Men's experiences of violence and abuse
from a female intimate partner:
Power, masculinity and institutional systems

ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of intimate partner abuse has attracted considerable attention over the past 40 years. However, although the epidemiological literature has consistently reported that at least 30-40% of those experiencing intimate partner abuse are men, it has come to be constructed as a gendered social problem where heterosexual men are stereotyped as 'dangerous' perpetrators and their female partners as 'vulnerable' victims. Consequently, the 'abused man' and the 'abusing woman' have come to be marginalized, not only in statutory policy and service provision, but also in academic research and the development of psychological interventions.

My thesis argues that heterosexual 'abused men' are constrained from occupying the position of victim and are consequently denied the compassion and support available to 'abused women'. The research sought to understand how heterosexual men constructed their experiences of abuse and to consider how these constructions impacted on the negotiation of their identity in response to abuse and also their help-seeking conduct. The research was informed by a critical realist epistemology and adopted a discourse analytic approach, drawing on the work of Michel Foucault.

The men's accounts constructed their partner's behaviour as challenging but non-impactful and explainable by psychological problems, caused by past traumatic experiences, and precipitated by current material stressors. The warranted responses included endurance, social withdrawal and seeking psychological support for the partner. The constructions drew attention to a range of institutional and self-disciplinary practices, deployed in the context of stereotyped accounts of gender and partner abuse, which served to constrain the men's public identities and help-seeking conduct.

This research echoes calls for more inclusive research into the phenomenon of partner abuse and psychological interventions for 'abused men' and 'abusing women'. Those who provide services, including psychological services, should also be better informed and trained to respond appropriately to 'abused men' and 'abusing women'.

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

While working as a first-year clinical psychology trainee, I had cause to read the local authority policy on domestic violence. I was somewhat surprised that the local authority's provision (e.g. emergency re-housing) seemed to extend only to women and children. A brief internet search confirmed that men did indeed experience significant levels of domestic violence. So why, I wondered, was there so little consideration by this local authority of abused men?

By way of a beginning, I am presenting an extract from an earlier draft of this chapter, which I am doing, firstly to characterise my personal connection to the topic, and secondly to begin arguing my thesis by drawing on my own experience, as a man and as someone who has, on one occasion, experienced violence from a female partner:

> *"As a heterosexual forty-something male I, like many men I imagine, have experienced conflict with an intimate female partner. During one such argument, I recalled how an **ill-judged remark** from me had resulted in my already **emotionally-distraught girlfriend** lashing out. I was punched on the chest and slapped on the face, and I didn't know how I should respond. **I knew that to hit a woman was wrong** and having witnessed parental conflict as a child **I did not want to lose my temper with my girlfriend**, worried that I may physically retaliate. **Naturally, I was required to defend myself,** and I remembered how **even pushing my girlfriend's arms away felt somehow wrong,** and this was compounded by her demand not to touch her. **Afterwards, I felt unable to mention it** to anyone, which I attribute now to feeling **embarrassment and guilt**."*

I have highlighted pieces of text that seemed to illustrate some of the issues that I observed later analysing men's talk of their own experiences. Initially, I noticed how I was already taking responsibility, as a man, for what was happening, while stereotyping my girlfriend as 'emotionally-distraught' and, in so doing, I seemed to be uncomfortable accepting our putative subject positions of 'victim' (me) and 'aggressor' (her). I then noticed how easily, as a man, I drew on accounts that condemned the violence of men towards women; and also how I was trying to make myself seem reasonable to the reader.

Finally, I noticed how constrained I seemed in my own responses, not only from my own values, but also from the predicted feelings of shame and guilt I would experience talking about the incident. Therefore, it is my thesis that heterosexual 'abused men'[1] are constrained from taking on the identity of victim and are thus barred from receiving compassion and practical support. In articulating this thesis I also argue that heterosexual 'abusing women'[2] are similarly constrained from taking on the identity of perpetrator and are thus shielded from its associated condemnation and corrective treatment.

1.1. Aims of the Research

The primary aim of the research is to explore how abuse by a female intimate partner is constructed in and through men's talk and to identify the material and social practices warranted by these constructions. The secondary aim of the project will be to identify the subject positions enabled by these constructions and to consider how the identity and conduct of the 'abused man' are constrained or enabled in the context of self-governing practices acting at the level of society, institutions and the individual (McNay, 2009).

1.2. Analytic Approach

The research is informed by a critical realist epistemology, reflecting Parker (1992), who has argued that discursive constructions are grounded in social and material structures. Critical realist psychologists posit a complex dynamic relationship between the material and the discursive in the operation of power to constrain or enable human conduct (Hook, 2001). For my analytic method, I have adopted a post-structuralist approach to discourse analysis drawing on the work of Foucault (1982), in order to focus on mechanisms of power and subjectification. My analytic approach will be discussed in detail in chapter 2.

1.3. Issues of Definition

Firstly, I will briefly deconstruct the title of this dissertation; "*Men's experiences of violence and abuse from a female intimate partner: Power, masculinity and institutional systems.*" The first part of the title is an attempt to convey the heterogeneity of problematic or impactful interpersonal behaviour experienced by men in intimate relationships with women.

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[1] I will use the terms 'abused man' and 'abused men' to refer to heterosexual men who self-identify or are reported to have experienced violence or other forms of abuse from a female intimate partner.

[2] I will use the terms 'abusing woman' and 'abusing women' to refer to heterosexual women reported to have behaved in a violent or abusive way towards a male intimate partner.

