



# Gandhi Nivas

Serving our families

**Experiencing change: An affective ethics of care supporting men bound by Police Safety Orders**

**Technical Report**

**Men's narratives of care in early intervention services**



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## Overview

The current report presents a selection of fragments from men's remembered stories of change processes as they engaged with Gandhi Nivas, with our analysis. We engage with a theoretical praxis of research that attends to the men's felt movements as they talk with each other about interventions provided by Gandhi Nivas, and how they are feeling the changes in their lives. The narratives are fragments of fieldnotes and interview transcripts, collated in a process of engaging with the men about their experiences by Matthew, the first author. The overview provides descriptions of the narrative fragments from the report, attending to the felt memories of the men participating.

The men tell Matthew, and each other, many stories, among them:

He lives by himself and he drinks. He's waking up to the real world, every morning facing what he has done the night before. He's numb with alcohol.

Some of the home visits don't garner much engagement, but conversations where something is *happening* break the boredom of a day feeling purposeless. He wonders about the images of men from which they aspire to change and how their encounters with each other at the whare enable them to imagine themselves differently in the future.

He comes back to talk over and over. He feels a fruitfulness. Talking about changing is moving him. Good things are coming his way.

Handover feels like an intensive sharing that creates a productive awareness that does not depend on description. What kind of differences does it make to the day ahead if it feels like carefully processing a critical event as it is lived here and now?

He's puzzling. He doesn't speak. He doesn't know. They go to the hospital. Nothing is discussed. He's puzzled. The whare is quiet. Then the men open up with one counsellor and he seems to be doing without thinking. It's puzzling when the experience is difficult to story.

He feels welcomed to a togetherness that isn't familiar since he thinks of the encounter as an interview. Food is offered, transport as needed. The men talk relationships, sometimes teasingly. Newness is introduced, differences gather. He wants to rethink how men experience their lives with tears and laughter. He explains himself. He is asked about his hopes. We notice how strange the welcome feels to him, and the offering of all he needs to articulate his hopes. We wonder how often men coming to the whare feel this strangeness: a welcome and care for their needs when they arrive. It probably isn't what they're expecting from the whare when they arrive, escorted by police. He feels sustained, remembering humour and compassion. We hope.

He doesn't trust anyone or ask for help. He talks of feeling shy, closed off. It's hard to say he has needs. He feels vulnerable. He trusts in counselling because others he's encountered just look down at his paperwork. The counsellor talks with him. In the whare they actually have communication. He is used to "getting over" his feelings. There are times when you need to get over "getting over it" and say how you feel. He is trusting, becoming vulnerable in the flow of care with his counsellor and other men in the whare. We wonder about his new possibilities for action from a place of trust and vulnerability as we bear witness to his remembered process of talking of his feelings. He is getting over "getting over it".

The men are his neighbours and they're sharing a beer while they're discussing the research he wants to do. They are talking about the experiences of men and violence, and how the conditions of men's lives need to be addressed. They are talking about professions in which the exclusion of men who use violence from becoming practitioners means that practitioners lack lived experiences. He recognises the binary category of victim/perpetrator that informs the exclusion and also the felt memories as being both included and misrecognised. He tells a story of his own experiences of violence, or stories, and opens a space to resist the stereotypical images of victimisation and perpetration while also

bringing feelings into a conversation, over a beer, with neighbours. Renarrativising memories of felt experiences with men becomes a methodological strategy for his research.

The whare is full of movement and he wonders how the practitioner sustains the constant motion and what the movement sustains. The man she is helping feels anxious and has been awake and wandering, she explains that this is unlike him. So the men go to the General Practitioner (GP) by car. He doesn't say anything but he does make a sound, sounds like groaning that feel as if he is making a connection with the other man. He's puzzling, uncomfortable and the circumstances are unfamiliar. He's puzzled as to how to respond. When left on his own while his appointment is checked, he disappears. When he reappears the women who work in the GP office are helpful about locating where they should go. He disappears again. It's troubling but he needs to be found. He's in a bar but he hasn't had a drink. The man who has found him now calls the practitioner and the man agrees to go back to the whare. He hasn't seen the GP. He seems to sleep, wakefully, in the car. Back at the whare he goes to his bedroom while the other man talks with the practitioner, whose arranged for some men in his family to take him to the GP. They arrive and confirm that he is behaving strangely and would not usually go out by himself. He doesn't know how to care for himself. But he has disappeared from his bedroom, this time.

The men are cooking a meal at the whare for other men for the Men's Group. It's a big deal for them both. Preparations mean remembering who eats halal, and what's needed for such a diverse group. Meals matter at the whare, where men usually arrive with nothing. Eating together is something they can do, for themselves. Cooking a meal for the men is a big deal. An unknown number of men will be coming. They are nervous as one of them is worried that he'll ruin the cooking, and the meal for other men. He's excited too and wants to celebrate. He has health problems, so cooking is a challenge, as is moving around more generally. He's often on the edge of acute pain. There is a rhythm to the way he joins in cutting

vegetables. The other men arrive, brought from one of the other whares by three of the women practitioners. Even though it's the Men's Group, they join in to bear witness, they say. Someone says Grace and the men eat, talk and journey together. He wades in. It's a big deal for them both.

He's telling a story about how he was finding this guy at work really difficult and he was told off and he ended up punching a bus timetable and then someone ran over his bike. And his brother had started up again. It all come to a head with a fight at work, and he lost it. He says he's not proud of anything that happened, except his shiner. He got into the fight after spending a few days at Gandhi Nivas, because he wasn't handling things. He didn't want to go home where none of what happened would be understood, so he came to Gandhi Nivas. He just had two days to do whatever he wanted. It was a rest. And it changed things for his family, 'cause they laughed. He was greeted by a big smile from his wife because she kind of understood. She knew because he had a black eye. It explained something for her, brought it back full circle. He's got some understanding himself now from the conversations he was having with another man who understood him. He calls it a "man conversation". He participates now because he wants it to mean something. Man conversations show that men care, and they take time. You can't just be fitting them in.

He's talking with the other man about counselling and thinking about that moment. The counsellors ask questions and with each one he shares his story anew, sharing a different thing about the events that brought him to Gandhi Nivas. He feels like he's been allowed to return to that moment and untangle himself. Calmly and steadily, they were explaining to him, so he could understand the entanglements remembered as a moment when violence erupts.

Jack always arrives early for the Men's Group because he likes to debrief his week first, like a practice run. Tonight, he seems on edge but as soon as he arrives, Seve turns up, excited for the group after counselling and

other appointments. He's lost custody of his kids and only has supervised access and he's been mandated to better manage his anger. He shares his week excitedly with the two men who are there. It's only his second time at the Men's Group but he feels supported so he has returned. Jack is thankful. He shares Seve's appreciation of the whare, the practitioners, the other men. Tonight, he has brought bags of DVDs and a console to donate to the whare to say thanks for the care, support and compassion he feels there, and nowhere else. Jack knows that men arrive at the whare with limited means for entertaining themselves and he wants the DVDs to give them a chance to enjoy themselves. He wants his donation to be fruitful, and shared so it belongs to everyone and no-one. The whare is fruitful for Jack, reminding him "what's important". He says he doesn't need the DVDs himself anymore. He's not needing to fill in hours on his own while he's waiting to do something. He's never going to watch them all now he's figured out that it is limiting to demand influence over the family's daily life because he's the breadwinner. He's given up "calling the shots" and his time busy doing things he hopes care for his family. He's busy creating the conditions for his family to thrive with new-found capacities to respond and relate with them. Now his family seek him out for his support rather than fearing him. It's never happened before. Changes, Jack says, are his whānau experiences, not his alone. Seve feels hopeful as he hears Jack's stories. As he's shared his stories with other men in the Men's Group, he's begun thinking that he needs to shift his thinking so that work is not a burden. If work means burden, then he is burdened by his son's and stepson's needs for safety and well-being. This is not what he wants. He wants to think about his children's wellbeing as worth working towards. He wants to care, differently. Counselling is supporting him to become the dad he wants to be, not one who hurts and scares them in the name of guarding their wellbeing. The men keep talking, travelling together to another whare, sharing their stories. As they settle in another familiar place, another man appears, welcomed by the laughter the men are now sharing.



He's talking with another man about how, these days, he talks about his life with other men without worrying. He's putting himself out there, because it's good to share his experiences, some good and a lot of bad. He shares whatever comes into his head, whether it's something he remembers from years ago or something that just happened. He shares a story of working on his hands and knees in a bullying workplace, and how he doesn't forget. He says sharing is beneficial for him because he's able to relive the events and "roll over on that part" of his history. It's stressful to try and forget, but if he shares then it gives him a chance to get used to his past. He has to adapt to it to make it easier to move forward. And it's like standing in the rain, you won't adapt if you run back inside as soon as it starts spitting. You need to stand in it.

He reflects on how interventions can help you prepare, predict and learn, but it amounts to zero at the time if you're triggered and stressed. He's talking about himself and the things that "add up" for him. He feels like it's impossible to prepare because it all depends on how it feels at the time. Like when his mother died and he didn't cry, he didn't feel like she had really passed. It became something he *felt* for real when he spoke at her funeral. He puzzled over why he didn't feel it at the time. It's the same kind of thing with family violence, because you feel the wrongness after it's happened. It's not straightforward. He knows people think he could've walked away but it's complex, it's not like that.

He's not sure what's expected of him and puzzling about his inability to connect, tonight. Hanging out with some other men, they just talk about events they remember from their past, things happening now, and possibilities for their futures. The men he is with have spent a lot of time together in recent days, and they're appreciating Gandhi Nivas. They hadn't expected to find safety and possibilities for changing at a place the police brought them after picking them up for family violence and in the company of other men. One of the men is quick to laughter, digressing often and then apologising. It's hard work to talk to him and he doesn't always make sense. They keep listening and he notices that the other man

is coming alive with the unpredictability of the conversation. The other man is having fun, while he bears a puzzled witness. Still there is a coming together as the men talk, a sense of co-mingling and he has a glimpse of the other man's patience with all the digressions and nonsense and a glow he can follow as he joins with the men. He wonders if this is how the man who digresses follows their conversation, by following their glow, connecting with the sense of them and how they're responding to him, not with the stories they are telling. Patience then, isn't a possession bestowed on another to "deal" with them. Patience emerges as felt experience from the conditions of talking together for hours. He's trying to make sense of this, to theorise his experience, wondering about his own feelings of boredom, frustration, and the limits of his understanding. Then they eat together and still the company feels warm, the men gracious and polite. A practitioner passing by shares a question and it becomes clear that the patient man has expectations of his family's gratitude that are problematic. What possibilities are there, now, that he has felt patience emerge in where tonight? What might come of his relationships with his children?

Glancing back into the where where the other men are gathered, he says, "We create new, unpredictable opportunities, when we travel together in processes of change".

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## Research Timeline and Major Events

03 March 2020	First Meeting with Sahaayta
25 March 2020 14 May 2020	New Zealand Nation-wide Lockdown Social Distancing Restrictions Lifted
26 May 2020	First Visit to Gandhi Nivas Whare (Ōtāhuhu)
21 April 2021	First Interview (Wiremu-Ōtāhuhu)
21 April 2021	Second Interview (Cameron-Ōtāhuhu)
29 April 2021	Third Interview (Josh-Papakura)
15 May 2021	Fourth Interview (Robert-Ōtāhuhu)
18 May 2021	Fifth Interview (Ansh-Ōtāhuhu)
20 May 2021	First Men's Group (Ōtāhuhu)
29 May 2021	Sixth Interview (Sunil-Te Atatū)
29 May 2021	Seventh Interview (Talan-Papakura)
4 June 2021	Eighth Interview (Jack-Te Atatū)
16 July 2021	Ninth Interview (Kingi-Papakura)
23 July 2021	Tenth Interview (Nīkau-Ōtāhuhu)
17 August 2021 3 December 2021	New Zealand Nation-wide Lockdown Auckland-specific Restrictions Lifted
15 December 2021	Eleventh Interview (Doug-Ōtāhuhu)
17 December 2021	Twelfth Interview (Jack-Te Atatū)
5 April 2023	Thirteenth Interview (Jack-Te Atatū)
13 April 2023	Fourteenth Interview (Jack-Papakura)
23 April 2023	Fifteenth Interview (Jack-Te Atatū)

## Working with Men who are Violent in the Home

Family violence continues to be a harsh reality for many families, whānau and communities across Aotearoa New Zealand. Despite years of legislative efforts, policy actions, and public campaigns, Aotearoa New Zealand continues having one of the highest rates of family violence in the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023). The primary aim of this report is to promulgate *new* possibilities for the violence prevention sector by linking theory and community practices that are at the forefront of current efforts to reduce violence perpetrated by men against women and children. By providing an analysis of fieldwork experiences, 1:1 interviews, and a weekly men's group that the first author (Matthew) undertook as part of a collaborative research project in partnership with Gandhi Nivas and men accessing Gandhi Nivas for support, our hope is that by privileging the everyday social worlds, of *both* the researchers of this report *as well as* the participants in Matthew's research, networks of *felt* memories become capable of tracing our experiences of change as we work together.

As an entry point into understanding the current research, this report is about men becoming responsive to the New Zealand Family Violence Death Review Committee's Sixth Report (FVDRC) (2020). The FVDRC report takes issue with individualistic interventions and attends to gaps in how we address family and sexual violence, by highlighting a need for services within the violence prevention sector that are less *plug and play*. That is, rather than a matter of (*re*)*socialising* men by teaching *relationship skills* through *cognitive* interventions overtly *challenging* misogynistic and patriarchal *attitudes* and *beliefs* present in daily life, or through *surveillance-oriented* approaches to managing men's *risky bodies* and the harm they cause, we note the report asks a question: how do we *empower* men's *change processes*? In response, Matthew's research and our report advocates for an agenda of keeping victims safe with community-centred engagement models empowering change through an ethics of care for the politics of men's everyday lives. In other words, we recognise the diversity of men's experiences and anticipate complexity in their lifeworlds, and seek to support men, and their families, with pathways of change with respect for and in relation to their cultural, gendered, socio-economic, and religious experiences of the world.

With a community-led engagement model premised on an ethics of caring for the politics of men's social worlds, Gandhi Nivas offers opportunities to rethink violence prevention

work by offering men emergency accommodation at three locations in the Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland suburbs of Te Atatū, Ōtāhuhu, and Papakura. More than just an emergency accommodation provider, though, Gandhi Nivas appreciates the unequal access to material, financial, and social resources in times of crisis can have severe and lasting consequences for men, their loved ones, and their communities of belonging as well. In recognition of this, Gandhi Nivas often refers to the emergency accommodation as *whare*, or homes where men can obtain material support in the form of clothing and food, access to individual and whānau-centred counselling and holistic wellbeing sessions, culturally responsive anger management groups, and links to budgeting support, migration advisors, and legal services. A culturally-specific concept inclusive of Māori worldviews and communal ways of living, the term *whare* sustains the dignity and mana of men voluntarily accessing violence prevention services in community settings by affirming and privileging the homes as places of learning, healing, respite, and care for one's self and others.

We note, though, Gandhi Nivas does not empower change by encouraging and supporting more idealised versions of men, nor by men adopting more socially acceptable masculine practices or habits whilst at the *whare*. As creative spaces where men's understandings of social norms and practices can be safely challenged, the *whare*, in our experience, provide spaces where caring for the politics of men's lives enables them to bring to the fore legal, political, and cultural forces as conditions that shape the men's understanding of themselves and the situation that brought them to Gandhi Nivas. This includes men's encounters with police, who are acting to protect the men's families and improve safety in their communities by investigating reports of family violence, as well as their wider social community.

In our ethnographic experience, Gandhi Nivas empowers change by creating spaces, where taken for granted social forces are disrupted, enabling men to experiment with *alternative* modes of relation with other men and practitioners, as well as their whānau and their local communities, *without judgement* – but with *opportunities for accountability*. Men are empowered to explore their understandings of change through the knowledge, support and wisdom of their whānau, cultures, and the communities with whom they identify, which serve as sources of strength to support self-led strategies of transformational social change. The creative possibilities of spaces where it is possible for men to encounter new

ways of relating to each other, practitioners and their families produce conditions where violence is less possible, reduced, and mitigated, for both men and their families.

Leveraging Matthew's professional expertise working with men and boys with histories of violence within the criminal justice and health sectors, our research focuses on developing new engagement practices with men with the goal of better understanding change processes. The project entailed an uncertain "plan" for Matthew to become embedded within Gandhi Nivas, given the organisation's support for men subject to Police Safety Orders (PSOs). PSOs are a discretionary tool for Aotearoa New Zealand law enforcement providing short term protection for those most at risk of violence, whilst ostensibly offering pathways of change for men *prior* to the involvement of the criminal justice system. An alternative to arrest, PSOs remove the perpetrator from the scene, typically a home or other dwelling the respondent shares with the possible victim(s) and prohibits their return for up to 10 days. Specifically referred to as a *bound person*, individuals subject to a PSO are also subject to a number of protective measures intended to keep possible victims(s) safe, namely that a bound person "cannot assault, harass, threaten, stalk or intimidate the protected person, or go near any land or building that they occupy" (New Zealand Police, 2023).

As a 24 hour service operating 7 days a week and 365 days a year, the practitioners who work in the homes are actively engaged in the everyday processes and organisation of the care provided for men and their families. Nearly all staff operating the homes are trained social workers, mental health counsellors, or substance misuse counsellors. This becomes important as men are offered an immediate needs assessment, counselling interventions, and social support *on arrival* at the home, as well as throughout their stay and as part of longer-term counselling after their PSO or bail conditions expire. Although the majority of men are referred to Gandhi Nivas and transported to the homes by police officers responding to a family harm incident, not all resident men are subject to PSOs. Some men are on bail conditions while others self-refer, or are referred through other community agencies – all are accommodated and provided services. This means, in practice, Gandhi Nivas offers services to men *separate to* as well as *beyond the duration of* a PSO, or when bound men *might otherwise stop* using their services, as men sometimes return to Gandhi Nivas, on multiple occasions, for accommodation, social support, non-violence programmes, and culturally sensitive counselling services. Adding to the complexity of the

social circumstances of men residing at the whare, it is also the case that some men do not stay and choose not to engage with services that are ongoing (Coombes et al., 2024; Morgan & Coombes, 2016; Morgan et al, 2024).

Furthermore, as a significant proportion of staff come from the same migrant communities and cultural backgrounds as the men they support, staff also support men and their families not only with safety planning but also by acting as translators, by liaising with statutory government organisations such as Work and Income New Zealand or the Department of Corrections, and by making referrals to medical and mental health care providers. Staff offer transportation to family group conferences in relation to their child care responsibilities and custody rights as parents, as well as putting men in contact with informal migrant support organisations in their respective communities, such as ethnic community centres and places of worship, that help men and their whānau access food parcels, budgeting advice, and migrant legal services. This enables a service delivery model with professional practices created, developed and implemented by staff members familiar with the complex challenges many families experience within the culturally-diverse communities of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. They are also professionals embedded in networks of services within their professional relationships, so support is underpinned by relationships among professional practitioners as well.

Part of a longer-term cross-sector working relationship between community, philanthropic, and government stake-holder organisations, Gandhi Nivas provides a community-led service where men may become enmeshed within culturally-responsive therapeutic supports. Men who engage with services will be heard by staff with care and understanding for their experiences and interpretations of their use of violence. Hearing the men's accounts with care and compassion begins change processes that pay attention to the men's cultural and gendered contexts, including, for many, their status as immigrants living within diasporic communities in a multicultural urban environment.

At times emerging from Matthew and his co-researchers' different experiences as bystanders, witnesses, facilitators and participants to men's change processes, this report is crafted with a mosaic of selected field notes, interview transcripts and self-reflexive narrative accounts of events chosen to illustrate the experiences of the criminal justice and violence prevention sectors that are connected with participants' self-reported experiences



of change. Our approach to including multiple methods to gather men's stories allowed the men accessing Gandhi Nivas to become part of, and participate in, a collaborative, multi-year and multi-report programme of research between the wider research team, Gandhi Nivas, and Police. Together, we, the researchers, reflexively and collaboratively analyse experiences of bearing witness to *both* men's capacities for *violence* and *non-violence*, within men's social worlds. From our different relationships with research, praxis and activism focusing on safety, non-violence and care, we recognise that the men who engaged with Gandhi Nivas and collaborated with Matthew are diverse in the conditions and events of their lives. We value each man's life as a world which, together with his partner's parents', children's lives, creates a universe of feeling and action in which they experience, together and differently, affections and commitments, expectations and betrayals, fear, anger, and love within the ebbs and flows of everyday life.

