Investigating the Increase in Domestic Violence Post Disaster: An Australian Case Study

Debra Parkinson[1]

Abstract

Interviews with 30 women in two shires in Victoria, Australia, confirmed that domestic violence increased following the catastrophic Black Saturday bushfires on February 7, 2009. As such research is rare, it addresses a gap in the disaster and interpersonal violence literature. The research that exists internationally indicates that increased violence against women is characteristic of a postdisaster recovery in developing countries. The relative lack of published research from primary data in developed countries instead reflects our resistance to investigating or recognizing increased male violence against women after disasters in developed countries. This article begins with an overview of this literature. The primary research was qualitative, using in-depth semistructured interviews to address the research question of whether violence against women increased in the Australian context. The sample of 30 women was aged from 20s to 60s. Recruitment was through flyers and advertisements, and interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and checked by participants. Analysis was inductive, using modified grounded theory. Seventeen women gave accounts of new or increased violence from male partners that they attribute to the disaster. A key finding is that, not only is there both increased and new domestic violence but formal reporting *will not* increase in communities unwilling to hear of this hidden disaster. Findings are reported within a framework of three broad explanations. In

[1]Monash University, Clayton, Victoria, Australia

Corresponding Author:
Debra Parkinson, Monash University, Clayton, Victoria 3800, Australia.
Email: debra.parkinson@monash.edu

conclusion, although causation is not claimed, it is important to act on the knowledge that increased domestic violence and disasters are linked.

Introduction

Disasters create a different context for domestic violence. Suddenly, the concept of *community* is brought to the fore as a spotlight is shone on disaster-affected regions from media, government, and the health and community sector. The attention of a whole nation is momentarily focused on previously anonymous communities. A thirst for stories of courage and resilience in mainstream media remains on the great national ethos, the indomitable human spirit and the kindness of others.

A critical first step in filling the research gap on violence against women after disaster is the willingness to hear women when they speak of violence against them. Instead, attention to domestic violence in disasters' aftermath can evoke hostility toward those who speak of it. Reports of domestic violence or sexual assault are refuted—either subtly or explicitly—as evidenced by the denial of rapes of women in the Louisiana Superdome and elsewhere after Hurricane Katrina. Yet, Austin (2008) concludes that after Hurricane Katrina, "the real-number increase in sexual assaults corresponds to a 95% per capita increase in reported cases" (p. 1). Enarson (2012) states the violence was real and explains that antisocial behavior is minimized in disaster analysis. After disaster, it appears that everyone must pull together, and accounts of violence against women and children must remain unnamed. Canadian researchers, Cox and Perry (2011), observe,

> The dominant discourse of recovery tended to reinstate the status quo and prescribe a preferred version of recovery in which suffering was privatized and individualized and positioned as something to be managed effectively and moved beyond as quickly as possible. A failure or inability to conform to this construction was construed as a character flaw or pathology. (p. 401)

Acceptance of domestic violence post disaster is further complicated by those who fear that it will unseat notions of cohesive communities and heroic yet vulnerable men.

This article reports on research with 30 Australian women following the unprecedented and catastrophic 2009 Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria which killed 173 people, injured 414, and destroyed 2,133 houses (Victorian

Bushfires Royal Commission, 2010). Displacement was estimated to be 7,000 people (Atkins, 2011, p. 4). There is very little published literature on domestic violence and disaster in the developed world (Houghton, 2009a; Jenkins & Phillips, 2008b; Sety, 2012). An overview of the literature that does exist begins this article. The research findings reveal both increased violence after Black Saturday and an endemic culture of denial. Three broad explanations are identified—drawn from empirical findings from the field, together with the research literature.

The Literature on Domestic Violence and Disaster

Despite the scarcity of studies focusing on disaster and rates of interpersonal violence (Dasgupta et al., 2010; Phillips & Morrow, 2008), evidence to support the hypothesis of increased violence against women after disaster is growing. A systematic review of the international literature from 1976 to 2011 found "that being exposed to natural disasters such as tsunami, hurricane, earthquake, and flood increased the violence against women and girls" (Rezaeian, 2013, p. 1105). It is therefore clear that in developing countries, increased violence against women is characteristic of a postdisaster recovery.

The literature presented here, however, is primarily based in economically developed countries. This is deliberate, both to provide a contextual basis for this Australian research and to counter the perception that violence and discrimination against women is a problem that exists only in developing countries. Gendered violence is, instead, a global concern transcending class and ethnicity.

In countries similar to Australia, evidence reveals that domestic violence and child abuse increase in the wake of disasters (Anastario, Shehab, & Lawry, 2009; Clemens, Hietala, Rytter, Schmidt, & Reese, 1999; Enarson, 1999; Fothergill, 1999; Houghton, 2009b; Jenkins & Phillips, 2008b; Schumacher et al., 2010).

Several studies included in a global review of approximately 100 gender and disaster studies (Fothergill, 1998) indicate an increase in domestic violence following disasters, including a 50% increase in domestic violence helpline calls following Hurricane Andrew in 1992. After the 1993 Missouri River Flood in the United States, 400% more women and children, than expected, sought shelter from the antiviolence coalition (Enarson, 2012). In the first 4 months following the 1997 earthquake in Dale County, Alabama, reports of domestic violence increased by 600% (Wilson, Phillips, & Neal, 1998). A study of 77 Canadian and U.S. domestic violence programs echoes these, finding a link between domestic violence and disaster (Enarson, 1999). Yet, compiling a sound evidence base

on rates of violence against women after disaster is not easy, as noted by Scanlon (1997, p. 5):

> [T]here is a suggestion that the stress of disaster may lead to increased violence, making battered women greater targets than at other times. However . . . it was difficult to acquire empirical data to demonstrate that this was the case, and impossible to document it.

Domestic violence reports increased by 600% and court injunctions by 98% in 4 months after the 1997 earthquake in Dale County, Alabama (Wilson et al., 1998). In 1999, Fothergill reported a 50% increase in protection orders after the 1997 Grand Forks Flood, and Clemens et al. (1999) report that domestic violence was significantly greater among their 140 participants after the flood. Despite this, few studies followed over the next decade. Fothergill (2008) writes,

> [T]he research on woman battering in post-disaster communities is still almost non-existent. In the disaster research community, many question whether rates of woman battering increase in a disaster. Thus, although this question has been frequently asked, it remains largely unanswered. (p. 131)

A significant finding by Anastario et al. (2009) showed a fourfold increase in intimate partner violence (IPV) in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. In 2010, it was reported that domestic violence calls from Louisiana to the national hotline increased by 20% in the first 2 months after the oil spill (U.S. Gender & Disaster Resilience Alliance, 2010). Schumacher et al. (2010) compare the 6-month periods before and after Hurricane Katrina and found a 98% increase in physical victimization of women. They conclude, "the current study provides compelling evidence that risk of IPV [intimate partner violence] is increased following large-scale disasters" (p. 601). Around the same time, Picardo, Burton, Naponick, and Katrina Reproductive Assessment Team (2010) conclude that

> Physical abuse was not uncommon among displaced women following Hurricane Katrina. Increasing and new abuse were the most commonly reported experiences. (p. 282)

A questionnaire survey with 123 postpartum women, all of whom had experienced Hurricane Katrina, found that "certain experiences of the hurricane are associated with an increased likelihood of violent methods of conflict resolution" (Harville, Taylor, Tesfai, Xiong, & Buekens, 2011, p. 834).