The second part of the title draws attention to some components of the discursive space available to men self-reporting as abused by a female intimate partner (hereafter I will use the term 'abused men'), and which seemed most relevant when I made my thesis proposal. *Power*, as talked about by Michel Foucault (Foucault, 1980), is meant in two senses: firstly that power is not a thing but a relation; and secondly that power operates in a productive way at the most micro levels of social relations and is omnipresent at every level of the social body. One of the most important features of Foucault's view is that mechanisms of power produce different types of knowledge which collate information on people's activities and existence to produce and reinforce discursive and material practices. The term *masculinity* is intended to represent a place in gender relations, and the practices by which men (and women) engage that place (Connell, 2005). *Institutional systems* refer to the agencies and organizations with which the 'abused man' may come into contact, and whose material practices serve to constrain or enable his conduct. Secondly, I will briefly outline some of the problems inherent within the official and un-official terminology associated with problematic or impactful interpersonal behaviour in close relationships. The well-known term, *domestic violence*, is used by the United Kingdom government as an official umbrella term for partner abuse, family abuse and child abuse[3]. Although used in official documents, such as the Home Office British Crime Survey (BCS), this term arose by consensus and is not defined in legal statute. There are also less official terms commonly used such as 'battering' and 'intimate partner violence'. All these terms tend to convey that abuse is about physical violence. This interpretation is reflected in the criminal legislation that only enables prosecution for crimes of physical (domestic) violence (or threat of physical violence) under section 47 of the Offences against the Person Act, 1861. Consequently, incidents of abuse that do not involve physical contact (such as emotional abuse) are not recorded as crimes. The recent Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act, 2004 introduced a number of civil remedies (e.g. restraint orders), but still does not define a crime of domestic violence. For clarity, the term that I will adopt, in common with the BCS, is *partner abuse*, and more specifically *male partner abuse*.

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[3] The Home Office of the United Kingdom (UK) Government currently defines domestic violence as "[a]ny incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality." (Home Office, 2004: 12).

1.4. Chapter Overview

This introduction will evaluate how 'male partner abuse' and 'abused men' are constructed. Section 1.5 will outline the problem of the 'abused man', and consider how such a problem has come to exist and is maintained by privileging feminist critiques of patriarchal 'male dominance'. Section 1.6 will evaluate how 'abused men' are constructed in and through the research literature and the subject positions, identities and practices warranted by these constructions. Section 1.7 will evaluate how male partner abuse is constructed through the academic literature and will shed light on the practices warranted by these constructions. Finally, section 1.8 will provide a summary and rationale for the project.

1.5. Male Partner Abuse: The Problem of the Abused Man

In the forty years since partner abuse first came to public awareness, a continuing topic of controversy has been whether men can be victims of abuse by their female partners.

Malcolm George (2007) contends that:
> *'this "Great Taboo" (George, 2004) is the coalescence of two forbidden beliefs in society: first, that a man can be beaten by a woman, which is an anathema particularly to men; second, the uncomfortable reality that women can be aggressive and violent, which contravenes stereotypical notions of femininity and is an attribution that neither men nor women wish to acknowledge' (p. 1).*

From a different perspective, Erin Pizzey[4] wrote:
> *'In my experience I found that in most relationships the violence is consensual – both partners are equally responsible for what goes on behind the front door. In those cases we rarely hear from either partner unless the children of those doomed relationships are drawn to the attention of the schools and then the courts or the psychiatrist's office. However when one of the partners is an innocent victim of their partner's violence if they happen to be a woman, they can at least find comfort and refuge but for men, at the moment, there is nothing. If he is involved with a violent woman he risks the laughter of his friends and a truly frosty reception from all the agencies.'* (Pizzey, 2007)

The following sections will provide an outline of how the 'abused man' has become constructed as problematic and the implications of this for his ability to access support.

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[4] The founder of the first refuge for 'battered women' in Chiswick, West London, which opened in 1971.

1.5.1. A brief history of the abused man: a problem for patriarchal power.

From medieval times, within patriarchal Western culture, a husband was expected to dominate his wife, making her, if the occasion arose, the proper target for necessary marital chastisement; not the other way around (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). For this reason it has been argued that, historically in France and England, society ridiculed and humiliated husbands thought to be 'battered' and/or dominated by their wives (Steinmetz, 1977-78). Such 'treatments' for these husbands have been attributed to their perceived inability to live up to the male-orientated patriarchal ethos in society, which persisted well into the twentieth century (Pleck, 1987).

The maintenance of a gendered patriarchal framework in society is argued to be premised on the unequal distribution of power and resources between people, particularly men and women (Coltrane, 1998). In terms of partner abuse, such power inequalities are theorised to be maintained in and through lay gender stereotypes of the man as aggressive and dominant and the woman as passive and submissive (Seelau & Seelau, 2005). Such stereotypes are grounded in dominant accounts of gender roles, termed by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) as 'hegemonic masculinity'[5] and 'emphasised femininity'[6].

The following sections consider the influence of the feminist challenge to patriarchy on the construction of 'partner abuse', and then offer a critique of this challenge.

1.5.1.1. The feminist challenge to patriarchal 'male dominance'.

During the latter half of the twentieth century, there was a shift in people's attitudes towards what was acceptable behaviour in marital relationships. In the 1970s, pioneers like Erin Pizzey exposed the "hidden" secret of domestic violence for both men and women (Pizzey, 1974).

However, it was a 'battered women's movement' which gained momentum, with the support of a vociferous feminist lobby, while a "battered men's movement" struggled to grow (George, 2007).

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[5] 'Hegemonic masculinity' is defined as 'the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.' (Connell, 2005; p. 77)

[6] 'Emphasised femininity' refers to a term used by Connell to acknowledge both the dominant gender practices of women but also the asymmetrical position of masculinities and femininities in a patriarchal gender order (Connell and Messerschmidt, 1995).

It is perhaps unsurprising that most of the early academic research dealing with partner abuse focused on female victims and the social factors that supported the victimization of women (Smith, 1989; cited in George, 2007). Consequently, a significant proportion of feminist-inspired literature portrays partner abuse as a social phenomenon stemming from a patriarchal framework where women are stereotyped as the powerless victims and men portrayed as the powerful perpetrators (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Such research has enabled a powerful feminist lobby to influence civil law, the enforcement of criminal law, and the ways law enforcement and social agencies respond to the needs of female victims of partner abuse (Fitzpatrick, 2005). This lobby continues through the political advocacy of, amongst others, Harriet Harman MP, who, in 2001, led a drive within Government to make tackling domestic violence a priority. The new UK domestic violence legislation has provided a framework to support both genders', but, as will be explored, it seems doubtful that men and women are benefiting equally from the new legislation.

