat to any extreme for that person is a lot more than what I've seen for example within Anglo, I've seen that in other [ethnic] cultures but when you cross us as a people, I'm talking generally, there's a point at which there's a line that cannot be ...[...]... there's no going back so once a decision is made about whatever it is there's no going back ...[...]... maybe it's that ego of I've made that decision, I'll stand by it no matter what and it's that no matter what even if I suffer I'm not going to give into it. Maybe it is pride more than passion, ego, yeah maybe.

These accounts from the women further elaborate the process of selection and rejection identified earlier in that they are able to identify elements of their culture as both beneficial and problematic. They took what they felt was congruent with their beliefs and values and rejected what was not. This process was common to all nine women; however, they were in varying stages of it. For example earlier I mentioned how Ligaya was still in this process because in one interview she talked about needing to belong but by the next interview this had been worked through and she said she no longer needed to belong. This selection and rejection process is very important to the issue of ethnicity and CSA because, as the earlier chapters showed, the negative consequences of the cultural gendered practices and values for girls and women in relation to CSA are substantial.

In addition to the concept of culture, as to that of ethnicity, some women identified a further element to culture, that of 'family culture'. Ligaya described the existence of 'family culture' within the 'ethnic culture':

> Ligaya: Can I just say, when I think about culture and influence of culture it will also be the familial culture, the ethnicity and all that, and the thing is the familial culture that develops within that yep and —

> Tanja: That sort of sits within the broader ethnic culture but it can also be quite unique to the family.
>
> Ligaya: I believe that it is unique to my family ... also influenced by the broader culture of course, influence by the religious culture, so all of that put together makes it very, very complex.

The women used this idea of family culture to illustrate examples of when their families stepped outside of their 'ethnic culture' and created their own ways of being and doing, specific to that family. For example, a number of the women talked about how their fathers stepped outside of the traditional male role by cooking sometimes or encouraging their daughter's education. Thus, culture can also be divided into the elements 'ethnic culture' and 'family culture'. I include this only to show that elements of culture are highly complex and can be constructed by individuals through interactions with the larger society around them but also with each other (Nagel 1994:16) and developed by individuals in ways unique to themselves. This would suggest that some families have resisted some of the cultural gender practices and created their own 'family culture' within their broader ethnic culture and wider society. This concept speaks to the fluidity of the term 'culture' and the rationale identified in the ethnicity chapter that culture was not a clear enough term to show the fullness of a person's ethnicity and therefore how ethnicity impacts on and shapes women's experiences of CSA.

The women's uses of the term 'family culture' show that a person can have an ethnicity, but challenge the cultural traditions and norms of the ethnic group they originate from. Culture appears to have many different elements for the women, even though similarities can be found across the group, whereas ethnicity appears to be more distinctive to individual women. Most popular understandings of migrant, refugee or ethnic cultures position culture in a homogenous way, as a simple reproduction of customs and traditions from people's homelands to a new country (Vasta 1993:218). Indeed as shown here these can range from food, gatherings and rituals to family and community closeness, work ethic, loyalty and passion. However, this popular view is simplistic, as the women's recollections of their culture showed. Culture is often fluid, changing, complex and for the CSA survivors in this study quite a painful process. This questioning resulted in them challenging and changing fundamental beliefs they were brought up with, but which also created, shame, guilt and feelings of being dirty and damaged in contexts of CSA.

The earlier chapters showed how the women used the term culture to describe the cultural gender practices and values in their communities, that is, how gender was constructed. They then articulated how these cultural gender practices and values impacted on their experience of being subjected to CSA and how these views affected the way in which CSA survivors are seen and responded to, and perpetrators made invisible. In fact, this thesis has shown that gender constructions embedded in the women's culture were remarkably similar across the sample. The women also showed similarity in their selection and rejection of cultural gender practices and values. As a result of their experiences of CSA, and exposure to different ways of thinking about gender, they chose elements of their culture to keep, maintain and nurture, and discarded those that were not congruent with their current lived experiences, values and beliefs. The women also negotiated and maintained their ethnicity and recreated its meaning in their lives in a similar selection and rejection process, while culture described particular traits, norms, values and traditions within their ethnic groups. Therefore women talked about culture in the context of ethnicity. Again there were significant similarities across the sample in terms of what was selected and rejected. For example, the cultural value of family and communities sticking together when living outside their country of origin was valued and this was evident in most interviews. This insight has implications for understanding the issue of CSA for ethnic women because CSA mainly occurs within families. The culture within families impacts on disclosure and how the CSA is responded to within the family itself. Furthermore, the cultural practice of ethnic communities sticking together also has implications for the experience of CSA, particularly in the context of living in another country where the ethnic group is not dominant. As I discussed in the methodology, there is real fear within the ethnic communities in Australia of being especially identified with the issue of CSA and this fear reinforces silence and creates barriers to disclosure. This fear of judgement is not only without but also within. The earlier chapters showed how significant the issue of gossip within the community was to silencing CSA within communities. Eight participants talked in depth about the consequences of such gossip to a survivor of CSA. Thus, as Hall (1959:39) suggested so long ago, culture can hide much more than it reveals, with the irony being that it hides this most effectively from its own participants.

## The Search for Answers

The women separated the concepts of culture and ethnicity, that is, they saw culture as a component of one's ethnicity (Nagel 1994:153) but it did not formulate their ethnicity. They chose to use the concept of culture when they spoke about gender and understandings of CSA. In this section, I explore women's critiques of their cultures and the implications for their understanding and experiences of CSA. The women discussed their criticism of culture in three main ways: critiquing gender in culture; their developing feminist consciousness; and experiences of resistance to culture.

### *"Those Questions Follow me all the Time": Critiquing Gender in Culture*

The majority of women spoke about being angry at their culture for allowing or remaining silent about the abuse they personally endured and generally about how their culture treats CSA. They often expressed this anger by discussing the gender practices in their culture and how gender discrimination was experienced in culture and in the lives of women in their communities. For example Zita spoke of the lack of openness in discussing issues such as sex, sexuality and CSA.

> I knew I couldn't tell anybody ... I think that's where the culture comes in, I couldn't talk to mum about anything personal ... there were things that you didn't talk to her about and that's definitely very cultural, maybe generational but I think that is very cultural ... I don't know how you're expected to deal with them ... There isn't a language [for talking about CSA].

In addition to the absence of a language or openness to discuss it Zaina described how CSA is misunderstood:

> In my culture sexual abuse is not understood ... because if you are abused sexually they will as family, as community leaders in your family, ask the perpetrator to pay something and that thing will be given to your family and if you are sexually abused ... if you are a child or let's say for 12–13 you must go and become wife of that perpetrator ... That is a common marriage in Africa especially in remote area, even many people who came even in Australia they were married like that.

Zaina's extract shows her anger at how the cultural gender practice of virginity is used to negate and misconstrue the sexual violence perpetrated against a girl and to translate it into forced marriage. Whilst Zaina was the only participant who discussed this particular response, the interviews consistently showed that CSA was misinterpreted through the cultural gender practices discussed earlier. Zaina further stated:

> I am angry ... Because even here I can see women are discriminated with my culture but they don't say anything. So that's keep me to feel to look the way I can

> stop that discrimination ... if the rape didn't happen to me it happen to other people, the culture could stay the same.

Here Zaina is saying that the culture needs to change and that through her resistance she is seeking to bring about this change. The commitment she speaks of to challenge gender discrimination was consistent across the sample and I will discuss it shortly. Similarly Tanja also said:

> It's made me angry, for doing all the things that it does, like objectifying young girls and women, and having these women who have to be all and everything. I think it's just made me more determined to make it visible ... because it is invisible.

Nguyen Thi Oi said that the culture she grew up in teaches and reinforces different behaviours for men and women through cultural gender practices. For example, she is very critical about how girls are taught not to express anger at the discriminatory cultural gender practices but, rather, girls would be taught to say, "it's ok if I was abused when I was young, and if my husband treat me like that, I accept it, I am not angry". Further Nguyen went on to elaborate that the cultural idea of children being a clean slate makes her angry because it impacts on providing information to children about sexual matters. She said:

> I am angry with the culture that that older mother or older sister doesn't teach anything for younger sister or younger child to know which one is our private parts, which one don't let people touch you, if I got that teaching then it wouldn't happen to me. So I am angry with my culture that people don't teach us this ... why people so worry about virginity but they don't teach us how to keep it.

Sameera Abdi talked about how the cultural gender practices identified in earlier chapters left her constantly questioning why her culture was this way:

> I have been questioning all my life, why, what is it that in our culture women have not liberated themselves, you know why does it have to be such a big difference between how society look at the man and a women, it is very rarely that we talk about the man's responsibility [for sexual matters] and those questions keep following me all the time, all the time.

This questioning of one's culture was consistent across the sample. Astraia summed it up by saying:

> I think that my culture has shown me that males are seen very differently and are seen as something extra special and are raised that way to think that, you know, they are the be all and the end all and oh no girls are just trouble and difficult.

Through the interviews each of the women identified gender discrimination in their childhood, either through witnessing the differential treatment of boys and girls, through

stories of how their brothers were treated differently, through the treatment of their mothers, or through witnessing incidents of discrimination against women and girls in their communities, but on reflection recognised that at the time they did not have the language to describe what they felt was unfair. This is the way that culture with its gender and sex practices socialises women into accepting a position as a lower status human being and enables the perpetration of sexual violence against women and children (Chan 2009, Mchichi-Alami & Kadri 2004:240, Haj-Yahia & Tamish 2001, Kenny & McEachern 2007:22).

Alongside their anger at this culturally sanctioned gender discrimination the women also critiqued their religions. Astraia said, "I think the Greek religion is really suppressive and treats women like shit". Doortje, whose family was Catholic, also was critical of religion for similar reasons to Astraia, that is, its suppression and control of women. She said, "I hate Catholic religion; I hate what it stands for". Those women who spoke about religion recognised that the issue of guilt and shame in relation to the female body and female sexuality was reinforced by religious doctrine. For example Tanja said:

> I felt pretty bad about myself, and I felt pretty damaged, and I guess religion plays a part in that; my mum's Catholic and that means, as a kid I was afraid that God was watching and that I'd be punished and sent to hell because he was watching whatever was happening ...[...]... so there was a lot of things about God will punish you, if you're naughty. And I guess, having the taboo of the sex, and then the experiences [of CSA] ...