In Australia, there appear to be no published research studies investigating increased rates of violence against women in the wake of a disaster,[1] yet there was some attention to this issue in a 1992 symposium on "Women in Emergencies and Disasters in Queensland."

In New Zealand, following the 2004 Whakatane flood, Houghton, Wilson, Smith, and Johnston (2010) report that the workload of the Women's Refuge tripled and callouts to police doubled. In 2010, New Zealand police reported a 53% increase in callouts to domestic violence incidents over the weekend of the Canterbury earthquake on September 4 (Houghton et al., 2010). On February 28, 2011, New Zealand police reported that "Domestic violence surged by more than 50 percent in disaster-struck areas after an earthquake hit Christchurch" (Ingber, 2011, para. 1).

Nevertheless, claims of increased domestic violence after disaster remain cautious, for example, one study found higher rates of IPV among blue-collar workers after Hurricane Floyd in North Carolina, the United States, in 1999, but disputed a link to their flood experience (Frasier et al., 2004). Another example is a study in Australia after flooding in 2011, which refers to "perceived" increased violence (Shaw, van Unen, & Lang, 2012).

Recorded and Anecdotal Evidence

In the months after the fires, with ongoing grief and bereavement, homelessness, impassable roads, and lost infrastructure, domestic violence was not prioritized at a systems level. There were few specialist services in Mitchell and Murrindindi shires both before and after Black Saturday, and these were offered through only one service provider. The three key sources to provide statistics on domestic violence incidence in the aftermath of Black Saturday were the existing domestic violence service, Victoria Police, and the Victorian Bushfire Case Management System. None, however, could provide conclusive data, leaving domestic violence neither recorded nor addressed at a broader systems level across existing and new services.

In a case study several months after Black Saturday, Lancaster (2009) seeks to draw attention to this failure to compile accurate domestic violence statistics after this disaster, reporting that there were early indications of an increase in domestic violence as funded domestic violence agencies soon began to raise concerns. Outside the domestic violence sector, concerns were also raised. Local newspapers ran articles indicating the rise in domestic violence and linked this increase directly with the bushfires. Sources included those in the most senior positions—the Victorian Bushfire Recovery and Reconstruction Authority Chairperson (Bachelard, 2009, May 10, 2009), and the Clinical Psychologist Consultant to the Victorian Disaster Recovery Plan

(Johnston & Mickelburough, 2010). Anecdotal evidence from these and other sources was clear, yet my *attempts to quantify an increase in domestic violence from formal sources were unsuccessful* (Parkinson, 2015). The lack of official data was the first of many silences about domestic violence (Parkinson, Lancaster, & Stewart, 2011).

Method

The research question was the following:

> **Research Question 1:** Is there a link between disaster and increased violence against women in the Australian context?

Ethics approval was granted from both North East Health and Monash University Human Research Ethics Committees. Data collection through interviews was conducted jointly with a cointerviewer from late 2009 to 2011 and geographically confined to the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Mitchell and Murrindindi in Australia's northeast Victoria region. These LGAs were selected for study as they were the worst affected on Black Saturday with 159 of the 173 deaths (Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, 2010).

The Research Approach and Analysis

The research methodology is qualitative in approach using in-depth individual interviews (Berg, 1989). This offers an effective technique to encourage women to speak of their experiences (Chatzifotiou, 2000). In qualitative research, the researcher's values are influential, and therefore, "plenty of care and self-awareness" is required (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10). Cultural values—both explicit and tacit—must be identified by each researcher and attempts made to put them aside to venture, in "almost complete ignorance" into the field to be studied (Spradley, 1980, p. 4). Sandelowski (2010) explains,

> There is a vast difference between being open-minded yet mindful of the preconceptions (including theoretical leanings) one has entering a field of study and being empty-headed, an impossibility for any human being with a fully functioning brain. (p. 80)

This approach acknowledges individual subjectivities and that perspective is needed to help identify relevant data and subsequent categories. There are

rules for data collection and analysis that minimize ethnocentrism in the attribution of meaning (Spradley, 1980). NVivo Versions 9 and 10 of the qualitative software analysis package were used to assist in coding the data. In each interview transcript, themes and concepts were identified through careful reading and rereading of the data, and line-by-line systematic coding to ascribe meaning to each sentence or phrase (Berg, 1989). The result was a series of interrelated categories and subcategories. In this way, concepts and theories were built inductively. The careful and comprehensive systematic coding of phrases into categories in the beginning allowed for shifting and merging codes iteratively as more data were coded, thereby building theory as the categories began to reveal the meaning of the data. The transcripts had been previously checked by the women after some weeks "cooling off," and the draft report was also later returned to the women, allowing confirmation of the meanings ascribed to their words. These methods mitigated against researcher bias (Berg, 1989).

Ethics and Recruitment Procedures

Women were invited to be interviewed in-depth about their experiences and subsequent reflections. Criteria for inclusion were that women were living in the Shires of Mitchell or Murrindindi during the Black Saturday bushfires and were aged above 18 years. Recruitment notices were placed in community newspapers, newsletters, and electronic publications, and displayed at the hubs, temporary villages, and community centers.

Consent procedures were outlined, including that they were free to withdraw from the project at any stage, and later could amend or withdraw their interview transcript. They were then advised of a AUD$100 voucher (funded by Women's Health Goulburn North East) to cover related expenses such as travel costs and child care. Interview venues were chosen by the participants. Safeguards included women having access within a day or so to professional counselors. Although all the women were given pseudonyms, absolute anonymity was not possible in this research due to its location within small communities. The explanatory statement that accompanied the consent form stated this.

Rural communities, at any time, present challenges for qualitative researchers who aspire to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. After disaster, the challenge of confidentiality is exacerbated because people who survived were immediately thrown together, and most shared their stories of survival. Fear of retribution made recruitment difficult. Furthermore, those left in the fire-affected communities were, in a sense, "under the microscope" with research and media attention and ongoing community meetings and

Table 1. Summary of the Research Sample.

Characteristic	Range
Age	From early 20s to 60s
Race/ethnicity	All presented as part of the same rural culture, and none pointed to ethnicity or race as a factor in their post-Black Saturday experience of violence.
Years of residence	Six to 51 years; median = 20 years, average = 22 years.
Marital status	28 married or in defacto relationships and two separated as of February 7, 2009.
Occupations	Managerial, administrative, professional, and service occupations in the health, community, agriculture, retail, education, and transport sectors, and voluntary work.

consultations. As a direct consequence of frequent news of suicides, residents were more alert to the well-being of their neighbors and friends. Another contributor to the slow recruitment of women was the diminished population in the fire-affected regions as many people moved away, either temporarily or permanently. A more complex explanation that emerged through the interviews is that the context of disaster magnifies the taboo and shame that still characterizes domestic violence.

Data Recording

The interviews were semistructured so that women were free to speak on the aspects of their experience of Black Saturday and its aftermath that were most significant to them. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed, and returned for women to approve —except for two women, who were concerned that their husbands may find out about their involvement in this research and asked not to be contacted for further approval.

The Sample

A total of 30 interviews with women were conducted. Women were aged from early 20s to 60s. Their length of residence in the fire-affected region ranged from 6 to 51 years, with a median of 20 years and average of 22 years. Two of the women had separated from their partners before the fires and the other 28 were married or in defacto relationships at the time of the fires. The women held managerial, administrative, professional, and service occupations in the health, community, agriculture, retail, education, and transport sectors and some worked in a voluntary capacity (see Table 1).