1.5.1.2. A critique of the feminist challenge to patriarchal 'male dominance'.

Some researchers using alternative methodologies have continued to report that a significant proportion of self-identified victims of partner abuse are male (see Archer, 2000 for a review). However, these researchers have until recently remained a minority and marginalised voice in academia, heavily criticised by some (e.g. DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2003) for reporting significant levels female violence and abuse. Thus, it is argued that there has been an "exclusionary" aspect to the feminist-inspired research in relation to the presence of a 'male victim' and a 'feminisation' of the phenomenon of victim (Walker & Walker, 1997). Furthermore, these research findings have been mirrored in the UK by official statistics such as the BCS. The latest BCS (2009-10; Home Office Statistical Bulletin, 01/11) reported that about 1 in 9 men (11.2% of male respondents) had experienced some kind of partner abuse (non-sexual) since the age 16, compared to about 2 in 9 women (22.6% of female respondents). For incidents occurring within the previous 12 months, the BCS reported that 2.6% of men reported some kind of partner abuse (non-sexual), compared to 4.6% of women.

However, the feminist-inspired literature on partner abuse has been criticised for being "ethnocentric", as most of it centres on white Western middle-class females (Sarantakos, 1999). More fundamentally, the "male dominance" model of patriarchy (Dobash & Dobash, 1979) continues to be widely accepted across the academic, politico-legal and social spheres, although attempts to test the model empirically remain inconclusive (George, 2007).

The 'male dominance' model has been criticised because it does not offer an explanation of the process by which men may deploy the power of societal patriarchy to dominate a female partner (Bogarde, 1988; cited in George, 2007), particularly as most men have been found to be non-violent within intimate relationships (Dutton, 1994). Furthermore, it has been argued, in response to feminist accounts, that the power and consequent agency attributed to men in a patriarchal society may be diminishing or in fact be unavailable to them, within the context of their own domestic situation (Archer, 2000).

There is a growing body of 'masculinist' evidence to suggest that male perpetrators themselves are responding more to an ethos that 'males cannot be victims' than to the societal account of male dominance over women. It has been argued that men are particularly sensitive to personal threat and a fear of victimisation (George, 1997). Studies investigating the construction of men and masculine behaviour draw attention to apparent contradictions in the concept of universal 'male dominance' through physical strength, suggesting that during the journey to manhood, males learn to articulate strength through gentleness and compassion rather than force and oppression (Macchietto, 1992). Arguably, such a socialisation supports the declarations of the vast majority of men who claim to abhor violence against women (O'Leary, 1993).

The next section considers the problematic subject position of the 'abused man'.

1.6. The 'Abused Man' as Victim: A Problematic Subject Position?

The previous sections have outlined some of the structural conditions under which the 'abused man' as 'victim' has come to be 'problematized'[7] (Foucault, 1985) as an unwanted challenge to dominant notions of patriarchy, reinforced by continuing stereotyped views of male and female gender roles.

The following sub-sections will examine the subject positioning of the 'abused man' and evaluate the practices by which he has become 'problematized' as a 'victim', and consider the implications of these processes for his subjectification (Foucault, 1985).

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[7] Throughout, the term 'problematized' intends to convey the notion that 'abused men' (as victims) and 'abusing' women (as perpetrators) are consistently constructed as ill-fitting (problematic) occupants of those subject positions through the (problematizing) action of power in dominant discursive practices.

1.6.1. Subject positioning of men in the social construction of partner abuse.

Several studies have identified negative perceptions towards men identified as victimised by a female partner (e.g. Macchietto, 1992). Harris and Cook (1994) found that a greater responsibility was placed on the male victims who were also taken less seriously than female victims, while Cormier (2006) reported that, in hypothetical scenarios, female perpetrators were seen as less capable of inflicting harm than males and as reacting more strongly to a 'battering' incident than men. Similarly, Lewis and Sarantakos (2001) argued that female violence directed against men was generally considered a taboo subject by society and the media.

A certain amount of work has also been done to explore how male victimhood is treated in institutional policies and procedures. Barber (2008) identified how a UK Department of Health (DOH) resource manual on domestic violence had made minimal reference to men as victims of domestic violence and focused almost entirely on the experience of women (Department of Health, 2005). Similarly, the Royal College of Nursing's guidance on domestic violence (RCN, 2000; cited in Barber, 2000) has only occasional mentions of men as potential victims of abuse. Another example of this gendered portrayal of 'domestic violence' is a Home Office leaflet reproduced as local guidance by several organizations. The leaflet, which, despite identifying a small amount of support for men, explicitly refers, in large part to female victims.

For example, one section of the leaflet advises:

> "If you think a friend or loved one is being abused, try telling
> **her** that you're concerned, say why you're worried and ask if
> **she** wants to talk to you about it. Let **her** know you want to help."
> ("Home office domestic-violence-leaflet12835", n.d.; bold by me)

In summary, such societal perceptions are likely to perpetuate the common assumption that women are the only victims and, implicitly, that men are the main perpetrators of such violence. This would arguably constrain the ability of the man to take up a position of victim that would warrant the right to seek help with an expectation of recognition.

The following section will outline the literature that has dealt with institutional responses to 'abused men' and consider the impact of these practices upon his conduct, particularly help-seeking.

1.6.2. Institutional practices regulating the abused man's conduct.

The data presented here on institutional responses are from the perspective of UK 'abused men' who have spoken about this in qualitative interviews, as there is a dearth of analysis of how institutions actually respond to 'abused men'.

In the Northern Ireland Domestic Violence Forum 2005 report, Mike Brogden and Saranjit Nijhar[8] provided a detailed account reporting men's experiences with a range of agencies. Social Services are reported as, at best, viewing men's allegations with suspicion and at worst being felt to be in collusion with the female partner. The police are regularly accused by 'abused men' of ignoring male abuse and favouring women during domestic call-outs and investigations. Brogden and Nijhar suggested that the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act (2004) and domestic violence training, almost exclusively carried out by organizations supporting female victims, may help explain these perceptions. Occasionally a doctor's response was considered pro-active. However, several interviewees, who had spoken to their doctor, were met with a lack of understanding or the occasional abrupt dismissal for the failure of the male to deal with his own situation. Very few interviewees spoke of contact with psychological services. Occasionally, men had accessed counselling but usually after the relationship had ended, and those that reported being able to attend RELATE said that they had found the experience helpful. From conducting a review of the literature it is clear that clinical psychology has neglected the area of abused men, a sentiment echoed by Seager (2011), who cites a wide-spread failure of psychology to study men as a group and to engage with the problems of being a man in modern society. I am unfortunately unable to offer any literature that describes clinical psychology interventions with men as victims of partner abuse or conversely for women as perpetrators. Such interventions have apparently been undertaken but wait to be reported.