The women spoke about religion not only in relation to the silencing effect it has on CSA but also the ways in which it encouraged cultural gender practices which significantly influence responses to CSA. Other studies have also found that CSA survivors blame religion for the silence about CSA and the negative messages about sex, sexuality and womanhood (Singh et al 2013:1108). Religion also can formulate a component of one's ethnicity (Watt & Norton 2004), like culture, and together they can powerfully influence women's views of themselves and communities' perceptions of CSA. The woman in this study had different relationships with their religious backgrounds. Some, as shown above, resented and rejected their religious beliefs, whilst others found some of the values of the religious doctrine helpful. For most (seven) of the participants in this research their religion did not formulate a significant component of their day-to-day lives as adults. However, they were able to describe the faults and

benefits of the religion associated with their ethnic group. Whether or not they were engaged with religion did not affect their ethnic identification. Thus they saw themselves as of a particular ethnicity without necessarily needing to be involved in the religious components of it. This selection and rejection process in relation to religion described here is similar to the process that was undertaken by most of the women in relation to their culture, which I will discuss shortly. Interestingly it is also similar in that they challenged their religions because of the gender discrimination within them, and the same reasoning led them to challenge their cultures.

### *"It Makes me a Free Woman": Feminist Consciousness and Resistance*

Through the participants' stories it became evident that as they got older and migrated or had access to education their awareness of gender discrimination became more solid. Nguyen Thi Oi said:

> I am think I am lucky enough to live in Australia, I see, I live here, I pick a good, I am not sure how to put it, a positive thinking about women. I pick up that and then I compare to my culture, that why I am get angry ... But because I am living here for so long, 20 years, so I pick up a positive, about woman, being a woman as a woman, so that why I am angry ... I am, I think I am still angry. It won't go away, because, I don't see any Vietnamese man who respect woman ... I never see once ... The more I contact with more power men out there, I still see they are, they don't respect women.

This extract shows the process of comparing that Nguyen Thi Oi and indeed all of the other women went through in relation to their cultures. Through education, particularly education in relation to gender equality, the women were able to better understand and describe their experiences. Some identified this as feminist; others used the terms rights and equality. Sameera Abdi said, "so those are the weaknesses, the clear definitions and roles, and the mismatch of responsibility that everything lays on the women". Zaina described how for her it became apparent once she was in a refugee camp receiving education about her rights as a woman:

> We went in refugee camp when we start learning, because in refugee camp we had many organisations, teach women their responsibilities and their rights, since I understand what is my rights, what is my responsibilities.

Doortje reflected on how she joined the feminist movement and then how this awareness affected her:

> I walked into the women's liberation movement ... a consciousness-raising group ... then I realised how oppressed I had been and how I allowed men to oppress me ...

> until they opened up that door for me and showed me the bullshit, I believed it. My man is happy I am happy, its bullshit, I was a total doormat ... I just rebelled, I was so angry, I hated every man on this planet at that time until I realised that I had a son who I loved dearly and he is growing up to be a man so I better change that.

Anechka spoke about valuing equality:

> I believe if you have family you have equal rights to be happy but also equal rights to clean and to wash and to everything. It's not like this is women work and this is man work.

Sameera Abdi referred to her migration and education, but more broadly her ability to mix with other cultures and peoples as framing her understanding:

> the fact that I left [the country], I think my upbringing definitely had a lot to do with it, but not of who I am today, not only the factor of who I am today. Cos education and experience and coming cross different cultures and all that. Every day I have been moulded into who I am and I am cool about it, I love it, because it just makes me a free woman. Free of any of those constraints that was put on me and forced upon me and I feel that I am, I'm much better.

Sameera Abdi's statement about being a free woman speaks to a feminist consciousness, even though she did not use the term feminism. Tyagi (2001:28) found in her research on incest and women of colour that the women perceived that the experience of living through incest helped them develop an inner strength and an awareness of how women are affected by such trauma, which they also identified as a feminist consciousness. Research has shown that a greater acceptance of a feminist perspective correlates with a better recovery (Lefley et al 1993 cited in Schneider et al 2009:412). Feminism still has a responsibility to create conditions which enable women to try on for size the cultural gender practices available to them in their ethnic groups and reject those that do not fit and provide the materials for women to construct others which may fit better (Scott 2001:359). Krause and Roth (2011:40) suggested the experience of abuse may increase a girls' awareness of the socio-cultural messages that devalue women. When trauma is experienced, core beliefs about the self and the social world are challenged (Krause & Roth 2011:34). The women in this study showed through their interviews an increased awareness of cultural gender messages and simultaneously challenged them.

Modernisation and migration can mean important shifts in the scope and resources available to women and men (Kibria 1990:10), which can result in them questioning the rules of the previous gender system, as they did for the participants in this study. However, it is important to note that for many of the women in this study the

questioning did not occur only as a result of the migration or education: rather the questioning occurred much earlier and migration/education provided the women with the ability to formulate answers. Research suggests that many ethnic women stay committed to ethnic patriarchal structures because they provide the resources for maintaining parental authority, and resisting economic insecurity, racism and the cultural impositions of the new society (Kibria 1990, 1993, Lim 1997 cited in Pyke and Johnson 2003:38). Further, some research has argued that definitions of gender and constraints that patriarchy imposes on women's gender production can vary from culture to culture (Pyke & Johnson 2003:38). In contrast my analysis shows that these are more similar than different, evidenced through the ways in which women from nine different ethnic groups have described the cultural gender practices in their ethnic groups and the impact of these practices on them, their families and their communities in relation to CSA. Patriarchal ideologies appear to be general, even universal, despite their local expression varying according to the social positions and historical specificities of the migration of ethnic groups (Menjivar 1999).

### *Ethnicity and Culture: A Critique*

As I argued in the literature review, and as the women showed through their interviews, identity is comprised of gender, culture and religion as components in the construction of one's ethnicity (Austin 2005:10). The women in this study on CSA challenged, resisted and fought against the cultural gender practices that were imposed upon them through their ethnic contexts.

Three of the women explicitly identified an impact of the abuse on their identity and how this was linked with culture and ethnicity. Some spoke about not being the person that they were; others wondered what type of person they would have been had it not happened. It is worth repeating Astraia's quotation about her Greek identity here:

> There is a lot of resentment and dislike of that community and that has influenced how I see my ethnic identity ... I don't feel, I know that I am Greek, you know Greek background, my ethnic identity is Greek that's where I come from my cultural heritage, but I don't know that, you know I, I accept that on a factual level, but in terms of how I feel, I don't feel, um, to me it's a stereotype to put myself in that category, I don't feel Greek, I feel like there is a lot of diversity in me, I feel like my identity has been formed by all my different experiences in life ... and I have, I have been influenced by amazing and incredible women especially that I have had, I have been very privileged to learn from and to be mentored by, and that's what I see my identity as more than anything else. I don't reject the fact that I

> have Greek cultural heritage, I think there are some beautiful things in my cultural heritage.

Sameera Abdi talked about how the CSA has resulted in her challenging and questioning her culture and religion, and she did so even at the time of the abuse. She said:

> I have challenged my culture all the time ... first question my faith, that happened at the time that I had no idea about church abuse. I mean not a clue, we hardly had TV at that time, but I did question, so I was going to church for just on the surface, tick the box I was in church. I certainly have questioned their motives, their ideas, you know ... also the culture in general I questioned it ... I always compared my culture to others because of the limitations that we had.

Tanja spoke of this in the broader sense of identity.

> But it [CSA] has significantly changed my identity. I'm sure of it, and I've tried to, over the years, I've tried to reconnect with that girl, and I just can't, I just can't seem to reconnect. Maybe part of me is afraid of reconnecting ...[…]… but it has, it really has changed who I am.

The difference between these two extracts is that in Sameera Abdi's there is a continuing questioning which remained congruent from child to adult; however, in Tanja's there appears to be a disconnection between who she was as a child and who she is now as an adult. All the women said they were angry at the injustice of gender discrimination against women in general, but particularly for girls subjected to CSA. One result of this anger was conflict with their culture, which was often painful and heartbreaking. Once the women were able to understand and articulate for themselves the discrimination they saw within their ethnic groups they could select and reject different aspects of their cultures. For some participants it was also difficult to live differently within their families and ethnic groups once this awareness was gained. Sameera Abdi said: "You know and it's hard to live your own values because often it contradicts what the culture expects". A number of the women spoke about disconnecting from their ethnic groups because of the culture. Astraia said:

> I don't really like the Greek community, I know that sounds awful, I just think, you know on the whole, I think there is some really good people but I think it's a very suppressive culture, I think that the thing that disappoints me is that I still see a really large part of some of those horrible suppressive cultural attitudes being handed down and I think, why is my generation thinking like that, and behaving like that?

Astraia therefore stayed connected to her family, but not her ethnic community. Others were completely disconnected from their families and communities. Indeed research has

shown that the closer the connection between a woman and her community the bigger the burden she has to bear in relation to responsibility for CSA (Shahidian 1999:205) which is often why women remove themselves from their communities completely. Those who were connected to both family and community identified an internal conflict between their own values and the cultural values regarding gender within their families and communities. Four women spoke about the internal conflict they experienced from this incongruence and the effects of this. For example, Nguyen Thi Oi described how at work she is one person and then when she comes home she must be another.

> I'm live in two culture, here go to school see the non-Vietnamese people who acting like that but going home have to become completely different person ...[...]... so it doesn't matter what position you are, when you are with your own family then you are different because of the culture.

This extract shows the internal conflict that can be experienced by ethnic women who have been subjected to CSA in negotiating their own experiences within the gendered practices of their culture and those of the dominant society. Ligaya went on to describe the internal struggle that she experienced:

> I wish I could be more challenging than this but once it verges around sexuality or the image of being good, in terms of sexual thing, I would stop there. Can be challenging in other ways but that would limit me, that would stop me or the hurt that comes inside.

While Ligaya is comfortable challenging gender practices, the cultural sexual expectations were harder. Many of the women also spoke about having to make choices between their cultural values and their own values. For example, Sameera Abdi spoke about loving her culture and her family but making choices about what parts of it she does not like and learning to negotiate those choices whilst still living with close ties to the community.

> I look at different ways of preserving my culture, it doesn't have to be through the whole package but through a selection of things, I make those choices of what I want to continue and what I don't what to continue. I still struggle with it in terms of my love to my parents and to my culture, not necessarily to every single value in my culture. I still belong strongly to that culture, and I love it and proud of it, but the challenge for me is to help the people that I love and are precious in my life to understand who I am today, that's the challenge. I don't think that I'm able to do that in the way I would like it to be. So I find it quite challenging.

This shows the steps subsequent to comparing the ethnic and wider culture: once comparison is undertaken then there is a process of selecting and rejecting the parts that one wants to keep. This process of selection and rejection is central to the

reconfiguration of one's ethnicity. In this extract Sameera Abdi excluded elements of the culture she felt were unjust. Agency is present in this process, which sits in contrast to other CSA literature, which suggests that women who have been subjected to childhood sexual abuse have problems with the development of agency (Mullen & Fleming 1998).