Gender was the central focus for this research. The sample reflected the lack of racial or ethnic diversity in the geographic area in which the study was located. The ethnic profile within the two shires indicates that 83% of women in the Mitchell shire and 82% of Murrindindi shire women were Australian born, with the remainder born in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Germany, the Netherlands, and Italy, and 89% and 92%, respectively, speaking only English in the home (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Importantly, the women's narratives did not indicate race or ethnicity as a factor in their post-Black Saturday experiences of violence. All presented as part of the same rural culture.

Twelve women actively fought the fire and 13 escaped, with all the danger that entailed. Two women spoke of doing both. (Three women did not speak about this aspect.) Twelve women lost their homes. For those who still had homes, many were damaged and unlivable for some period. Only six of the 30 women felt they would survive the bushfires. Thirteen women were alone for at least part of this experience, seven of them with dependent children. Another woman had small children and left early.

Results

Most of the 30 women interviewed spoke of increased violence within relationships they knew about (friends, family, and neighbors), and 17 women spoke of their experience of violence from partners since the fires—15 in their own relationship, one in regard to a close sister's relationship, and another concerning her daughter's relationship. Nine of 17 relationships affected by violence in this study had no violence before the fires, and seven of these were stable, nonviolent relationships. These women spoke of settled and happy relationships that were disrupted by the fires. For seven women, the violence had escalated sharply or had been an isolated incident many years earlier. For one woman, the violence had been severe and she had left the relationship before the fires. Her husband returned after the fires "to help" and resumed his level of violence toward her (see Table 2.)

The 17 women in the sample directly related the violence to the fires as a *catalyst for* the new or increased violence against them. Only one stated she was not afraid of her partner. The next section draws from the narratives of these 17 women and presents these findings within a framework of the key theories of violence against women.

Explanations for Postdisaster Domestic Violence

This section outlines three broad theories as a framework for presenting the research findings. The theories are presented in the literature as explanations

Table 2. Characteristics of the 17 Relationships With DV Present.

DV Present After Fires	DV Before Fires	Woman Frightened of Partner?	Stable Nonviolent Relationship Before
17 yes	1 yes[a]	16 yes	7 yes
	9 no	1 missing data	7 no
	7 escalated		2 separated
			1 missing data
	17	17	17

Note. DV = domestic violence.
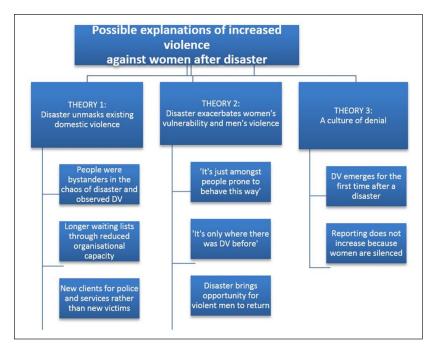[a]Violence caused separation before fires, partner returned after fires when woman was vulnerable.

for increased domestic violence after disaster, and each theory has a subset of explanations as shown in Figure 1.
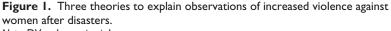
Theory 1: Disaster Unmasks Existing Domestic Violence

This theory suggests that the domestic violence observed after disaster is symptomatic not of an actual increase in the incidence of men's violence against women but of an unveiling of the problem. Fothergill (2008), for example, considers whether increased demand on domestic violence services may be mostly from existing clients. The chaos of disasters' aftermath means community members are thrown together in refuges, service hubs, and community meetings, thereby increasing risk. As Brown (2012, p. 180) notes, 'a woman could end up at a disaster shelter with her abuser'.

Formerly private relationship interactions become public. Support services for domestic violence such as police, domestic violence workers, and counselors are no longer available as demands of the postdisaster period take priority and waiting lists for help with domestic violence grow (Jenkins & Phillips, 2008a; Renzetti, 2010). Such waiting lists and organizational data may have included new *clients* rather than new victims—women who were no longer prepared to tolerate violence from partners. Elaboration of each subset follows.

In the postdisaster chaos people were bystanders to domestic violence. The first explanation is that domestic violence incidence, prevalence, and reporting were unchanged after disaster but simply more visible. In recovery periods after disaster, people are often displaced, having to move in with friends, family, or strangers. In temporary makeshift accommodation, little is private. Community meetings and dinners are commonplace. The usual legal and

Figure 1. Three theories to explain observations of increased violence against women after disasters.
Note. DV = domestic violence.

societal constraints are diminished by the extreme events (Austin, 2008; Neumayera & Plümperb, 2007), and changed living conditions may leave relationships exposed (Phillips & Morrow, 2008).

A participant in this research, Lauren, told of an incident where her husband's previously controlling behavior escalated to the extent that other community members feared for her safety during a community event:

> That night I had about half a dozen people running interference between him and me because they were very concerned about my physical wellbeing if he got close. (Lauren)

There were overlapping factors at work in the account she gave of her circumstances. Although the violence was apparent to others in the exposure caused by Black Saturday, it was also exacerbated by the changes brought about by the disaster. As Enarson (2012) observes, some women's new-found confidence may have led controlling husbands and partners to increase their

level of power and control in an attempt to maintain control in the household. Lauren had taken up new opportunities for community involvement that emerged in the aftermath of the fires and drew new confidence from her valued role in the recovery period. She was willing to pursue this despite the cost of retribution from her husband. Accordingly, he increased his use of power and control to the extent that it was more evident, even to others. The necessity for the community to come together in the recovery period provided opportunities for others to notice his violent behavior and state their fear for her safety.

Longer waiting lists through reduced organizational capacity. Organizational capacity to respond may be reduced *because of* the disaster. This manifests in a number of ways. The organizational capacity of police, domestic violence, and community health services may be reduced as their organizations' resources, infrastructure, and staffing may have been affected by the disaster, leading to a period of no service (or reduced service) and then a queue of clients (Enarson, 1999; Jenkins & Phillips, 2008b).

> At a time when women's freedom from domestic violence depended most heavily on legal and social services, every aspect of the New Orleans criminal/ civil legal system was disrupted and slowed by the displacement of personnel and by damage of the physical structures, courtrooms and offices. (Jenkins & Phillips, 2008b, p. 66)

Another possible explanation for apparent increased demand may be coincidence in the timing of women needing support. *Existing* clients all needed support during the same time periods as a consequence of their own disaster experience or their partners' violence following the disaster, or because normal support networks including friends and family were no longer there. If formal services were the only support available post disaster, this may have manifested as a temporary spike in demand rather than a real increase (Fothergill, 2008; Jenkins & Phillips, 2008b). The demand, therefore, is only from women who had previously been clients of services or police.

This explanation does not apply in this case. Domestic violence services were not adequate before the disaster, particularly in Murrindindi shire, and remained so after Black Saturday. The domestic violence organization serving the two shires did not officially acknowledge an increase in demand and was largely unaffected (in damage or resourcing) by the fires.