In conclusion, Lawrence (2003) suggests that support resources and networks available for female victims of domestic violence are not available for male victims. For example, there are shelters and safe homes to assist in protecting women from violent partners, but these dwarf the few services available for men. It is understood by the researcher from anecdotal evidence that there has been a recent increase in shelter provision for abused men, some provided by existing providers of women's shelters (e.g. REFUGE).

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[8] All in-text citations for Brogden and Nihar (2005) refer to reference list entry for an official report published by the Northern Ireland Domestic Violence Forum.

This change seems to have occurred in the context of recent UK legislation, namely the Equality Act (2010), which came into force on 1st October 2010. The act, designed to consolidate existing equal treatment legislation and to come into line with four major EU Equal Treatment Directives, seems to have enabled a small shift in the acknowledgement of 'abused men'.

The following sub-section explores how the identities of 'abused men' are constrained by the culturally-available accounts concerning masculinity and partner abuse, as well as their embodied responses to the material practices warranted by such accounts.

1.6.3. Embodiment and discursive practices disciplining the 'abused man'.

Several studies have highlighted the self-reported shame and embarrassment of 'abused men' (e.g. Migliaccio, 2002). Migliaccio, having interviewed twelve men self-identifying as abused, argued that this embodied feeling of anticipated social rejection limited a man's confidence to talk about the experience, both within and outside the relationship, so constraining them from seeking help.

Migliaccio further reports that the men he interviewed spoke of a challenge to their masculinity and an awareness of societal expectations of them to be self-reliant, stoic and to try to reassert control. Consequently, the burden of a construction of 'hegemonic masculinity' may impact considerably on male victims and constrain their identity (George, 1994). Such an idealised view of masculinity rejects and even ridicules any deviation from the hegemonic roles and identities of men and so there is no discursive space made available for the 'vulnerable' male. In addition there may be a counter-construction of 'female privilege', underpinned by an ethos of patriarchy, where it is considered acceptable to slap or ridicule a man not meeting such masculine ideals (Fontes, 2003). However, the extent to which such a narrow conception of masculinity prevails in 2011 is open to question. Wetherell and Edley (1999) suggest that men vary in their own alignment with and adherence to the ideals of a hegemonic masculinity. They seek to accomplish multiple identity positions, and are not merely limited to those enabled through accounts of masculinity. Furthermore, by rooting the debate on partner abuse only in totalizing notions of gender, rather than in the inherent attitudes and propensity of individuals to use violence and abuse as an inter-relational strategy, female victimization will continue, as will the unseen victimization of some men (Stitt & Macklin, 1995).

The following sub-section considers the potential impact on the help-seeking conduct of 'abused men' as a result of their subject positioning and governing processes acting upon them.

1.6.4. Subjectification of the 'abused man' and his help-seeking practices.

There is a considerable body of evidence to suggest that the 'abused man' is constrained from seeking help. For example, Stitt and Macklin (1995) suggests that male victims may not seek help because care agencies often deny the existence of violence against men where the female partner is the perpetrator. Barber (2008) further argues that 'men are not encouraged to report abuse, they are conditioned not to ask for help and may feel disempowered by those in authority and are therefore less likely to report incidents of domestic violence' (Barber, 2008, p. 37). In addition, a recent US community survey of the help-seeking attitudes of 'abused men' (Tsui, 2010), cited: service perception of client group, shame and embarrassment, denial, stigmatization, and fear as constraints to seeking support from agencies. Du Plat-Jones (2006) cites anecdotal concerns from UK men that their healthcare needs will not appropriately be met by healthcare professionals, a sentiment echoed by several men interviewed by Brogden and Nijhar (2005). In terms of reporting partner abuse as a crime, the Scottish Executive Central Research Unit (2002) report by Gadd, Farrell, Dallimore & Lombard (2002)[9], quoting from Scottish Police crime data, identified that only around 7% of all incidents of domestic violence recorded by the police in both 1999 and 2000 involved male victims attacked by female perpetrators. Lawrence (2003) suggests that 'abused men' report that it is hard to accept their own situation and believe that the police blame men and are reluctant to produce crime reports on partner abuse against men. Therefore, given the higher level of partner abuse reported by men in the BCS, it seems likely that men are constrained from reporting partner abuse as a crime.

The following sections will evaluate research which has been conducted with 'abused men' to shed light how they construct their experiences of and responses to abuse.

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[9] All in-text citations for Gadd et al., (2002) refer to reference list entry for an official report published by the Scottish Executive Central Research Unit.

1.7. Constructing Male Partner Abuse: A Problematic Experience?

This section will deal with how the 'abused man' constructs his experiences of the challenging behaviour of his female partner.

1.7.1. Abuse as the problematic behaviour of the female partner.

There is now a substantial body of research seeking to differentiate the experiences of male and female victims. A majority of this research can be criticised for focusing on a form of behaviour (i.e. physical violence) perceived as 'male'. However, a few interview-based studies have drawn on wider definitions of abuse (e.g. Brogden & Nijhar, 2005). The following sub-sections summarises the characteristics, consequences and explanations for abuse identified in this research and elsewhere.

1.7.1.1. Characteristics of male partner abuse.

In survey-based studies violent acts such as hitting and punching are regularly listed, but are often reported as more frequent and having more severe consequences when perpetrated by a man against a woman (e.g. Gadd et al., 2002). However, researchers have pointed out that women may 'even the score with physically stronger male partners' by using weapons or throwing things (Hines & Malley-Morrison, 2001). Similarly, men are more likely to be victims of severe violence from women involving kicking or objects thrown (Strauss, 1980) and that the number of attacks experienced is likely to be greater (Archer, 2000), and that severe violence perpetrated by women often results in some type of injury (Morse, 1995).