The majority of the women also pointed to agency in relation to making choices about their identity, culture, religion and their ethnicity. All the participants said they wanted to have a different life to the one they grew up with. They described that in choosing to have a different life they have challenged their families and their communities through their resistance to the cultural gender practices. Pyke and Johnson's research (2003:48) shows that people outside their countries of origin who have challenged the cultural gender practices lose their ethnicity. In contrast, my research suggests that the women critiqued and challenged many elements of their culture especially gender and through this reconstructed their ethnicity. So rather than losing their ethnicity, they reclaimed it but without the more oppressive elements. As the participants have shown here, this is a complex and often painful process. For example, Sameera Abdi described how she challenged the domestic norms and roles within her own marriage because she wanted to change this cultural norm:

> Sometimes there were times where I wanted to do things for my husband and I didn't do it because I don't want him to get used to it, do you understand what I am saying? ... so there were times where my husband, initially when we first got married, [would say] "so where is dinner", "on the stove", "oh I need to eat", and I would say "yeah, go and put [serve yourself] I've cooked it you know".

The above extract shows how Sameera Abdi rejected the cultural gender practice of serving her husband food: rather she made him plate it up for himself. However it also shows that she kept the cultural gendered practice that cooking is women's role. On a much wider scale Astraia challenged dominant norms regarding marriage and mothering and this left her quite ostracised from her extended family. She said:

> I didn't do the conventional thing; Greeks are very traditional so I was the one that didn't marry, and had a child as a single woman which was scandalous. At 38, lots of rumors about me. You know all these years, "there is something wrong with her", "she is a lesbian", and "she is strange left-wing closet communist lesbian weirdo". My relatives just all stayed away ... I am quite different and I have sort of challenged boundaries.

This questioning and challenging of culture shows a process undertaken by the women in a search for meaning by trying to understand the reason for abuse (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999:1277) and the reason for the gender/sex discrimination in culture. In articulating how she challenged these gender norms and roles in her family and community, Astraia's quotation also speaks to the consequences of resistance in terms of isolation from her ethnic community and family, which other women also experienced. For example Ligaya said:

> I think I am just viewed as someone who will do things like that anyway. They just don't know how much I suffer inside because I am not doing the expectation and I wanted to, I don't know why I want to? I want to belong, I want to belong, but I know I don't fit in anyway that's the thing, so that's always my dilemma.

Here Ligaya showed how the changes in her values and ideals meant she no longer fits in her family. I discussed this notion of belonging earlier in relation to the participants' experiences of belonging or not belonging both within their own and the dominant culture. Some of the women suggested that living their lives in this resistance resulted in feelings of shame, which I term cultural shame, which is slightly different to other elements of shame the women discussed in previous chapters related to sexuality and CSA. I use the term cultural shame here intentionally to show in language this added layer of shame for ethnic women. This shame is particularly related to elements of culture that are influenced by cultural gender practices and induce shame in those who do not abide by the cultural gendered practices. Earlier I discussed the layer of shame associated with sexual abuse and the constructions of girls and women's bodies in culture: this is one layer. The layers of shame under discussion here are more related to not meeting the gendered cultural expectations of a girl/woman. Furthermore, within this layer there are two levels of shame: shame the women felt for themselves in not being what was expected of them, and then shame for their family in the community for their daughter not being what was expected, that is, not living according to those cultural gender norms and roles. Ligaya described how the expectations in her culture that children should be professionally successful have resulted in her feeling ashamed to go back to her family.

> You know it's all connected so your shame ... my shame actually and that's true I've not contacted them for a while now cos I am shameful, I am not as successful [professionally] as I want to be so the guilt of not being successful. Probably is just my own subconscious thinking but makes me feel ashamed to go back to my clan.

So alongside the layer of shame for the CSA, which I discussed in earlier chapters, there is another layer of shame which is perhaps particular to ethnic women, that is the shame of not living up to the cultural expectation of you as a girl, whether it be professionally or personally. Thus these multiple layers of shame are present for ethnic women. Astraia described the cultural shame that her parents would be exposed to because of her choices and experiences of being a single mum:

> She has been an amazing mum and I think in a way there is this side of her that wanted me to rebel, and gave me the permission and, you know, has always been there to support me and to fall back on, I love her for it. But I can also see the other side of that cultural pressure on her too it's almost like that ... feeling that externally about, you know I've got this child that hasn't followed the [norm], you know, and even in this day and age.

Four participants were married to men from their ethnic group at the time of the interviews. Anechka talked about how her ex-husband viewed her thoughts on gender equality:

> I am not feminist ok, but I think it's man put above women in many ways, like I am in a way more like an equal not like my ex-husband, he said I have been brainwashed, I have become feminist, I don't know if it's feminist or not. I believe if you have family you have equal rights.

Here she shows how feminism is used against women as something dangerous or to ridicule, thus women do not identify publicly in their communities as feminists (Cox, Kershaw & Trotter 2000:179). Those who were married to men in the past both within and outside of their ethnic group also described this conflict. If awareness of gender discrimination assists CSA survivors to reformulate their experiences and construct positive images of women for themselves, as shown in this thesis, then within ethnic communities ethnic survivors who identify with this may be more exposed to cultural shame and ridicule if they espouse feminist views.

Sameera Abdi described how this selection and rejection process impacts on her relationship. In addition she also shared her concerns about judgement from her non-ethnic colleagues in relation to her choice to continue with some cultural gender roles and expectations:

> Really challenging every single aspect of my culture, I wouldn't be in a relationship; I would not be in a relationship ...[...]... I even chose, within an Australian context, to not share some of the things I do cos I know that I am going to be judged. Oh "do you do this for your husband", no I keep quiet, because I don't want to be judged or criticised for what I chose to do, it is my choice. I know

> that if I want to change it it's going to be a big battle and it's a battle that I don't want to take because there will be no win–win situation.

This intersection of ethnicity, culture and gender shows that women feel this clash personally but are also aware of a clash with the dominant culture and the ideology of feminism, which many engaged with as shown above. Consistent with other research the women here are describing how they do not construct a single gender identity for themselves, but move between their 'culture' and alternatives (Pyke & Johnson 2003:37).This can create conflict regarding gender issues and juggling these competing cultural expectations (Pyke & Johnson 2003:37). Despite these challenges seven women said they were proud of their ethnicity and were comfortable with where they sat in relation to it.

In closing, the women in this study showed how they engage with processes of selection and rejection about their own personal cultures but also how they engage with the dominant culture. The agency involved in this process includes withholding information from colleagues in relation to domestic responsibilities. It is a reminder that feminism as an ideology can be used to shame women who choose to take up particular roles in domestic life. While Pyke and Johnson's (2003) research suggests that women felt they could not be their authentic self in their ethnic culture, my study suggests that some women felt conflicted in both ethnic 'culture' and dominant 'Anglo culture'. For ethnic women, their ethnic identity, no matter how far removed, is something with which they are judged in this community. As the participants described above, many ethnic women feel obliged to make a choice between their ethnicity and their womanhood (Trinh 1989:104). For many of the women this has resulted in a personal, ethnic 'me', and a female 'me' that is political (Trinh 1989:104), which is perpetuated through discourses of difference and diversity. A personal consequence of these tensions for ethnic women can be the requirement to choose either their feminist beliefs or their ethnic communities because the two appear to be incompatible. In the context of CSA this means that, if women better manage the effects of CSA through knowledge and information about gender inequality, this can result in a clash with their culture, family and community, as I have shown here. This can leave survivors of CSA with the choice either to become isolated from their cultural social supports or to inhibit their emotional healing because the two appear incompatible. Further to this, even for the women who negotiated a bridge between these they were unable to share the love of their culture and

some of those traditional practices and values with their Anglo colleagues. Thus, in order to remain loyal to their culture, community and family, ethnic survivors of CSA may feel compelled to remain silent so as not to bring shame to their community and ethnic group by making visible the gender practices that enable the ongoing abuse of girls. Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989:106) has described this as a triple jeopardy for women of different ethnic groups in relation to the feminist fight. I would like to use her concept and show its relevance to ethnic women's experiences of CSA. Thus, an ethnic woman who has experienced CSA can be accused of: betraying her (ethnic) man if she identifies that a man from her ethnic group abused her; she can be accused of betraying her (ethnic) community when she speaks about CSA; and she can also be accused by remaining silent on the issue of CSA and as such may be viewed as non-feminist and as betraying women by not making this issue visible (Trinh 1989:106). It is a no-win situation whereby women are either betraying their men, their community or their sex. This process of pitting anti-racist and anti-sexist struggles against each other is an ideal mechanism to divide and conquer (Trinh 1989:106) and water down cross-cultural similarities in gender oppression and CSA. It also creates barriers between ethnic women, Anglo women and feminism. Feminists should not be afraid of the continued need for feminist analysis in the lives of ethnic women and indeed all women. Through recognition of these participants' 'womanness' but also their 'ethnicity' it has been possible to show how this theoretical tension between ethnic women and feminism can have very real personal consequences for ethnic female survivors of CSA. Further, this study has extended this by showing how some of the participants have managed this tension, even though it remains. In addition, I have shown how the women have found ways through this tension by keeping some cultural ways of being and rejecting others by taking up some feminist views.

This thesis has shown that one of the greatest shared consequences of CSA was how women critique gender within their cultures and question, negotiate and reconstruct their ethnic identity. For the participants in this study this was and is an ongoing, complex and often painful process. The women described how the CSA impacted on their lives and the majority went through a process of reformulating these ideas through developing an awareness of the link between what they were feeling, the CSA (Singh et al 2013:1105), and the cultural gender practices and thus reformulating the experience which forms a large part of resilience (Singh et al 2013:1105). This process ameliorates

some of the effects of the abuse (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999:1277). This does not mean that there was not a time when many effects were not there; it simply means that at some point they were able to contextualise the abuse and reduce and even overcome the negative consequences of it (Phasha 2010:1242). Again they exercised agency through a process of selection and choice about the sexual abuse itself, their culture and their ethnicity, which placed the abuse in a different context. Research on resilience has identified that no single factor acts alone; rather it is an interaction of factors (Phasha 2010:1235). This research has shown that there is a particular nature of resilience in these ethnic women which has involved the process of selection and rejection of culture, ethnicity and gender equality. Each woman was able to describe in great detail the impact of culture on their lives and the lives of women, men and children and the impact of this on the issue of CSA, but they spoke about it from their position of being an ethnic woman. Ethnicity is a complex frame for CSA and it involves powerful cultural gender power relations and practices which are silencing, and place responsibility on women, rendering perpetrators invisible. However at the same time the women showed how they used their ethnicity to help themselves through a complex process of selection and rejection of the cultural gender practices and values that have strengthened them in many respects. This dual nature of ethnicity and culture enables us to understand how bridges are built by an individual between themselves and the society they live in. It shows us the tensions that can exist between two conflicting or interacting forces, the self and social structures (Ybema et al 2009).