By conditions of men's lives we mean the precarity, discrimination, exploitation, patriarchal privilege and authority that men and women who have engaged with Sahaayta Counselling and Social Support (who provide the services within the Gandhi Nivas homes) have already spoken with us about in previous research with Gandhi Nivas and Sahaayta (Coombes et al., 2020/2024; Coombes et al., 2024; Mattson et al., 2020). These have become conditions in which men's, women's and children's lives erupt in moments of violence that are attended by New Zealand Police as family violence investigations, resulting in the men's referrals to Gandhi Nivas. Such moments are memorable events that are felt and interpreted differently by all those involved, yet none-the-less become memorable because of the social processes that are enacted when violence interventions come into force. By focusing on social conditions and the felt experiences of men who engage in change processes, the mosaic of narratives we present in our report shifts attention away from changing men's cognition and behaviour to focus on possibilities for change through interventions that enable care to flow in the everyday work of practitioners for change (Buckingham et al., 2022; Coombes et al., 2024; Mattson et al., 2020).

Our analysis attends to the conditions that both men and professionals in the violence prevention sector experience and how change processes are felt and interpreted. The narratives we include here, we hope, will help produce understandings of change that take account of the social forces the men, their families and the services supporting them experience as they engage in processes aiming to enable lives free of violence. To take an

approach to collaborative research that analyses stories from multiple perspectives and focuses on social processes and felt experiences, requires thinking differently about how conditions, events and experiences that men remember and story during their collaboration in research enable us to keep men's change processes in sight. We need to think in new ways about our own change processes as we are collaborating together, and with others in our team, so that we are always thinking with each other and remembering the felt experiences we bring to the interpretations of narrative experiences we shared with men and women, practitioners, and police during our programme of research with Gandhi Nivas. We are experimenting with a mosaic of narratives retold to acknowledge and dignify the change processes in which we are all involved as a consequence of our engagement with Gandhi Nivas, Sahaayta and the different stakeholders in violence intervention with whom we have collaborated. Rather than surveilling or disciplining men as if they are risky bodies, our experiment with narratives of felt change keeps both *men's* and *our* processes of change *in sight*. The narratives included in this research, as well as untold narratives that, for one reason or another, are left out of the report, offer a new set of ethical possibilities by opening up what we, as researchers and practitioners, experience, as we encounter the fluxes and flows men experience in becoming stuck and unstuck in change processes.

This is not a straightforward task.

There are sticky networks of remembered feelings to navigate as we try to think with the men's change processes while keeping ourselves in sight too. There are important processes of memory selection, field note and interview evidence, collaborative discussions and narrative writing to consider alongside analyses of particular events in the conduct of a research project focusing on felt experiences of changing towards non-violence. We are mindful that our report is set in the social, political and cultural environments specific to South Auckland. The diversity of cultural, religious, and socio-political backdrops to South Auckland communities suggests the community resources and stakeholder complexities informing the work undertaken by Gandhi Nivas are unlikely to take the same form elsewhere in Aotearoa New Zealand. The spaces Matthew occupied within the organisation of Gandhi Nivas as he engaged in the research, were oftentimes ambiguous, fleetingly uncertain, and changeable, and only took form when Matthew was *called upon* to participate in activities, initiatives, meetings, and hui involving Gandhi Nivas,

the resident men, and other statutory and non-governmental organisations and entities. Emerging along an axis of advocacy, critique, and promotion of community-led violence prevention interventions, and the men accessing these services, transformative spaces often took shape as community-led efforts at challenging taken for granted assumptions about men, and the services available to them in the community. By enabling, fostering, and sustaining an unfamiliar sense of *political accountability* for the Police, government agencies, philanthropic bodies, community groups and non-profit organisations supporting community-focused violence prevention efforts, Gandhi Nivas has kept caring for specific needs of the community at the forefront of their advocacy and intervention for non-violence (Coombes et al., 2017).

Matthew's ambiguous and often uncertain place as a researcher enabled uncomfortable political locations for Matthew, locations oftentimes produced by engaging others about an ethics of care emerging between Gandhi Nivas, men, and other allied services within our local communities. Becoming accountable to Gandhi Nivas, and the men accessing Gandhi Nivas for support, often became a matter of *(re)producing* knowledge and professional practices *empowering* witness-able accounts of men's otherwise *un-seen* processes of change. In situations of accountability, where he was called upon to testify as to the *difference* an ethics of care makes possible within the violence prevention sector, *Matthew's* experiences of change whilst working with resident men accessing Gandhi Nivas for support became focal. *Advocacy* for both Gandhi Nivas and the men supported by Gandhi Nivas involved Matthew crafting entry points into men's experiences of *change* as *creative processes of transformation*. In this sense he approached his encounters with the men careful not to anticipate the stereotypes represented by *masculine social norms* and *dominant thinking on* violence and non-violence. He offers curiosity and interest in their lives, as do the practitioners who work with the men. He dignifies the men's accounts with his own felt responses, openly talking about feelings and violence with the men.

Retrospectively evoking the complexities of following change processes with the *felt movement* of men, this report follows Matthew's research as he engages with transforming the concept of *non-violence*. Most usually understood as an *absence* of violence, in our understanding, non-violence becomes more active: the process of *non-violencing* as embodying *alternative modes of relations* for men, between men, and between men and their loved ones, where violence is less possible, reduced, and mitigated. Whilst the

effects of non-violencing cannot be predicted, and we acknowledge that we were unable to follow up with men who participated in this report, we believe it is in men's own homes and through their relationships with their families that opportunities emerge to re-story *change* as men's embodiment of *variations* in affect. Therefore, engaging with an organisation such as Gandhi Nivas, which supports men within ethical frameworks of *care* for the *politics* of their lives, new possibilities emerge with research that privileges an analysis of felt experiences and processes men and their whānau engage as an effect of the care of Gandhi Nivas. In doing so, we acknowledge that all men participating in Matthew's research, as well as this report, have encountered Gandhi Nivas, and are thus experiencing *change* in ways individualised to each man. In this way, this report puts to work participant felt experiences of conditions and events as entry points to re-story experiences of change we cannot know – but feel. This enables us to attend to how different experiences of the conditions of our lives *act on* and *through* us, as researchers, academics, and professionals with decades of experience in the sector, with unpredictable, yet *empowering*, possibilities for men's daily life, as well as the lives for those that support them.

**((Men's Narrative))**

(C) I first started to live by myself (at the age of) 20? 21? 20? 21. 21 I think. 21 or 22...I can't even remember that man. Yeah, well, I stayed by myself and alcohol picked up really bad. I started drinking every day. I was still under mental health services and stuff like that. I found that, at that point in my life I was waking up to the real world. I was, you know, like, starting to realise, now that life's starting kicking in, you know, no matter what, you woke up the next...as long as you woke up that next day you know, you were always coming to terms with what you have done. Even though how much you numb it, you know, and have (drank) the night before, with, you know, work the next day, reality still gonna be there to greet you in the morning, you know, give you a handshake and say hey, life's still here, man, you know.

(M) It's a hard greeting in the morning.

(C) As long as you're living, it is a hard greeting, man, specially when, you know, that you're living that lifestyle. And you have to come to terms with everything, so you just adapt, and, you know, try make something work of yourself.

**(Cameron, Interview, 21 April 2021)**

## ***Retooling Psychological Analysis***

To *reflexively* (re)produce understandings of change that enable us to bear witness to variations in men's *ways of relating* with others, this report re-conceptualises participants and researchers as dynamically shaped by our social *conditions* and the *felt experiences* from which understandings of ourselves and our everyday lives emerge. Rather than assuming a Western and universal idea personhood, where *individuals* are assumed to have *autonomy* and *capacity* to take control over one's own *life*, we focus on specific, local experiences of social conditions and felt experiences to acknowledge the complexities of our shared social worlds. We are aiming to *keep in sight* men's relations with others, and their ways of understanding themselves and their worlds. Reflexively, we pay attention to where *we* become *stuck* by *thinking of* the men's everyday life through stereotypical or dominant normative perspectives that overlook the men's felt memories of events that they experience, providing a multiplicity of possible ways to narrate our experiences of change and difference.

For instance, the fragment of fieldnote we collected from Cameron's interview illustrates an account of alcohol dependence as a condition in which a man may live his relationships with others in ways that account for him perpetrating violence. From our earliest research with Gandhi Nivas, we have consistently been made aware of the ways in which alcohol and other drug dependencies are well recognised among practitioners and commonly experienced by their clients (Buckingham et al., 2022; Coombes et al., 2024; Morgan & Coombes, 2016; Mattson et al., 2020). Excess alcohol consumption provides a commonsense account of lowered inhibitions in which frustrations or anger are more likely to be expressed through violent responses to others. Acknowledging substance misuse, in this sense, becomes an opportunity for a man to let others know that they are 'taking responsibility' for their actions. This helps us consider how Cameron does not present his drinking as an account of his violence, nor do we interpret his understanding and felt experience through assumptions that Cameron should address his drinking so that other issues in his life may be addressed with agency and intent. Cameron tells us that his drinking is numbing him. He speaks of distress he lives with as underlying mental health issues. His drinking masks his *existential struggle*. Thinking with him, rather than about him, means noticing that he is embedded in conditions that are beyond his capacity to sustain without resorting to *numbing* himself. We recognise alcohol dependence and turning to Cameron's thinking, Matthew affirms the harshness of remembering anew every

day that his *lifestyle* is hard. In response Cameron offers the possibility of adaptation and “making something of himself”. A fragile aspiration emerges.

Thinking with men as they are working towards change involves a process of not only reflecting on the normative assumptions we might decide worth analysing, but also moving with the different ways the men think of themselves, their relationships, their conditions and the violence that they have perpetrated. Our reflexive process of re-thinking so that we are moving with and moved by the men’s narratives, while keeping their processes of change within sight, draws from Braidotti’s (2006, 2011a, 2011b) theories of nomadic thinking. We are seeking an *ethical* capacity for a critical analysis by privileging experiences of everyday life and staying aware that they may appear as biological, social, relational, cultural, material, and psychological experiences, holistically lived through the men’s felt, embodied processes of engagement and change. We aim to bring into our texts the immediate circumstances men implicate in their understandings of life altering events that are not necessarily part of taken for granted understandings of the ‘problem’ of violence in the home. We recognise that this report, then, is a *political* narrative, since it is crucially concerned with the politics of everyday life: the felt experiences of living in our present conditions and moving towards “making yourself anew”. Rethinking psychological enquiry as an analysis of social conditions of everyday life becomes a strategy we use for *retooling* psychological enquiry with *capacities* to trace *change processes* with experiences we *sense* and *feel*. Rather than making our theorising accessible to the audience of this report, though, our intention is to actualise some experiences of family harm and change processes by re-telling a selection of the myriad institutional, legal, political, and socio-cultural conditions through which participants, and the research team, arrive into, experience, and depart the care of Gandhi Nivas. This entails politicising the narratives included in this report, which, given the unknowability of political locations of the audience, contributes to a variability in the accessibility of political spaces – and capacity for movement – we trace with any given selection of narratives.

But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

Commencing in June 2020, Matthew’s fieldwork for his PhD research became a repeated process of placing himself within the ongoing fluxes and flows of Gandhi Nivas as an organisation, and the lives of resident men, providing us firsthand knowledge of men’s

daily life whilst residing at the homes, and how Gandhi Nivas supports resident men in its care. These *self-reflexive* experiences, which are documented with field notes, were early autoethnographic attempts at representing unfamiliar, confusing, uncertain, and often perplexing encounters with men accessing Gandhi Nivas for support, enabling us to bear witness to bewildering happenings occurring between men and Gandhi Nivas staff within these therapeutic spaces. As textual experiments addressing a question of how, rather than why, men engage when they come to Gandhi Nivas, Matthew's yearslong fieldwork experiences provided a theoretical basis to understanding how these services work.

Throughout Matthew's fieldwork, which consisted of regular visits to the homes on different days and at different times, up to three times a week over a period of 12 months, Gandhi Nivas staff helped identify *resident* men, as well as men *returning* to the houses to access support, who would be receptive and responsive to engaging Matthew in an open process of *kōrero*. Combined with his participation in a range of structured activities, such as weekly anger management groups, and unstructured activities, such as passing time with men waiting for their PSOs to expire by drinking cups of coffee and watching daytime television, fieldwork consisted of struggle, of struggling to infuse *kōrero* with men with understandings of change – in ways *responsive* to the needs of the men *experiencing* change. These early attempts at engaging men also took the form of engaging *groups* of men, becoming opportunities to *experiment* with *thinking* that not only *challenges* men's use of violence and resistance to change – but also offers men an opportunity to *affirm* diverse experiences of violence, and their engagement with police, statutory services, and supports available in their communities, as a result of their violence. *Kōrero* became a way of both *inviting* and *welcoming* men to become *informants* to violence prevention research by contributing self-led *felt storylines* of their experiences of change, helping produce a burgeoning body of knowledge about community-led services, such as Gandhi Nivas, which support *men* with professional practices that address the conditions of men's lives as they engage with the violence intervention sector<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> We feel it is important to acknowledge that whilst an ethics of care guiding Gandhi Nivas' work with women and children is far more familiar to the research team, we are aware of very similar 'flows of care' in other culturally specific services and how flows of care supports individual men to move with care towards others. In our experience, Gandhi Nivas' expertise in relation to supporting men with a culturally-responsive ethics of care that recognises the diversity of men's social worlds is specific to their service.



**GN2: 10-1 p.m. at Te Atatū with Rē and OJ**

**Staff: Jabir**

**11 November 2020**

After sitting with Rē for an hour, I worry I have nothing to show of my time this morning, except a sore belly provoked by our attempts at sign language, shouting, and making curious faces at each other over a cup of coffee. Agreeing neither one of us speak each other's languages, we settle on laughter as a signal something was happening between us, what that something is for the other...we are left guessing.

In a rush to do something productive, I join Jabir on home visits. As we set out, Jabir explains a purpose of home visits is to make contact with families of men staying at Gandhi Nivas, and provide information about the services available to them as families and whānau of men bound by PSO's. The quiet of the car ride does little to assuage the uncertainty of how we will do this.

On our first visit, as we approach a lone figure on a porch, it becomes apparent the woman doesn't understand what Jabir is saying. She can't hear his voice over the sound of traffic, and makes no effort at coming any closer. Jabir says it's the right address, so we stand there for several minutes, gesticulating with ever louder voices. A tall man, Jabir's body is waving like a flag in the wind, moving in ways I do not expect, his voice rising in pitch and volume. I'm left wondering what more he can do to get her attention. The fence means we are unable to approach, and the dog's gnashing teeth makes circumstances rather fraught, so we decide to leave.

Arriving at another address, we get out of the car in the middle of a the driveway. The possibilities of another dog make approaching the house directly very uncomfortable for us both, so Jabir begins speaking to children playing outside with some toys, near where we're standing. Hearing his voice, I presume, their mom comes outside. Never making eye contact with Jabir yet hearing him out, I hear her say she's "fine", abruptly and with some finality. I don't doubt the kindness of her smile, though, as it is all that I can hear of her as she thanks us for letting her know about the services available to her whānau. We wave to each other as we depart her home.

As Jabir drives to yet a third house, I am unsure what we accomplished in the two hours it has taken to visit just two houses. Thinking of another hour stuck in traffic in an unfamiliar part of Auckland, with other wistful attempts at communication, I wonder, what's the value of a laughter, frustration, and a smile?

Back at the whare, I meet OJ as I walk in the office. He's staying at the whare, and has been here for a few days. We're both a bit bored. Excited after what feels like an unproductive afternoon, I welcome a presence I feel with OJ, and we spend the next several hours together, drinking coffee and sharing the strange contours of changes in our lives.

Afterwards, I'm confused. What did I explain, express, or produce in elaborating my place in the organisation, and my reasons for being at the whare today? What did OJ find interesting enough to spend much of the late afternoon with me? I can sense we're both following *something*, yet what are we following? I don't feel we are following an object, a *what* that explains the *something we are following*.

But I can *sense* something, not unlike picking up particles in the air to find my way...but not with a sense like smelling. More, there's something happening, produced...an affective current *flowing between us, amongst us*, around *us*, as we both entered the whare, together.

I don't remember thinking where this current leads...but remember a comfort, a comfortability, a *joy* finding ourselves together...with another man for whom this experience makes sense, or is it with another man who can make sense of this experience?

We began asking questions of each other...which became *playful* when asking questions not of each other, but of ourselves. The questions we ask are of our own storying, yet the questions also emerge from our own self-storying. The questions we place amidst the conversation welcome the other to respond. Asking questions of myself, only for OJ to respond, is both strange and satisfying, disconcerting and humbling, satisfying, tiring and energising.

OJ's stories follow a different logic...helping me to share my own experiences of change, of growing up in the proverbial small town in the U.S and escaping Michigan, in part, to lead a life where change is not frowned upon, where difference is not treated with fear and scepticism by others. In other words, I ask a lot of him, I ask him to make connections between the things, and we follow each other, further, keeping each other in sight.

Leaving for home later that evening, I begin wondering. How do I keep men in sight, what possibilities are afoot for fieldwork that does not rely on images of ourselves as static figures of thought from which we change, or images of ourselves as future figures of thought towards which we hope to change? How can I rethink an image of a self embodied with experience of encounters with men in the whare?

In early 2021, the abundance of fieldwork encounters with men accessing support, and their engagement with staff and the services being provided, enabled relational, ethical, and affective capacities for Matthew to begin working with Gandhi Nivas staff to identify men who may be interested in, and would benefit from, participating in self-reflexive 1:1 interviews<sup>2</sup>, a weekly men's social support group (hereafter referred to as 'the Men's Group'), or *both*. During the recruitment process, and more generally whenever Matthew was 'on site' throughout the research project, resident men and men visiting the homes were informed they were not expected to interact with Matthew if they chose not to, and that engaging in *any* activity with Matthew was entirely voluntary<sup>3</sup>. In any case, Matthew was often approached by men, regardless of their interest in participating in the research project, as a source of social support, someone to have a cup of coffee with or watch daytime television, if only to while away long afternoons spent at the house. This enabled the resident men to set the terms of their interactions, offering Matthew opportunities to reflect on where he became stuck, and unstuck, with the unpredictability and uncertainty of men's social lives whilst subject to PSOs.

Eleven men subsequently agreed to participate in 1:1 interviews, contributing over thirty hours of recorded interactions over a period of eight months. All participants were offered an opportunity to continue their involvement through *multiple* interviews, which became an invitation to revisit any topics or issues men found important, as well as to "update" Matthew with changes in their lives through follow up sessions, resulting in one participant contributing three further recorded interviews (four in total) over the course of this project. Whilst ostensibly self-led, the primary focus for the interviews involved men's understanding of *change* and *difference*, both in the specific context of prevention

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<sup>2</sup> See Research Timeline for further details.

<sup>3</sup> Where included in this report, the names of participants and staff members have been changed. As part of providing informed consent, participants were made aware that the details of their participation were confidential and were given the option to choose a pseudonym to protect their privacy. Whilst staff were not given an opportunity to choose a pseudonym, the use of pseudonyms for staff not only ensures their privacy but also encouraged men to share freely by limiting the possibility individuals would be able to be identified through narratives of particular experiences, activities, and events. Men were made aware the limits of confidentiality meant staff would be alerted of any safety concerns, such as if men appeared to become emotionally distressed or disclosed past experiences of relationship abuse and violence towards others whilst participating in research activities. Participants were informed should they disclose any active planning for violence, or present an imminent danger to themselves and others, immediate action would be taken, with staff and the local police informed of all relevant information, including personal details of the participant and others involved. These safety protocols were discussed verbally and provided in writing to participants at the beginning of the research, and regularly discussed throughout their participation to build trust. Regular conversations with staff occurred through daily interactions and team meetings, ensuring staff were also made aware of the limits of confidentiality throughout the research activities as well.

initiatives for men who are violent in the home as well as a more generalised notion of what change means for men's daily lives. All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed by Matthew, with men offered the opportunity to read and provide feedback to the transcriptions as part of providing informed consent for their participation.

The formation of the weekly *Men's Group* was theoretically grounded on a notion that each group would potentially entail a *different* gathering of men with diverse experiences of change and family violence. Men were made aware that the *social support* available each week was 'unpredictable' as this was determined by the participants attending each week. The Men's Group was therefore attended by *both* men *new* to the group as well as men that had attended *previous* sessions. Whereas participants provided informed consent acknowledging the limits of privacy and confidentiality should they decide to share details of their personal lives within group, given the flux and flows of men attending the groups, participants were also empowered to think of themselves as a source of social support for others, offering them an opportunity to rethink themselves, and their own needs, through their relationships with others.