New clients for police and services rather than new victims. The final suggestion in this first theory is that domestic violence incidence and prevalence was unchanged after disaster but formal reporting to police and domestic violence

services increased. As noted in the U.S. context, "Even though we do not know if domestic violence rates increase in a disaster, we do have evidence that the demand for domestic violence services increases during disaster times" (Fothergill, 1999, p. 79). An increase in women's apparent willingness to report the violence against them may have emerged as they could not cope with violence as well as the trauma from the disaster or the immense pressures of the recovery and reconstruction period (Jenkins & Phillips, 2008b). For some women in this research, their experience of Black Saturday was a catalyst to consider taking the risk of leaving:

> The bushfires made me realise I didn't want to put up with it anymore. It was a near death experience. I thought I was going to die, I couldn't breathe. I thought, "If I get out of this, I'm not going to put up with it anymore." (Kylie)

Suddenly, women could no longer tolerate the violence (Houghton et al., 2010; Jenkins & Phillips, 2008a) and displacement after the disaster may have removed the support from family and friends they previously relied upon (Enarson, 2012). According to this explanation, women were new *clients* rather than new victims—reporting was new whereas violence was not (Fothergill, 1999). Although men may have been violent toward their wives and partners prior to the disaster, the women's experiences of the disaster, or their partner's responses to it, acted as a catalyst to report for the first time. Women's awareness of their right to live free from violence may have increased, with some finding the strength to leave abusive partners (Enarson, 1999; Fothergill, 1998; Jenkins & Phillips, 2008b). For Liz, one of Fothergill's (2008) case studies, the 1997 Grand Forks flood was a catalyst for her new life, whereby access to financial resources afforded her an opportunity to leave (Fothergill, 1998). As Enarson (2012) wrote, "researchers also hear from women who see the door wide open and walk right out" (p. 84). It is plausible that when women have options that include leaving violent relationships, their willingness to seek services to help them do this is increased. The extent of this may be undercounted, as narratives from women in this sample indicated that they, indeed, sought help (and had not before the disaster) but were not counted in official data collection as their reporting rarely found an adequate response.

Theory 2: Disaster Exacerbates Women's Vulnerability and Men's Use of Violence

In this theory, increased incidence of men's violence against women is acknowledged, but the argument only extends to accepting an exacerbation of violence where it previously existed or among particular groups.

It is just among people "prone to behave this way." This explanation takes up the misconception of domestic violence occurring only among certain classes—the inference that "it's just among people who are not like us." After disaster, more people rely on government grants or funds, and therefore, fit the stereotypical myth of *who* perpetrates domestic violence and who is a victim of it. The magnifying effect of disasters works at every level of marginalization, so a person's likelihood of becoming a disaster victim is influenced by their place in society (Wilson et al., 1998). Fordham (2008) writes that disaster is actually *not* the great leveler, with the concept of community involving both exclusion and inclusion.

U.S. researchers, Phillips, Jenkins, and Enarson (2010, p. 285) observe that "[i]ncome obscures the realities of violence," and staff from refuges in New Orleans reported that middle-class and professional people sought help for domestic violence and they were "new faces" to the service after Hurricane Katrina (Jenkins & Phillips, 2008a). Enarson (2012) writes that violence is not a function of poverty, and the increased rates of violence against women and children after the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill in Prince William Sound, Alaska, could not be conveniently put aside as such, even if "[a]bsorbing these statistics in a largely indigenous community may reaffirm convenient stereotypes about Native Alaskans" (p. 73). The expedience of ascribing violence against women to "Others" was equally apparent in the United States in the months after Hurricane Katrina, when perpetrators of sexual assault against White women—volunteers at the grassroots relief organization, the Common Ground (CG) Collective—were wrongly assumed to be Black (Luft, 2008). This was a blatantly false allegation as, in fact, seven of the eight reports were of White perpetrators (Luft, 2008). The "Black Threat" hypothesis analyses coercive social control of Black people by Whites to constrain threats to White privilege (Eitle, D'Alessio, & Stolzenberg, 2002; Feldmeyer, Warren, Siennick, & Neptune, 2014; Ferrandino, 2015; Myers, 1990; see also Blalock, 1967; Key, 1949). This hypothesis could account for the misleading and wrong allegation of sexual assault perpetration. As Luft (2008) writes,

> Despite the evidence that attacks were largely perpetrated by white male volunteers, CG discourse increasingly focused on an imagined threat posed by the surrounding black community. (p.15)

Such racism could equally account for the media's use of loaded language in reports of a White couple "finding" groceries and a Black man "looting" groceries in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina (Macomber, Rusche, & Wright, 2007, p. 161).

Although the homogenous racial and ethnic context of the two shires in Victoria in which the study occurred is very different to the United States, the same tendency to blame those considered to be "Other" to society exists—in this case, in relation to socioeconomic status. In this research, there were stated prejudices by emergency management, reconstruction and health professionals that if domestic violence had increased in the aftermath of Black Saturday, it was only in some problematic towns and among some (low socioeconomic status) sections of the community.

It's only where there was domestic violence before. In the aftermath, men who were previously violent may have escalated their violence to a frequency or severity that women did not accept. In this explanation, what appeared to be new domestic violence was, in fact, an extension of preexisting power and control behavior (Enarson, 2012). Houghton (2009b) suggests that men's use of domestic violence can change from psychological and economic to physical for the first time when trying to regain a sense of control after disaster. Supporting this theory, through postdisaster counseling, some women became aware that there had always been elements of power and control in the relationship. It was easier to recognize this after the disaster:

> To be completely honest, I didn't realise the level of domestic violence that I had experienced until . . . I was in a counselling session with a woman and I saw the "Power and Control Wheel" . . . and I just went, "Oh my God, every one of these sections applies to me." (Ruby)

Although this explanation asserts that increased violence only occurred where there was preexisting domestic violence, many examples in this research refute this. Some women did describe having previously endured violence from their (same) partner, and in some accounts, there were suggestions of ongoing power and control issues; however, each woman stated that the level of domestic violence had escalated sharply, sometimes from an isolated incident many years earlier. For example,

> Once he smacked my face when I'd come home late from shopping and once he got physically rough with me after we had a major discussion about certain silly experiments we were doing at the time and so there was more [of] a context . . . [S]ince the fires . . . it's like all the lines are blurred in his life . . . it's kind of all in together in one big pile of anger. (Becky)

One woman described a shift from psychological power and control to physicality:

He would shake with rage and you could see that he was struggling to hold it . . . [One time] his fist stopped very close to me. (Audrey)

Where women had endured severe domestic violence incidents in the past, they stated it was much worse after the fires and linked the escalating violence to the men's experience of Black Saturday. The unrelenting nature of the violence and abuse was described by Virginia:

Before [the fires], it might have gotten bad once or twice a year but never to that point . . . it was just constant . . . it felt really urgent that I had to get out. I don't know, some days I wondered if he was going to kill me. You know he made threats before, he said I had to get out because he felt himself like he was going to kill me, and he was warning me . . . I feel like it's just—I'm on borrowed time. (Virginia)

Violence that included threats to kill all the family was described by Kylie:

He was on edge and you could feel it, so many times. He pushed me into the fridge, threw things at my son, and threw my daughter . . . he grabbed me and put me in a headlock and I couldn't get out . . . he took a knife and was threatening to kill us all. (Kylie)

It is unacceptable that the explanations—that domestic violence after disaster was "only" preexisting or among "certain people"—are used as reasons to ignore the issue (Enarson, 2012). A common response to calls for action on domestic violence is the ill-informed assertion that "these days," women can simply leave. Women stay in violent relationships sometimes for the children and through fear of not being believed, fear of blame, and of escalating violence. These are patently real fears. The period immediately after separation is widely cited as the most dangerous for women leaving violent relationships (Bagshaw & Brown, 2010; Flood, 2010; Mouzos, 2005). In Australia, half of all murders relate to family violence, and one woman a week is killed by her partner (Dearden & Jones, 2008).