# CHAPTER TEN

# Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore how ethnicity frames women's understanding and experience of CSA. I have used an intersectional framework to examine how ethnicity and culture intersect with gender and CSA in order to show how these shape women's experiences of CSA. The findings have shown that gender is the overarching category that emerges, but ethnicity and culture lend particularity to women's understandings and experiences of CSA, which I argue has implications for CSA research and feminism. Thus this study has demonstrated both similarities in women's experience of CSA across ethnicity and differences.

From analysis of the women's interviews, this study has produced five significant findings. First, the women's stories of CSA showed the multiple layers of silencing that impact on the issue of CSA in ethnic communities. I found that the cultural practice of silence about sex, or sexuality in general, had the specific impact of silencing CSA disclosure. The lack of sex education was identified by all women as significant to their own understandings of CSA. The fear of gossip in the community also reinforced this silence, because CSA could potentially dismantle the status of honour for a family and the reputation of the girl. In addition, I found that this silence can be further reinforced by belief systems in ethnic groups, especially the belief that CSA 'does not happen in our community; it is a Western problem'. In particular, the women's accounts showed how this denial can be reinforced in ethnic groups living outside of their countries of origin because they do not want to be identified as 'the group' that experiences CSA.

Second, this study showed how the women's cultural practices and constructions of gender within the women's ethnic groups and cultural contexts framed and situated blame and responsibility with the women who experienced CSA. The women collectively told stories about ideas of guilt surrounding failure to prevent the abuse and the potential of being blamed outright for the CSA because one was a girl. From these two findings, I have argued that gender practices are shrouded in unspoken rules about gender, sex and sexuality within cultures and these reinforce shame and blame for both victims of CSA and for mothers. Furthermore, I found the sexualisation of the female

body induced shame and responsibility for women and girls in relation to CSA, which creates a stamp of stigma so that women are viewed as dirty and/or damaged.

Third, this study has shown that cultural constructions of both male and female sexuality further situate blame for CSA with women. This was illustrated throughout the women's accounts of the cultural value placed on chastity and virginity and the importance of these to constructions of women's sexuality. The women's stories showed how cultural perceptions are used to form views about impurity and female sexual desire, which then impacted on how they saw themselves and CSA and how they remembered and coped with CSA experiences. The women also spoke about male sexuality, blame and CSA, showing that male sexuality is often understood as uncontrollable, with men positioned as not being responsible for perpetrating CSA. The themes of female and male sexuality showed how cultural ideas about men and women's sexual desires can come together to shame and blame women for CSA and leave male perpetrators invisible.

Fourth this thesis showed the emotional consequences of CSA for the women, including depression and experiencing a loss of trust in men, but also a loss of trust in general, particularly in relation to the safety of their children. The women's stories of their own emotional turmoil and grappling with understanding their experiences of CSA showed a process of questioning culture and ethnic identity as they searched for answers for why they were abused.

Finally, this study found that, despite a questioning of culture and ethnicity, the women were able to identify their own strengths and resilience from elements of their culture. Specifically, this study showed that the women engaged in a selection and rejection process when they examined gender and their experiences of CSA within their culture, which enabled them to retain their ethnicity whilst at the same time allowing them to reject certain parts of their culture. The women demonstrated agency within the distress of CSA, showing their capacity to resist the effects of it and redefine who they are (Kaler 2006:70) as ethnic women living between two cultures. The findings show the active process the women went through in order to carve out and reject the gendered elements of their culture and reframe their views to those of gender equality. This study showed how the women talked about culture, not ethnicity, as the key issue that frames

CSA in communities. When they talked about culture they talked specifically about gender, sex and sexuality.

## Feminism, Gender and Ethnicity: The Tensions

This study was not about the homogenisation of CSA survivors' stories; rather it was undertaken as an expression of social justice (Reavey, Ahmed & Majumdar 2006:172) for ethnic survivors of CSA. There has been a reluctance to engage with the gendered and heterosexist nature of CSA in general (Cox, Kershaw & Trotter 2000:10–11) and this reluctance is even more pronounced in ethnic groups. Despite evidence-based research showing that CSA occurs across countries, different ethnic groups and cultures (Fontes 1995, Clear et al 2006, Suchting 1999), exploration of abuse characteristics, disclosure and social reactions of survivors from different ethnic groups (Ullman & Filipas 2005a:68) is limited.

Radical feminism has been central to explaining CSA and how it impacts on women and children and, as a result, CSA has ceased to be unspeakable, particularly in Western contexts (Cox, Kershaw & Trotter 2000:xi). As mentioned major, there has been much debate about how women's oppression and liberation should be understood within the different schools of feminism such as those raised by women of colour and by post modern/post structuralist theorists. The debate among modern and postmodern feminisms continues regarding the relationship of the 'real world out there' to 'discourse'. Similarly, how sex/gender, class, race and ethnicity are postioned in theorising oppression is still debated and the problem of sex specific corporeality is receiving renewed attention (Daly 1997:25). Nonetheless, as I argued in the literature review, feminism has been widely critiqued by different groups of feminists for assuming a universal experience of oppression amongst women and for adopting Western models of patriarchal power and intimate relations (Ahmed et al 2009).

This has resulted in theoretical tensions in the use of feminism to describe different women's experiences because of the other more prominent sites of oppression, like race, ethnicity or class. The failure of feminism to interrogate race ends in feminists often replicating and at times reinforcing the subordination of ethnic and black women (Crenshaw 1994:100). At the same time, the failure of anti-racism to interrogate patriarchy ends with anti-racism reproducing the oppression of ethnic/black women (Crenshaw 1991:1252). Theoretical tensions are further complicated by the implications

of the postmodern suspension of all forms of value judgement, and of concepts such as truth, freedom and rationality, and for emancipatory political projects which rely on certain 'metaphysical' assumptions about what makes up oppression and freedom (McNay 1992:1). These can imply that the power differences amongst women can render their similar struggles against men fundamentally different, making the feminist emancipatory project impossible (McNay 1992). Bordo (1990:145) observes that the 'analytics of class and race... do not seem to be undergoing the same level of deconstruction' as gender and women. Similarly Daly(1997:34 ) argues that less intellectual discussion has been devoted to showing the lack of a unified referent for racial and class categories compared to those for gender.

However, these challenges have been useful for identifying the differences among women, and acknowledging the importance of race and ethnicity to discussions of gender is vital. Indeed there are many strands of feminism that have embraced both postmodern principles of diversity and difference but maintained a collectivist emancipatory approach. As mentioned earlier, this includes post colonial feminist analyses of the ways in which race, ethnicity, sexual identity, gender identity, age, religion, level of education, occupation/profession, marital status, and health condition may separate one group of women from another. This work has revealed how contextual factors shape women's self understanding of being oppressed or not oppressed and has encouraged other feminists to reject female essentialism and female chauvinism (Tong 2009:8) . Similarly feminist standpoint theory enabled an understanding of patriarchal institutions and ideologies as perverse inversions of more humane social relations (Hardstock 1983:284) Similarly, the findings of this thesis give strength to the statement that "deconstruction is a useful idea but it doesn't stop someone from dying" (Tuhiwai-Smith 1999:3 in Reynolds 2012:58). Therefore, I adopted a radical feminist theoretical perspective, in order to describe the lived corporeal reality of the participants, whist at the same time recognising the importance of diversity and difference, which was achieved through the use of an intersectional feminist analysis.

An intersectional framework provided this study a multi-dimensional lens through which I was able to examine the intersections of gender, ethnicity, culture and CSA. In so doing, have demonstrated how multiple elements of the women's lives overlapped and crossed over, providing for multiple sites of injury (Olsvik 2007:8, Essed 1991, Crenshaw 1994, Easteal 2001, Bograd 1999, Weeks 2000). This has enabled me to

retain a focus on the specificity of the female body and gender, while attending to ethnicity, culture and CSA.

However, through interviewing women from different ethnic backgrounds numerous times and immersing myself in their stories, I could not help but think, are there certain points at which we have strayed too far in the analysis of our difference as women, and the goal of recognising difference has unintentionally, perhaps, made us blind to our similarities as women? It is within the space of violence and abuse, and particularly in relation to childhood sexual abuse, as this thesis has shown, that the similarity of women needs to remain central. The similarity of woman begins in childhood, whereby children are always 'owned' by adults, always, everywhere, because their very existence relies on adults who hold positions of power over them across the globe. Their ability to have agency and choice to step out of a particular situation is limited by virtue of being a child. CSA is a site of domination that is characterised by power relations that are asymmetrical and cannot be reversed (McNay 1992:67). In order for power relations to be unfixed, fluid and reversible an element of freedom is required (McNay 1992:67). When one person is at the complete dominion of another who is able to exercise infinite and unlimited power over them, there *are* no power relations (Foucault 1988b:12 cited in McNay 1992:67). In the study of CSA it has been demonstrated over and over that there is a gender disparity in this particular form of victimisation, that is, female children are predominantly sexually abused by men. Radical feminism has recognized the oppression of women as a fundamental political oppression through which women are classed as inferior based upon their sex (Madsen 2000:153). This is a form of oppression that ensures continued male domination through the masculine control of female sexuality (Madsen 2000:153). Thus sex both expresses and determines how power is experienced in personal relationships and social behavior (Madsen 2000:154): a perspective that came across clearly through all of the participants stories. I argue if we were to demote the primacy of sexual difference, and not show this inherent imbalance of power between adults and children, this form of sexual violence would become less visible in all ethnic groups across the world. If we do not continue to name the similar, that is, men sexually abuse girl children, this worldwide problem and its far-reaching ramifications, and direct and indirect costs, will become secondary and therefore less visible. I argue that in spaces of CSA identifying and locating differences

and how these intersect across race, ethnicity, class, ability and so on is important but this should not prevent us speaking openly about sites of similarity as women.

The findings of this research have identified CSA as a site of similarity. I recognise it is no longer possible to think of gender as a globally constant phenomenon, that is, gender is a construct that intersects with race, class, ethnicity, disability and sexuality and so produces at times a radically different experience of what it means to be a man or woman in particular contexts (McNay 1992:65). However there are social problems that cut across these categories, such as CSA, with the dominant story being one of girl children being sexually abused by adult men. Girls who are sexually abused by adult men experience that abuse in a body that is layered with particular cultural meanings about what it means to be a girl and then a woman and it is these dominant cultural and social meanings that allow CSA to continue. These cultural meanings produce significant impacts on a woman's lived experiences of CSA as a girl and subsequently as an adult woman. The nine women in this study, despite being from different ethnic groups, spoke about gender, sexuality and experiences of CSA in predominantly similar ways. Thus, despite the differences, the issue of CSA revealed a site of similarity. The centralisation of the female body and the cultural constructions imposed on that body contribute to the exploitation and devaluation of girls and women globally, and this is particularly stark in CSA.