Advertised as experiments *by* men and *for* men, as a way of addressing the *needs* of men experiencing change, the Men's Groups met at the Gandhi Nivas whare, often before travelling by foot, together, to a local cafe. On a number of occasions, the group also collectively decided to socialise together on the weekend, in community settings when the men were not working, to play billiards, hit golf balls at a driving range, and explore local municipal parks together. Between two and twelve men attended any given group, not including Matthew, with the men spending between two and four hours together each week.

We feel the importance here of reflecting on the fact that all Men's Groups participants attended at least three sessions in total, with some men attending regularly for long periods of time, only to abruptly end their involvement when the social support was no longer needed, whilst other men periodically attended *as and when needed* for social support, oftentimes over extended periods of time where different life events brought them back into the care of Gandhi Nivas. For some men, their participation coincided with their time residing at the whare, whereas others *came back* to the Men's Group after leaving the whare, due to *life circumstances* posing immense challenges whilst *on their own*. Whilst

the groups were not recorded, Matthew's memories of the Men's Groups took the form of self-reflexive, *felt* narrative accounts of his experiences with the men, a selection of which shape this report.

**(((Men's Narrative)))**

(M) So Doug, I know that, without even having to think about it, I know that we have spent hours and hours and hours together, over the last six months, or nine months, however long we've been doing the Men's Group. Here, we're gonna be here another couple hours. That's a lot of time you've invested in yourself. And I guess, so the question for me is, what comes of that for you? What does, sort of, that change, that coming out of your lazy self, what difference does it produce in your life? Can you give me, sort of, an example?

(D) Ahhh, yeah, nah, just fruits, generally. Fruit

(M) Fruit.

(D) Fruit.

(M) Fruit. Produces...it's fruitful? Is that what you're saying?

(D) Gives me...it gives...yeah it's fruitful. It, in and of itself, can provide motivation, for me, to do anything else. Because I'm seeing...changes and benefits in my family and myself. Good reasons to keep doing it.

(M) Okay.

(D) And when you start to see benefits, and things like, I've got a, ummm, affirmation at the moment, good things are gonna, good things are coming my way. And when I see things like that, opening up, that in itself is fruit. But it's construction material. But yeah this is, it's just feeding in the good stuff.

**(Doug, Interview, 15 December 2021)**

Here, trying something new and untested, with uncertain ramifications, Doug expresses a notion of a *self* in an emergent style. Rather than *containing* himself, as a violent man engaging in change, Doug positions a notion of change outside of his *self* through felt moments of connection with his loved ones, which, to our understanding, forms a *travelling* ethics of care enabling him to *attend to* what might be happening *for others*. His concept of *fruitfulness* helps us understand how self-formation and experiences of change do not refer specifically to benefits for *him*, which has significance in that men, in our experience, are often asked to become empathetic, to *think* about others as part of violence prevention and anger management interventions. As the knowledge holders of such self-reflections, practitioners are then called upon to critique and analyse men's capacities for empathy. Doug helps us understand that moving stories give shape to a self through benefits for others that are benefits for a *self* that has yet to arrive ("good things are gonna, good things are coming my way"). This is not represented through an example, such as less tension within his family or feeling less angry at his wife, or that his family is more safe, accordingly. Our attention is also drawn to the possibility that by *determining* what aspects of a partner's life they may enjoy, as a *product* of this fruitfulness, echoes with devices of control as well. Instead, we understand Doug's narrative positions change as something that is *felt*, that change is a *felt sensation* that empowers Doug, and his family; non-violencing is the production of new ways of being with different capacities for agency ("And when I see things like that, opening up, that in itself is fruit. But it's construction material. But yeah this is, it's just feeding in the good stuff"). This narrative creates departures from taken for granted understandings of change for Doug and Matthew, and for us, and by conceptualising *difference*, differently, *together*; embodied felt experiences of change become a relationally *connective* experience between the men (and us). Yet, whilst the connective possibilities of narrative empower a capacity us to participate in the creative imagining of Doug's sense of self, shaping oneself without norms to guide us is a hard habit to quit. We do not imagine ourselves or Doug *quitting* our gendered social norms, yet we are moving with Doug imagining himself as nurturing, opening up and becoming fruitful. Becoming fruitful is a *different* image of a man for Doug's agency to enact by "feeding the good stuff".

### ***Emergent Relationships***

The notion of precarious life circumstances reminds us of the importance of remembering that Matthew's fieldwork was in part about developing skills that build trust with men for

whom psychological support is often premised on experiences of exploitation and untended adverse consequences. Trusting became a complex undertaking, spanning myriad conversations and multiple modes of interaction between resident men, creating emergent “care-full” capacities for Matthew to engage men in kōrero about topics they might otherwise be *resistant* or *reluctant* to discussing. Rather than being *overcome*, though, men’s resistance and reluctance was both *affirmed* and *acknowledged* by inviting those considering participating in the research project, as well as those unable or unwilling to do so, to become *informants* to a collaborative tripartite with Matthew and Gandhi Nivas. We imagined collaboration as a process of disrupting normative power relationships between men (and their whānau), community organisations, statutory and government services, academic research and practices, and the communities in which we live. By creating a *relational* approach to understanding change and difference, in which men, including Matthew, develop possibilities of “care-full” storytelling of their experiences of change in languages others can sense, men helped create opportunities where change meant *learning to forget* taken for granted habits of thinking. For Matthew, then, fieldwork became associated with loosening narrative knots created by psychological training and professional experiences in which Matthew’s self-image and engagement practices were crafted in respect to positions of (moral) authority imbued with disciplinary powers backed up by normative social expectations – and the weight of criminal justice and healthcare systems that sanction non-normative ways of being, for both men and the services supporting them. The narratives and experiences men shared, rather than simply a ‘resources’ that we *use* to *explain* men’s understandings of change, became opportunities to elaborate *new* understandings of change by helping us *refigure* modes of relation that affirm our commitment to turning away from cognition and behaviour and normative patterns of thought by attending to *felt* experience and our *moving relationship* with the men’s change processes. We also recognise our reluctance to do so.

As a collective of individuals, we acknowledge we have felt memories of events that bring us to a shared distrust of men’s narratives of their violence, but a shared distrust that forms from our irreproducible individual experiences. Our felt memories of events “pull” us in different directions, both as individuals as well as a collective, meaning what constitutes threats to our safety and what constitutes violence changes, and is changeable, as we collaborate together. By example, violence prevention in the Aotearoa New Zealand criminal justice sector has involved Matthew being subjected to numerous threats against



his life, through, for instance, threats to burn down his home by a man with an extensive history of arson and attempted murder. The man, who pled guilty to charges of threatening to kill, received a prison sentence as a result. Matthew has also been a respondent to civil court action, in particular a writ of habeas corpus, taken against him as an individual whilst employed by Corrections, due to exercising legally sanctioned authority, bestowed by legislation and determined by the New Zealand Parole Board, that restricted the plaintiff's place of address and imposed a night time curfew. These experiences differ in connection with experiences of being detained by the police whilst physically restraining a young person being violent towards members of the public, as part of a violence prevention *behaviorist* approach espoused by community organisations when he began his career in Michigan. The threat of violence in both of these circumstances not only involves an immediate risk of harm to Matthew's physical safety, by way of being physically assaulted by a young person(s) under this care or losing his life through an act of arson, but his experiences also engender a notion of vulnerability, harm, and violence, as well as safety, that differs from the other researchers when carrying out his (mandated) responsibilities to protect the safety of others. Each of us brings an assemblage of felt experiences unfamiliar to other members of the research team, becoming moments of resistance as well as moments of connection with modes of relation we trace throughout this report.

**GN1: 3-8 p.m. at Ōtāhuhu with Sam**

**Staff: Sanyam**

**11 July 2020**

Arriving a bit early, Sanyam and Dayita have a handover, of sorts. An absence of “details” about the clients, what they’ve been up to, is confusing. But the sharing, their *kōrero*...is intense, affective; is this creating an *intensive* awareness of the day? I wonder...this feels like something that happens after an event, a critical incident, a *trauma* that needs processing...but productive, rather than reactive, I wonder how this “sets up” the day differently, what becomes possible when we *affectively intensify* our experiences, rather than describe a day, an event, a person? Is handover a collaborative practice of *molecularisation*...?

Sam welcomes me to join him on a trip to Middlemore Hospital. His demeanour is somewhat perplexing. It’s Sunday, he’s not visibly unwell...and he’s got no shoes on. No small talk; neither Sanyam nor Sam are from Auckland, and both are unfamiliar with the hospital, so would benefit, I’m told, from me serving as a navigator of sorts. That I’ve never been to Middlemore doesn’t seem relevant...

Sitting in the front alongside Sanyam poses some challenges to talking with Sam, who sits behind me, but we persevere. Sam explains having ADHD, which causes problems with maintaining employment, which disrupts his daily routine...for him, there’s a spiraling that occurs with an absence of structure to his daily routine, exacerbating his ADHD further, which in turn impacts on his capacity to work, if he doesn’t remember which day of the week it is...

I’m still unclear; on a Sunday, after losing both his accommodation and employment in the last few days, he’s wanting to see an ER doctor? I want an explanation, a reason, what he’s going to hospital for; a way of making sense of this trip that explains why I’m here.

Parking is problematic, and traffic is awful. Sanyam drops us off at the main entrance, and asks me to join Sam whilst he finds a place to park the car, and we get out at triage area. Am I following Sam, or am I meant to lead him into the hospital?

We keep talking...but stop. Covid; that’s right we need to wear a mask in the triage area.

As I ask the nurse where we might wait for our friend, Sanyam catches up with us, and asks me where I’ll be waiting.

*I'm not going in with Sam?*

Confused and upset, ignoring Sanyam...moping, wandering around outside the main building, amongst cigarette butts, empty soft drink bottles and cups...

*No car keys...I don't even know where the car is. How long's it been now? I'm lucky it's not raining.*

Five minutes. Twelve minutes. Fifteen minutes. Twenty three minutes...Sanyam texts; meet at the front of the hospital.

In the same seats, down the same streets, listening to the same radio stations, we don't speak about what happened. Why not? Why we were there, what happened? What was I meant to be doing?

Back at the whare, groups of men roam around together. The men don't know each other yet, but our interactions, tensions, budding friendships and shared cultures and experiences are present. I can smell, taste, and see men; they're everywhere.

Today, for such a small house, the whare is quiet; there's not much noise, only a few phone calls. Eight clients; ten men in total. We're waiting. I wonder; how does boredom contribute to men deciding to leave the whare early, and return home, breaching their PSO's? I don't want to "follow" the men from room to room; I don't want to sit here; I want to get out of here myself.

*How do I become part of what's going on, with the commotion, confusion, stultifying slowness, and constant feeling of being lost with men going about their daily lives?*

Sanyam is often spoken about...having an empowering presence; men suddenly find themselves no longer resisting, but sharing, talking, and engaging the world when working with him. No one has an explanation, only experiences of this with him. Is this is a measurable guide to success, of working effectively with men, doing without thinking?

This is uncomfortable to dwell upon. If I'm collecting data at the whare...how do I make sense of my experiences, and the experiences of others, if I'm not constantly surveilling the scene, watching the comings and goings of men...

*What do I miss?*

Our approach is informed by Tucker (2012), which suggests privileging men's experiences in everyday life brings moral and ethical benefits to psychological practice and community interventions supporting change. We affirm an assumption that all the men are different, both from each other and from the men they were before the experience of violence that brought them to the whare and the care of the practitioners. The moral and ethical benefits of assuming difference extend to us: to Matthew as a researcher who is also a *man* with a history of lived experiences and everyday life events pertaining to violence and *non-violence* and to Mandy, Leigh and Ann as research collaborators who bring their own different histories of lived experiences into the research process. When we think about difference, we privilege events, felt experiences and the uniqueness of embodied memories of everyday social worlds. We also recognise that events and embodied memories change as we live through our experiences, so differences are not only between but also within us. The concept of nomadism (Braidotti, 2011a) acknowledges that we are transient and our memories guide the stability we feel as our continuity. Nomadism helps us to think with the perpetual movement of differences that are not usually (normatively) the focus of violence interventions undertaking work with men. It also enables us to consider how Gandhi Nivas practitioners become enlivened through a *community-oriented* and *community-led* organisation situated amongst the myriad social, cultural, ethnic, and economic backgrounds of the local communities in which the men live, and the service operates.

Our focus here is to privilege practices that support staff and resident men to think through, and therefore become responsive to, the social forces *conditioning* men's experience of change. We recognise that we are sharing conditions in which there are dominant gendered social norms as well as specific, minority norms that together shape lived experiences of becoming gendered. In particular, we attend to the gendering of affect, and how men embody different affective capacities with accounts of the gendered *political locations* they inhabit. As a type of embodied thinking *through* and *with* felt experiences and their memories, *nomadism* affirms both *negative* affect (such as fear and embarrassment) and *positive* affect (such as hope and enthusiasm) arising through specific events that are connecting men with others at the whare. A *relational* approach which acknowledges *both* contemporary (Western, colonial) social expectations and traditional (patriarchal) social expectations which men often carry with them from their cultures, communities, and countries of origin, nomadism is a theory of thought which

empowers us to address the social conditions that men find important to their pathways of change, through an ethics of *care* that is responsive to what is happening *for men and their families*, including *Matthew's*, when they are accessing Gandhi Nivas for support.

Rather than comparing different men's experiences and understandings of violence, thinking with felt experiences not only brings to the fore the different *agential* limits to what men are capable of *at any particular time*, but also becomes the conditions producing *new* possibilities of action with the production of *different* potentials, capacities, and limits when men embody *variations* of felt memories. For instance, affective logic enables *both* resistance and support for taken for granted norms and expectations within our social worlds. This helps understand change as a *situated* process. By experiencing first-hand the care of Gandhi Nivas, Matthew, for instance, is able to resist the notion his experiences of physically restraining both children and adults, whilst under the employ of organisations privileging behavior modification approaches, means engaging in self-rebuke or remonstrance, and thereby pinning processes of change he's experienced in the decades since in place.

In our experience some men *resist* a characterisation that they are unable (or unwilling) to share feelings and emotions by *participating* in multi-hour interviews *sharing* the politics of their lives *whilst also* maintaining a gendered disciplinary regime predicated on rights and obligations as head of the household or part of a government department. For other men, both interviews and the Men's Groups offered opportunities to share understandings of men's modes of relation with women through a diversity of explanations, such as describing violence as part of *naturally-occurring masculine ways of being* or *gender-based* behaviors predicated on *religious beliefs* – whilst tentatively expressing a desire for a future free of violence. This becomes important as many participants spent many *hours* in *kōrero* with Matthew, both alone and with others, where affective logic both *delimits* thought by producing *stability* within men's social worlds whilst also *empowering* thought by becoming the conditions for change, as well. Both resistance through stability and empowerment through changing to an affective logic become possibilities for action for men, including Matthew, and for the women in the research team who bear responsibility for witnessing men's change processes.

## (((Self-Narrative)))

Mandy leads the way to our seats. Together at a cafe, a cup of coffee and a pastry is all that stands between us — and a potentially life—changing interview. Our first meeting with Sahaayta looms large this morning, my body telling me caffeine is not needed, the excitement of the moment forcefully conspiring to introduce my thunderous heartbeat into my voice, palpable to anyone sitting next to me.

We leave the cafe, separately, the remaining few minutes alone in the car sufficient to ponder the possibilities of reframing psychological research beyond the notion of life of an individual. I've got Colebrook (2002, *I think?*) with me, helping me think how *life* can become a flow or multiplicity of experiences. Only a few days into a multi-year research project, how have I already begun carrying philosophy books to meetings?

We arrive together. Ostensibly an interview, I am immediately greeted with a *cacophony* of hugs, handshakes, and radiant smiles. My heartbeat joins the noise of these bodies, creating a deafening moment of (be)coming together amongst us.

Any expectation of what is to come feels less familiar, less available, less recognisable with what is transpiring around, and within, me....Mandy's arms are still embracing a few of the women even as I am told we are travelling elsewhere, together, for lunch.

*This is different. This isn't the introduction I envisaged...these feelings of welcome, of movement, of coming together.*

Standing, waiting, listening with deaf ears to the women around me, these are not a feeling of being part of some thing, but of *becoming* something, unforeseen, that has yet to arrive...the thunder of my heartbeat joins the warm embrace of someone's breath on my cheek; tentative arms reach over my shoulders, the smooth fabric, cool to the touch, imbues vivid warmth. With the respectful care for (an)other's body, women around me introduce me to different possibilities before me.

Soon, I am with Dayita, and thinking of the smell of perfumes permeating the car. Somewhere along the way, I've been ushered into the car with several others. Ignoring the directions from the car, telling us the fastest way to get to lunch, instead, we follow two other vehicles ahead of us. The women tell me they are speaking Hindi amongst themselves, not about me. They are teasing Dayita, because, I think, her husband bought her the car.

*We're making light of gendered norms...I am told...because her man takes care of her. I tell them...my girlfriend, hopefully, settles for something else, as I won't be able to buy her much of anything whilst working on a PhD.*

As we arrive inside the restaurant, my seat is shown to me, and surrounded by others, we begin again, the dozen or so women emanating a tender care, flowing around me, soothing my less thunderous heartbeat.

Before long, our food is ordered, collectively, with our divergent tastes for, and tolerance of, hot food arriving amongst the plates of curry dispersed around the table. Seemingly, the dozen or so women take turns providing a description of a dish.

*These are from South India; these are very hot curries for very hot weather. These are made where people eat more meat; it's dry, mountainous and cold.*

The women present, the women tell me, are from different regions from India, with different customs, religions, and foods...and different men.

For the next three hours, I do not remember much of the questions asked of me, or the stories I tell. Instead, I think with a welcoming patience I remember, shared by the women, inviting me to risk weaving stories together with narratives explaining different, and often divergent, ways of knowing myself, my work, and my family. Beginning again, I tell them the stories I share are an effort to rethink how we understand our lives, with the tears and laughter we experience as men.

The smells from unfamiliar bowls of curry, specially requested by the women for our lunch I'm told, give me pause...

I'm hoping to work with men, the men you support in the where, to situate our understandings of change processes through narratives of the politics of the locations we experience. I want to experiment with creating notions of change embodying our histories, our cultures, our families and religions and customs and traditions... the things men find important to their stories of change.

When we imagine our *selves* as navigational aides across space and time, sustaining the complexities we experience in life, I hope that, with other men, we can create narrative opportunities to make sense of change and difference by tracing experiences of disruptions, of love, loss, and renewal, imagination, hope, and despair—in other words, I am interested in the *becomings* of men.

As we finish lunch, I'm asked what I hope for my work.

*Although my project began as a proposal to create witness-able accounts of men's change processes, what I want to remember is the attentive care given to me here, to my many selves i've shared throughout our lunch together, by the women present here with me.*

*I want to remember the humour and compassion, the forces and flows sustaining me through troubled and troubling times. I want to remember feeling the unspeakable voices expressing conditions of a life from which I emerge.*

**(Matthew, 2 March 2020)**



Affective logic becomes important as whilst Gandhi Nivas is principally a violence prevention service intended to support men subject to PSOs, men who access Gandhi Nivas for support arrive for different and disparate reasons. Whilst many men have come to the attention of the police specifically due to being suspected of perpetrating violence, which is related to Gandhi Nivas staff by self-report or by the police as part of an 'in-take' when men arrive at the whare, a notable proportion of men who self-refer also self-report a need for accommodation due to *problematic life circumstances*. This includes migrant men new to Aotearoa New Zealand, men released from prison, and men repatriated to Aotearoa New Zealand from overseas due to criminal convictions. Men also report losing temporary accommodation in private rentals, hostels, and with other family members, for unexplained reasons, or seek support from Gandhi Nivas due to being evicted or trespassed from the family home after engaging in violence directed towards flatmates, supportive non-related family members, landlords, and neighbours. Furthermore, for many men social isolation and the absence of social support during critical life events, such as a death in the family, the loss of employment, or a general sense of geographic social displacement (i.e. men moving from rural, close knit family communities to the unfamiliar urban environment of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland), are often given as reasons for accessing emergency accommodation and early intervention services with Gandhi Nivas. Therefore, Gandhi Nivas' remit is *inclusive* of men's diverse *affective experiences* of violence, acknowledging men often express self-reported concerns about being a victim of violence and general life struggles – as well as concerns about their own behaviours and the possible use of violence towards others – as reasons for seeking support.