In interview-based studies, men described women's violence as frequently creative, common and including sexual violence (e.g. direct attacks on the man's genitals). The violence described might also include harm to children or be accompanied by random destruction of property (Brogden & Nijhar, 2005). Men also regularly cite the experience of non-physical abuse, described sometimes as 'controlling behaviours', emotional or psychological abuse (Hines et al., 2007). Emotional abuse is perceived as the most severe form of abuse, especially when conducted with an audience of children. Control may be exercised obliquely over household affairs, such as by rationing income and expenditure or exclusion from family meals. Men also claim that false accusations regarding alleged violence to their female partner, either to the police or their children, is another way the female partner could assume dominance.

Finally, psychological abuse could also occur through the denigration of the partner's sexual competence compared to other males; while sleep deprivation was also perceived as particularly pernicious according to some men, especially where their job required concentration (Brogden & Nijhar, 2005).

1.7.1.2. Consequences of male partner abuse.

Survey-based studies have tended to focus on 'internalizing' symptoms such as depression, which women experience at twice the rate of men. Many studies have failed to examine 'externalising' symptoms such as alcoholism or PTSD which have been found to be significantly associated with the experience of partner abuse (Hines & Malley-Morrison, 2001) and have also often failed to assess suicidal, self-destructive, self-mutilating and assaultative behaviours (Carmen, Rieker & Mills, 1984) and also fail to report that the male suicide rate is consistently higher than for women (Office of National Statistics, 2011). Furthermore, while reporting immediate reactions such as anger, emotional distress and depression (Follingstad, Wright, Lloyd, & Sebastian, 1991), men also report other reactions such as wanting to seek revenge, feeling unsafe and feeling shame or fear (Morse, 1995).

In the UK qualitative literature, the most severe form of abuse cited by male respondents was emotional victimisation, normally cumulative and involving long-term trauma, which at the extreme may lead to suicide attempts. Such victimisation could affect their ability to work or result in a loss of home or livelihood. Only a few of the interviewed men reported that in subsequent legal and matrimonial procedures were the courts receptive to the notion of the male as victim. Men reported emotional trauma, not just because of the direct effects on themselves, but also because of their children witnessing such abuse and in some cases, being forced to take sides. Such experiences in several cases affected the individual's ability to develop future relationships with members of the opposite sex, although others stated that future relationships could largely compensate for their experience of partner trauma (Brogden & Nijhar, 2005).

1.7.1.3.   Explanations for the abusive behaviour of a female partner.

There is a substantial body of research in scientistic paradigms that has sought to compare and contrast violence and abuse simplistically along gender lines. It has also been possible to identify one qualitative study that has asked men how they account for their partner's challenging behaviour, namely Stitt and Macklin (1995).

In the survey-based research there is a common perception that the problem of partner abuse is located in the individual pathology or deviance of the individual, and/or that it is a result of 'dysfunctional' relationships underscored by individual mental illness, alcoholism, drugs, developmental difficulties or stress (Hines & Malley-Morrison, 2001). Research has also associated childhood abuse experiences and attachment difficulties with vulnerability to later 'psychopathologies', such as personality disorder in both males and females and, confusingly, in both perpetrators and victims (Goldenson, Spidel, Greaves, & Dutton, 2009). However, it has also been argued that men are far less likely than women to carry the label of 'victim' into adulthood, even when childhood abuse experiences are acknowledged (Graham-Kevan, 2009).

Longitudinal research paradigms have highlighted that risk factors for later aggressive behaviour are shared by girls and boys and predict both general and partner aggression (Moffitt & Caspi, 1999). In addition, personality-type risk factors (e.g. fearlessness, lack of empathy and impulsivity) and other risk factors, including maternal behaviour, young motherhood and low socio-economic status have been cited as highly predictive of later aggression (Graham-Kevan, 2009). Furthermore, for both men and women, specific risk factors in terms of adolescent 'conduct disorder' were found to be predictive of both perpetration of later partner abuse and of pairing up with an 'abusive partner', often leading to more reciprocal abuse (Moffitt, Caspi, Rutter, & Silva, 2001).

In terms of female abusers, self-defence is often not the primary motivation for violence reported (Follingstad et al., 1991), but rather efforts to exert dominance and control over their partner (Rouse, 1990). O'Leary and colleagues (1989) noted that in one-sided violent marriages, women were twice as likely as men to be the sole perpetrator of abuse. Similarly, Swan and Snow (2002) noted that in 12% of their sample of couples, women were classed as dominant aggressors.

It has been suggested that power may therefore be exerted by women as well as men, at least within the specific context of an intimate relationship (Johnson, 2006). From this I wonder whether it is an uncomfortable notion for feminists and others that women may have (in some contexts) the autonomy or agency to exert power and commit violence, other than to resist male oppression.

By way of contrast, the Stitt and Macklin study asked twenty men whether 'they attributed their wife's behaviour to an addiction or other issues' (Stitt & Macklin, 1995, p. 49).

Respondents offered a range of accounts including 'alcoholism', 'post-natal' depression, childbirth, 'pre-menstrual syndrome', 'eating disorder', retirement and unemployment (man as 'nuisance' in the house). Interestingly, eight respondents also attributed their partner's behaviour to the 'normal' character of their partner.

The following section explores how men construct their responses of abuse.

1.7.2 Abuse as the man's responses to his partner's challenging behaviour.

The implications of the constructions of the challenging behaviour of the female partner for how the man is enabled to respond, both personally and in terms of seeking support from others, will be considered in this section.

1.7.2.1. His response as strategies to cope with violence and abuse.

A minimal amount of research has garnered information about how men cope with the direct consequences of female-perpetrated abuse (Hines et al., 2007). Consequently, the following section will be based on findings from one UK interview study (Brogden & Nijhar, 2005).

The men interviewed in the Brogden and Nijhar study stated that to a varying extent they could 'manage' coercive abuse, but required coping strategies so to do. There were concerns expressed that severe abuse would 'mentally destroy' them or that it undermined their image of masculinity in the outside world. To cope, most of the men attempted to conceal their abusive experiences from public view: variously out of embarrassment, by self-injury to conceal their bruises, or because they believed third parties would not take the abuse seriously. Some respondents described coping through a process of passive acceptance as they became slowly immunised to the escalating abuse and violence. Most found reasoning ineffectual and engaged in various strategies to avoid or temporarily escape from the problematic behaviour. Many felt trapped, as by leaving, they risked disadvantage or unhelpful contacts with agencies. Others attempted to normalise the abuse, believing that it would ease over time.