In this thesis I established the category of ethnic survivor to examine CSA because the literature reminds us that studies that have explored ethnic women's experiences of CSA are few. At the same time, I recognise the problematic nature of using 'ethnic' as a category. This is because inevitability specific local contextual perspectives will be lost, for example, the nuances of growing up living in an African community in an African country, compared to the diverse cultural contexts of Eastern Europe. However, I wanted to use the category 'ethnic' because it has a historical and social context in Australia that positions migrants and refugees as 'the other'. I argue the exclusion of ethnic women from CSA survivor research has a social and historic context in Australia specifically, but that representations of the 'other', and the lived experience of being the 'other', are present all over the world. I therefore embarked on this thesis to explore and expose the experiences of CSA for those groups of women that share the position of 'other' in Australia. This process of categorisation for me was therefore an "unavoidable political act" (Calhoun 1994 in Ezzy 2002:159). Using the term ethnic

enabled me to avoid centralising one ethnic group as the group CSA occurs in, and hence risk stigmatising particular ethnic communities. Identifying the category ethnic provided a space for a shared experience of being 'other' in Australia and a shared experience of CSA as women. While I am aware of the political implications of this, I argue that this similarity will make the social and personal ramifications of CSA more visible for ethnic women. At the same time I recognise that women's lives are determined through a multiplicity of influences that cannot be categorised because so often they cut across each other to form complex power relations (McNay 1992:123). I accept though that, irrespective of "how local the focus of attention, some perspectives will always be excluded" (McNay 1992:124); and so it is with this study. The findings of this study support the premise that if one denies any kind of generalisation about society, what is left is an ineffectual point where "what remains is a universe composed entirely of counterexamples in which the way men and women see the world is purely as particular individuals, shaped by the unique configurations for that particularity" (Bordo 1990:151 cited in McNay 1992:125). The problem of CSA cannot be consumed by particularity; it needs to be embedded in gender similarity for political purposes. Ethnicity is the platform or the context in which women speak about their experiences of CSA but it is gender that gives that similarity. I am arguing this point not to overlay Western ideals of morality on those of other ethnic groups but to point out how such arguments dismiss the centrality of the female body to sexual violence and the ways in which that body is understood and treated across cultures. It is this position of similarity that allows us to ask questions as women, such as, why is the female body commonly viewed across cultures as designed for sexual exploitation by males? Why is it that the statistics consistently show that women and girl children are sexually violated more than boys and men? Why is it that across the world it is primarily men who perpetrate sexual abuse against children? How does men's sense of entitlement to women's and children's bodies continue to be maintained?

Feminism is a dynamic, growing and introspective body of theories and it is best positioned to answer these related questions. I argue that the category of woman and the constructions that surround it have enough commonality across the world, particularly seen in CSA, and this commonality has the political weight to challenge and change how we understand gender and therefore erode violence and abuse against women and children. This thesis is therefore a feminist project that is fundamentally posited on a

modernist metanarrative of promoting the personal emancipation of women from all groups (McNay 1992:123). As this thesis has shown, general categories and abstractions such as gender produce a compelling analysis of social inequality (McNay 1992:123). I do not discount the importance of and challenges around discussion of difference within feminism but I argue commonality and similarity provide a platform that creates an opportunity to broaden feminist ideas and concepts, particularly in the field of CSA. In line with other research, this study has located and framed women's experiences within the gender practices, values and expectations of *a* society (Reavey & Gough 2000:326) as well as focusing on the social and structural constraints placed on women, rarely taken up by mainstream academic and popular texts (Reavey & Gough 2000:327). Thus, this thesis has shown how girl children who have been subjected to sexual abuse are located in socio-cultural practices and constraints of sex and gender, which are expressed within the culture of their ethnic communities.

## "Too Hard Basket": Bringing Similarity Back to the Feminist Conversation

In my work in clinical social work practice, research and policy making over the past 15 years, I have encountered conversations which place CSA in ethnic communities in the 'too hard basket' as too difficult to deal with and to be avoided (Suchting 1999). In clinical practice, I have encountered non-ethnic workers who do not raise issues of CSA with their clients even when clients themselves disclose it for fear of being culturally inappropriate, or worse, they are afraid that the women's experience of CSA is so different they will not know how to deal with it. Working with ethnic groups about CSA has been constructed as problematic because professionals are seen to lack the expertise, skills or knowledge to tackle the perceived different experiences of ethnic women (Ahmed et al 2009:8). The problem of culture becomes suffocating, particularly for non-ethnic workers working with women from different ethnicities (Ahmed et al 2009:8) or the issue itself is relegated to the 'too hard basket' (Miller & Cross 2006:17, Ullman & Filipas 2005b, Suchting 1999:69). This is reinforced by academics and practitioners arguing that treatment and intervention for individuals with an ethnic background requires a different approach. However, there is little information available that identifies what this different approach might be (Miller & Cross 2006:17, Ullman & Filipas 2005b, Clear et al 2006:79).The issue of being culturally appropriate becomes dominant in these contexts because workers feel like 'culture' is something they do not

understand because it is foreign. So they avoid it or dance around complex issues such as CSA. I am not arguing against culturally competent practice: instead, I am arguing that the concept of culture needs to be reconsidered as something everyone is exposed to in different ways and there are similarities across cultures, such those shown in this thesis around gender and sexuality.

I raise the issue of the 'too hard basket' not to blame non-ethnic workers for apathy or fear, but to highlight that this narrative of 'too hard' comes from ethnic workers too, who suggest communities are not ready to deal with such issues because there is no language for CSA or who claim that it does not happen in their ethnic group. These are all arguments that I have encountered in the course of my work. The slippery slope that is walked upon here is often not so evident, so let me make it clear. These are cultural relativist arguments which rise from the dominance of discourses of difference and diversity (Ramazanoglu 1989:142). While workers, researchers and policy makers do not want to be seen as essentialist in claiming a universal experience of woman or while they fear talking about culture, the danger is that CSA is viewed as culturally relative, reinforcing silence. Culture as something foreign and only present in ethnic groups can be used to manipulate what is going on. Fear of political correctness has workers fearing being culturally inappropriate so that issues are left unquestioned. If we do not challenge these views, both as ethnic women and also non-ethnic women, this type of injustice is maintained and silenced under the disguise of culturally appropriate practice.

This thesis has shown how male privilege and dominant masculinity cuts across all the cultures of the ethnic groups discussed. So while on the one hand some ethnic cultures have extreme responses to a breach of virginity, like honour killings, it is not the ethnicity of a particular group that has created this. Rather the patriarchal dominance within that culture has privileged and reinforced values and ideas that locate women's and girls' chastity and virginity with the honour of the family. CSA is then seen as a breach to that honour for which women and girls are responsible. In understanding CSA it is important to know the difference between cultural relativism, which leaves each culture acceptable on its own terms, offering women no common ground, and respect for each other's culture, which enables understanding, evaluation, comparison and choice, without the need to condone indiscriminately (Ramazanoglu 1989:144).

Research has found there are no major differences in understandings of CSA between different groups (Lowe et al 2005:162). Despite the arguments for potential differences across groups, "it may be that people's attitudes toward CSA are less subject to cultural variations in values because, like murder, CSA is universally viewed across cultures as unacceptable or undesirable behavior, rendering other cultural mores as secondary or irrelevant" (Lowe et al 2005:162). This begs the question of whether researchers, academics and workers have been so focused on identifying the differences that we have forgotten this similarity, and hence it has been rendered invisible.

In all societies women are primarily defined in terms of their bodies, which are seen to be unruly, out of control and inferior (Davis 1997:5). Through analysis of ethnic women's understanding and experience of CSA, this thesis has shown the female body in this context is a site over which men have and continue to exert disciplinary control and through which the norms of feminine behaviour are established (Bordo 1993). From the women's stories and their articulations of culture I have demonstrated that if we bypass the reality of the female body we also bypass the reality of women's lives (McNay 1992:24).

McNay (1992:117) argued that feminists cannot afford to sacrifice valid judgements, and I argue that the judgement that CSA is wrong, irrespective of what culture you come from, is fundamental to any feminist perspective. We need some concept of ideology that enables us to see where power and oppression are located in each society and this ideology is best placed and argued within feminism. In places where women do share common interests, as they have in this research, they share it in relation to a form of subordination, that is sexual violence of girls and women by men in communities where men's interests are dominant (Ramazanoglu 1989:146).

## Patriarchy and Cultural Patriarchies

I came to this study with a strong commitment to the recognition of difference as an ethnic woman and feminist. When faced with the overwhelming similarity of gender constructions in my data, I was unsure how to *do* similarity within the context of the various tensions within feminism. This has resulted in a very intentional, political and strategic positioning of myself as a researcher, feminist and participant to name and centralise patriarchy through feminism.

Patriarchy, a term used by many feminist theorists has fallen out of favour in recent years, but it suggests that power is fundamentally organised on the basis of biological sex (Weedon 1997:127). Post structural arguments suggest that it is not natural and inevitable but socially produced, thus while biological differences exist, the degree to which they are emphasized, and the meanings they are given, differ (Weedon 1997:127). Therfore in order to accommodate for the many different elements under analysis within this study, it was important to analyse the range of meanings which biological difference has in various ethnicities, and the political structures which justify particular meanings. This is not just an intellectual process but one found in the lived experience of being a woman on a daily basis, whereby women are subject to particular definitions of their femininity and sexuality, which often contradict the way they define themselves (Weedon 1997:127).

Patriarchy imposes constraints on how gender is lived, particularly for women, and it has been argued that these constraints vary from culture to culture (Pyke & Johnson 2003:38). This suggests that gender is constructed differently across cultures. However, all the women in this research emphasised their bodies as female through descriptions of physiological processes that are specific to women (Lorber 2001:121), and I have shown how this links with particular cultural constructions of sex and gender within and across the different cultural contexts. At birth women's bodies are claimed as female and these bodies are culturally saturated in sexuality and meaning with particular bodily practices that are culturally significant (Gatens 1991:146). The patriarchal constraints on women in this study have been shown not to vary significantly across the nine ethnic cultures presented; rather they are similar. This similarity is a demonstration of patriarchy across cultures because the women's stories about their childhoods and growing up as women showed that the female body is "one on which an inferior status has been inscribed" (Bartky 1997:139) from birth. This discussion of the biological imposition on women's bodies is not intended to be an argument for an essentialist view on these matters. Rather, the findings of this study show that, despite the proliferation of research within academia suggesting gender neutrality, diversity and difference (Butler 1990, 1993, 2004, Mohanty et al 1991, Razack 2002, Bulbeck 1998, Ahmed et al 2009), the material reality of the female body and how it is constructed in society still persists in common ways and has significant material consequences for women (Gatens 1991,

1996, Bordo 1993, Pittaway & Pittaway 2004, McNay 1992). This thesis has demonstrated this material reality through the experiences of sexual abuse in childhood.