Affirming men's myriad reasons for accessing support becomes meaningful when men acknowledge 'a problem with' their anger or see themselves as 'violent men' but resist a notion that their use of violence is 'gender-based' violence against women. In these circumstances, a man's self-belief about the appropriateness of their use of violence is often a *masculine* or otherwise *socio-culturally justified, acceptable, or condoned* privilege bestowed on him, as a man. These become the politics of locations (Braidotti, 2006) conditioning their experiences of change, and in support of this ethos, the whare, as homes, become inclusive of activities of daily living tying men together, whilst also acknowledging every man's unique history and experiences of *home* can be quite different. The whare become spaces where men experience change as a collaborative creation of *possibilities* with others, through joys of sharing meals together and supporting

others struggling with traumatic life events, as well as the tensions of communitarian living spaces and shared sleeping arrangements when groups of men with unfamiliar habits and routines welcome the company of others. This is in direct contrast with conceptualising the whare as residential facilities or settings, where men learn interventions, coping skills, or techniques that reduce their use of violence by challenging their self-beliefs as *cognitive distortions*. Communitarian living is a particularly important consideration for men who have never lived apart from their families and whānau, let alone men who have never lived alone, and otherwise might struggle with activities of daily living such as food shopping, preparing meals, and doing laundry for themselves. For others, whose daily life typically consists of child care responsibilities, religious duties, and gender-based cultural activities, rather than a period of harmony free from problems, or a form of voluntary isolation where men go to get away from their families, whānau, and loved ones, the whare often become spaces where men experience boredom and uncertainty as to how to occupy their time. Empowering men's creative potential with both moments of resistance to change and the moments that connect them with other men, Gandhi Nivas empowers men to support each other through the doldrums of long afternoons, and, often, even longer nights alone. Conceptualising whare as place-based locations *affectively* connecting men with other men through activities of daily life, helps resonate the whare as supportive, caring, and non-judgmental spaces where affective logics can be resisted, disrupted, and safely challenged.

**(((Men's Narrative)))**

(M) It's an interesting...it's an interesting concept, that there's a witness to your struggles and processes of change. Can you tell me anything more about that?

(W) Well, they give you guidance and counsel at the same time on how to. It's a pretty tricky thing to do, you know what I mean. Specially when you don't trust anybody, because there's a lot of guys in here that don't trust anybody, and it's very hard to get it from people that have lived in South Auckland. It's difficult...because everyone is pretty much to keep to themselves, okay. Don't go and ask for help, or they think, like, nah, I won't ask these people what I need to do for myself because they feel umm...what we call *whakamā*. Shy. Too shy or too quiet. Or always closed off. Because the trust is not there. It takes a while for a person to even trust a person, to only say, like, I need this done for me. Or, you know what I mean, can you help me. That is a big vulnerability, because help is a big thing for a person with no trust. Once the person opens up to a one on one with a person that has been counselling them, talking to them and getting to know who they really are, because most of the time they just look at a piece of paper, or else they will just look into a computer what the police have told them about you, but they don't get it from that person, because that person is not open enough when they first meet here.

But when they stay here for, like, a little journey, right, like it could be a week or so, yeah, it could be two weeks, man, you know what I mean, before they actually have communication. But when they first come in here, they're, umm...they're lost. They're lost, man, to opening up. Even with feelings, emotions, not much people share that because they've always been told, umm...just get over it, man. Just get over it, you know. But there is times when you never get over that, too...(laughing) and start sharing your, what emotions you going through, what feelings you going through. Because if you don't have open communication inside the place here, with the guys that work here, how will they go through?

**(Wiremu, Interview, 21 April 2021)**

Beginning again with a notion that this report is an attempt at writing our encounters with the different social forces and flows conditioning men's experiences of change, the narratives we include enable the *textual* production of *affective* connections, and variations to these connections, to map our experiences of men's change processes. What we experience is limited by the embodied experiences of things we can feel – and know – and our capacities at creating an affective logic where, in our experience, violence become less possible, less likely, or less sustainable. Following this thought further, our intention is that by putting to work this report as a creative process of renarratising *affective moments that connect*, and where we feel *resistance* to these moments, we hope to produce new understandings and experiences of change processes men and the researchers, and the readers of this report, experience *together*. This report, then, is an attempt at displacing traditional and taken for granted engagement practices and ways of thinking within the sector by tracing variations in thinking with an ethics of care for the social forces conditioning *our* experiences and understandings of change. With a particular interest in resisting academic and disciplinary knowledges that form a basis for our understandings of men and masculinities, and processes where possibilities of non-violence occur, our analysis of field notes, interview transcripts, and narratives of Men's Groups become a kind of ethnographic account of men's (including Matthew's) responses to questions such as *what am I in the middle of?* and *what am I and others doing?* The selection of texts included in this report are important, as these provide traces of what work has been, or is being done, with men and by men.

Yet, it is unclear what counts as data here, as interpreting and engaging with these narratives, in other words the work done by *us* (the researchers) to (re)produce the written document itself, is part of a *mangled* assemblage of *human* and *non-human elements* inclusive of professional practices, personal beliefs, life experiences, and embodied experiences that *both* participants and researchers contribute to the report (Jackson, 2017). What becomes important to us, though, is not being able to *identify* each element of a mangle, or to *reveal* our mangled practices, but to analyse *what they do*. Our concept of a mangle enables us to reflexively analyse what experiences follow us whilst creating an affective logic making sense of men's narratives, only some of which are included in this report, without having to identify *where* (as in which of us) each element *originates* or *how* each element contributes to an affective logic. Thinking of our work as part of a mangle acknowledges that, as researchers, our moments of resistance and connection to the

politics of locations participants inhabit creates *conditions* for *data* for this report, which is a way of becoming *responsive* to the needs of men, and their families, by elaborating thought always immediately outside of our grasp, and never fully known to ourselves, in ways that opens up our thinking to variation and change. Our hope is that by untangling the politics of locations men occupy and share with Matthew, as fragmentary, unfamiliar, confusing, uncertain, and often perplexing social worlds that we often do not have language to explain ourselves, a selection of narratives can become entry points enabling us to bear witness to *not only* bewildering happenings about men's social words, but mangled practices empowering *witness-able* accounts of otherwise *un-seen* processes of change, for both our selves and participant men. By politicising men's narratives, we hope to invoke 'threads in the mangle' so that we can bring the transforming normative narratives into view, as we work to transform them. In this sense, our task is at times one of 'translation', which is about making the 'taken for granted' parts of an unknowable mangle appear, to be present, and able to be accounted for.

Wiremu's world is a world of differences from ours, and we bear witness to his memories of changing through becoming more vulnerable and trusting from locations as relative strangers. It is bewildering to need to get over all our feelings, as we are used to speaking of hopes, fears, aspirations, troubles and burdens within the safety of supportive relationships. We also feel the meanings of becoming "lost, man, to opening up", yet we recognise limitations on sharing felt memories and becoming trusting and vulnerable where safeties are not secure: sometimes specific relationships emerge in which affective vulnerability becomes constrained or exploited. In the bewildering happenings of Wiremu's world we recognise constraints on affective logic, as well as feelings. When there is no space in a man's life where he might usually find support for feeling vulnerable, then the unseen processes in which his relationships with men and women at the whare empower him become openings to new possibilities for engaging affectively with others.

### ***Methodological Becomings***

With a selection of narratives, interview transcripts, and field notes we put forth in this report a *purposeful* curation of accounts allowing us to trace events that resist simple and static explanations or descriptions, we also want to acknowledge that these are only a selection of narratives, that is, the men's narratives included in this report are *only one possible map* of the political locations men articulate through their participation in

Matthew's research. We are aware we have chosen a *specific* selection of narratives enabling us to *not only* textually trace where and *how* men make sense of change, but the narratives are also intended to bring into being *how we*, the researchers, *produce* and *(re)produce* accounts of the conditions and power relationships making up men's social worlds. A resource for reflexive thinking, narratives offer opportunities to destabilise our understandings of social conditions brought to bear by men when we enliven narrative with the politics of our respective locations as researchers, and whether created on purpose in moments of connection or in inadvertent resistance to men's understandings of social conditions they experience, gaps emerge, though, when we *(re)create* narratives of ongoing, and continually altering, social worlds.

These gaps differ from *gaps in knowledge*, where, in other words, we might 'lack' knowledge about men and their experiences that we then strive to *fill*, *erase*, or *improve upon*. Gaps created by the selection of narratives we include in this report produce possibilities to self-reflect on the affective logic emerging with narrative accounts of the social forces framing men's social worlds, through critical analyses of how knowledge privileged by academic disciplines (psychology) and social sectors (violence prevention) becomes implicated in men's understandings and experiences of change processes (Arrigo, 2013). Doing so acknowledges that, as academics, researchers, and professionals, we also have bearing on men's experiences of daily life, enabling us to materialise how our modes of relation and practices both limit and empower men's experiences of change. Much as Matthew inhabited uncomfortable political locations produced by affectively engaging others about his experiences with Gandhi Nivas, rethinking the politics of our locations as researchers also situates our selves within unfamiliar territories. Creating the conditions for an unfamiliar form of *reflexive* practice, analysing our understandings of narratives enable us to resist taken for granted understandings of violence and non-violence, such as when *being* violent and non-violent are thought of as *existential conditions* from which we extract knowledge, so as to *overcome* men's use of violence. Emerging as a swarm of different affective forces and flows that we, as professionals and academic researchers working in the sector, bring to our work with men, this report, then, is an opportunity to rethink how we empower processes of change with a praxis of *care* for the politics of addressing men's use of violence.

## (((Self-Narrative)))

Late on a Friday evening, I share a few beers with my neighbours, Gerry and Chad. Aware it is the weekend before I officially “begin” my PhD studies, they want to know what it is exactly about violent men I intend to study.

Why is it you believe you can help men who are violent, and how do you expect to help them change their ways?

Both men share stories of the New Zealand criminal justice system, and, in particular, the professionals they have encountered.

The focus of government support for men should be affordable accommodation, and employment training or new educational opportunities; men need security to maintain financial independence and care for others. Men will only learn their lesson and “get on with things” at their own pace, according to their own individualised journeys, which “the system” only impedes.

Psychology, as a discipline, they tell me, is only interested in good men and bad men, with uncomplicated understandings of violence as something always harmful and immoral.

Professionals are “out of touch” and “disconnected” from the needs of men like us. How can professionals with no experience of committing violence or harming others support men with change, when government employment policies require probation officers and prison guards to have no previous criminal convictions. What do people who have never had to contend with the police or criminal justice system know about our experiences as men?

Psychology, they go on to say, will only ever provide knowledge of violent men that sets them apart from other men who are supposedly not violent. Chad stresses his point. He “learned” to fight from his brothers at a very young age, permitting him a means to influence others, and therefore protect his friends and loved ones.

Violence is one way brothers stand by each other at school, allowing us to resist and challenge bullies, to find our way in risky and dangerous places.

Gerry describes the appropriate use of violence as judicious, not flagrant or gratuitous, with violence often a necessary means to solve complex problems, and in support, Chad shares a story. The weekend before, Chad went to a local bar to meet friends for drinks. The bar is often rowdy, with violence apparently occurring most weekends. When Chad arrives, a man at the bar is already making unsolicited advances towards a young woman serving drinks. Chad, irritated this is going unnoticed and ignored by others, tells me his concern; the harassment leaves the woman in a vulnerable position. When the man does not take heed of the “quiet words” put to him, Chad tells me the man soon finds himself on the floor of the bar.

Violence is a way of putting actions to words. Violence is a way of being accountable to others, a way of keeping others safe. Violence helps us live life, as a man.

Familiar yet very uncomfortable with beliefs espousing the virtues of violence, and resisting an argument about psychology, I confess to Chad and Gerry that I have never been in a fight, nor have I been arrested by the police. I explain, though, the entirety of my professional career involves supporting men and boys learn independent living skills, develop interpersonal relationship skills, and establish connections with their communities and cultures that enable them to address their use of violence. Pausing, I describe my earliest experiences in the violence prevention sector, running the day to day operations of after-school and respite programs for boys, and, later, as a supervisor for an adult foster care facility.

Being responsible for the safety of both staff and clients, I participated in hundreds of incidents involving the physical restraint of men and boys, and, occasionally, young girls, many of whom were intent on harming themselves, or using weapons to harm me and others. Here in New Zealand, my career with the Department of Corrections involved incarcerating men; I can no longer ignore the disproportionate impact and trauma my work has on our communities, as men.

What counts as violence towards others is very different between places and across time, with different considerations taking priority in Michigan, the U.K., and New Zealand. Many men in prison have mental health concerns, and experiences of abuse, trauma, self-harm and . Men are haunted by histories of drug and alcohol use, and the consequences of traumatic brain injuries. Life is challenging for many of us, in a myriad of complex ways.



We can easily rationalise and justify violence through religious, cultural, and gender norms. Psychology, I hope, can help develop understandings of violence responsive to our differences, informing not only what we mean by violence towards others but also how we respond to and support men who want to address the harm they cause others.

Pausing, again...I begin noticing Gerry and Chad dis-engaging, their attention turning to other matters of more importance, like the status of their margaritas and a need to top up their drinks. But they wait. Unprepared to relent, and nervous, I share with Chad and Gerry other experiences of violence, beginning with memories of my grandfather and father. A few weeks after my 17th birthday, I explain, my father committed suicide, as his father had many years before him. Pausing, I remember the breathlessness of explaining..

Both men died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head, after developing debilitating manifestations of Huntington's Disease, a fatal genetic disorder expressed through degenerative behavioural, neurological, and psychiatric manifestations. I spent decades, wondering if I inherited this disease, never sure if I would become an old man...die young, or follow in their footsteps.

An attentive silence ensues, becoming something of a welcome, or at least I feel welcomed to share with Chad and Gerry that I unable to recall a time when genetics, terminal illness, and suicide were unfamiliar terms.

I do not recall a time before the subject of giving life, of becoming a father myself and passing on the Huntington gene to my children, became interconnected with experiences of risk, grief and loss. I do not recall a time when violence was unknowable, and am often troubled with experiences of violence often treated very differently from other forms of violence, but I also wonder how my experiences of violence create conditions for who I become, and continue becoming. Contemplating my intimate knowledge of violence, I too wonder how experiences of violence help me live life, and think as a man. For almost three decades and across multiple countries, I still remain curious of people, and continue wondering what we can become.

**(Matthew, 28 February 2020)**

### ***Re-entanglement***

We include a narrative of Matthew's interactions with Chad and Gerry to bring forward memories of sharing troubling feelings, helping us feel for phenomena of *gaps, disruptions, and ruptures* as capacity for movement within narratives of violence. This narrative helps us *feel* connections capable of unsettling settled beliefs and memories when Matthew, rather than focusing on the convincing logic of an argument that holds understandings of violence in place, returns to memories of events, experiences, and activities that condition his understandings of violence. When his narrative disentangles specific lines of thought, by acknowledging that the meaning of *violence* is often disputed, we sense a gap emerging between the men, disrupting assumptions about what constitutes violence created by the politics of locations Chad and Gerry inhabit, and seem to assume that Matthew inhabits too: the boundary that excludes perpetrators from their professional fields seems to be reproduced as they assume their own and Matthew's *lack* of experience of violence. As academics, all of us are familiar with similar assumptions about our lived experience of violence, including forms of gender-based violence or condoned self-defence that we may remember. We use this narrative as (auto)ethnographic experiment, as a way of tracing how affective logics are able to produce new, empowering relationships with others.

With narrative self-accounts such as this, we wonder how affective logics challenge taken for granted memories that condition a sense of self for the men. We notice the gaps and disruptions, like the distance that opens between Chad, Gerry and Matthew, as assumptions about violence are resisted through speaking of felt memories. Bringing affective logics and the 'both and more' of experiencing violence into the conversation induces a form of vulnerability for Matthew that is normatively not appropriate for professional relationships, nor perhaps for men's normative conversations within their social worlds, even where violence is discussed. We notice how the gap – the space in the conversation – sustains resistance to privileged masculine identities that have produced dominant ways of thinking about, and limiting our thinking about, violence. Such vulnerabilities offer opportunities for exploitation, which is problematic in community-based violence prevention work – let alone when working with men, whether in the community or in custodial settings, in the criminal justice sector. Aware our responses reflects a shared notion of *professional boundaries* as a conditional *means* of maintaining a sense of self that is immune to the influence of others, so as to mitigate any risk of collusion or

complicity with illegal, immoral, or simply *unwanted* behaviours as a result, professional boundaries stand in direct contrast with Matthew's relationship with Chad and Gerry, which is, ostensibly, a benevolent and convivial relationship premised on an intimacy of neighbours. We are also aware of an uncomfortable-ness with sharing such experiences with men, which we recognise is a relic of individualistic notions of privacy and a concern about how *practiced* Matthew might be in sharing such information. We are also well aware that whilst practitioners and professionals are sometimes 'invited' to share their personal experiences by those they work with, we have experienced the 'authentic-ness' of our stories being challenged by others; maintaining and breaching professional boundaries both are risky endeavors.

Mindful these considerations produce an affective experience of nervousness and anxiety as to Matthew's safety, that the researchers carry with us, our goal here, if there is any, is not to dispute these concerns or lay claim to a/the *right way* of engaging men about experiences of violence, but to re-claim the ambiguousness of self-hood and identity by refocusing attention how the men form their sense of themselves within these encounters. As an affective encounter between the men that Matthew has textually recreated, this narrative also *effects* us to *think* thought *differently*, to think *thought* that which can only be apprehended *sensibly*. *We wonder what is being felt, more so than what is being said.*

Noticing gaps and disruptions that are felt and remembered makes sense of how we oftentimes struggle with conceptualising affective *difference*, differently, with Men's Work. Affective experiences of change and difference do not fit neatly into narrative packages with beginnings and endings, so they require thinking differently about telling stories together too. Creative ambiguity is often an undesirable quality of professional and academic *psychological* writing, yet ambiguity enable us to develop a *multiplicity* of alternative understandings of the *embodied connections* the men bring to bear in the narrative. We also understand that Matthew's storying of felt memories of violence is not in competition with Gerry and Chad's version for status as 'correct', but, instead, they serve as *counterparts* and *counterpoints* to the men's understandings of violence and non-violence. Rather than replacing Gerry and Chad's understandings of violence and non-violence, Matthew's narrative account *unfolds* a complex weave of remembered moments that connect the men, and moments of resistance *between* the men. The narrative gives us pause for thought; how do we share narratives that enliven men's diverse

understandings and experiences of violence, in all its myriad forms; how do we create opportunities to (re)think how we engage men when discussing *violence* and *non-violence*, differently, in the violence prevention sector?

Reflecting on the empowering possibilities of gaps helps us revisit how to trace other connections and experiences with men participating in the research project. We are interested in how men's affective engagement creates *new* affective politics for men, enabling *new* social relationships with others. As with the previous narrative, though, affective practices of engagement offers a *fruitfulness*, as Doug explains, that only emerges afterwards, with the unfolding of further unpredictable effects that do not necessarily come from his authority, but from his actions in relationships with others. Returning to Matthew's fieldwork experiences, we wonder about opportunities to *resist* academic, professional, and personal assumptions and practice habits we take for granted by *extending*, rather than *replicating* or *reproducing*, our notion of gaps to other unfamiliar, if *affecting*, encounters between men.

Turning towards affective logics and nomadic thinking we become entangled in a multiplicity of *ethical* tensions, inclusive of safety concerns, and our professional boundaries involve knowledge that particular *actions* and *engagement practices* have serious consequences for men, their families, and professionals alike. Part of our concern is it is not always obvious what we are bearing witness to, or what men are *affectively experiencing*, except through our own sense that we *could* have or *should* have said something, or said something *different*, which can present serious ethical challenges to a sense of self when *we get things wrong*. This kind of self-regret, although limiting the possibilities of affective encounters and social relationships we permit ourselves to experience with others, is a hard habit to quit as well. We wonder of a productiveness that we are able to bear witness to, through the affirmation of new affective capacities and social relationships that men bring to bear in processes of becoming non-violent.

**GN1: 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Ōtāhuhu with Cris**

**Staff: Bharavi**

**30 September 2020**

Arrive at the whare... a busy-ness is afoot. Bharavi is working the 1st shift. She is doing thirteen things at once, but not actually doing any of it/them at any given time...her “messiness”...her motion and movement...neither a personal attribute or trait...her ways of being are hard to endure; frenetic, loud, in constant motion, I wonder what sustains this-and what this sustains?

Bharavi asks that I take a new client to the GP. Cris arrived yesterday evening; he is experiencing anxiety, has been awake all night. At some point between “last night” and “this morning”...he began walking around the house and along the roadside. Bharavi’s already been in touch with the family this morning, and they’ve said this is uncharacteristic of him. He often rarely leaves the house, alone. Bharavi explains how he is presenting...rather than what he is presenting with, or a judgement about how he “should be” on his first night at emergency accommodation. This feels important; *self-reflexive* rather than an *assessment* of fact-this is how Bharavi is experiencing him, rather than what he is experiencing. Something like an ethical statement of herself vs a moral assessment of his functioning.