Disaster brings opportunities for violent men to return. In disaster's aftermath, there are opportunities for violent men to exploit woman's new vulnerability caused by the experience of the disaster and its consequences (Jenkins & Phillips, 2008b). A further incentive for predatory men is the possibility of claiming grant monies (Enarson, 2012). According to Jenkins and Phillips (2008a), after Hurricane Katrina, some abusers tracked women down and moved in with them. This was facilitated by women's increased fear and insecurity. Shelters emptied after the Twin Towers terrorist attacks on 9/11 as women sought the comfort of family and familiarity (Enarson, 2012), and

after the 2004 Whakatane floods in New Zealand, 85% of women who sought refuge assistance returned to violent partners (Houghton, 2009b). Add to this that women may have been suffering posttraumatic stress disorder, homelessness, unemployment, lacking child care, and schools and having to negotiate grants and rebuilding—all stressful and conflict-ridden (Fordham, 2008).

Such situations were apparent in this research, where Black Saturday provided new opportunities for violent men to return to women now vulnerable through homelessness and unemployment brought on by the disaster. This was most evident for two of the women in this sample. Both had been separated from their partner. The two men appeared to exploit the women's changed circumstances for their own purposes, each presenting himself as willing and wanting to help. Haley said,

> I was experiencing violence before the fires . . . We had a major incident when I left him. I was drawing a line in the sand then [thinking] I can't have my kids around this . . . But when the fires started happening, he sort of took the opportunity to try to get back into my life . . . Then a week and a half after the fires, he was verbally abusing me at my home, pushing and shoving me and not letting me walk out my back door, and hit me and choked me and things like that.

And Ruby remembered,

> I had several phone calls from him [on Black Saturday] and it was ironic because I hadn't really spoken to him in a year. We'd separated a year before the fire but on the day of the fires he . . . sort of mapped my way out . . . And at midnight that night he turned up . . . [and stayed on. Some months later], after the fires and after the death threats and after all the manipulation and intimidation, I just wanted it to be over. I said, "What do you want?" and he said, "Well you've got the insurance money, give me half."

Theory 3: A Culture of Denial

This third and final theory is consistent with the findings of this research which was directly informed by women. It states that violence against women increases in the aftermath of disaster, that this increase includes new incidents from men who had not previously been violent, and that reporting does not increase because women are silenced.

Domestic violence emerges for the first time after disaster. A significant proportion of the domestic violence that became apparent after Black Saturday was both new and denied. This explanation acknowledges that domestic violence after disaster—either isolated acts of physical violence or "power and

control"—may be new. This was clearly the case for nine of the women in this research. In the second of Fothergill's (2008) case studies, the Grand Forks flood was identified as the main contributor for first-time physical abuse: "Karen felt the flood brought on the violence" (p. 144). The domestic violence was experienced as a one-off physical attack for two participants in this research.

> I could see he was so angry, so angry . . . and he pushed me onto the floor . . . and pushed me and pushed me . . . my head opened the front door . . . four [broken] ribs and the sternum, and I was on Voltaren and Panadol Osteo for two months . . . if he'd been drunk I'd be dead. You just knew he was paying out on you, on everything. (Jill)

> He stood up, put his hand on my neck, can't remember which side, and he blocked my airways . . . until I desperately lunged for air . . . So I landed on my knee on the slate breaking my knee cap in two. (Christina)

Christina had described her husband as "very gentle" before the fires, but he reacted violently to her in the weeks following the fires. Other women described new domestic violence that more closely fitted descriptions of power and control, often including physical violence, again stressing the change in their husbands since Black Saturday.

> I've never seen the aggression in him. That anger was absolutely not my husband . . . You could hear the frustration and anxiety in his voice . . . he's exhausted and pale but the anger in his face is what scared me . . . I was in a situation that if I left him, I was afraid of what he would do, and if I stayed with him I was afraid of what he would do. (Tanya)

Others were subjected to domestic violence that was new after the fires and persisted over time. Miranda described her husband as "an absolute pussycat" before the fires:

> Every time he gets into a rage he is more abusive and more hurtful . . . I'm really scared . . . While he is in police custody, he texts me that I will die from his hands . . . that the children are dead to him, if he ever sees me again he'll punch every tooth out of my head and it continues, it continues all night . . . I am genuinely worried at this point that he is going to make good on his threats. (Miranda)

Marcie concluded her interview by saying, "I feel guilty saying these things about him and putting him down because he's my husband and my best friend." She had described his behavior as very different after the fires.

He started shouting, "Aren't you grateful, I've done all this work." And he had a meltdown really. There was a lot of shouting at me, and at anyone who would try to speak to him—me, the kids. He would get like this [making fists] and he punched a door and made a dent in it. I was a bit afraid. The kids were. They'd get upset and they'd say, "I'm scared of Daddy when he gets like that." (Marcie)

And Courtney described the unrelenting nature of her husband's postfire behavior.

He [went away] and it was like an audible sigh of relief just to get a break from him, to just go, "Ah, just for the week, OK we don't have to go on egg shells" . . . Oh yeah, he'd shout . . . when he would rage it would just go on for so long and his voice is so loud and he's nearly six foot four and he would tower over me and yell down at me, "ARGGHH" like a lion . . . Every now and then the kids would cop a slap on the face . . . The other day, he really lost it . . . It was the first time I thought, "Oh my God, is he going to . . . ?" (Courtney)

Kelly said there were indications her partner could be violent before the fires, but he had never acted on them until after Black Saturday:

[Y]ou couldn't appease him . . . Oh yes, he'd scream . . . He was a very intimidating person [and] no matter what you said, no matter how clearly you said it, he'd find some way of turning it around . . . a couple of times he actually did, a push, a shove and a hit sort of thing.

Reporting does not increase because women are silenced. The last part of this theory describes how women were reluctant to report and were prevented from reporting or even speaking about the violence against them. This position implies a greater increase in domestic violence than is enumerated. The women's accounts indicate that after Black Saturday, both existing violence escalated and new violence emerged despite the lack of data to confirm this. The lack of recorded data revealed, above all, poor recording systems and silencing of women. Anecdotal data of high rates of domestic violence came from the most reputable sources, professionals, community members and, critically, from women themselves. In sharp contrast with existing published research which drew from domestic violence service data, the few domestic violence services in Mitchell and Murrindindi shires showed *no* increase in demand after Black Saturday (see also Parkinson et al., 2011). As observed in other disasters (Jenkins & Phillips, 2008a), domestic violence was seen to be a less important issue than recovery and reconstruction, and indeed, separate. There was little capacity or will be by organizations with disaster recovery oversight to gather accurate statistics on domestic violence. Attitudes were

that domestic violence preexisted and was unrelated to the disaster. The community focus on practical recovery, grief and loss, combined with sympathy for traumatized, suffering, and suicidal men prevented willingness to hear about domestic violence.

The factors inhibiting women from reporting included risk to confidentiality and fear of inflicting hurt on loved family members and loved communities. Another was fear of repercussions from partners—or indeed, their community—if they spoke out about what they and their children were going through in living with an abusive partner since the fires. The more subliminal explanation for the silence is the magnification of all those reasons women do not report and do not leave: exhaustion, self-blame, fear of not being believed, fear of escalating violence, lack of options, protection of now traumatized children, and protection of the violent—yet now vulnerable—man. Protection of the man is perhaps the main reason after a disaster. Becky said,

> Because you've gone through a trauma, you'll continually make excuses for someone's behavior and you'll actually feel helpless to escape the situation because they're suffering.

The women felt compassion for the men. Health professionals were compassionate, too, and this sometimes blurred their ability to recognize and take action on domestic violence. We heard that police "were sensitive" to the circumstances—after all, the men had been through a lot and were acting out of character. The result is a feeling of disloyalty by women, and fear of tipping vulnerable men over the edge may have softened responses.