For example virginity is a construction specifically focused on the female body that continues to be positioned as culturally significant, and the women in this study reminded us again of the cultural signifier of honour and purity associated with virginity that is particular to women. This value afforded to the hymen and through it to female sexuality is very strongly linked with the existence of the vagina and the level of sexual usage of this vagina by men (Lebowitz & Roth 1994:372). Similarly, the women in this study spoke about menarche and puberty being constructed to represent a girl as sexually ready. As the women in this research showed, if CSA occurs at puberty it is seen as her fault because this physiological process is constructed as a readiness for sex (Jackson & Falmagne 2013:382). These lived consequences of cultural practices and values are intermingled with specific female phenomena. The ethnic women told specific stories of the significant influence of virginity, chastity and puberty over the ways in which CSA is responded to both personally for the victim but also for families and communities. The similarity in the ways the different ethnic women constructed cultural meanings about virginity, puberty and menarche that sit around the female body was stark in the findings. Becoming a woman in patriarchal society requires a woman to embody the societal messages of femininity, and dissociate from her own physical desires so that she can conform to the hegemonic constructions of the feminine (Tolman et al 2006 cited in Jackson & Falmagne 2013:382). Furthermore this study has also shown cultural practices and values about masculinity which also require men to conform to hegemonic constructions of the masculine, and these too have specific ramifications for CSA. One particular cultural construction found in this study that continues to exist was male sexual desire being seen as uncontrollable and therefore men having particular sexual needs that must be met. Constructions of masculinity were linked with assumptions about biological male genitalia which transcended the different ethnic groups in this study. As I have shown, this positioning of masculine and feminine bodies has significant ramifications for CSA as these are used to blame women and girl children for any sexual violence that occurs because men's desire is uncontrollable and therefore they cannot be held responsible.

This thesis also found across the individual ethnic identities that the responses from family and community to CSA were similar, as were the responses from the nine

individual women in relation to locating their understanding of men, women and CSA in culture. The gender practices and values referred to as 'culture' by the women translate into social reactions that stigmatise and revictimise girls and women who have been sexually abused (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999:1276). Culture was the common reference point when discussing sex, sexuality, masculinity, femininity and CSA. It is within this site that the relations of power between men, women and children, their significance for the female body and its subsequent consequences for victims, survivors and their families can be made visible. Patriarchal discourses and practices remain dominant and create the space to make these common reference points visible in ethnic communities as they pertain to sex, sexuality and CSA: these gendered practices and values continue to represent patriarchy today. Gender and heterosexuality are therefore sustained not only through structural hierarchies and social norms but through everyday sexual and social practices, as the women's personal stories have shown. Most people do gender and heterosexuality every day without reflecting critically on it because it is done through talk and action. But heterosexuality is also embodied in practices of dress and demeanour and active participation in formal institutional settings through which the mundane activities of everyday lives are ordered (Jackson 1999:180).

While similarities are important, the findings of this study have also demonstrated the importance and usefulness of understanding the differences in the experiences of CSA through culture and ethnicity. In the past, some studies have suggested that ethnic women resist blaming culture, and consequently this builds a reluctance to name cultural practices that legitimate violence and abuse for fear of offending ethnic groups or out of cultural respect or to preserve privacy (Burman et al 2004 cited in Ahmed et al 2009:22). In contrast, the women in this research were clear that culture was responsible, most specifically cultural gender practices and values, and did not take this as an affront to their ethnicity. The women named the patriarchal gendered components of culture and how they influenced understandings of women and men. They displayed anger at particular elements of their culture by naming the injustice and harshness of the social construction of gender. In particular, they demonstrated how elements of culture positioned responsibility with them as girls and women.

Theories of patriarchy explain the creation and maintenance of men's social, ideological, sexual, political and economic dominance (Ramazanoglu 1989:33). Even as society has changed, patriarchy has not been defeated as many would have us believe.

Rather, its reach has broadened whereby now "women have the whole of society in which to roam and to be exploited" (Walby 1990:201). Consequently the concept of patriarchy has been central to this thesis. This study has shown how patriarchal cultural gender practices and values across nine different ethnic groups inhibit disclosure of CSA. This sits in contrast to research that suggests members of different ethnic groups respond differently to disclosures (Pierce & Pierce 1984; Rao, Di Clement & Ponton 1992, both cited in Fontes 1995:2, Miller & Cross 2006:16, Ullman & Filipas 2005a:67). This study has shown that the patriarchal cultural gender practices and values result in high levels of blame and shame for ethnic girls and women, and their mothers. It has demonstrated how the responsibility for preserving honour falls to the girl and her mother because of the way in which female bodies are constructed in culture as being provocative, alluring and depending on the age of the child and what she was wearing (Fontes 1993, 1995, 2001, 2002, 2005, Fontes, Cruz & Tabachnick 2001, Ullman & Filipas 2005b, Clear et al 2006, Feiring, Coates & Taska 2001, Suchting 1999, Mennen 1995, Noh Ahn & Gilbert 1992, Heras 1992, Thomas 1992, Hamelin et al 2010). Thus patriarchy frames culture and through this is legitimised as a way of being and providing meaning within communities. It is central to the ways in which female children live in their bodies, are subjected to sexual violence and subsequently experience the effects of this violation within the context of the society and culture in which they live. Patriarchy is an institutionalisation of male power rather than an innate property of being a male (Spender 1985:36 cited in Ramazanoglu 1989:35). All men benefit from patriarchy (Ramazanoglu 1989:35) and this includes ethnic men. Ethnic men are subjected to racism and discrimination outside of their countries of origin but I argue from the findings of this study that this does not mean their ability to perpetrate violence against women and children is less or that they should not be held accountable for their actions of rape and CSA.

The value of patriarchy as a concept is that it can be used to describe the different power relations between men, women and children within ethnic communities. It enables understandings of childhood sexual abuse and the particularity of the female body to these relations. The fact that these women were children when the sexual abuse was perpetrated against them makes questions relating to children in ethnic groups relevant. It is my argument that, if we can understand how women and children are viewed in culture, it might provide us with some answers as to how to make men more

accountable for the sexual violence they perpetrate. The bodies that were abused were female bodies and their lives were based upon the fact they were born female. The data in this study suggests these cultural practices and values in relation to men and women in communities appear universal and ongoing; therefore as researchers we should not ignore them just because the way forward may be fraught with complexity. Thus it is important to recognise that patriarchy still structures the lives of many women, both ethnic and non-ethnic, and that it can have severe repercussions for survivors of CSA. The concept of patriarchy as a continuum has assisted me to take seriously the intersections of race, ethnicity and gender as they relate to the issue of childhood sexual abuse. Considering it in this way made it possible to identify the way in which the female body was constructed in culture, the way in which CSA is understood in culture, and the impact of both of these on ethnic women.

Research suggests that a person's culture is said to be defined by their race or ethnic group (Mennen 1995:115). Yet research also shows that patriarchy uses violence to subjugate women across cultures and communities (Meetoo & Mirza 2007:189). Which comes first, patriarchy or culture? The findings have shown that the women's ethnicity, that is, the fact that they come from Greece, Italy, Holland, Vietnam or Anglo Australia has very little to do with how CSA is understood and responded to in the community and family. Rather it is what they define as their culture, more specifically, patriarchal gender discrimination within cultures, that produces a myriad of specific effects for ethnic women that are both similar to Western women but at the same time different. The particular differences highlighted in this study are the multiple layers of silencing around the issue of CSA which impact significantly on both understanding and disclosure. Further, the particularly powerful systems of blame present in culture in relation to CSA result not only in victims blaming themselves, but in family and community blaming them. In addition, the significant pressures placed on girls and women in relation to virginity and chastity add further layers of shame and blame to women's understanding of CSA and its impact on their lives as women in their community. The painful process of questioning and challenging one's culture demonstrated by the women often meant that they isolated themselves from their communities and families. Alongside this, the selection and rejection process the participants undertook enabled them to retain their ethnic identity and use it as a source of strength and resilience rather than reject it completely. These are differences that

have been made visible alongside the similarity of gender, culture and patriarchy. Therefore rather than treating the concepts of patriarchy and culture as separate, by laying them over each other I have been able to demonstrate both as they relate to the issue of CSA for ethnic women.

I do recognise that treating patriarchy as a universal concept falls into the trap of biological determinism, whereby the implication is that "since [what] all women have in common is their biological sex, it is hard to avoid the assumption that patriarchy must be rooted in an essential masculine nature" (Ramazanoglu 1989:35). Nonetheless my concern in relation to ethnic communities and CSA is that ethnic groups live outside of their countries of origin within a subculture that exists within a dominant culture. As such they are legitimately afraid of racism and discrimination (Tyagi 2001:21). Migrants and refugees come from a range of backgrounds, with most beginning life in Australia in working-class or lower-class occupations, many in undesirable jobs, as my parents did (Kilic 1997). The discrimination they experience based on their ethnicity, race, language ability and education levels, amongst other factors, is very real. However, to disregard or prioritise one form of discrimination over the other leaves one unspoken. This is the added layer of complexity in the intersections of CSA with ethnicity, race, class and gender that must be considered.

In Australia the premise of multiculturalism and being culturally appropriate inadvertently supports cultural gender practices and values as part of a person's ethnicity. This is because ethnicity is often collapsed into culture, rather than the culture itself being under interrogation, resulting in a culturally relativist argument (Beckett & Macey 2001:311) as illustrated earlier. Views such as these leave ethnic women to fall through the cracks of theory and practice because these ideals result in non-intervention based on beliefs and values rooted in cultural and religious practices in the private sphere (Idriss & Abbas 2011:43), which are often gendered. However, studies that consider cultural gender practices and values in specific ethnic groups run the risk of constructing those ethnic cultures as impervious to social change, where resistance to gender oppression is impossible. This study also runs a similar risk in that, in identifying this similarity across ethnic groups, the risk is that all ethnic groups will be painted with a similar brush, with the mainstream viewed as the ideal. This results in three concerns. First it contributes another layer of silencing to the issue of CSA in ethnic groups in Australia because no one ethnic group wants to be associated with it.