Bharavi’s already tried to register and book an online appointment for him, using the details of the GP provided by the family after Bharavi called Cris’ mother. The GP cant locate him on their system. We meet with Cris to discuss going to the GP in person. He’s attentive, but unresponsive, so the conversation is limited to encouraging and welcoming his participation in these activities-however that might be. I’m tasked with driving him to the medical practice, on the other side of Auckland in an area I’m not particularly familiar with, but traffic’s light and Cris willingly joins me in the car without prompting-so we go.

On the way, as we begin crossing into a part of town with heavier, commuter traffic, I turn the radio off to keep my focus on the road. Without the radio playing, I notice Cris is doing *something*, a *groan*...not in pain, but... something else is happening. I sense he’s communicating to me, trying to communicate *with* me. Barely perceptible to my ears, and more something I feel through my car seat, feeling a low rumble—what is this groaning meant to do? There’s no words, and the groan barely registers as a *sound*...yet I get *something* is happening for him-but what? How is this communicating to me, what does it do?

He doesn't answer questions, does not respond to my entreaties...but Cris responds differently at times, the groans changing texture and shape within the confines of the shared space of the car. I wonder about the limits of responsiveness, rather than the limits of a responsiveness...if there is "nothing wrong" with him, what he's doing is "working"...his groans are producing connections, becoming an assemblage with my frustration, irritation, and impatience.

I wonder, what are the consequences of this "strangeness"—I can sense *discomfort*, but I'm not "getting" him. What is he thinking/sensing here, with me, now?

Pulling onto the motorway...torn between slowing down or speeding up, I become worried. Do I try to get off the road quicker, or do I play it safe? How does one become-molecular in the confines of an unfamiliar car ride in unfamiliar terrain with an unfamiliar person...and why do I invoke *familiarity* and *unfamiliarity* when I become lost in these circumstances? What does this do for me...and for Cris? As we approach Pakuranga, I decide taking a more firm, affirmative, directive approach to what we are doing. I've forgotten masking mandates and social distancing mandates mean visitor access to the medical practice is limited!! Parking the car, it isn't as simple as being fearful of what Cris will do, as in breaching protocol, but I'm unfamiliar with "what do to" both in response to these issues but also with social distancing protocols...how does one "do" without a role? "Who" am I, in this circumstance, and how do I introduce myself to the reception?

We arrive to a busy carpark on a busy road, and I ask Cris to wait near the car.

Going inside on my own, I approach the GP administrators and inform them Cris is here to see a GP, that we don't have his GP information, and that Cris presents with some challenges so I am supporting him as a community worker. There is some resistance, or at least some "strain", as the clerks seem as unfamiliar with this as I am. They can't find a record of him, and ask for his health identification number...I explain we don't have this, he doesn't know it, he hasn't said a word to me in the almost two hours I've now spent with him. The administrator asks if maybe he belongs to the other medical practice down the road...I suggest this isn't likely, but go back to the car to ask Cris.

But Cris is gone. I wander around the building and he isn't here, he's gone. Back at the car, Cris reappears, coming from the other direction...we must have circled around each other as we both walked around the building. He says "yes", he's sure this is where he came before, doesn't know any of his details and doesn't have ID.

*Hmmm...*

Back inside, I speak to the clerks again, painfully aware that there's something wrong now, the strangeness of Cris saying three clear sentences combines with a notion I shouldn't be in the medical practice without a legitimate purpose, without confirmed details that we SHOULD, in fact, be here...and now two administrators are looking into their computer system, trying to help. Still unable to find his details, they stumble across his health identification number, which also confirms he is not part of the practice.

*Fuck.*

The senior administrator asks, again, gently, about "who" I am in relation to Cris, what sort of community support this might involve. Through our face masks, all we see are each other's eyes, our wrinkled furrowed eyebrows... our frustration palpable, able to be shared through the bare few centimetres of our faces we can see of each other. I explain Cris arrived at emergency accommodation last night, without revealing sensitive information about the type of service Gandhi Nivas provides, and without breaching confidentiality, given he's not actually a patient here. Their smiles reveal they know something of our circumstances. Less information, or details, or a "thing" that which we can exchange, but rather this knowing is an invitation, a welcoming, to share what we can in order to help each other, enabling me to explain I am from the community, that I work with men, he "lives with us", and wants to see his GP for stress/anxiety etc. The women's faces further reveal a patient smile, a kindness for me in a tough moment. They give me directions, they make a call to the other practice, letting the administrators there know to expect us, that we're on our way.

Outside, Cris is gone. *Again.* Walking around the building, this time in both directions in case he's following behind me. Nothing. Inside again, asking the same staff if they've seen Cris...nothing. Now seems like a good time to contact Bharavi, which is brief. Head into Howick, just a kilometre down the road, check the shops. Back in the car, I check the roadside and the side roads into town; Nothing.

From the car window, the first several businesses appear to be high end retail shops for women's clothing. I am not convinced he would be permitted entry into these places, nor does it seem likely Cris will know how to navigate the rules and regulations of these shops. Watched and followed, security would likely be called; he'd be excluded, washed away like a bad stain. Doors would be closed to him, he'd be asked to leave. If he's thought to pose a risk to people, if "left alone", I worry the police would be called.

I'm beginning to feel...nervous, anxious, doubt, and concern for Cris, which is distracting, and doesn't feel useful to finding him.

I turn back and head back to the GP's office, and contact Bharavi. I've not seen him use one, but can she check if Cris has a mobile number by contacting mom. We're in luck. He's got a phone and picks up when I call him. He mumbles something about a bar, getting a drink. The receptionist helps me decipher Cris' location as a bar, a few blocks further from where I turned around in town. Offering to pick him up, or for him to come there, he doesn't reply so I head over to him.

At the Barrel Inn, I greet him as he pauses in the door way. I ask if he has had a drink, he looks back toward the bar, and says yes. I suggest I am not able to transport him back to the where, if he has had a drink; he again looks back and says go on without him and walks further into the bar. I call Bharavi. He's declined to leave with me. I'm put through to Sahasra, and I'm told;

*you shouldn't be here*

Cris approaches me, looking at me from inside the bar through a large plate glass window, trying to listen to me. Sahasra advises I am to inform Cris of Gandhi Nivas' phone number and address, offer to have someone pick him up (if he is sober) and depart. This isn't a negotiation, an ultimatum...but I'm not sure what I am meant to be doing to "support" Cris.

By then he's gone away from the window, and the bartender is standing near me, in the doorway...looking like he is wary of Cris coming in...leaving me impression Cris has not had a drink at all-and neither am I welcome here anymore.



*Shit, I've only got my personal phone.*

Back in the car, parked outside the bar, I call Bharavi back, and have her text him the contact details as I don't want Cris to have my personal details. Bharavi wants to speak to Cris, I hang up, and find him wandering outside the cluster of shops surrounding the bar; he's been sitting quietly, watching me from afar. I invite him to go back to the whare with me, or we can have someone pick him up, but he's also more than welcome to get a taxi back. Encouraging him to have a word with Bharavi, he is amenable to getting into the car out of the wind to talk with her, but before talking to her he quickly agrees to head back to the whare.

On the way home, he is making similarly strange noises, but now these noises feel like he's apologetically crying, before he abruptly begins "sleeping" and making snoring sounds, only for him to wake and start over again. I wonder, as we pass through "no man's land" of urban motorways, how I can make sense of this with the disorganised urban "space" between Howick and Ōtāhuhu. Cris conveys unfamiliar embodied affect...enabling him to go on with me, and I, somewhat, with him...my voice with his crying; my asking questions with his "sleeping"...although he is clearly not sleeping nor crying.

*What the fuck is happening between us.*

Driving back through Ōtāhuhu, he becomes more attuned to those around him, much more "present" and organised in the car as we pass by the familiar buildings and shops. Back at the house, he follows me into the whare, where Bharavi greets us. As Cris heads off to his bedroom, Bharavi acknowledges having "confidence" in my capacity to handle men and "manage" situations such as supporting them at medical appointments...meant she was asking me to support Cris without considering the possibilities of what might happen, which normally would not be a big deal...yet, unable to give me specifics, Bharavi is afraid she didn't follow rules and processes and policy.

By now, I'm well aware that we "got into this" together, and I share as much, that as much as "something" did happen, 'nothing' also happened as well. Neither of us know what this "something" or "nothing" is...but we're in it together. Bharavi contacted Cris' mother, who organised for his brother in law and an uncle to take him to GP later in the day. We debrief about his "presentation", and I explained something of his "disorganised" behaviours...mindful I have no reason to attribute these to mental health or drug issues...rather than try to express how one might "perceive" it, I wonder if expressing how I experience him would be more useful. Bharavi agrees...although she asserts he didn't "do" anything wrong, either, no particular rules were broken...but today was more a manifestation of things we simply do not know, but instead of things we feel.

The uncle shows up with a cousin in short order, and affirms that Cris does not go for walks, does not leave the house, does not “do things” on his own—in fact, violence sometimes emerges as a response to the family trying to get him out of the house. Both men confirm Cris’ mother “mothers” him incessantly, without blaming nor suggesting that this is wrong...which is more a comment about his “capability” to look after himself.

Bharavi goes to Cris’ bedroom, as she has a few questions she would like to ask him...but comes back in a hurry.

*He’s gone!! Again!*

## A Return to Praxis

We became familiar with the autoethnographic approaches put to work with this report as part of other work in which we have experimented with self-narratives. Our experiences with nomadic *affective* accounts of labyrinthine processes emerge from feelings of frustration, of being stymied by narrative methods limited to illustrating a *gendered* logic of change processes as a matter of locating, identifying, and navigating challenges of violence, secrecy, and silence. *Nomadic* narratives become experiments with unexplained feelings – of anger, fear, affection or estrangement – whilst (re)remembering to ask ourselves *how did I get to here*. Braidotti's (2011b) nomadic theory enables us to resist centering *ourselves* with a narrative figure that experiences change as both a logical and linear process of transcending obstacles, hurdles, and barriers. Nomadic writing, we find, empowers a capacity to *re-remember* experiences by *re-arranging* taken for granted accounts of our experiences as interconnected *affective* spaces in which we trace. Often a *pain-full* process, nomadic thinking empowers alternative, *therapeutic* narratives by drawing upon life-changing traumatic events as remembered encounters with affective forces both propelling us forward and stopping us in place within processes without clear beginnings or endings.

Imbued with the complexities of *felt* experiences, *embodied* affect, and *bodily sensations*, nomadic narratives become opportunities to account for our memories by crafting challenging *affective political spaces* with the presence of *reverberating flows of materiality*, that is, sensorial and cognitive data introducing shifts, changes and irruptions to understandings of experiences, providing insight our processes of struggling to exceed the limits of a life marked by violence, secrecy and trauma. In other words, nomadic narratives create a capacity to *textually* recreate embodied experiences that cannot be *known* – but are *felt* (we hope) – with narrative accounts weaving a mosaic of events and images to embody change processes we experience by *re-storying* our memories theoretically. *Narrative work*, in this fashion, emerges as a purposeful practice of embodying a *mangle* of social forces brought to bear with nomadic narratives, to *rethink* encounters with loved ones, familiar places, and life events as stepping stones to creating and enlivening an affective *relational* logic connecting human, non-human, and more-than-human social worlds that remain unwritten in normative narratives of change. Each narrative is a risky endeavour, though, as affective memory offers unique and never repeatable opportunities to bear witness to escape routes from social forces pinning

change processes in place, revealing both potentials and limits of what becomes possible with *affectivity* as conditions from which change and difference emerges.

When Cris disappears, we notice how the practitioner turns to the men in his family for support in helping him get to the GP. We notice how she bears witness to his family's understandings of his disappearances as strange, and out of character for Cris, who feels pressured by any need to leave his home. Yet he is at the whare, uncommunicative, anxious and wandering. We cannot know how the movement and the motion of the whare enables Cris to break old habits, to groan as he moves rather than lash out at the prospect of moving. Yet we feel that something is happening, a pattern is broken, and new possibilities emerge.

Our understanding of praxis draws on the concept of theoretical and politically informed action, including advocacy, activism and creation of new processes and practices for transforming harmful social relationships. We recognise that practitioners at Gandhi Nivas theoretically inform their practice not only through disciplinary training and knowledge but also through lived appreciation of the politics of social determinants of health (Coombes et al., 2017). Yet we sense something more, something entangling the heart and the spirit of connecting – even with discomfoting strangeness – in our felt memories of engaging with practitioners and clients at Gandhi Nivas. Informing our research praxis with affective logics and nomadic thinking becomes a mode of collaborating that enables us to resist the established logics that individualise risks of violence and attend to otherwise excluded socio-cultural and gendered expectations of work with men in the community.

### ***Gaps, Ruptures, and Breakages***

With this report, we narratively assemble our affective moments of connection with participants, and the services and communities supporting them, in a style that resonates with Doug's experiment with self-formation as a *fruitful process* that benefits others, and by *textually (re)creating* what is happening for us, and others, in our reading of these narratives, we undertake an unrepeatabe *iterative process* of creating possible departures from thinking habits that are hard to quit. Rethinking narratives in this way, we understand the next narrative, as a textual experiment, attempts to provide an embodied logic to Matthew's experiences with *affective* forces whilst making dinner with, and for, the Men's

Group, creating conditions of a social world that is still in the process of becoming transformative.

### **(((Men's Group Narrative)))**

Jack calls me early. He is caught up with domestic errands...picking up chairs for his daughter's wedding, he is unable to meet until 4 p.m. We are cooking dinner for men residing at the whare tonight, part of Jack's compensation for participating in the research project. Jack explains, again, a nervousness. His experience of making a meal is limited to food he can heat up on the stove, in the oven, or with the microwave. He doesn't exactly cook, he says. Jack is surprised when I share with him...we're creating an event, a social encounter, cooking for other men, whom we've never met. I'm not sure how many will be at the whare; how many will be around; how many will want to join us. If Jack is nervous because he does not know how to cook, I am also nervous I don't know how to cook for these men, either.

*This is a big deal for us.*

Hanging up with Jack, I reach out to the whare, for the third time, whilst roaming the supermarket. Abdul eats halal; he is Muslim. Countdown does not carry halal products. None of the fresh chicken, beef or lamb will suffice; I leave the store empty handed, and wonder;

Have I left Jack empty handed, sharing my nervousness with him?

Have I asked too much of us?

Contemplating options, I worry. And worry. And worry. I've come to understand eating is often one of the few ways to break up the day, for men staying at the whare. Many show up at the whare with no possessions, but for the clothing they're wearing; eating, together or alone, is something men can do for themselves, and, often, others, in challenging circumstances. A cup of instant noodles can both affirm the precarity of their living circumstances, and bring momentary thanks and appreciation for what little they have, helping men remember not what they've lost, but what they're working towards.

How will men, who are expecting dinner, respond, if our meal does not suffice?

I park the car in a hurry as I get to the whare, the forgotten halal butcher across the street suddenly remembered. I get to the shop breathlessly wondering of the panic subsuming me. With my minimal knowledge of halal food, the clerks in the shop look at me with a patient interest, their muted questions and smiles breaking a tension arising with the unfamiliar discomfort of roaming around a halal butchery. I share with them;

*This is a big deal for us.*

At the whare...in between unpacking the food, pots, and crockery, I tidy up the dining area and discuss with house staff, that two men residing at the whare will join us, including Aotea. Pacing the house from room to room whilst on an electronically monitored curfew, he joins us, and offers to serve as temporary and intermittent moral support whilst I furiously chop copious amounts of vegetables and await Jack's arrival.

We still don't know how many men from Papakura will be coming when Jack arrives. Before I can ask him about how he's doing, he asks if I can stop for a second; he wants to share something with me. Jack has given it a lot of thought, he wants me to know he welcomes the challenge of creating a meal more complicated than anything he has ever cooked. He is nervous about the unfamiliar food; he's worried about not knowing how to cook; he's scared he won't like the food. He's afraid of ruining it for other men. Yet...he knows he also feels excitement; to be cooking for a large group of men, several house staff, for he and I. He wants today to be a celebration...

It feels strange, and I don't really know what it means, but I think I'm feeling...privileged, to become part of men's change processes. This is a big deal for me.

We set out vegetables for Jack to chop...he is gracefully methodological in following the examples of cut vegetables I set out on the table. Cutting carrots and beans, potatoes and kūmara, we continue talking openly about the degeneration and debilitation of Jack's body...the result of a congenital disease implicating his nervous system. Every day Jack must reassess and familiarise himself with changes to his ability to balance, his legs increasingly less responsive to the demands of everyday life. Walking involves careful consideration of the journey and terrain ahead of him, identifying spaces of safety, to rest and linger.

Sitting still and sitting down are just as problematic, as his legs often do have the strength to lift himself up and remain standing. The Men's Group helps him to remember, helps him not to forget that, in retirement, new opportunities have emerged for his family. Jack shares of becoming emotionally supportive of his daughter's wish, to get married to her partner of over 20 years, how this has become possible through his involvement with the Men's Group. Finishing the vegetables, Jack's participation is influenced by a need to sit, stand, and walk around the room on a regular basis. Movement becomes a strategy, helping to minimise the debilitating acute pain always on the verge of shutting down a capacity to sit, stand and walk around. Jack, unhampered by the blunt knife he uses, sings to me;

...each cut of a vegetable is a chance to cut anew, one more opportunity to see what a body can do...

Jack's knife thuds, time and time again, with sounds of "chop chop chop" against the board...each cut creating a loud and profound (if slightly unnerving) kathunk. As the knife, carrot, and cutting board blur into a single motion of movement...I wonder;

*What is Jack doing?*

As I await the oven to heat up...I wonder what unfamiliar possibilities emerge when we no longer want to remember abilities and intentions, causation and effect. I want to welcome memories of touch, feel, and duration...but I pause...

*How will I remember this?*

The men from Papakura arrive. Pita, the other resident at the whare, helps me gather the men before they disperse around whare. Greeting the men, he is also listening, I notice, attending to the men moving around us;

*He's wading in...*

Positioned in the kitchen to welcome the bustling forces of ten strangers coming together, I marvel to Jack;

*There's a lot of us here...and no one person knows the name of everyone present.*

Rather than introducing ourselves, the men, us, we...congregate together near the food Jack and I are preparing. Unnamed men's inquisitiveness reaches us across languages and cultures. As we become unbounded by the things that set us apart, I am not sure what emerges.

*How will I remember this?*

As Jack and I finish cooking...something is happening...the three women staff do not sit aside. Although this is a Men's Group, the women transported the men here, are here with us **now**...collaborating yet not participating, they both stand amongst us and between us, but not apart from us, their presence, they say, is only to bear witness to our get together tonight. They're interested in how men become otherwise.



The table is set, the food is ready, the men are all present...and suddenly I'm aware of a kerfuffle. Pita has waded in again, and mentioning the presence of Christian and Muslim and Hindu men amongst us, he asks for us to bless the food. Jack says he's not particularly religious yet wants to respect the men present. He offers a short prayer, before pausing a moment, and begins again;

...thanks for the opportunities of participating in the Men's Group, thanks for understandings and knowledges of change processes, and thanks for the chance to cook good food...

Opening his arms wide, his voice filling the room with grace and humbleness, Jack thanks me, for these possibilities, and closes by acknowledging the men, who, if like him, are nervously joining him in sharing food. In unison, I am asked by all six men to go first...tearfully, I stumble...unable to speak and move, I motion...  
...towards Jack, who, in turn, defers...  
...to the men.

The men are laughing as they plate their food, whilst Jack and I sit quietly together, attending to a shared tiredness arising from our efforts. The men often and frequently become excitable...they are enjoying the food by being, together, with other men. We eat, joke, and banter, experimenting with the unfamiliar social interactions between men. No-longer amongst strangers, yet lost amidst a journey-ing together, Jack and I almost forget to eat, ourselves.

Two hours later, thinking how to "end" the night, as I contemplate how to "close" a get-together that is neither "my" dinner nor at "my" house...I think about Pita as I notice Jack, amidst the men, becoming imperceptible.

He's wading in.

This is a big deal for us.

As the men and women leave the whare, startled and bewildered, I ask Jack.

What have we become?