> [Would your sister get the police involved?]

> Absolutely not. She doesn't want anything to happen to him. (Kate)

Other women's comments, too, reflect their efforts to help their partner, despite the abuse:

> He was not coping . . . he was having his own mental problems, and I was quite compassionate towards him. (Hailey)

> I'm encouraging him this whole time to see a counsellor, "Please go and see a counsellor . . . please go and get some medication . . ." (Miranda)

> He was so intensely unsure who he was that any kind of criticism was amplified within himself . . . Men are constantly trying to surmount and be stronger and

control, and when they face that [disaster experience]—even the most beautiful guys . . . you see some of them crumbling too. It just breaks my heart. (Becky)

A theme in the disaster literature is that the predisaster response to violence against women is a predictor for how it is viewed in the aftermath (although Houghton found otherwise in her study; Enarson, 2012; Fothergill, 1999, 2008; Houghton, 2009b; Wilson et al., 1998). Disaster exacerbates both the invisibility and vulnerability of domestic violence survivors (Fordham, 2008; Jenkins & Phillips, 2008a) and can lead to "some violent acts [going] unrecognized and unrecorded" (Phillips et al., 2010, p. 280). Conservative, patriarchal rurality (Pease, 2010; Tyler et al., 2012) hampers women's willingness to report at any time. A local newspaper reported on this research and quoted the Chief Executive Officer of the sole funded domestic violence service for the region. She said,

[T]he study would have attracted women who were "aggrieved with the system" and wanted to speak out. (Wilson, 2012, p. 9.)

One of the participants in this research posted a comment on the newspaper's website, refuting this. As "LM," she wrote,

I agreed to take part in the study because I was seeing with my own eyes that not only had my partner become increasingly violent and agitated since Black Saturday, but friends' partners had as well. I sought help . . . for domestic violence issues, and neither [police nor the domestic violence service] seemed to care less. Actually, they couldn't wait to try and pass me on elsewhere . . . After my experiences with "the system", I felt humiliated and defeated. I now accept that this is my lot in life and that there is no one out there capable of helping me out. "The system" is an absolute failure and this was very obvious in the months after the fires. (LM commenting on Wilson, 2012, posted March 7, 2012, 2:19 p.m.)

Other readers commented in support of her, prompting the chief executive officer to retract her statement that denied an increase in domestic violence:

My apologies to you LM as this article does not accurately reflect what I said, which has therefore not paid suitable respect to your experience. Our family violence data did not go up, and your experience could reflect that the many service providers that were on the ground after the fires, did not always link in to specialized local responses available such as family violence services. (CEO commenting on Wilson, 2012)

This final theory, and the key finding, is that not only is there both increased and new domestic violence but reporting *will not* increase because of its assignation of low priority, post disaster.

These results have implications for theories of domestic violence, demanding a new perspective in a disaster context, as discussed below, and highlighting the need for further research.

Discussion

The Link Between Domestic Violence and Disaster

There is no claim in the disaster literature that disasters "cause" domestic violence:

> [I]t is important to refute wrong-headed ideas based on stereotyping or misinformation. The most significant of these is the notion that stress causes violence, and that both simply increase in disasters. (Enarson, 2012, p. 79)

Instead, the relationship between stress and violence is complex. As Fothergill (1999) reports, "Experts in the field maintain that perpetrators are very much in control, stating that crisis conditions do not cause the abuse nor do they cause men to lose control" (pp. 82-83). Indeed, some men purposely use such situational factors as disaster to excuse or justify their behavior (Fothergill, 2008). It is, after all, men, not disasters, inflicting the violence. In her summation of the key literature, Sety (2012) acknowledges anecdotal evidence of an increase and reiterates that the question of attribution remains unanswered:

> Relying on anecdotal reports and limited research, it is difficult to determine what the increase in domestic violence can be attributed to. (p. 3)

The same discourse on attribution is held about the role of alcohol in domestic violence "due to concerns about misconstruing alcohol as a cause of partner abuse, thereby reducing perpetrator responsibility for their violence and failing to target its real causes" (Braaf, 2012, p. 1). As Houghton (2009b) noted, "Clearly, the root causes of abuse are deep and complex," and stress is more a rationale or aggravating factor in domestic violence rather than a cause (p. 101).

The resistance of many domestic violence professionals to linking domestic violence to disasters perhaps springs from the fear that men will be excused as they are traumatized. However, if violence after disaster is not recognized by domestic violence practitioners, then no one is willing to hear women speak of the violence against them. This unacceptable outcome was experienced by some of the women in this sample. This research exposes the

culture of denial in the overall recovery efforts. It exposes the reluctance of police to respond to domestic violence after disaster despite their Code of Conduct. It exposes the unwillingness of case managers, health professionals, and trauma counselors to act on women's reports of violence.

Responses from professionals working at the coalface of the Black Saturday fires tended to interpret men's violence as variously unintentional violence, an anomaly, a temporary lapse, which, given the right environment and appropriate support from the woman and the family, would right itself in time. The message to women was that to intervene *as if* this was domestic violence would be a disservice to suffering, good men. Domestic violence professionals have a crucial role in educating communities and the emergency management sector on the dynamics of domestic violence post disaster, and educating senior emergency management leaders (and disaster researchers) that there will be no significant increase in reporting until there is willingness to hear from women about the violence against them. As Bain writes (2014),

> We at the International Rescue Committee (IRC) have found that women and girls do not come forward to disclose the violence they have experienced until specialised services are in place, and only then if they are trusted to be safe and confidential. (para 3)

In the everyday, domestic violence is underrecognized and women experiencing it are largely unsupported (Jenkins & Phillips, 2008a). Although other studies report increases to service demand post disaster (Enarson, 1999; Houghton, 2009a), authors are reticent to claim this as evidence for an increase in the actual incidence of domestic violence, perhaps in the absence of direct research with women. The literature points to the need to ask women directly about increased violence (Fothergill, 2008; Jenkins & Phillips, 2008a; Picardo et al., 2010). This is essential to capture the experiences of the great majority of women, as few women use formal domestic violence services and even fewer report (Mouzos & Makkai, 2004).

Significance of the Study

The accounts of the women in this sample reveal that 17 women experienced domestic violence that they attributed to the Black Saturday bushfires. The question of causality is controversial and less important than acting on the knowledge that increased domestic violence and disasters are linked (Bain, 2014). Cognizant always that this is qualitative research and makes no claims on representativeness of the sample to the wider population; nevertheless, it

is noteworthy that the sample was drawn from a small population, made smaller by postdisaster relocation. It is equally noteworthy that there were barriers to women's participation in this research. It is unclear whether similar results would be obtained if this study was conducted again in this same population. However, these women would be only *some* of a bigger group of women enduring domestic violence after Black Saturday. This is likely to be the case in Mitchell and Murrindindi shires and beyond to other fire-affected regions. This claim is supported by the fact that the interviews could have continued beyond the data-gathering period allocated. Other women were recommended for interview but the timeline for this research prevented their inclusion. In addition, during the data-gathering period, despite interest in participating, women from outside Mitchell and Murrindindi shires were excluded from the study because of their location.

It is probable that similar results would be obtained if this methodology were to be repeated after a future catastrophic disaster. If women feel safe to speak of the violence against them, even in circumstances where they are silenced as effectively as after Black Saturday, they are likely to echo the accounts of the women in this sample.