This reinforces a culture of silence and keeping to your own. From my own clinical experience I see how this prevents ethnic girls and women from disclosing and is a contributing factor to them not accessing services. Secondly ethnic women who want to speak out about CSA are often faced with the choice between their family and community or their own safety. Finally it has been shown in other research that ethnic women often choose to reject their ethnicity entirely because of the misconception of the white egalitarian ideal which leads people to think that equality is only available in the Western world (Pyke & Johnson 2003:43). I mention this because it is an important consideration even though the women in this study demonstrated a process which enabled them to retain elements of both. For example, the participants in this study spoke about how in their families of origin their fathers challenged some norms through 'family culture' and the participants challenged them later in their own lives, showing that ethnic worlds are far more variable than 'racialised gender stereotypes' allow (Pyke & Johnson 2003:45). Further the study showed how the participants themselves underwent a process of challenging the cultural patriarchies in their own lives and demonstrated a selection and rejection process. Through this process they chose elements of their culture they felt were important and rejected the harmful patriarchal elements. This research has shown that ethnic groups and non-ethnic groups do have similar cultural ideas about gender and therefore shows that patriarchy is an ideology, a set of beliefs and expectations about how men and women should think and behave (Pérez-Jiménez 2007:359).

This recreation of experiences defined as similar, shown through the lens of CSA in this study, enables a reconsideration within feminist theory of the potential for a political similarity (Mulinari & Ranthzel 2007:93). This political similarity requires a language that recognises not only similarity but difference. I suggest that the term 'cultural patriarchies' could be used to define forms of patriarchy that occur across groups. This does not deny diversity and difference based upon ethnicity or race, but rather places patriarchy as a category of analysis that allows for cultural similarities and differences in how we understand gender to emerge. For example, the term has been used to describe the patriarchal nature of Islamic societies (Cheruvallil-Contractor 2012:9) but also to describe the beauty industry in the West (Lewis 2008:176). There appears to be a distinction between different forms of patriarchy (Antrobus 2004:180). However, this marking of difference needs to be treated with caution as it could lead to the term

‘cultural patriarchies’ only being used for ethnic communities. This would make it ‘ethnicised’ because it is ‘only’ located in ethnic groups or within certain contexts like the beauty industry. Rather than differentiating between what types of patriarchy women are subjected to, the term ‘cultural patriarchies’ should be used to define forms of patriarchy that have things in common that occur across groups and contexts, but also allow for particularities. This does not deny diversity and difference based upon ethnicity or race, but rather positions patriarchy as a category of analysis within ethnic and non-ethnic women’s lives. The category of woman is still required to describe and transform the lives of women (Soper 1990 cited in Francis 1999:391). The women from this study discussed culture from the context of their ethnic background and in so doing all talked about cultural understandings of gender, sex and sexuality. Therefore the question that remains is whether this concept of cultural patriarchies can bring together women from all societies in relation to this specific form of subjugation. All of these tensions and issues have caused me to look again at the category of woman and reconsider its importance in the area of CSA. For the feminist project to keep its strength and rigour, diversity and sameness need to run alongside each other. We must recognise that no one theoretical paradigm is perfect and, in so doing, we can work together across cultures. In my concluding remarks in the next chapter I will expand on how this might be achieved.

# CHAPTER ELEVEN

# Concluding Comments

> A novel or a poem or a play, or a theoretical essay for that matter, is an attempt to make others see something that really matters to the writer ... In this gesture, there is hope – not certainty – that perhaps others may come to share her vision, if only for a moment. This hope makes a writer vulnerable. She has to be willing to say what she sees, to stake everything on her vision, without any guarantee that she will be understood. To write is to risk rejection and misunderstanding. To create a work of art, Sartre (1988) writes, is to give the world a gift nobody has asked for. But if we don't dare to be generous, if we don't dare to share with others what we see, the world will be the poorer for it. And sometimes someone actually does get it. When the reader feels that a book really speaks to her, she feels less lonely in the world. Literature holds out the hope of overcoming skepticism and isolation. (Moi 2008:268)

In this study I have explored and analysed the effects of childhood sexual abuse on women from different ethnic groups, and considered how ethnicity has shaped these experiences. This study demonstrated the multiple layers of silencing that impact on women who have experienced CSA in ethnic communities. It showed how the cultural practices and constructions of gender within the women's ethnic groups situated blame and responsibility with the women. This study has contributed to elucidating knowledge about ethnic perpetrators and found that the perpetrator tactics used against the participants in this study were similar to those in non-ethnic contexts. It also showed how ethnic perpetrators of CSA have further layers of protection from responsibility because of culturally exclusive beliefs that CSA only happens in non-ethnic groups.

The study showed the emotional consequences of CSA for the women, which were found to be similar to those generally experienced by women. A particular emotional consequence found for ethnic women is the emotional turmoil of grappling with understanding the CSA through a process of questioning one's culture and ethnic identity. The women demonstrated how they critiqued gender practices within their cultures and through this engaged in a selection, choice and rejection process in relation to their culture, which enabled them to retain their ethnicity whilst at the same time rejecting aspects of their culture. The participants also identified their own strengths and resilience in relation to the CSA. This came from elements of both their culture but also an acquired 'feminist consciousness'. The participants were able to actively resist the effects of the CSA, redefine who they were (Kaler 2006:70), and keep positive elements

of their culture but retain their ethnicity. The study demonstrated how the women talked about culture, not ethnicity, as the overarching frame for CSA in communities, showing how important gender practices and relations are to the issue of CSA.

The findings from this thesis are an example of developing a space from which to traverse the distance between difference and similarity debates within feminism itself. The women's stories and integration of gender inspired me as a researcher, practitioner and woman to consider "What might be experienced if the bridge is built between these two worlds?" (Reynolds 2012:58). The participants in this study came together as allies to share their experiences of being subjected to childhood sexual abuse across the multiple dimensions of their positioning. They did this because they wanted to raise an issue that has been silenced in their communities for too long. They did this through a vessel, myself as the researcher, in whom they had trust, which was established through our shared experience of being ethnic women subjected to CSA. We collaborated around a particular set of ethics in relation to CSA; hence this study was undertaken as a matter of social justice and to do social justice one requires a theoretical paradigm on which to stand. Feminism provides the platform from which both similarity and difference can be celebrated as women.

Feminism is best positioned to support collective ethics about CSA as it provides a connection that weaves women from all cultural groups together. But this connection does not have to be perfect (Reynolds 2011b:4). If I had not identified my political position throughout this thesis, one would assume me neutral and non-political. I am not and this was made transparent not only throughout my written work but also in my interactions and relationships with the women. This is important because through invisibility I am more than likely to replicate acts of power over others or replicate status quo agendas (Reynolds 2008:5). By being explicit in my positioning I was able to find and build a sense of common ground regarding the issue of CSA (Bracho 2000 cited in Reynolds 2011b:4). This thesis is but one example of women from diverse backgrounds coming together because of a shared ethics and concern about the issue of CSA. This has brought alive an "intimacy that does not annihilate difference" (Palmer 2003 cited in Reynolds 2011b:4) but provides a powerful political position for social action.

I acknowledge there is no innocent position (Reynolds 2010). I am a woman, ethnic, heterosexual, working-class, educated, white-skinned CSA survivor. These multiple positions make transparent both my privilege and oppression (Reynolds 2010). Through making visible this location I made my privilege known from the beginning of this study and included myself as a participant as an act of accountability for my access to power and as a beginning place for trust to grow (Reynolds 2011a:3), which it did. This thesis is also an example of ally positioning. Reynolds (2010) has argued that ally positioning must always attend to the fluid positioning described above within the same moment within the same conversations. An ally position is not fixed; it is fluid and based on the different domains of our identity and the access to power we hold in relation to that domain (Reynolds 2011a:1). Ally work means we attend to the presence of power both between us and around us, back each other up and be in groundless solidarity with each other across the differences that divide us (Reynolds 2010).

Future practice and research that aims to centralise gender similarity requires a feminist collective ethics and ally positioning. To work alongside women in all their diversity where power and privilege is ever present, becoming allies with collective ethics and groundless solidarity provides a pathway on which to walk together. Groundless solidarity means one's ethics are not always tied to one site of oppression. No one site of oppression is the organising principle of all oppression in all locations (Reynolds 2010). Rather, the intersections and the gaps between these need attention and complex analysis (Reynolds 2010). Through this type of work we weave together (Shira & Meis 1993 cited in Reynolds 2011a:4) gender, culture and ethnicity to examine problems such as CSA. This does not mean that the other sites are not equally valid or that they do not require attention. It just means that at this moment in this discussion we are attending to CSA. In this study CSA is the space where ethnic women have been able to speak about the impact of cultural patriarchies. Their words matter and should not be dismissed (Reynolds 2010).

In this study, the participants accepted me as an ally because there was trust. Trust may not always be possible, but such imperfect alliances are necessary because the cost of inaction is so great (Reynolds 2010, Reynolds 2011a). As allies we are imperfect and this fluidity enables alliances that are based in moments, are flawed yet required and useful (Reynolds 2010, Reynolds 2011a). Such imperfect alliances can bring trust and

solidarity and enable accountable relationships to grow (Reynolds 2010, Reynolds 2011a).

In conclusion, as a researcher and activist I know we learn on the backs of others (Reynolds 2010) and so it is here in this thesis where I have marked my position as a researcher but also as a participant to share the burden with other women in naming CSA in our communities. In this study, the researcher as an impersonal, objective 'knower' has fallen away. What is left is me, a woman with a particular place in society, with particular passion and particular political motives (Smith 1979 cited in Ramazanoglu 1989:52). In my writing I ask the question, this is what I see, can you see it too? In this gesture there is a hope. It is my hope that in identifying the similarity between women who have been subjected to CSA I have exposed cultural patriarchies, and shown women's agency and choice in the resistance of harmful cultural practices. In this space researchers can begin to collaborate and work together across communities, providing knowledge, support and activism in the area of CSA. It is only through working together despite our differences that we can make a positive contribution towards eliminating the sexual exploitation and abuse of girls across the world.

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# Appendices

# Appendix A LETTER TO ORGANISATIONS FOR RECRUITMENT

University of South Australia
School of Social Work and Social Science
Amy Wheaton Building
St Bernard's Rd
Magill 5688
South Australia

**Project Title:** What's culture got to do with it? How does ethnicity and culture frame women's understanding and experience of CSA?
**Researcher's Name:** Tanja Stojadinovic
**Supervisors' Names:** Dr Nicole Moulding & Dr Sarah Wendt

Dear

I am writing to inform you of a study that is being conducted through the University of South Australia as part of my PhD thesis.

This research is looking at the impact of childhood sexual abuse on women from different ethnic backgrounds and gives women the opportunity to speak about these issues in a way that includes their ethnic identity and cultural understandings about trauma and abuse.

I understand that you work with many different ethnic groups and would like to invite you to place a flyer about this research in your rooms and or refer people whom you think might be interested in this research to speak with me.