**Men's Group: 1 October 2022**  
**Jack, Pita, Aotea (Ōtāhuhu)**  
**Tim, Sayam, Abdul (Papakura)**  
**Ōtāhuhu and Papakura Staff**  
**Location: GN1-Ōtāhuhu**

Our conceptualisation of affective logic and gaps in thought helps us revisit the connections Matthew's narrative traces between the men, and our experiences working with men. By revisiting these connections, our desire is to articulate social forces conditioning narrative connections, and how new modes of existence and new modes of engagement become empowered when we enliven narratives with moments of resistance and connection to academic, professional, and relational forces that we encounter in the violence prevention sector. Following this thought further, by opening up and affirming social forces we encounter, we can condition new possibilities of thought by revisiting recurring questions we often ask of men in the violence prevention sector, by asking the very same questions of *ourselves*;

**What am I in the middle of?**

**How did I get here?**

**What are we doing that creates the conditions for change for men, their whānau, and the communities in which they live, as well as ourselves?**

**What possibilities are afoot for men and boys, as well as ourselves as academics and practitioners, as we seek to produce different engagement practices?**

**What possibilities emerge with men's participation in violence prevention initiatives as a form of collaborative partnership with academic researchers and practitioners, in particular?**

Whilst these questions inform a critical professional praxis of wondering how we keep men's processes of change *in sight*, this also presents further tensions when we think about how we *empower* change processes. In our experience, challenging men's modes of relation and understandings of change is often *insufficient* to enact change, or that the changes men bring into being as a result, are, more bluntly, unlikely to produce safety for others. For instance, when we support men to enact interventionist anger management techniques meant to minimise conflict through an engagement practice of *motivational interviewing*, this engagement approach is often insufficient when confronting men whose choices and actions are likely to have serious consequences for their safety and the safety of others. When men repeatedly make contact with their partners and children through text messages, or visit them at school, whilst subject to protection orders prohibiting such contact, throughout our careers we have witnessed the failure of approaches where success involves becoming better decision makers, or more empathetic beings concerned

about the wellbeing of others (or their own wellbeing). Telling men what they *should* do, or should *not* do, is not the same as empowering change processes that acknowledge the politics of self-beliefs (as *dutiful* husbands and *providing* fathers, for instance) as social conditions *holding men in place*. This report, then, is intended as a response to these challenges, by seeding change within practices that privilege new modes of existence empowering new modes of relationship with others. By bringing into being modes of relation that privilege men's affective capacities to experience change, we can begin *thinking with* and *thinking through* the social conditions holding men's capacities for violence and non-violence in place; we can keep men and their change processes in sight.

Thinking with the night of the dinner for the men's group, where the women join in to witness the men's engagement with each other, to collaborate in their celebration of openly talking about their feelings, of eating together and connecting with each other, we notice something within the whare that stirs gratitude for opportunities the men are provided. Affective logic, where it is possible to feel contradictory affections simultaneously is a logic of both/and, and reminds us that connections amongst men also sustain violence. So the non-violencing of dinner within the whare may present a different perspective for the women and children who fear the violence of which the men are capable. We celebrate with hope that as the men come to feel the connections of a warm kitchen and a meal made to share, they also become open to acting more safely within the context of their own homes. It's a big deal for us.

**(((Men's Narrative)))**

(D) Yeah. And, so, during the week, I was working with this guy, he was strung out. My gosh. He was, I was, he was just, he'd turned up, like after smoko (smoke break). Ahhh. This is going on, this going on, (Doug saying to himself) I've just gotta get out of here. Okay. Yeah, just carry on working. He's the only guy from this company, and he leaves us on the job. Ummm, that kept happening and kept happening. They ended up sending somebody else from their company, who was asking me what to do. And then, kind of telling me off. And I was finding it really difficult to deal with. I ended up getting off the bus at Māngere Town Centre, and punching this, the timetable, then somebody ran over my bike, on one of those hoists. That's another thing. My head. And my brother, he started up his old, whatever he goes on about, the oldest one. So I had three things, just, just mental. I knew they weren't real...

(M) Each individually quite difficult, by the sounds of it, let alone...

(D) Yeah yeah. And then it culminated with a fight, at work, to the with the guy that was, giving my workmate a hard time. And he just happened to get me on the phone. And, ummm...I just lost it. Wasn't proud of anything that happened, except for my shiner, because he got me a good one. And that's pretty much the what put me on. I spent a couple of days here, then went back to work, and then got in a fight, I think.

(M) How did you make...

(D) A right royal stuff up.

(M) ...a decision to come here?

(D) Because I wasn't handling things, and I didn't want to go home, to a place that wouldn't understand any of it...

(M) Yeah.

(D) ...and rest.

(M) Okay.

(D) (Laughter) Because you just can't rest. They just want to know, if they don't want to know, then they want to annoy you.

(M) Were you able to rest, here, then?

(D) Yeah. Yeah, there's an old dude, and then, yeah, I'll tell you, he was pissing in the corner. He was he was a really good guy. Really, uh, just, not many people can be a mentor, for me, for some reason. But he, I say he was a mentor, for that for that, at the time.

(M) What, what was rest like? Can you can you kind of describe it?

(D) Just, two days, do whatever I want.

(M) Were you working still?

(D) Nah, after two days, my work broker rang up and said, can you go back? And I said, sure, like a dummy. I got issues with that, too, because the guy knew, I said I'm gonna punch someone. (Laughter). I got issues with that. So he should've caught it. Hard job.

(M) And that rest, that you felt, that you experienced, did that change things, sort of, moving forward?

(D) It changed things for my family. And they laughed. You know how there's the thing with my daughter (a verbal altercation), well my son came out of his room when it happened when he heard the bang (of Doug running into the doorway whilst trying to avoid running into his daughter). And he's like, ah what's going on, what'd you do, kind of thing. And, the black eye, took all of that away, took all of that uncertainty away. Took all of my shame, took all of their fear, because I know what it was, it was her angst, her ungratefulness, my wife's bullying on the trip, all of it, and I soaked it up. I didn't know quite what to do, with it. It changed it all, so that, that, our shame wasn't the, the stepping stone, the tripping stone, anymore, because I had a black eye. So I had already proven everything that needed to be said. And I got greeted by a big big smile by my wife, because she kind of understood. Jessica didn't hit me up, because the cops didn't take me away. But she knew, knew I got charged up, because I had a black eye.

(M) What is it, do you think, she got?

(D) Who?

(M) Your wife. What is it that...for lack of better explanation, made sense that hadn't been making sense before.

(D) Something changed. And it changed in the way of my black eye, and it was enough of an explanation for her. Kind of brought it back around full circle. You know (laughter). Ahhhh. Because I don't...no, I hadn't ever had the, one, while we've been married. But I can, I think she kind of thought it was a bit stressful.

(M) Hmm. Thank you for sharing that, not quite sure you've shared the entirety of that story in the past, when you've been talking about these things with me. So thank you for that. Kind of thinking of your self, what became different for you, then, in terms of having some time away? Not so much what you were doing, what what was different for you? How was, how were things different, for your self?

(D) I got I got some understanding. There were the chap, kind of knew this stuff. I felt like he knew this stuff, so conversations we were having...man conversations. And, it's good when somebody, even if they don't understand if you believe they're understanding, that's just what, that's what the doctor ordered.

(M) Still really important.

(D) Really, really important, yeah.

(M) Because you've, you've talked about that, with the men's group, quite a bit, and I, we're not here only to talk about the men's group, but I know that you've, it feels like sitting there and being part of it, you've put a lot of energy and bravery, into your participation with the men's group. You bring your self.

(D) Oh shit, I want it to mean something, because I've fricking, I've been tested.

(M) So when you say man conversations, I also know that you're not, you're not just saying men are this or men or that, but you're talking about men being able to have conversation.

(D) Men don't use a lot of the self care words, but they have the meaning in their own language. Given time. That's what I mean by man conversations, you have to have time to have those, otherwise you're just doing what you got time for. Yeah, and just fitting everything in.

**(Doug, Interview, 15 December 2021)**

The first narrative of Doug's interview (see page 18), to our understanding, is an experiment of opening himself up to a sense of self outside what is immediately imaginable to both men. By trying to make sense of his experience of change by tracing a mode of being capable of experiencing variations of affect, Doug shares a conceptualisation of fruitfulness to language felt experiences, and puts to work an enlivening, nourishing, and sustaining process of "feeding in the good stuff" to offer a way of understanding an unfamiliar mode of being that would be unavailable to Matthew alone. We understand this explanation as a way of tracing the "good things" that are coming his way, even if he does not have the language now to explain what these 'things' might be, displacing, for Matthew, taken for granted masculine ways of thinking in which change has a productive value for men, and their families. Doug's narrative, then, is not a representation, a metaphor, nor an analogy; fruitful-ness is a literal explanation making sense of unrepresentable experiences that arise when self-narratives are no longer limited to normative storytelling describing experiences of change.

The second narrative, which is a continuation of Doug's narrative from the previous section, was experienced by Matthew with a sense of dissonance, in that Doug returns to familiar patterns of thought in which he *describes* narrative events with cognitions, emotional feelings, and possibilities of action ("Because I wasn't handling things, and I didn't want to go home, to a place that wouldn't understand any of it..."). Taken together, the two narratives do not necessarily support self-coherence, nor, to our understanding, are they required to. Rather than an error, or the return of a normative identity that pins change in place through a recognised productive value, for him or his loved ones, that makes sense to others (like desistance from violence or empathy for victims), Doug's narratives are an affective process of creating, between him and Matthew, a composition of social forces that converge with different possibilities of non-violencing – for himself and for his loved ones. We feel the importance here of a necessary specificity. We are unconcerned as to his becomings as a productive coworker; our interest in Doug's narrative is how affective processes of self-formation become investments in support of subjectivities where violence becomes less likely, mitigated, or reduced – anywhere; at home or at work.

A form of *affective* self-formation, our notion of *becomings* trace the always already present *intensive affective transformations* brought to bear with Doug's understanding of

everyday life as a mangle of social forces that conditions his experiences of the world. We appreciate threads in the mangle, like precarious employment, workplace bullying, masculine violence perpetrated against other men, familial relationships, intimacy with his wife, and more. We understand the opportunities of *affective engagement* help Matthew resist perpetuating *reactive* masculine assumptions about change that positions the productive value of change along a *hierarchical scale* of socio-economic worth, and by returning to narratives of self-formation empowered with a composition of affective forces that converge with the realisation of different agential possibilities for him *and* his family, the *connective* possibilities of *affective* self-narratives (“Oh shit, I want it to mean something, because I’ve fricking, I’ve been tested.”) open up opportunities, for *both* Matthew and Doug, to return to *embodiment* as an *affective* process of self-formation. To our understanding, *subjectivity* is *not* a matter of narratively adequate and accurate representative accounting practices of experiences of change, instead, narrative *affective flow* creates gaps between the men that Matthew remembers from the interview as unexamined space, opportunities unsaid, and possibilities left unexplained (“So when you say man conversations, I also know that you’re not, you’re not just saying men are this or men or that, but you’re talking about men being able to have conversation.”). Gaps free the men from the necessity of narrative coherency and stable self-images, their *kōrero* becoming a creative process of breaking open, untangling, and following lines of thought further, *together*, creating a co-production of new social forces that Doug is able to put to work with the emergence of new political locations disrupting taken for granted masculine self-beliefs (“Men don’t use a lot of the self care words, but they have the meaning in their own language. Given time. That’s what I mean by *man* conversations. You have to have time to have those, otherwise you’re just doing what you got time for. Yeah, and just fitting everything in.”).

As we reflect on our affective engagement with Doug’s second narrative, and the gaps that open up as opportunities, we notice how his story positions his wife as having the ability to respond to him with understanding (“something changed, it was my black eye”). His appreciation of her understanding moves us, and reminds us of women’s responsibilities for compassion, understanding, care, and sometimes harmony in the home. We still wonder how Doug’s wife understands his experience of a “shiner”, though we bear witness to Doug’s story of her laughter as the eruption of change that he recognised. Did she appreciate the irony of him wearing the scars of violence himself; the realisation that he



would now experience the kind of bruising pain he is capable of inflicting on others; the possibility that their shared experience of shaming has dispersed with the humiliation of his defeat by another man? We cannot know more than the meaning of her laughter for Doug as he speaks with Matthew, telling himself as a man in a process of change. We are uncertain, but we recognise, and maybe she does too, that Doug has not desisted from violence since he wears the evidence of men's violence towards men in his bruised face. So while he has been living within a world of work where violence erupts and produces his shiner, he brings his face home to a moment of non-violencing that brings us hope.

The inclusion of Doug's narratives, as well as parts of this interview that, for one reason or another, are left off the page and yet to be told, offer new ethical possibilities of caring for men's processes of self-formation produced with and by non-representable, non-linear story-ing. Our intention here is to eschew representative logics of self-formation to help access where men, and ourselves, become stuck and unstuck with narrative fluxes and flows of affective movement, with the narratives given here helping us break with the fixity of thought in order to ask different questions. This becomes important when we experience the touch of masculine expectations, in particular, when Matthew re-remembers struggling with Doug's masculine self-expectations telling him what he can, and cannot, think about ("He was, I was, he was just, he's turned up, like after smoko (smoke break). Ahhh. This is going on this going on I've just gotta get out of here. Okay. Yeah, just carry on working. He's the only guy from this company, and he leaves us on the job. Ummm, that kept happening and kept happening."). The embodied affectivity brought to bear by Doug enables us to re-remember a multiplicity of familiar professional and institutional practices conditioned with masculine commands. We are aware many of our taken-for-granted neoliberal professional practices are premised on assumptions about men's autonomy and self-determination which privilege expectations of self-control and mastery. We are also aware that our struggle with professional practices is often embodied as a resistance to understandings of change as a process of only needing to learn how to make better choices next time. In effect, we experience the limitations imbued by neoliberal images of men as subjectively figuring men as existentially lacking capacities to do differently when confronted with the absence of knowledge appropriate to make informed decisions. Accountability, in this sense, is a matter of men gleaning, obtaining, or promulgating knowledge and resources *that puts men on the right track*. In our experience, this forms the affective conditions for subjectivities which invoke patriarchal modes of relation as a

mechanism for *disciplinary governance* over others, with misogynistic beliefs, such as seen in the *manosphere*<sup>4</sup>, playing a supportive role in maintaining and sustaining criticisms of ways of being and modes of relationship which are believed to *put men on the wrong track*. We also know the affective mechanisms of such beliefs and modes of relation overlap with far-right and alt-right communities espousing the glorification of violence against women, and men, such as Matthew, who resist the hegemony of specific masculinities, and masculine norms, through relational subjectivities and practices promoting *non-violence* as *ethical* modes of being.

In practice, Doug's self-narratives *resource* a capacity to recognise, resist and disrupt the *touching* of normative masculine thought, textually unleashing, for Matthew and Doug, the potential to narratively *craft, trace, layer, and weave* social forces they are able to sustain and maintain *together* in *kōrero*. An implication, for us, then, is Doug's narrative becomes a kind of self-formation incorporating a *joy* of untangling *moments of resistance to* and *moments of connection with* affective forces that the men find affirming, comforting, disruptive and confronting. We can understand this theoretically, as well, with Braidotti's (2018) ethics of joy, with an image of the thinking subject that which "rests on an enlarged sense of a vital inter-connection with a multitude of (human and non-human) others" (p. 221). Braidotti's ethics situates subjectivity as a process-oriented creative re-imagining of self-hood which emerges through human and non-human vital (affective) inter-connections with others. Fleetingly unstable, and difficult to textually reproduce, Doug and Matthew's *kōrero*, rather than relying on capturing an accurate representation of what each of them *experiences*, (re)forms experiences and understandings of narrative *events* with a creative *affective logic* they *feel* and embody *together*, a creative logic that we, in part, can *follow*.

With brief, incomplete *textual* accounts of multiple webs of affective interaction occurring *between* Matthew and Doug, (re)remembering the perils of "stopping" men and their experiences of change in place, we privilege affective traces within these narratives that encourage, welcome, and sustain a *multiplicity* of narrative possibilities only partially accounted for with our analysis of their interactions. Putting into action unique and never repeatable opportunities of self-formation we can bear witness to, we *weave a mosaic* of *affective* experiences that disrupts taken for granted notions of what we can *know* by bring

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<sup>4</sup> See James (2024) for an explanation of *manosphere* that highlights the heterogeneity and variation of "victimization narratives" (p. 2).

to the fore what we can *sense*. Although we cannot know what the movement means for the future, our experience of Doug's narratives *feels* moving. We are moved as he remembers his movement and the events that reconfigure to shift him from frustrations, anger and violent outbursts to joy in the feeling of shared understanding, and we are moved again as we recognise Doug is (re)living memories of non-violencing in the family home, and in the *whare*, that open *new* possibilities for Doug and those who share his world. These feelings of movement become counterpoints and counterparts to our concerns for Matthew's safety, and the safety of Doug's loved ones, when challenging and resisting masculine norms and practices Doug continues to bring to bear within his social world.

**(((Men's Narrative)))**

(T) It's just thinking about...yeah, it untangling. It's just going into the, back into that moment. like they (Gandhi Nivas counsellors) were asking me, talking to me, what happened, why happened, what happened. I was like, okay. Telling how, every time, what happened. Every different counsellor, (I shared a) different thing. So, it was allowing me to go into that moment and untangle myself, and maybe understand that situation. And let's keep it calmly and steadily, those things, like, they were, one by one, they were, like, explaining these things, how to understand.

**(Talan, Interview, 29 May 2021)**

## ***Becomings***

As writers of this report, we recognise academics, professionals and practitioners are not always aware of social forces conditioning common practices within the violence prevention sector. Furthermore, we are not always aware of how we sustain, maintain and propagate, let alone resist, reject, and destabilise, the multitude of social, academic, and institutional forces disciplining the communities with which we work. This often limits academic research to (re)thinking which professional practices are potentially helpful *and* unhelpful, if not harmful, to men and their loved ones, and the communities in which they live. Whilst we do not suggest contemporary *interventionist* practices are devoid of therapeutic potential, whether supporting men form new social relations premised on *empathy* for others or challenging men's use of social power relationships as a mechanism of control and discipline, we *also* acknowledge the limits of *normative* (Western, colonial) psychological theory that posits violence prevention is a matter of addressing problematic cognitions and behaviors that we associate with men *being violent*. With a range of professional experiences and expert knowledges from across a diverse expanse of psychological approaches informed with community-focused feminist and posthumanist philosophies, we believe our contribution as scholars with culturally-situated yet transnational expertise in the violence prevention sector also entails empowering *new political locations* where our work produces a *fruitfulness* not just for *ourselves*, but a fruitfulness, we hope, for *others* as well. To our understanding, this means the effects of our participation, in part, often only emerge *afterwards*, oftentimes in unpredictable ways that will be unknown to us. In this sense, our report is put forth in order to enable the audience to *sense* our *becomings* as professionals, to sense our logic as we wonder what conclusions can be drawn with connections we bring to bear in this report, and, in particular, what can be experienced with narratives retelling affective connections we encounter in the violence prevention sector.

We invite you to join us in the transformative potential of creating *new* political space, political space that emerges by wondering:

**How do we experience an ethical professional praxis that keeps change processes in sight?**

**What does becoming non-violent with men feel like?**

**How would we remember it?**

We acknowledge our proposition requires different *senses* to remember *events*, different ways of *remembering past affective conditions*, and different *modes of being* able to *resonate* the *politics* of our *past* and *future becomings*. In our view, this involves a practice of loosening narrative knots keeping ourselves imprisoned in specific political locations by creatively reworking *affective* self-accounts of subject formation. The narratives and accounts we share here are a purposeful selection of texts that help us sustain a nomadic mode of thinking that produces specific *self-critiques* we find useful in disrupting taken for granted knowledge practices that we carry with us into and out of our social worlds. Re(membering) experiences is less to *identify*, that is, to *represent* the disciplinary consequences of our political locations, but, instead, nomadic writing helps resonate the *dangerousness* of these locations as a mangle of practices that pin men and their experiences of change in place, and brings forth new, unpredictable possibilities for the violence prevention sector when we embody *different* modes of relation with others. Nomadic memory work, in this sense, is an *iterative* practice of experimenting with *relational linkages* and *affective connections*, and creating modes of being with new agential capacities bringing into being practices of non-violencing.

Retrospectively evoking *modes of relation* for men, between men, and between men and their loved ones, to make sense of these narratives we put to work Tocci and Moon's (2020) conceptualisation of non-violencing as *variations* in modes of relation where violence is less possible, reduced, and mitigated. Our conceptualisation of non-violencing extends violence prevention practices past the limits of an individual *being* non-violent. Nomadic thinking is a creative process we put to use to challenge taken for granted notions of men as *lonely thinkers* with *control* over their actions, enabling us to resist a familiar narrative trap in which an individual is conceptualised as possessing a unitary, self-regulating consciousness, where subjectivity, in the words of Colebrook (2002), is limited to "unchanging perceiver[s] set *over* and *against* life" (our stress) (p. 128). What we find in the participants' narratives is an *empowering fruitful effect* of "therapeutic spaces" occurring at Gandhi Nivas, that is, hints and suggestions of possible interconnections, modifications, and transformations making known processes of change we can *follow* and creating new capacities for non-violencing through experiences of change we can *sense*. Sometimes processes of change, though, are the *becomings* of *other becomings*.