Conclusion

Although feminists first drew attention to domestic violence as a criminal issue in the late 1960s, even now, public sentiment lags behind legislation. The willingness to overlook violence against women is exacerbated in post-disaster circumstances where support services are overburdened with primary and fire-related needs. The aftermath of Black Saturday further validated Taylor and Mouzos's (2006) finding that a large proportion of Australians believed domestic violence could be excused if it resulted from temporary anger or if there was genuine regret. In the face of empathy and excuses, decades of training in the dynamics of domestic violence appeared to vanish. This played out in the long aftermath of Black Saturday as few in the affected communities chose to tackle the violence that emerged or increased.

The complicating factors of the horrific and unprecedented disaster meant excuses for men's harmful behavior came from the women, and from the men themselves, from health professionals, police, trauma psychologists, and even from some domestic violence practitioners. The way they excused men's violence was to prioritize their suffering in the disaster's aftermath over the women's right to live without violence. Whether the men were suffering because of the trauma of the day, or the losses they endured, or their current difficulties, people felt sorry for these men whom they thought of as "good" men. Acknowledgement that the violent men were

traumatized by Black Saturday somehow makes it easier to look away from domestic violence after a disaster.

When the stakes are high, it is men's interest that will be protected, and our commitment to the notion that women and children always have the right to live free from violence is revealed as conditional. Yet, women do not speak easily of the violence against them by the man who is their partner, and disaster is no excuse for domestic violence—just as alcohol or drug abuse is no excuse (Braaf, 2012). It is critical that violence against women be named, and the identification of domestic violence not altered to accommodate trauma after disaster.

Disaster researcher Enrico Quarantelli (1994) urges us to think about both functional and dysfunctional aspects of disaster, and to consider it as part of the evolution of social systems. The aftermath of Black Saturday presents Australians with the opportunity to see how deeply embedded misogyny is and how fragile our attempts to criminalize domestic violence and hold violent men accountable. Violence against women is an abuse of human rights (AusAID Office of Development Effectiveness, 2008)—even in, and after, disaster.

Note

1. Kerri Whittenbury (2013) has found evidence of increased violence against women in relation to declining water availability. As drought has a slow onset, it is excluded from the definition of disaster used in this thesis as recommended by Quarantelli (1994).

References

Anastario, M., Shehab, N., & Lawry, L. (2009). Increased gender-based violence among women internally displaced in Mississippi two years post-hurricane Katrina. *Disaster Med Public Health Preparedness*, *3*, 18-26.

Atkins, C. (2011). Aftershock: The ongoing impact of disasters. *Insight 5 Emergency Management: Trauma and Resilience*, *5*, 4-7.

AusAID Office of Development Effectiveness. (2008). *Violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor: Building on global and regional promising approaches*. Canberra, Australia: Office of Development Effectiveness.

Austin, D. W. (2008, July). *Hyper-masculinity and disaster: Gender role construction in the wake of Hurricane Katrina*. Paper presented at the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Sheraton Boston and the Boston Marriott Copley Place, MA. Retrieved from http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/2/4/1/5/3/p241530_index.html

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2011). *2011 Census QuickStats*. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/1fvcYhF

Bachelard, M. (2009, May 10). Three months and three days since the Black Saturday inferno. *The Age*. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/pJXcpZ

Bagshaw, D., & Brown, T. (2010). *The experiences and views of children and adults from families who separated post-1995 and post-2006* (Vol. 1). Canberra, Australia: Attorney-General's Department.

Bain, A. (2014). Gender-based violence: Stop looking for "proof" and put survivors first. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/1faCfiz

Berg, B. L. (1989). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Blalock, H. M. (1967). *Toward a theory of minority-group relations*. New York, NY: Wiley.

Braaf, R. (2012). *Elephant in the room: Responding to alcohol misuse and domestic violence* (Issues Paper No. 24). Sydney: Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse.

Brown, B. J. (2012). Battered women's shelters in New Orleans: Recovery and transformation. In E. David & E. Enarson (Eds.), *The women of Katrina* (pp. 179-189). Nashville, Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press.

Chatzifotiou, S. (2000). Conducting qualitative research on wife abuse: Dealing with the issue of anxiety. *Sociological Research Online*, *5*(2). Retrieved from http://www.socresonline.org.uk.ezproxy.lib.monash.edu.au/5/2/chatzifotiou.html

Clemens, P., Hietala, J. R., Rytter, M. J., Schmidt, R. A., & Reese, D. J. (1999). Risk of domestic violence after flood impact: Effects of social support, age, and history of domestic violence. *Applied Behavioral Science Review*, *7*, 199-206.

Cox, R. S., & Perry, K. (2011). Like a fish out of water: Reconsidering disaster recovery and the role of place and social capital in community disaster resilience. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *48*, 395-411.

Dasgupta, S., Siriner, I., & Partha, S. D. (Eds.). (2010). *Women's encounter with disaster*. London, England: Frontpage Publications.

Dearden, J., & Jones, W. (2008). *Homicide in Australia: 2006-07* (National Homicide Monitoring Program Annual Report). Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.

Eitle, D., D'Alessio, S. J., & Stolzenberg, L. (2002). Racial threat and social control: A test of the political, economic, and threat of black crime hypotheses. *Social Forces*, *81*, 557-576.

Enarson, E. (1999). Violence against women in disasters: A study of domestic violence programs in the United States and Canada. *Violence Against Women*, *5*, 742-768.

Enarson, E. (2012). *Women confronting natural disaster: From vulnerability to resilience*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Feldmeyer, B., Warren, P. Y., Siennick, S. E., & Neptune, M. (2014). Racial, ethnic, and immigrant threat. *Journal of Research in Crime & Delinquency*, *52*, 62-92.

Ferrandino, J. (2015). Minority threat hypothesis and NYPD stop and frisk policy. *Criminal Justice Review*, *40*, 209-229.

Flood, M. (2010). "Fathers' rights" and the defense of paternal authority in Australia. *Violence Against Women*, *16*, 328-347.

Fordham, M. (2008). The intersection of gender and social class in disaster: Balancing resilience and vulnerability. In B. D. Phillips & B. H. Morrow (Eds.), *Women and disasters: From theory to practice* (pp. 75-98). Philadelphia, PA: International Research Committee on Disasters.

Fothergill, A. (1998). The neglect of gender in disaster work: An overview of the literature. In E. Enarson & B. H. Morrow (Eds.), *The gendered terrain of disaster: Through women's eyes* (pp. 11-25). Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Fothergill, A. (1999). An exploratory study of woman battering in the Grand Forks flood disaster: Implications for community responses and policies. *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*, *17*, 79-98.

Fothergill, A. (2008). Domestic violence after disaster: Voices from the 1997 Grand Forks Flood. In B. D. Phillips & B. H. Morrow (Eds.), *Women and disasters: From theory to practice* (pp. 131-154). Philadelphia, PA: International Research Committee on Disasters.

Frasier, P. Y., Belton, L., Hooten, E., Campbell, M. K., DeVellis, B., Benedict, S., . . . Meier, A. (2004). Disaster down east: Using participatory action research to explore intimate partner violence in Eastern North Carolina. *Health Education & Behavior*, *31*(4 Suppl.), 69S-84S.

Harville, E. W., Taylor, C. A., Tesfai, H., Xiong, X., & Buekens, P. (2011). Experience of Hurricane Katrina and reported intimate partner violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *26*, 833-845.

Houghton, R. (2009a). Domestic violence reporting and disasters in New Zealand. *Regional Development Dialogue*, *30*, 79-90.