Alcohol was a common resort with no positive effects, and some men attempted to use physical exercise to alleviate the domestic strife. Work also provided a temporary but unsatisfactory distraction for some men. A majority of the men interviewed had terminated the relationship, either through choice by either party or through 'exhaustion'.

The next section will consider the experiences of 'abused men' in terms of seeking support from others in crisis.

1.7.2.2. His response as seeking support from others in crisis.

Again, a minimal amount of research has garnered information about the experiences of men who have sought support in response to abuse. Consequently, this section will be based on findings from two UK studies that asked men about their help-seeking responses (Brogden & Nijhar, 2005; Stitt & Macklin, 1995).

Brogden and Nijhar (2005) reported that only a few men had sought external support, mostly from trusted friends. The respondents mentioned having contacted male intimates, family members and professional agencies, but had received mixed responses, predominantly negative and unhelpful. Some support was experienced from 'breaking the silence' to a neutral party and in confiding subsequently to new intimate partners. Stitt and Macklin reported that, of twenty respondents, two said that they had gone to the police and three said that their partner had called the police. The other fifteen had stated that they did not want to involve the police, having little or no faith in the police being impartial and in their ability to acknowledge men as victims of partner abuse.

In terms of other services, Stitt and Macklin reported that seven respondents had said they had not contacted any agencies for support, expressing negative expectations of the response that they would receive. Thirteen respondents reported that the services that they had involved had been unsympathetic (stigmatising and minimising) and/or unhelpful. Counselling services and help-lines were viewed as offering no practical help and GPs responded in practical ways by treating the physical injury or by prescribing psychiatric medication to men to help them cope with the stress, thus locating the problem in the man.

The following section will provide a chapter summary and rationale for this research.

1.8. Summary and Rationale

1.8.1. Summary.

Thus far, I have argued that the 'abused man', is constructed as a problem for the discourse and practice associated with patriarchal power. In so doing, I articulated how the feminist challenge to patriarchal male dominance had led to a feminist-inspired literature around partner abuse and a vociferous lobby to seek practical support for female victims.

The feminist challenge has, in my view, further 'problematized' men as victims of abuse and women as perpetrators within the academic literature, and in so doing has perpetuated the exclusion of the 'abused man' from the compassion and support afforded by society to the 'abused woman'.

In the following sections I sought to shed light on the problematic subject position of the 'abused man' and the discursive and material practices which exercise power over 'him' (Rose, 1996). I showed that these practices serve to not only constrain his help-seeking conduct, but also reinforce his public positioning as not in need of, or deserving of, support. In addition, I outlined how, in spite of recent legislative changes, that institutional practices continue to be influenced primarily by the gendered discourses surrounding partner abuse and the social stereotypes which underpin them. Furthermore, I sought to show how men are, at least to some extent, constrained in their responses to partner abuse by the discursive and material practices associated with hegemonic masculinity and social stigma. Finally, I utilised the literature to demonstrate how institutional practices in response to male partner abuse served also to constrain his conduct, particularly help-seeking.

I then sought to shed light on the ways in which abuse is a problematic experience for men. In so doing, I have argued that while the research suggests that men may experience lower rates of physical injury from female intimate partners, it also seems that men may experience more severe violence as women attempt to 'level the playing field' with stronger male partners, while interview-based studies suggested that female partners may also dominate men through emotional, psychological and material forms of abuse.

In addition, I have shown how the survey-based research has suggested that men may also experience the impact of abuse in terms of emotional or psychological effects (Hines & Malley-Morrison, 2001), while interview-based research has also suggested abuse may also impact on children and other areas of the man's life. Furthermore, I have articulated how very similar psychological and social explanations for violence and abuse have been attributed to both men and women, while highlighting that such explanations offer considerably more opportunities for women to be 'problematized' (as perpetrators of abuse) than men, both in society and by the men themselves.

Subsequently, I sought to explore how men's responses to abuse have been constructed. In so doing, I outlined how men's attempts to cope with partner abuse appear to reflect not only the challenges to masculinity that are associated with the abuse, but also an awareness of the stigma of their situation and the constraints on the local availability of personal or statutory supports.

In addition, I have sought to show how men's reluctance to seek support and their unhelpful/unsympathetic experiences, both with agencies and their social network, adds weight to their concerns about the stigma of their situation and the problematic position of 'abused men' in society.

However, there is currently only a small amount of research offering contextualised accounts of UK heterosexual men's experiences of partner abuse. Consequently, the following section will consider how this research would add to the literature, offer alternative ways of conceptualising partner abuse for psychologists and increase the awareness of psychologists working with men and couples.

1.8.2. Rationale for the Research.

The interview studies that have been carried out with male victims have tended to focus on describing men's subjective experiences. However, it is arguably important to also understand how these men draw on their materiality and available discourses to construct their experiences and practices in response to partner abuse. It is proposed that the dominant gendered discourses surrounding partner abuse will influence how men access and are supported by clinical psychology services. As this chapter has articulated, the feminisation of victimhood and associated threats to masculinity may lead men to relate their experiences to psychologists in certain ways, including denial, minimisation or embarrassment.

Furthermore, the existing 'feminised' conceptualisation of partner abuse may lead to the presenting issues of men to be misinterpreted by clinicians. For example, so-called "externalising" symptoms (e.g. alcohol use) may be wrongly attributed to perpetration rather than victimhood, which may in turn lead to inappropriate formulation or treatment.

Having an increased awareness of the discursive and material factors influencing men's accounts of abuse would inform decisions about appropriate psychological treatments. For example, treatment could be informed by considering male victimhood as disempowering and, therefore, offering some appropriate empowerment of the male victim may support

him to develop both his autonomy and sense of self. Such empowerment may include a validation of a man's particular experience as a victim of female-perpetrated abuse, recognition of his expertise in terms of knowing how to cope and acknowledgement of and working with his particular material constraints, such as availability for treatment.