In other words, our experiences of change, as powerful departures from the stucked-ness of thinking which holds us in place, enable processes of self-formation begetting the becomings of others as well.

We cannot know, for instance, how Talan's story of his thinking and untangling the moment of violence that brings him to Gandhi Nivas brings fruitful change to his lived experiences of controlling violence at home and social entrapment in his worlds of social relations. We *can* become witnesses, though, to his felt experiences of *connections* with counsellors with whom his thinking becomes possible. Talan is not alone in his untangling of himself – and his danger to others. He is in the company of skilled practitioners whose careful inquiries travel with him as he journeys through variations in modes of relationship where untangling is a shared project of creating possibilities for non-violencing (steady and calm). Bearing witness to changes and processes of creation we cannot always see, but feel, becomes an ethical responsibility for reflexive praxis within the collaborative project towards a multiplicity of social entanglements that support, sustain and maintain non-violencing.

### (((Men's Group Narrative)))

Jack arrives at his self-appointed time of 430 p.m., as he's told me numerous times, before other men arrive so that we have our usual time alone. Close behind him, though, Seve follows him inside. Jack's tradition of sharing his week with me before other men arrive, what I understand as a kind of *practice* session, is disrupted when Seve's excitement fills the room. I begin to wonder about his smile, which seems *on edge*, when Seve abruptly acknowledges he rushed back from counselling and other appointments today. He is looking forward to tonight, that having men in his life is helping him sustain a positive engagement with various *other* counselling services. He's lost custody of kids, and sees his kids supervised by a social worker, with the Court's mandating him to see a counsellor, to "better manage" his anger that his young son was sexually abused. Seve's PSO arose after threatening his older child, who he blames for not "looking after" his younger brother.

Seve hesitates...

*I want to thank you for your support last week, and inviting me to join the group the day after I arrived.*

Jack's beaming, with a big smile. He is thankful

It's usually me who begins the Men's Group by sharing about my week.

The three bags Jack is carrying contain dozens of DVD's and a DVD player. Passing the movies around for us to have a look at, Jack shares with Seve a similar appreciation for both men and the staff at the whare, as well as our Men's Group in particular, and wants to donate to the whare, in recognition of the care, support and compassion he experiences when he visits—here and no where else.

As Jack, one by one, shows Seve the films he's brought, he also shares a story of purchasing four DVD players, as the shop keepers said, apparently, these were the last four consoles they would likely ever sell. Seve and I share looks and raised eyebrows, a bit concerned, when Jack says he's got too many, he's never gonna watch all the movies he has collected.

I comment it feels like he's implying he will never watch all his movies "before he dies", but Jack dispels any such notion of this, telling us his involvement with the Men's Group, and connections he maintains with men and staff at the whare, support him by "reminding me what's important", and asks to donate the movies and a DVD player to the whare, as a sign of appreciation. He wants to help men, who often arrive at the whare without any financial resources or belongings, as, Jack presumes, this means they also have limited capacity and opportunity to "enjoy" themselves whilst at the whare.



Jack wants to donate something that is fruitful, that can move between men at the whare, belonging to no one yet everyone. The whare, he says, support a number of men far beyond his capacity to help each one “in person”. Without the care and support he has experienced, and continues experiencing, Jack says, he would be “miserable” and “mean”...and wants men at the whare to know *other* men care about them, *too*. Jack gets emotional, when explaining he feels this is the best way to acknowledge changes he experiences, that mere words would be insufficient.

Both Seve and I are quiet, and feeling quite touched with Jack’s outpouring of emotion, all I can do is, again, share looks, eyebrows, smiles with Seve...a bit *stunned*, I put my arm on Jack’s shoulders, thinking at least I can let him know I am *here*, with him.

Jack quickly comments that he is donating his movies *not* because he thinks of dying, or that his health is poor, or that he no longer wants to live...he no longer needs them because he is “busy” in ways that mean he will have far less time to watch far fewer movies than he might have in the past. He is no longer interested in collecting movies to “pass the time”, alone, as something to do whilst waiting to do other things. Jack says, instead, he is busying himself with activities and projects that only become possible when he considers the staff and other men he’s met at the whare, and hopes, by donating, he can honour the opportunities that have emerged for him, and his whānau, with the support Gandhi Nivas offers him. Rather than watching movies, Jack says he *now* spends much more time thinking about his family, and doing things that don’t necessarily help them, but that, he hopes, *cares* for them. Jack tells us he spent many years as a traditional “breadwinner”, where he demanded influence and say *over* decisions impacting his family’s daily life. He no longer wants to *call the shots*...

Jack’s often talked about this *identity*, as a man, is problematic, and as his thinking has changed about what he is capable of doing, what his capacities are as a father/husband, he now busies himself creating *conditions* that he hopes helps his family thrive. He now proffers his wife not *choices*, like about giving her options for a hot tub for the family home, but Jack is learning, he says, how to be supportive to *her* in terms of challenges she might face. Using the example of spending a large sum of money, as well as time, renovating much of his house so that his daughter can afford to get married, Jack acknowledges in the past he would have only thought as to whether or not he approves of his daughter’s marriage before undertaking any sort of financial and social support of her plans. Now, Jack says, he regularly shares how he maintains an active relationship with his daughter, where he helps create the *conditions* of her “hopes” and “dreams”, by welcoming her to share her ideas and desires for how, where, and when she wants to get married. Jack wants to donate to the whare to acknowledge that, rather than fearing him, his family now seek out his help to meet the challenges of everyday life, to achieve their own hopes and dreams, which Jack explains has never occurred before. Jack says we are part of changes *his whānau* experiences.

Seve tells us that he appreciates Jack's stories and narratives, and although he is often overwhelmed with whānau-related custody issues, Seve shares that Jack's stories create hope for Seve, that he feels welcomed to share his own challenges the last few weeks, which gives him a lot to think about, including how he knows he needs to shift the notion that work is a burden...that work is something that takes time away from doing other, more interesting or more important things, or that work is a financial relationship involving compensation for his efforts. Seve wants to learn how to think about both his son's and step-son's safety and well-being, as things that do not take "work", even as he has to work at these things, but more that when he thinks of these things as *work*, he feels the implications of thinking "work" as things we would rather not be doing, or things he should be paid for. Instead, Seve wants to think about his children's well-being as something he works towards. He wants to *care* for them, differently.

I become distracted, as I remember Seve blames himself for his son being sexually assaulted, telling us the week before he feels he failed his children. His kids are hurt, experiencing not only the trauma of sexual assault, but he also became violent and aggressive towards them himself, further jeopardising their safety and well-being. Rather than guarding, maintaining, or controlling their safety and well-being, much like Jack's *breadwinner*, Seve says he wants his counselling to become about creating possibilities of difference for his sons, by becoming a dad that supports, and works towards, rather than controls, good outcomes for others.

Thinking how I have not spoken for many minutes, I wonder out loud how their stories conjure a sense of *mutuality*...both a mutual appreciation of each other's involvement in the group, but also how their involvement in the Men's Group *becomes* conditions of *change* for each other.

I wonder, out loud still...how both men *move* each other, and therefore become *movement* themselves.

A little later, the three of us leave the Ōtāhuhu whare, and I drive us the Papakura whare. For the entire 45 minutes, Jack sits in the front seat of the car with me, and facing forward the entire trip, also continues to share with Seve, who is sitting in the back seat. Although I occasionally contribute comments and thoughts whilst I navigate the motorway, I am not privy to what is transpiring between the men. Instead, **I feel** something transpiring between the men, a force empowering both men to continue experimenting with each other, with different ways to thinking of themselves. It is startling intimate and I feel a sense of regret and disappointment that I cannot attend to them more. I feel I'm missing something of immense importance, not to record but to remember something...

Arriving on site, Jack leads Seve to the back of the whare, having become familiar with the layout of the house and property on previous visits. We sit at a picnic table, restfully enjoying our company together.

I sense *today* doesn't fit an idea of "support" that offers empathy, recognition or familiarity of the challenges Seve is facing, or the 40 years of complex challenges Jack experiences in his marriage. We don't take responsibility by offering solutions, or telling each other it will all be okay. Support is no longer limited to recognising each other, and our troubles, in order to follow, contribute or participate in our conversations. Instead, in our coming together, in becoming accountable to each other with an ethics of reciprocity, we are not "giving" something of ourselves, but co-creating conditions of thinking, *differently*, together, *between us*. Rather than giving, as a gift, facets of ourselves that come already formed, identified and packaged, ready to be received or declined by others, taken up and put to use by others, Jack shows me giving our "selves" is also embracing unpredictability and welcoming chance to produce possibilities of change and difference, *for others*.

Our laughter becoming loud with humour, sadness, joy and despair, Rawiri Mohammed appears from several meters away, keeping a distance where he is able to hear our conversations without becoming involved in ways that would require him to contribute.

*He's peering at us.*

Rawiri Mohammed tells us it's difficult to figure out "what" we are doing together...

Jacks's laughter welcomes, pulls in Rawiri Mohammed to join us, and the three of us take turns inviting Rawiri Mohammed in whatever ways he feels possible. Asking Seve's permission before proceeding, I share with Rawiri Mohammed that Seve is sharing the challenges of figuring out how to work with various counselling services, due, in part, to a very traumatic situation within his whānau. There is nothing "easy" about this, nor is there anything "easy" for Jack and I in figuring out how to support Seve. Jack, with impeccable timing, suggests to Rawiri Mohammed that we, as a Men's Group, engage the messiness together, that in our coming together we do this work together between us. And with that, Rawiri Mohammed moves a bit closer to the picnic table, and asks if he has to share his thoughts, about what we are discussing, if he, in turn, wants our input to his challenges.

It's only now, that I notice Rowan walking around us, glancing toward us...and we begin a similar "intake" process...albeit with a bit more volume and energy now that Rawiri's laughter has joined ours...and we welcome Rowan to join us.

**Men's Group: 3 Feb 2022**  
**Jack, Seve (Ōtāhuhu)**  
**Rawiri Mohammed, Rowan (Papakura)**  
**Location: GN1-Ōtāhuhu to GN3-Papakura**

With this narrative of the Men's Group, Matthew remembers how Jack joined the research project in mid-2020. Matthew was, at the time, conducting fieldwork at the whare in Te Atatū, and by happenstance, Jack stopped by the whare to have a cup of coffee with his counsellor. This became a habit both welcomed and encouraged by Gandhi Nivas staff; socialising with others became part of a safety plan Jack put in place a few months before he met Matthew, as returning to the whare once a week provided Jack the confidence to return home after staying at the whare for a few days. Although he was not subject to a PSO, Jack introduced himself to Matthew by explaining his involvement with Gandhi Nivas through narratives of bullying in his workplace, carefully implicating how he was bullied for *both* "very real" neurophysiological disabilities effecting his balance and mobility as well as more "made up" beliefs about his physical appearance.

Jack introduced himself to Matthew through narratives weaving together experiences of social exclusion and isolation, and prior to coming into contact with Gandhi Nivas, Jack shared he sought help from the police after becoming overwhelmed with *both* a desire to use violence against others *and* suicidal ideation. Desperate for help, Jack presented himself to a local police station after a particularly traumatic experience at his workplace, and informed the officers on duty that he "killed someone". In Jack's telling, he feigned an act of murder only to get "a hearing" with the officers after "laying down" on a busy street failed to attract the attention of pedestrians and motorists passing by. After making enquiries as to his admission of murder, and finding no cause to continue detaining him, Jack explains the police transported him to the Gandhi Nivas whare in Te Atatū, which became a refuge, a place of peace offering *respite* during a particularly difficult period of social isolation. Jack often relates to resident men that he experiences a *quiet-ness* at the whare that enables him to safely reflect on experiences precipitating, sustaining, and re-entrenching different permutations of gendered beliefs about violence. It is at the whare that Jack says he began thinking about social forces contributing to his sense of self, and several years later, he continues sharing these same narratives with other men, offering his memories of isolation, violence, and desperation as a series of problem spaces that other men can sense and follow.

Throughout his participation in the research project, particularly as a participant in the Men's Group, Matthew recalls how Jack frequently shares *verbatim* accounts of these events with other men, with Jack often explaining his desire to share as a way of becoming

accountable for the support he continues receiving from Gandhi Nivas, and as a way of showing appreciation for his involvement in Matthew's research project. Materially comprised of affective memories rather than a representative story centering himself as the subject, Jack engages other men in a narrative process of *storying* his life. Whilst Matthew recalls hearing Jack's accounts of how he *arrived* at the whare on countless occasions through their participation in the Men's Group and various 1:1 interviews Jack provided for the research project, although the narrative language rarely changes, Matthew witnesses how Jack's feelings move his body, and the men's responses to Jack, and they are different every time. In each telling the man Jack is becoming changes, again.

The fleeting appearance of stability to his narratives belies the convergence of feeling that flows through the bodies of the men gathered together, differently each time. Telling his story moves others who move with him, making possible inexhaustible opportunities for change. His different tellings of a seemingly stable narrative serve to remind us of the ways in which live experiences of conditions and events are re-experienced, differently as Jack accounts for himself to others. Jack's different tellings serve the purpose of *becoming accountable* within political spaces created by and created with different gatherings of men. This helps us understand Jack's moving stories as *unpredictable gifts* we can share with others. Jack's gifts, to our understanding, are fruitful for others as his stories offer *alternative* narratives of felt and remembered events from *his* life to demonstrate an ethics of care for the politics of *other* men's lives. Jack's sharing of his stories with different groups of men helps others make sense of their own experiences of change through his experiments with new modes of being capable of engaging forms of relation with others that are new to him. In this sense, Jack's care for other men is *felt* through the inclusion of social forces men are able to follow, rather than relying on a sense that he 'gets' or shares other men's problems. Sharing how he came to stay at the whare, Jack's affective experiences of social isolation becomes a social support for other men also experiencing distress by affirming a gendering of their socio-cultural locations – through their experiences of violence as well as experiences of isolation and change. Jack puts narratives *into action* by sharing self-reflexive memories and counter-memories of the past, tracing novel and fleeting narratives of change to create an agential capacity for action for others – within the conditions of his own experiences.

**(((Men's Narrative)))**

(J) It's, I, so for me it's, I might talk about, say, what happened to me in the past, what things that I've done, I might even mention, okay, what I've been doing lately. So, okay, might, you know, say I'm doing this project, that project, what I'm doing at home. So it's just putting myself out there, who I am and how I am. And experiences that I've had too, without having to be worried about it. I don't worry about telling the story about what's happened. In my life I've had a lot of things happen in my life, some good a lot of bad, you know, so those are things that I won't forget, you know, but it's good to share someone's experience, my experience.

(M) So how do you decide, then, what to share? If there's a sense of not worrying, if there's a sense of not needing to share specific stories, you know, we're not standing around (talking about) the last time we're violent for instance, so how do you decide what to share.

(J) I, just, whatever comes in my head. It might be something come into my head that happened, say, ten years ago, and then I'll share it, just like that. Because that's what happened. It's something that happened. And I've worked at a place where everybody hated me, you know. Basically I scraped the floor one day because the boss didn't like me, and I had bad legs and he said I got a good job for you, and here's a scraper. There's fifteen years of paint on the floor, scrape all the paint off, the length of the factory. And it took me three months to do that. On my hands and knees. He was very happy, but I never forget about those things, because when you go through a job where you've had people that want to put you down any second of the day, does a lot of damage even when you leave. So, you never actually forget, for me anyway, in my experience I never forget. So for me it's sharing something can also be beneficial for me to relive that part, in the mind, basically helps me to roll over on that part of history.

(M) Okay. So it's not about getting rid of it, it's not about erasing it, but almost re-remembering it, then. Doing something different with those memories.

(J) If you try and forget something, it's not easy and it can be very stressful trying to forget. So if you share something or relive something in your mind, well, my experience is that it's like you get used to it. It's like if you're if it's raining outside, and you go outside and it starts spitting, and you run back in, okay, you know you got a bit wet. But if you go outside and stand in the rain, well, then, for me I adapt to the conditions. So it's something that's, for me, I got to adapt to it, and it makes it easier to move forward.

**(Jack, Interview, April 13 2023)**

Careful to craft stories unconnected to specific events and final outcomes, Jack's narratives are a gift that enables men to question social structures and modes of relation that contribute to their use of violence, and help men sense where they become stuck in processes of change. In other words, Jack's narratives are an oral, spoken process of loosening narrative knots *in connection with* other men, helping us understand how non-violencing is not only an agential capacity that emerges as he becomes (a better) father, husband, grandfather, and friend, but non-violencing, to Jack's way of thinking, is *also* about bringing forth variations of relational connections with the people and places he encounters in daily life. Jack's gifts are *fruitful*, in effect, by enabling possibilities of non-violencing to take many forms – including as different starting points for different images of a man whose agency, and wellbeing, is sustained by “feeding [in] the good stuff”. Jack explains that attending the Men's Groups, and visiting the whare in general, is how he ‘practices’ non-violencing, as the safety of the whare is an embodied sensation that enables him to experiment with how he encounters social forces present in his daily life, which, he hopes, empowers others within the politics of their own locations.

Often reverberating other men's experiences of violence and becoming stuck in processes of change, Jack's narratives, which, in Matthew's experience, are not ‘practiced’ or rehearsed but are instead iteratively *repetitive*, that is, Jack's narratives are unpredictable in that the effects for other men cannot be known in advance, and only emerge afterwards with unanticipated, unexpected and uncertain possibilities for other men experiencing change. Tocci and Moon (2020) help make sense of this through their philosophy of non-violencing, which they explain as “a destination without a map” (p. 19). Matthew, who has witnessed affective interactions between Jack and myriad other men on countless occasions over several years, experiences his narratives as an ethical form of trustworthiness with which Jack becomes part of an empowering mangle of social forces propelling change processes for men, in ways that they can feel and know. We understand the empowering feeling Jack experiences by storying his experiences of violence with narratives of change is, in part, how he makes an affirmative difference in the world, and by helping other men experience movement he becomes worthy of the politics of joining a research project that seeks to support men who are violent in the home.

Becoming worthy of the politics of transformative change involves Jack in an ongoing process of remembering and retelling his life: sharing his strongly felt memories with

others is a gift from which he benefits through a process of becoming “used to” his past. Jack recounts his lived experiences of violence and change processes within a network of social support and safety created by the practitioners of Gandhi Nivas and other men within the whare. We remember Jack’s gift of DVDs to the whare, his gratitude for the reflexive opportunities to account for himself, and his desire to be safely among those who hear his stories and support his change process, as practices of non-violencing that *move us*. The DVDs remind us of all the (other) non-human contributions, such as food, clothing, beds, bedding and so on, that the whare enables for both community members and resident men. These become gifts of reciprocity for men that otherwise struggle to express their appreciation, with a language of care that has a meaning all their own. As Doug explains, we are moved by gifts of reciprocity which help men have “man conversations” without a need to “fit everything in” or “get everything right”. Becoming generous with himself in relation to others moves Jack into unknown encounters where giving himself is a new way to act in his relationships. This is a big deal for us.

### ***Becoming (Research)***

In response to our own questions, knowing a purpose of retooling psychological enquiry is to create *capacities* to trace *change processes* with experiences of forces and flows we *sense* and *feel*, we wonder, how do we experience the effects of non-violencing as an *emergent* outcome of our activism as scholars, academics, and researchers; what are the effects for others when what a body can do is *not only* the *absence of violence* but also empowers *peace and flourishing for others*? For the next section, to help us think this through, we return to the everyday lives of men participating in the research project, and, in particular, Talan’s narratives of change and experiences of *difference*.



**(((Men's Narrative)))**

(T) It's just thinking about...yeah, it untangling. It's just going into the, back into that moment. like they (Gandhi Nivas counsellors) were asking me, talking to me, what happened, why happened, what happened. I was like, okay. Telling how, every time, what happened. Every different counsellor, (I shared a) different thing. So, it was allowing me to go into that moment and untangle myself, and maybe understand that situation. And let's keep it calmly and steadily, those things, like, they were, one by one, they were, like, explaining these things, how to understand.

**(Talan, Interview, 29 May 2021)**

We have previously mentioned that our process of analysis is both *reflexive* and *iterative*. We *return* to a fragment of Talan's narrative, then, as an example of the process we have engaged with. In the case of our decision to *follow up* the first fragment from Doug's story with another, so that we could reflexively untangle our thinking about the change processes he narrates, our decision to return to Talan's story of counselling involves *selection* that excludes other possible narratives we could have included. Here we exemplify *iteration* purposefully to become inclusive of multiple interpretations connected with different felt memories of thinking with Talan's process of untangling himself in the company of caring practitioners.