Houghton, R. (2009b). Everything became a struggle, absolute struggle. In E. Enarson & P. Chakrabarti (Eds.), *Women, gender and disaster: Global issues and initiatives* (pp. 99-111). New Delhi, India: SAGE.

Houghton, R., Wilson, T., Smith, W., & Johnston, D. (2010). "If there was a dire emergency, we never would have been able to get in there": Domestic violence

reporting and disasters. *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*, *28*, 270-293.

Ingber, H. W. (2011, February 28). New Zealand: Domestic violence surges after earthquake. *GlobalPost*. Retrieved from https://www.pri.org/stories/2011-02-28/new-zealand-domestic-violence-surges-after-earthquake

Jenkins, P., & Phillips, B. (2008a). Battered women, catastrophe, and the context of safety after Hurricane Katrina. *NWSA Journal*, *20*(3), 49-68.

Jenkins, P., & Phillips, B. (2008b). Domestic violence and Hurricane Katrina. In B. Willinger (Ed.), *Katrina and the women of New Orleans* (pp. 65-69). New Orleans, LA: Newcomb College Center for Research on Women.

Johnston, M., & Mickelburough, P. (2010, July 30). Victims of Black Saturday devastation beg for help. *Herald-Sun*.

Key, V. O. (1949). *Southern politics in state and nation*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.

Lancaster, C. (2009). *A note on bushfire/family violence intersections post February 7th 2009 bushfires*. Melbourne, Australia: Northern Integrated Family Violence Partnership, Women, Children's Family Violence Counselling and Support Alliance and Women's Health in the North.

Luft, R. E. (2008). Looking for common ground: relief work in post-Katrina New Orleans as an American parable of race and gender violence. *NWSA Journal*, *20*, 27.

Macomber, K., Rusche, S. E., & Wright, D. (2007). After the Levees Broke: College students reactions to the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. In D. Brunsma, D. Overfelt, & J. S. Picou (Eds.), *The sociology of Katrina: Perspectives on a modern catastrophe* (pp. 123-140). Lanham, MD: Roman & Littlefield.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). London, England: SAGE.

Mouzos, J. (2005). *Homicide in Australia 2003-2004: National Homicide Monitoring Program annual report* (Vol. 65). Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.

Mouzos, J., & Makkai, T. (2004). *Women's experiences of male violence: Findings from the Australian component of the International Violence Against Women Survey* (Research and Public Policy, Series No. 56). Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.

Myers, M. A. (1990). Black threat and incarceration in Postbellum Georgia. *Social Forces*, *69*, 373-393.

Neumayera, E., & Plümperb, T. (2007). *The gendered nature of natural disasters: The impact of catastrophic events on the gender gap in life expectancy. 1981-2002*. London, England: Department of Geography and Environment, London School of Economics and Political Science and Department of Government, University of Essex and Max-Planck Institute of Economics, Jena.

Parkinson, D. (2015). *Women's experience of violence in the aftermath of the Black Saturday bushfires* (A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of doctor of philosophy). Clayton, Victoria, Australia: Faculty of Arts, School of Social Sciences, Monash University. Retrieved from http://arrow.monash.edu.au/hdl/1959.1/1162205

Parkinson, D., Lancaster, C., & Stewart, A. (2011). A numbers game: Women and disaster. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*, *22*, 42-45.

Pease, B. (2010). *Undoing privilege: Unearned advantage in a divided world*. London, England: Zed books.

Phillips, B. D., Jenkins, P., & Enarson, E. (2010). Violence and disaster vulnerabilty. In B. Phillips, D. Thomas, A. Fothergill, & L. Blinn-Pike (Eds.), *Social vulnerability to disasters* (pp. 279-306). Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

Phillips, B. D., & Morrow, B. H. (Eds.). (2008). *Women and disasters: From theory to practice*. Philadelphia, PA: International Research Committee on Disasters.

Picardo, C., Burton, S., Naponick, J., & Team Katrina Reproductive Assessment. (2010). Physically and sexually violent experiences of reproductive-aged women displaced by Hurricane Katrina. *Journal of the Louisiana State Medical Society*, *162*, 282-290.

Quarantelli, E. L. (1994). *DRC Preliminary Paper 228: Draft of a sociological disaster research agenda for the future: Theoretical, methodological and empirical issues*. Newark: Disaster Research Centre, University of Delaware.

Renzetti, C. M. (2010, Spring). And the bear just keeps on dancing: Violence against women in the context of a violent society. *Sociological Viewpoints*, 49-54.

Rezaeian, M. (2013). The association between natural disasters and violence: A systematic review of the literature and a call for more epidemiological studies. *Journal of Research in Medical Sciences*, *18*, 1103-1107.

Sandelowski, M. (2010). What's in a name? Qualitative description revisited. *Research in Nursing & Health*, *33*, 77-84.

Scanlon, J. (1997). Human behaviour in disaster: The relevance of gender. *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, *11*, 2-7.

Schumacher, J., Coffey, S., Norris, F., Tracy, M., Clements, K., & Galea, S. (2010). Intimate partner violence and Hurricane Katrina: Predictors and associated mental health outcomes. *Violence and Victims*, *25*, 588-603.

Sety, M. (2012, February). Domestic violence and natural disasters. *Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse Thematic Review*, *3*, 1-10.

Shaw, C., van Unen, J., & Lang, V. (2012). *Women's voices from the floodplain*. North Sydney, Australia: economic Security4women.

Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers.

Taylor, N., & Mouzos, J. (2006). *Community attitudes to violence against women survey: A full technical report*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.

Tyler, M., Fairbrother, P., Chaplin, S., Mees, B., Phillips, R., & Toh, K. (2012). *Gender matters: Applying a gendered analysis to bushfire research in Australia* (Working Paper No. 3, March 2012). Melbourne, Australia: Centre for Sustainable Organisations and Work, RMIT University.

U.S. Gender & Disaster Resilience Alliance. (2010). *Gulf Coast women reflect on 5th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina: Challenges of slow recovery and women's marginalisation after the recent oil spill*. Retrieved from https://www.gdnonline.org/resources/KatrinaWomenPlusFive-GDRA-Aug31.pdf

Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission. (2010). *Final report: Summary*. Melbourne, Australia: Victorian Government.

Whittenbury, K. (2013). Climate change, women's health, wellbeing and experiences of gender based violence in Australia. In M. Alston & K. Whittenbury (Eds.), *Research, action and policy: Addressing the gendered impacts of climate change* (pp. 207-222). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Wilson, J., Phillips, B. D., & Neal, D. M. (1998). Domestic violence after disaster. In E. Enarson & B. H. Morrow (Eds.), *The gendered terrain of disaster: Through women's eyes* (pp. 225-231). Westport, CT: Praeger.

Wilson, R. (2012, March 6). Fires' heart of darkness (pp. 8-9). *Heidelberg Leader*.

Author Biography

Debra Parkinson is an adjunct research fellow with Monash University Disaster Resilience Initiative (MUDRI), and manager of research, advocacy, and policy for Women's Health In the North (WHIN) and Women's Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE). Over the past two decades, she has researched gender inequity and gendered violence. From 2009 to 2014, her research with Claire Zara focused on environmental justice and gender and disaster, leading to a state award from VicHealth and a national award from the Attorney General's Department. In 2015, she was awarded the "Social and Political Sciences Graduate Research Thesis Award" from Monash University for her PhD on increased domestic violence after the Victorian "Black Saturday" bushfires. She has presented on her research in Japan and Denmark as well as at many Australian conferences. In 2015, a consortium of WHGNE, WHIN, and MUDRI established the Gender and Disaster Pod with Debra as its manager.