Research for interventions, statutory policies and most service provision (including clinical psychology) for victims of partner abuse tend to be focussed on female victims or couples, rather than men. Similarly, treatment for perpetrators of partner abuse is similarly biased almost exclusively towards men. There is a perception that the harm from abuse perpetrated by women against men is considerably less significant than the harm perpetrated by men against women (e.g. Dorling, Gordon, Hillyard, Pantazis, Pemberton, & Tombs, 2008[10]). It may be argued that this perception of relative harm has justified the asymmetry of service provision, in spite of the evidence of harm suffered by abused men.

The present research takes these issues as a starting point for undertaking a Critical Realist Discourse Analysis of men's talk informed by Foucauldian principles. Such an analysis would enable consideration of the social practices warranted by the local and cultural discourses available to these men (Willig, 2008); and also enable consideration of how material factors might influence the deployment of these discursive resources. It is argued that such an analysis would inform the conceptualisation of men's distress arising in the context of partner abuse, its psychological treatment and the provision of appropriate clinical psychology services.

Therefore, the following chapter will explore the constructions of men's experiences and responses to their partner's 'abusive' behaviour. In so doing, the analysis will consider the implications of these constructions for the subject positions enabled, both for himself and his partner and also shed light on the governing practices acting on the man to constrain or enable his responses and help-seeking conduct. The forthcoming analysis and discussion in chapter 3 will seek to answer the following questions:

Main research question:
- How do individuals self-identifying as men abused by a female intimate partner use talk to construct their experiences of abuse and what are the implications of these constructions for how they seek support?

Secondary research questions:

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[10] Refers to reference list entry for an official report by the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies (2008).

- What social practices comprise and/or are warranted by these constructions of abuse by an intimate female partner?

- What subject positions are enabled and what are the implications for action of these subject positions, particularly in relation to the seeking of support?

- How do these 'abused men' become constituted through the government of regulatory powers and discipline of the self?

CHAPTER 2 - METHODOLOGY

As introduced in chapter 1, this chapter will clarify the epistemological position taken in this study, namely critical realist social constructionism, and provide a rationale for the discourse analytic method undertaken.

2.1. Epistemology

In critical realism, it is assumed that language can inform us about the meaning of our social realities, but that 'these constructions are theorized as being constrained by the possibilities and limitations inherent in the material world', and thus do not mirror reality (Sims-Schouten, Riley & Willig, 2007: 101). Critical realists argue that it is necessary to go beyond the text being analysed to draw on other evidence to support the ontological claims made about human experience (e.g. the experience of men abused by female partners). Consequently, data such as material practices, embodied feelings and power are given an ontological status that is simultaneously independent of, but in a mutually-beneficial and interdependent relationship with, discursive practices. Hook (2001) argues that within this relationship 'discourse facilitates and endorses the emergence of certain relations of material power, just as it justifies these effects after the fact. Similarly, material arrangements of power enable certain speaking rights and privileges, just as they lend material substantiation to what is spoken in discourse.' (p. 33)

Social constructionism, as it has come to be adopted within psychology, describes epistemological approaches with loosely-related characteristics and sharing a number of key principles (Burr, 2003). The four principles of social constructionism (Gergen, 1985; as cited by Burr, 2003; p. 2-5) are as follows:

1) 'A critical stance toward taken-for granted ways of understanding the world';

2) 'Categories and concepts used to describe the world are historically and culturally specific'.

3) 'Knowledge is sustained by social processes' and;

4) 'Knowledge and social action go together'.

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Social constructionist researchers are concerned with the constructed nature of social reality and aim to trace the specific ways in which particular phenomena (e.g. partner abuse) are constructed through discourse and to reflect upon the consequences of this for those who are 'positioned' and 'subjectified' by these social constructions (Harper, 2011).

Social constructionism, as described by Harper (2011) is:

> "[epistemologically] relativist in a number of ways: its scepticism about a direct relationship between accounts and reality; and its assumption that we do not make direct contact with the world but, rather, our experience of it is mediated through culturally shared concepts – in other words language shapes our experience of reality" (Harper, 2011; p. 91).

Critical realist social constructionism has been described as a 'weak' constructionist position, as compared to the more radical ('strong') relativist social constructionist perspective (e.g. Jussim, 1991). Advocates of the 'strong' relativist social constructionist perspective take the position that it is not possible to make comments about the nature of reality as we cannot be in direct contact with it. However, researchers taking the critical realist position, aim to add a further level of interpretation by going beyond the text and to set what is said in a broader social, historical and cultural context. Willig (1999) argues for an acknowledgement of social and material realities in structuring our actions, and imposing constraints on the things we might do and say, thus influencing our ways of constructing the world in particular contexts. Thus, the grouping of critical realism with social constructionism could be described as ontologically realist but epistemologically relativist (Harper, 2011).

In developing a critical realist approach, I am informed by various writers who have proposed a range of material or 'extra-discursive' practices that, acting in relationship with discursive practices, serve to constrain or enable subjectivity (Parker, 1992; Willig, 1999; Nightingale & Cromby, 1999). Thus, for an analysis of men's talk of abuse by a female intimate partner I am concerned with embodied experiences (e.g. physical injury), materiality (e.g. financial status, the presence of children), the power of institutional practices (e.g. police procedures) and practices such as a speaker's enduring orientation to dominant social accounts (e.g. a man towards hegemonic masculinity). This is different from a relativist position (Edwards, Ashmore & Potter, 1995) in which the extra-discursive is positioned as material practices that are produced by discourse practices and are thereby secondary to discursive practices (Sims-Schouten, Riley & Willig, 2007).

2.1.1. Issues of this Position.

In this study, taking a critical realist social constructionist approach enables an exploration of men's discursive constructions of abuse with a female intimate partner, the self-governing practices engaged with and in, and the subjective positions they take up. It also acknowledges that social structures and material practices may influence the deployment of these discursive constructions. In response, epistemologically relativist scholars have argued that adopting an ontological realism underpinned by an epistemological relativism leads to inconsistency and a selective relativism (Harper, 2011). For example, selectively questioning some phenomena while reifying others when analysing texts is seen as a risk of this approach (Speer, 2007). However, critical realists argue that the relativist position may also lead to a political and moral relativism (from which social action is precluded). Furthermore, a failure to go beyond the text might mean that important issues like embodiment and subjectivity cannot be fully researched (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999).