As the researchers within this report, we have come together to re/think taken for granted notions of violence prevention as a practice, or a set of practices – if only to resist understandings of violence prevention which necessitate *individualistic interventions* to be *successful*. Prochaska and DiClemente's (1984) trans-theoretical model of change, and resultant iterations of their work, whilst ostensibly useful in some settings for particular people with specific life challenges, remains a theory of change that paradoxically both *pins* change in place whilst situating *interventions* along a hierarchical *scale* of socio-economic worth based on their *effectiveness* in *facilitating* change. This is a poor fit for family violence "early interventions" that envisage change as "open ended" and can produce change in the form of increased safety and security that help men, and their loved ones, *flourish* in ways exceeding the confines of economic determinants of wellbeing. Our understanding of Talan's experiences of the whare help us resist the commodification of interventions and embrace the potential *unknowability* of non-violencing practices which empower change processes and experiences of *difference*.

O'Neill's (2015) critique of contemporary masculinity theories is useful here, as this provides us alternative understandings of violence prevention practices, in particular that men's experiences of care at the whare offer *escape routes* from inherited ways of thinking that assert violence as a gendered (masculine) problem with stable (universal) meanings. This is a common refrain from men *stuck in place* by socially sanctioned conceptualisations of family violence within Aotearoa New Zealand that do not account for the socio-cultural locations men often occupy, and the social forces sustaining these locations, when they harm others. By de-centering masculinities, masculine cognitions, and masculine practices as objects of psychological analysis and targets for interventions,

an ethics of care enables us to become responsive to the social forces comprising our diverse social worlds, and thinking of violence as *conditioned* by the socio-cultural political *milieus* of men's daily lives, we can challenge taken for granted assumptions that family violence is an unanswerable *wicked problem*.

Rittel and Webber's (1973) critique of normative *individualistic interventions* to social problems, which, they argue, is a way of thinking more applicable to engineers, for instance, planning transportation systems with the development of roads, opens up possibilities for us to re/consider their exhortation that "[t]he formulation of a wicked problem *is the problem!*" (p. 161) (italics in original). We connect this with Crowley and Head (2017), who, revisiting the *notion* of wicked problems, distinguishes social problems, citing Nie (2003), as conceptually *wicked by nature* and *wicked by design*. To our understanding, *individualistic* understandings of family violence, then, are wicked by *design*, in so far that normative understandings of social problems are self-limiting as to *how* and *what* we are able to do to address the harm men cause others. Rittel and Webber (1973) put it succinctly, describing these limitations with a problematic, that "the information needed to understand the problem depends upon one's idea for solving it" (p. 161). Family violence is *made* wicked (by design), according to Rittel and Webber's argument, with a preponderance of individualistic approaches as the *preferred* approaches within a neoliberal society such as Aotearoa New Zealand, which continues to have significant rates of family violence within all of our communities, but, in particular, with extremely high rates of harm experienced by wāhine (women) within Māori communities, which have experienced the neoliberalisation of traditional *collectivist* communities and practices through ongoing experiences of *colonisation* (The Joint Venture of the Social Wellbeing Board, 2020).

The socio-political processes of individualism wrought by iterative and ongoing neoliberal socioeconomic policies over numerous generations of people, in our experience, creates a confluence of societal values where our approaches to social problems measures interventions as a *social investment* with expectations of economic returns, limiting *both* how we understand social problems and our capacities, as willing communities of individuals, to address social issues. This gate-keeps what amounts to knowledge – and what counts as *credible* knowledge production processes within the violence prevention sector. Put simply, family violence is wickedly designed – rather than necessarily wicked

by nature – given our collective capacity to adequately address men’s use of violence in the home is conceptualised through *individualistic interventionist approaches*, that we, as communities of people comprised of individuals, are able to formulate, act on, and measure.

We are noticing again that the intervention of practitioners working with Talan at the whare involves him in untangling himself through their persistent return to reflecting on the moment of his violence. Each time there is a variation in the mode of connection and the story he tells that enables him to return anew with different understandings each time. While counselling practice is often assumed to be individualistic, we notice a significant difference in Talan’s account: a collective of counsellors are actively involved with him in *kōrerō* that is open-ended. This resonates Jack’s storying of how he practices non-violencing. There may be ‘sessions’ or ‘conversations’ or ‘groups’ or ‘family work’ or ‘couple’s work’ available to resident men, yet there is always someone at the whare, other men and practitioners who are supporting possibilities of untangling the threads that condition the possibilities of violence in men’s lives while also creating new social relationships in which care, compassion and understanding become critical to intervention praxis – this is a big deal for both us and resident men.

**((Men's Narrative))**

(R) And then all these preparations and predicting and learning, and it's just nothing, it's just zero. Because you've been triggered and, like, you're tired, you know, you haven't had a good week that week, you know, it's a lot of...

(M) It's hard to keep faith in something that you don't see works.

(R) It's a lot of contributions, like all these little things add up and they make a big picture. A picture of, like, as much as you can prepare, you're really not prepared because it depends on that time. Yeah, like... on how you're feeling at that time. It's just, like for example, I don't know if this is a good example but I'm gonna give it a whirl. But it's like when you lose a family member, you, like, you don't know how to feel at the time, until, like, for me, when my mom passed away I didn't cry, I didn't. I didn't have that feeling, like, I knew she was passed, you know, like, I found it hard to mourn because it was just random, like it was only when I went to the service and I was I had to stand up, I'm the youngest, I had to stand up and give my, what did we call it...give my speech about my relationship with my mom. That's when I started feeling it, like, you know. But I always asked myself how come I felt it then but I couldn't felt it that time she passed?

You know, like, it's like you know, that's the kind of example I'm trying to bring up, cause like you know at that time, when family violence happened, how come you don't feel it but then you feel it after it's happened, or you felt it before but then afterwards you're like, oh man, that was the wrong decision, like, you kinda get what I mean. It's like

(M) I hear you

(R) It's not like straight forward, like, how people think, like, ahh (shouting) I could've just walked away. It's not like that, it's like complex, like, it's like, sophisticated, to me, how I see it. It's more, it's vast.

**(Robert, Interview, 15 May 2021)**

Let us explain differently by beginning, again, with resisting other familiar narrative traps pertaining to research activities. Fieldwork, for Matthew, became a process of creating a productive affective *capacity* to support men by attending hospital appointments with them, offering a cup of coffee to men arriving at the whare with a police escort, and listening to men after long days at work or after they have lost their jobs, all of which are social encounters of *being there* with men during the long days they often spend alone at the whare. *Being there* is a relational process of supporting men experiencing an unfamiliar *quietness* of being away from partners, children, families, and whānau, and the conflict, tension, and violence often permeating their everyday lives. This can be unsettling, frightening, and immobilising for some men, whilst others begin their stay at Gandhi Nivas confident and comfortable, with fixed ideas about how to “get through it” until they can return home, or until they find another place to live. *Being there*, then, is also a relational *felt* process of supporting experiences of fear and uncertainty when men are legally prohibited from making contact with their children, partners, and other loved ones, as well as experiences of relief and respite when men feel liberated from the challenges of family life.

Fieldwork, to our understanding, is less a *plurality* and more a *multiplicity* of practices that use different senses whilst listening to men make sense of sharing emotional and physical space with other men, an unfamiliar practice for some men who experience ‘living alone’ for the first time at the whare. For some, fieldwork involves supporting men experiencing distress with the absence of the financial means, material resources, and communication devices necessary for their everyday life. For others, being kicked out of accommodation due to their use of violence is a familiar, if not frequent, experience, enabling them to take pride in comforting routines and traditions helping them cope, manage, and pass the time whilst away from the more familiar habits of their everyday lives. The whare not only helps men learn to care for themselves but also to express *concern* and *care* for *other* men by cooking for each other and sharing food, doing each other’s laundry, and accompanying each other to government agencies. Shared living arrangements also might mean staying up late at night with a roommate experiencing distress, anxiety, and sadness, or finding unexpected comfort from men, like Jack, who help men develop a capacity for sharing their feelings and changes that are capable of making sense of inexplicable situations, like those Robert shares. Fieldwork, in all of these cases, involves listening to men find joy in shared living arrangements, sitting beside men bereft with cultural, gendered, and age-

related shame when realising they have never learned to cook and clean for themselves, and witnessing men experiencing sadness in environments where social and cultural differences are plentiful. The complexity of the conditions of men's lives, their felt memories and lived experiences of shame and joy and sadness, are shared together with practitioners who listen, express concern and care for them and other men in the context of a home where relationships are newly forming with skills and possibilities for transforming the safety and security of their homes.

**GN3: 3-8 p.m. at Papakura with George, Fergus**

**Staff: Chahel, Dayita, New staff,**

**3 July 2020**

Arriving a bit late due to traffic and an accident, Chahel asks what we should “call” me when introducing me to men tonight. His suggestion, something like a programme facilitator, is uncomfortable. This discomfort is recurring, a lingering frustration that I can’t understand him—nor he me. Is he expecting me to run a group tonight? Is Chahel’s introduction as a facilitator a way of lessening any resistance, hesitation, and resentment that men might feel towards psychology, or a researcher? Chahel’s expectations of me are ambiguous, unclear... and I don’t know how to respond.

*Why are we not able to talk about this?*

A bit at a loss as to how to proceed or what to do, feeling embarrassed, I sit in the lounge, and join George and Fergus watching TV. Before long, another fella is brought into the lounge by Chahel. We’re introduced to each other, but within minutes both the man and Chahel leave, but I’m not alone. Through long, meandering, and wandering conversations about me, my background, and “what I am here for”, George and Fergus help me escape the funk I’m experiencing, inviting me, welcoming me...to share time together with long conversations about people, places and things from our pasts, our presents, and our futures.

Fergus and George express appreciation for Gandhi Nivas, in that they have spent a lot of time together the last few days, and attempt to share what this means in terms of changes in their lives.

Through encounters with each other, companionship and camaraderie in a time of crisis is helping them resist perpetuating familiar, but problematic, thinking patterns blaming their partners, for instance, for their violence. Both men are at the whare due to police involvement as a result of conflict at home, and neither expected to find safety, and possibilities of change, within the uncertain circumstances of relationships with other men in emergency accommodation.

Fergus quickly becomes my centre of attention, though, as George continuously digresses from our conversations every few minutes. George’s constant movement is warm, if ponderous and distracting, and although he doesn’t talk about himself, he expresses—not so much about people and places and things, but more that I’m aware of him, I can feel him, even as he digresses once more, both disrupting the conversation whilst challenging my assumptions that he doesn’t make any sense.



I can sense jovialness and humorousness; he's quick to laughter; he apologises before, once again, digressing and, once again, apologising. Where we can, Fergus/I regather conversations that have gone astray with George's musings. The conversation goes on but does not always continue to make sense. I'm troubled that the details George shares are seemingly unimportant, and do not follow an apparent logic...yet Fergus is listening, following him, somehow. Losing count of the times Fergus and I reset, revise, and return to a conversation, we often simply forget the conversational lines...yet, other things are also happening.

*How am I going to make sense of this?*

Fergus isn't passive in receiving what George is saying, sharing, or expressing, nor does he ignore George, even as I feel patience ebbing, dissipating, and becoming boredom amidst the sheer volume of non-sense coming from George.

Yet, I also sense a commingling, a *glow* that is emerging.

George is hard work, and as we arrive at what I think is a cusp of being able to tolerate no more—we keep going. Rather than slipping away, Fergus comes alive when responding to and engaging with the unpredictable-ness of *kōrero* with George. He's having fun...

...not at George's expense, but *with* George and myself.

Might meeting George bring, although fleetingly, a set of affective conditions making possible what I sense as Fergus' patience with George? Braidotti said something like "freedom is extracted out of the awareness of limitations." If I'm following a *glow*...might Fergus and George too?

*Is this how George tolerates us, by sensing and connecting with our glowing(s), rather than what we are saying, or necessarily how we are treating and interacting with him? Is he following us, with this glowing?*

What if patience becomes possible, with George, in connection with Fergus? Patience isn't necessary nor required to "deal" with George...rather, patience emerges a productive affective experience of spending hours together...rather than something we possess, have, and carry with us?

I wonder, what political space emerges with different experiences of patience, then? Is this akin to when Braidotti says specific affective conditions are the contextually determined forms in which desire is actualized or expressed? Is enjoyment what becomes of our fleeting patience, with George? If patience is more than exceeding the limits of my own limitations, a state or way of being enabling me to “manage” him or my experiences of frustration with him...patience is not necessarily a virtue arising with societal expectations of “dealing” with people like him, a matter of tolerating him because we possess patience, or a matter of ascribing patience because we can tolerate him.

*I wish for an opportunity to talk about “how” they experience our evening together...but how do I ask? If kōrero enables a sense of belonging together...how are “we” in this together?*

I wonder of Fergus’ patience...he isn’t being “tested”, in that George isn’t “pushing buttons”, nor can I see a “strategy” or tactic to his patience. Fergus is not simply maintaining his one social support at the moment, a life-line, so to speak, for instance. I am becoming uncomfortable with feelings of envy, of Fergus, of George’s capacity to engender patience. Distracted, the men appear to have headed to their respective rooms before dinner.

*What sense can I make of this...? Why now?*

Sitting alone in lounge, again, I wonder what is “around” when no one is with us, to do this work with? Do I bring traces of *affectivity* with me, sensible to others as they encounter me in the whare?

We join back up at dinner, and a warmth continues, with both men gracious and polite. Fergus has cooked and plated our food, and ensured drinks are filled; George welcomes us to share his tikanga, to bless the food and the company we keep through prayer. Eating in silence, mostly...a disruption emerges...a new staff member walking by, someone I have yet to meet, shares a question, wondering;

*Only if Fergus only expected a little gratitude for his fathering.*

The *unsaid* hangs in the air...Fergus’ expectations of his family, of their gratitude, is problematic. What’s *different* with me and George? Rather than high expectations and entitlement as a father posing a risk of violence, what if tonight is an opportunity of “relearning” what becomes possible with his kids through other affective experiences of coming together with other men?

*What might come of his relationship with this children, what possibilities are afoot?*

Our encounters with Matthew's narratives of his research experiences, in connection with men's understandings of change, suggest the work they are doing together has little to do with litigating or justifying *who did what, for what reasons, and to whom*. According to participants, though, their *kōrero* is often the first time men feel *comfort*-able sharing experiences of using violence towards others. Men's experience of *comfort* not only *welcomes* men to dwell on the possibility they pose a danger to others, *comfort* also *sustains* men when they become concerned with *patterns* of behaviour that suggests violence is prominent, frequent, and common in their relationships. Ethically responsible social research means listening to and learning of the many experiences of men asking for help, who, in turn, offer care and concern to others as part of their experiences of change as well. *Fieldwork* is about rethinking social encounters by *affectively sensing* how to become part of the everyday lives of men experiencing *change* and *difference* – whilst contending with an immobilising sense of helplessness arising with men not knowing what to do with themselves. *Interviews* are occasions when men transpose the limits of affective experiences – to make known experiences we may not have the language to explain or describe but that we *know* by *feeling*. *Men's groups* are opportunities to *act on* and *act out* the *affective messiness* of *fleshy connections* with others – to *experiment with* bringing into being *alternative modes of relation* where violence is less possible, less likely, and less sustainable. *Men's work* is about learning *how* we care for *and* empower experiences of change and difference.

We know these are not straightforward tasks, that we, as a collective of individuals, will experience and make sense of research practices traced within this report in different ways. These are not weakness but embodied limitations to our modes of being. Gaps present in our analysis of men's narratives offer ruptures and breakages within our ways of knowing, and whilst disorientating, gaps also enable *different* starting points to pathways of change that we can *follow further*, if only to empower new modes of being with different *senses* and different *capabilities* in political locations where we accept uncertainty and the impossibility of control. In this sense, we do not simply define *effecting change* as developing *different* engagement practices with men who use violence in the home, nor do we qualify this report's *useful-ness* as a matter of contributing to the establishment and construction of *new* theories of men and masculinities and practices eliminating violence against women and children. Situated along an axis of *retreat* and *resistance* to taken for granted understandings of men's use of violence and violence prevention interventions, we

seek to craft a political narrative in which social and community practices of care help empower change processes pinned in place by expectations of gendered neoliberal individualism. Whilst we hope individuals involved in the day to day operation of the service finds our analyses helpful and productive, and that men consider our selection of notes, transcripts, and narrative accounts contribute to change processes for the violence prevention sector itself, whereas these possibilities *guide* our thinking and writing, tracing our collective capacity to rethink psychological enquiry as an analysis of social forces conditioning everyday life *becomes* a *tactic* to *retool* psychological enquiry with experiences of forces and flows we *sense* and *feel*-crafting, if only fleetingly, a narrative of change for readers of this report, that they can *follow* and *sense* as well.

## Epilogue: Becoming-fruitful

Remembering that men's bodies can bring violence to others in expected and unseen ways, the shifts and changes made possible with our analysis of men's narratives presents challenges, we imagine, shared by many of us in the sector who bear witness to men's violence. We continue to find it difficult to sustain connections with socio-culturally privileged *masculine* political locations men bring to the whare, and, as we stipulate elsewhere, whilst we are encouraged by, and welcome, the opportunities changes in modes of relation afford men and their loves ones, we continue to believe it is in men's own homes and through their relationships with their families that fruitful possibilities of non-violencing take form. This forms a tension for us, with *community-oriented* approaches to violence prevention practices that keep men's change processes in sight. By bringing our experiences of *encountering* men's understandings of change into our work, though, we share a sense of *bending* that, we hope, enables *new senses* to *bear witness* to men's resistance to, retreat from, and disruption of social processes adhering their social worlds, including the socio-political disruption men experience when seeking support from their communities of belonging. To this end, what also matters is resisting a *stuck-edness* we sometimes experience with political locations we bring to bear with our work within the sector. Resistance, then, becomes a notion that working with men *effectively* is not a matter of thinking *perspicacity* is a skill, *percipience* is an objective, and *sagacity* is an ability.

But, we also feel a *hesitation* that emerges from *not only* feelings of dangerousness that we carry with us into our work, our own *fleshy connections*, as individual researchers with life histories intimately entangled with different forms of violence, have life experiences of violence and men's experiences of change that come with us into our social worlds. We experience a *fruitfulness* of men's *becomings* of non-violence as the *beginnings*, rather than conclusions, of experiences we do not *yet* have knowledges to talk about, ushering in *different* starting points to our experiences that we carry with us elsewhere within the sector. This presents a *double* affirmation of *both* moments of resistance to *and* connections with changing social power relations, socio-political debates, and gendering norms we experience in everyday life as a result of our work within the violence prevention sector.

The multiple webs of interaction we trace with men's narratives reveal *both* potentials and limits of what becomes possible with *affirmative* sensorial and cognitive data of *affective connections*. Of the eleven participants who provided 1:1 interviews, and the dozens of men who joined Matthew to participate in Men's Group, two remain in contact with him through phone calls, texts, and encounters at the whare. Much like ourselves, we assume participants, and their families, are likely encountering unexpected, unfamiliar, and unpredictable social circumstances, taking them in different directions that do not include maintaining contact with Matthew, nor Gandhi Nivas. Also much like ourselves, we hope their experiences with Gandhi Nivas bring different escape routes where violence is not only less possible, reduced, and mitigated, but also affords families new opportunities to flourish. Drawing this report to a close with neither an ending nor a conclusion, instead, we hope to have *storied* new possibilities that take form as the work between us, and, together, we hope our kōrero makes possible, if only fleeting, unfamiliar locations where new ways of thinking can produce new problems deserving new solutions.

We have attempted to *textually* account for self-reflexive understandings of violence and violence prevention practices we continue to encounter, *together*. Occurring *between us* and *with men*, Men's Work, then, is *both* a matter of *disentangling* ourselves from patterns of thought *and* re-entangling ourselves with *different* experiences of forces acting on and through us, which we bring *out* into the community – and to others. Remembering this helps us keep safe in unpredictable processes of change with *unfamiliar* affective connections with *men's bodies*, with an ethics of *self-care* an *outward-bound* habit of (re)creating *empowering* affective conditions and political locations where safety is not a matter of maintaining who we are, but a way of remembering who we have yet to become.

We have selected narratives enabling us to map *mobile affective connections with men*, giving insight into the social forces *increasing* (but also decreasing) our ability to enter into new modes of relation premised on the care and wellbeing of others. Threads left hanging, at this place and point in time, allow us to bear witness to change that has yet to occur, and here, thinking this report as part of a large body of research with men experiencing change, leaving this writing, threads become a particularly challenging problem we share with men participating in Matthew's research. The strangeness of this *with-ness*, our shared affective experiences with men accessing support with Gandhi Nivas and participating in Matthew's research, connects us with men through new experiences of

mutual inter-relationship – *whilst also* producing new moments of resistance to our *becomings* as a research team.

We did not expect to *become part of* the Gandhi Nivas *whānau*. But do any of us?

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