If you are interested I am also available to come and speak with you, other workers or community members about the research. Further once the research has been completed I will be more than happy to come back and present the research findings to your staff and community.

Participation in this research is voluntary and participants are able to withdraw at any time. Participants will be required to participate in 2 face to face interviews and be provided with a journal in which they will be able to write or draw their thoughts and feelings about the interview process and participation in the research. Participants are able to write or draw in the journal in their preferred language or whatever way they would like to express themselves. The interviews will take place in a secure venue in the

state that participants live. All participants will have the ability to choose if they require an interpreter and whether this interpreter will be used face to face or via telephone.

As this research is currently before an ethics committee I would appreciate it if you could send me a letter or email letting me know whether you are able to support this project with recruitment. In addition if you would like a copy of the ethics proposal I would be happy to forward it to you. I would welcome any inquiry about this research project and would encourage you to contact me on 0422813169 or email STOTY003@students.unisa.edu.au

Looking forward to hearing from you

Regards
Tanja Stojadinovic.

# Appendix B RESEARCH FLYER

**WHAT'S CULTURE GOT TO DO WITH IT?**



The impact of ethnic identity on the effects of unwanted sexual experiences during childhood

- Do you come from a different ethnic group or culture?
- Have you had an unwanted sexual experience as a child?
- Would you like to share your knowledge and experience about your culture and your experience with someone?
- Are you over 18 years old?

If you have answered yes to these questions you may be interested in participating in a research project that is designed to understand the impact of unwanted sexual experiences during childhood on women who come from different ethnic backgrounds.

If you would like more information on this research project or would like to find out how to participate please contact the researcher Tanja Stojadinovic on 0422813169 or STOTY003@students.unisa.edu.au.

Participation in this research is voluntary and strictly confidential. Whether you participate or not will not affect your care in this organisation. Interviews with participants will be conducted in their chosen language (if requested) and at a time and venue suitable to the participants.

This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee

# Appendix C INTERPRETER CONSENT FORM

**Project Title:** What's Culture got to do with it? The impact of ethnic identity on the effects of unwanted sexual experience during childhood

**Researcher's name:** Tanja Stojadinovic

**Supervisors' names:** Dr Nicole Moulding & Dr Sarah Wendt

- I understand that I will be audio taped/videotaped during the study because I am providing interpreting services for the purpose of the research.
- I understand that I am required to keep the information I am translating confidential.
- I understand that my participation in the study is only to provide translation and I will not benefit from providing this service in anyway.

Name of interpreter

Signed

Dated

Researcher's signature and date

This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee

# Appendix D INTERPRETER CONFIDENTIALITY FORM

**Project Title:** What's Culture got to do with it? The impact of ethnic identity on the effects of unwanted sexual experience during childhood

**Researcher's name:** Tanja Stojadinovic

**Supervisors' names:** Dr Nicole Moulding & Dr Sarah Wendt

I, _____, as an interpreter, will be permitted to have access to client information in order to perform interpretation and translation work related to the participant in this research project.

I agree to keep all information that I learn about the participant in this research confidential. I understand that I may not discuss or disclose any information related to any participant to anyone outside the research setting. I further understand that I may learn personal information about a participant and/or his or her family that is private. I understand that it is my duty and responsibility to preserve and protect this privacy and confidentiality. I understand that this duty will extend after I am no longer interpreting for this participant in this research project. This includes the fact that this person participated in this research. Both state and federal laws protect the confidentiality of participants. By placing my signature below, I hereby indicate that I understand and agree to maintain the privacy of the participant(s)' personal information disclosed during the interview.

Name of interpreter

Signed

Organisation interpreter works for

Dated

Researcher's signature and date

This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee

# Appendix E INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

**Pre-interview questions:**

1. Do you require an interpreter?
2. What is your language group?
3. What is your age?
4. What is your state?
5. Sibling status. i.e. what number child are you in the family?
6. Responding to any questions that participants had of me
7. Information about the journal provided to participants.
8. Set up of interview 1. Time and location.

**Interview 1: Ethnicity**

1. What is your ethnic background or nationality?
2. Tell me a little bit about your culture.
3. How important is your ethnicity to how you understand yourself as a person?
4. What are some of the ideas about blame in your ethnic group/community?
5. What's the role of women/men in your ethnic group?
6. How is sex viewed in your ethnic group?
7. How are children viewed in your ethnic group?
8. How has your ethnicity shaped the way you understand sexuality?
9. How is sexual abuse viewed in your ethnic group/community?
10. Is there anything else you would like to add about your ethnicity/community?
11. Set up of interview 2. Time and location.

**Interview 2: CSA**

1. I will now be asking you some questions about the abuse. Do you still want to continue?
2. Tell me about the sexual abuse you were subjected to as a child.
3. Did you ever tell anyone?
4. What was their response to your disclosure?
5. Have you ever accessed support/therapy for the effects of the abuse?
6. How was that?
7. Do you think your culture/ethnicity provided you with any emotional strengths/weaknesses in dealing with the abuse?
8. Do you think the sexual abuse has affected the way in which you view your culture?

9. Do you think the sexual abuse has affected the way in which your identity has developed? Has this been influenced in any way by your ethnicity?
10. Anything you would like to add.
11. Discussion about journal and when participant will submit journal.

**Questions developed through the interview phase**

1. Why did you remain silent?
2. Were you taught about menstruation?
3. Were you taught about sex education?
4. How is pregnancy, birth and lactation understood within your ethnic group?
5. What are the ethnic group's understandings about sexual activity for women and men and what are the expectations within the ethnic group in relation to this?
6. Does a woman's virginity have any significance in the ethnic group? If yes why? If no why?

# Appendix F JOURNAL INSTRUCTIONS

Dear Participant

As well as being interviewed for this research, you will be asked to keep a journal. You can use the journal to write your thoughts and feelings down about how you felt when sharing your stories about your ethnic identity and unwanted sexual experiences as a child with me. Please express yourself through words, poetry, drawing and any other ways that you are comfortable with.

For example, when using your journal reflect on whether participating in the research made you consider your experiences differently: was it difficult for you to talk about your experiences or was it helpful? Do you think talking about your experiences helped or hindered your self-awareness? What was it like talking about yourself during this research? What were your interactions like with me?

Once we have finished our time together I would like to take the journal back so that I can read it to help me answer my questions about ethnic identity and unwanted sexual experiences during childhood. If you would like me to return the journal, I would be happy to do this, but you must let me know and it is important to think about how you will keep your journal safe.

If you have any further questions please feel free to contact me on 0412813169.

This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee

# Appendix G INFORMATION SHEET

University of South Australia
School of Social Work and Social Science
Amy Wheaton Building
St Bernard's Rd
Magill 5688
South Australia

**Project Title:** What's Culture got to do with it? The impact of ethnic identity on the effects of unwanted sexual experiences during childhood

**Researcher's Name:** Tanja Stojadinovic

**Supervisors' Names:**



| | |
|---|---|
| Dr Sarah Wendt, PhD, BSW-Hons, BA<br>School of Social Work and Social Policy<br>University of South Australia<br>St Bernards, Rd<br>Magill, 5072, South Australia<br>Ph: 0402124074 or 08 83024347<br>Email: sarah.wendt@unisa.edu.au | Dr Nicole Moulding, BSW, GDPH, PhD<br>Senior Lecturer<br>Research Degrees Coordinator, BSW Honours Coordinator<br>School of Social Work & Social Policy<br>University of South Australia<br>Magill Campus<br>Ph: (08) 8302 4314<br>E-mail: nicole.moulding@unisa.edu.au |



**PURPOSE**
I would like to invite you to participate in a research study. Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. All you need to do is tell me and it doesn't matter if it's before, during or after the interview.

The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of unwanted sexual experience during childhood on women from different ethnic backgrounds. I want to talk to women from different ethnic backgrounds that have had unwanted sexual experiences during childhood currently living in Australia.

If you are over 18 years and would like to participate but feel that you're English is not strong enough you can ask for an interpreter to assist you. All you have to do is tell me.

**WHAT IS REQUIRED OF YOU**

You will be asked to participate in 2 face to face interviews where I will ask you about your ethnic identity and experiences of unwanted sexual contact as a child. This means that you will be interviewed by me and that interview will be audio taped with your permission. You will also be asked to use a journal to write your thoughts and feelings about participating in the research. The interviews will take place in a secure setting in the state that you live.

The personal nature of the topic may be upsetting to some participants. If this occurs the researcher will be available to speak with you and will provide you with a list of counsellors and agencies that may be able to assist you.

After the interview you will have the opportunity to check the written transcript of your interview and to delete information you are not comfortable with being published. All of the information collected as part of this study is strictly confidential and any identifying information will be deleted and/or altered prior to publishing. The interview data will be securely retained for five years and stored at the University of South Australia, Magill Campus, School of Social Work and Social Policy, School Office. Only the researcher and supervisors will have access to this information during the study.

Researchers are ethically required to inform you that they will maintain participant confidentiality and anonymity unless there are court proceedings which require disclosure that relates to illegal activity which may be reported during the interview. The researcher will fully explain this requirement prior to the interview being undertaken.

**WHAT WILL IT BE USED FOR**

This research will be reported in a PhD thesis and scholarly articles. A copy of the thesis can be obtained from the Magill Campus Library, University of South Australia. Findings of the research will be made available to all participants. A request for this must be made directly to the researcher prior to the completion of the study.

For further information on participating in this research project please contact the researcher Tanja Stojadinovic on 0422813169 or email STOTY003@students.unisa.edu.au.

Your time is greatly appreciated
Tanja Stojadinovic

This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee, ethics protocol No. P093/09. If you have any ethical concerns about the project or questions about your rights as a participant please contact the Executive Officer of this Committee, Tel: +618 8302 3118; Email: Vicki.allen@unisa.edu.au.

# Appendix H PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

**Project Title:** What's Culture got to do with it? The impact of ethnic identity on the effects of unwanted sexual experience during childhood

**Researcher's name:** Tanja Stojadinovic

**Supervisors' names:** Dr Nicole Moulding & Dr Sarah Wendt

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet, and the nature and the purpose of the research project have been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand that I may not directly benefit from taking part in the project.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I confirm that I am over 18 years of age.
- I understand that I will be audio taped / videotaped during the study and I will be required to write in a journal which will be given to the researcher upon completion of the study.
- I understand that the tape will be stored at the University of South Australia Magill Campus for a period of 5 years in a secure facility. Only the researcher and supervisors will have access to the recorded material.
- I require an interpreter to be present for the interviews. I consent to an interpreter being present in the room during the interview or over the phone.

Name of participant:

Signed:

Dated:

I have explained the study to the subject and consider that he/she understands what is involved.

Researcher's signature and date:

This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee

## Appendix I THEMATIC MAP