To acknowledge but also seek to resolve this impasse, I have taken a position in common with Burr (1998) and Brown, Pujol and Curt (1998), that does not view the socially constructed and the real as either dichotomous or homogeneous. By speaking of things as simultaneously constructed and real, I am accepting the argument, advanced by Foucault (1972) and developed by Hook (2001), that a complex relationship must exist between 'knowledge' and 'practice'. As identified by Burr (1998), discourse ('knowledge') and social practices (which are social structures in action) are mutually-sustaining, and together with social structure, have 'real' embodied or subjective effects on people.

To illustrate this position, the introductory section of this project explored constructions of intimate partner abuse and 'abused men' as being historically and culturally-situated, and also being influenced by wider societal discourses concerned with gender (including patriarchy, masculinity and feminism).

It considered how such culturally-available constructions (e.g. 'masculine' resilience) may produce, and be producing of, not only the discursive practices of 'abused men' but also the institutional practices in health, social and justice services with whom 'abused men' may come in contact. In this sense, there is reciprocity of meaning-making between people's own constructions as individuals, and the practices and systems with which they come into contact, which all also have a material reality.

2.1.2. Reflexivity.

As the participants self-identify as heterosexual males, the role of the similarly-identified researcher's interpretive constructions in this process will also be considered. In constructionist research, the researcher is often considered as 'co-producing' data rather than being a neutral observer (Silverman, 1997). In this project, the researcher engaged participants as co-authors of the discursive interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) by inviting them to contribute to the agenda and by drawing attention to the co-constructed nature of the interview. Nightingale and Cromby (1999) suggest that reflexivity provides a way to explicitly address the researcher's contribution and how this may influence and inform the research. Willig (2001) outlines two types of reflexivity: personal and epistemological. The former of these refers to reflecting upon ways in which the researcher's own values, beliefs and interests may shape the research, with the latter referring to an exploration of the assumptions made in the course of the research which may subsequently influence the analysis. My analysis was influenced by a variety of factors, external and personal, including the opportunity to undertake critical and qualitative research in a deeply contested area, hitherto dominated by 'naïve realist' research drawing on positivist, essentialist and gender-normative paradigms. More personally, the topic of male abuse had some personal resonance for me as I have previously outlined and I also wished to acknowledge the perspective of men as survivors of abuse and participants in social action. Reflexivity was also addressed in this project through the use of a research journal (Finlay & Gough, 2003) kept by the researcher. Reflexive issues raised here will be revisited in Chapter 4.

2.2. Method

Several writers (e.g. Willig, 1999) have distinguished between 'methodology', as being the study of methods and dealing with the philosophical assumptions underlying the research process (i.e. critical realist social constructionism), and 'method', being a specific technique for data collection under those philosophical assumptions (e.g. discourse analysis). This project utilised a Critical Realist Discourse Analytic method informed by Foucauldian principles (CRDA), which will be explained in detail in sub-section 2.2.2. The following section provides an explanation and rationale for adopting a discourse analytic method.

2.2.1. Discourse Analysis.

Graham (2005) describes 'discourse analysis' as a flexible term, with the chosen analytic method(s) greatly dependent on the epistemological framework being drawn upon. A common aspect of diverse discourse analytic methods is that language is seen as productive of objects, events and experiences rather than reflective of 'reality', and as enabling various subject positions, actions and practices to be taken up. Hence, multiple methods can therefore be complementary in their use (Potter & Wetherell, 1995). However, Harper (2006) has distinguished between two approaches, discursive psychology (DP) and Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA). DP is primarily concerned with the 'micro level' of discursive practice (e.g. rhetorical devices and their use in managing social interactions), whereas FDA focuses more on the 'macro level' of discursive resources (e.g. how ways of talking about an object, event or experience are located in institutional contexts). FDA is also more concerned with power relations, particularly how privileged discourses are legitimated, and how various subject positions and actions are made possible by discursive constructions (Willig, 2008). Discourse Analytic approaches, particularly post-structural theoretical approaches (e.g. Foucault's 'analysis of the uses of discourse to exercise power') have often been conceptualised as relativist in an epistemological sense. However, as explained in section 2.1.1, I take a position in common with Nightingale and Cromby (1999) who say, 'discourse is already situated in the material world; it is always already the product of embodied beings. This means that we cannot just construct the world any old way we choose…'. (p. 9)

Several researchers in this tradition use Foucauldian approaches to discourse analysis (e.g. Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). Discourse analysis informed by Foucauldian principles (FDA) is concerned with the productive quality of language and focuses on the implications for possible ways of being that are structured by culture and the local availability of dominant discourses (Willig, 2008). FDA methods have been used to analyse text from a range of sources, including interviews. From this analysis, FDA seeks to articulate how power (by constituting knowledge within a certain discourse) produces the subject and its associated discursive objects and practices (Brown & Locke, 2008).

2.2.2. Critical Realist Discourse Analysis informed by Foucauldian principles.

In developing a rationale for my method I have been informed by the argument of Sims-Schouten, Riley and Willig (2007) that an effective critical realist discourse analysis may be produced through analysis of discursive practices, discursive resources and how various subject positions and actions are made possible by discursive constructions, together with an examination of material practices that may be considered to be 'extra-discursive' in their ontology. The ways that individuals understand themselves is influenced by 'personal, psychological and social mechanisms' (including embodiment, institutional practices and materiality) that offer a range of possible ways-of-being. Like Critical Discourse Analytic approaches (CDA; Fairclough, 1995), this analytic approach is concerned with the localised use of discursive resources (i.e. discourse practice) and how such constructions maintain and legitimate existing power relations within institutions and institutional practices.

As a result, the method of analysis I selected was a Critical Realist version of FDA as this enables possibilities and constraints in the material world to be explored (Bhaskar, 1989, p. 196). A Critical Realist approach to FDA proposes that material conditions have meaning for people and provide a context in which the deployment of certain discourses are more or less easily enabled (Sims-Schouten et al., 2007). Consequently, as Sims-Schouten et al, (2007: 103) put it: "this approach does not only map the ways in which participants use discourse to construct particular versions of reality, but it also positions their talk within the materiality they have to negotiate". However, I also wanted to understand in what ways a man can become 'problematized' as a 'victim' of abuse by a female partner.

Consequently, I developed an analytic plan which focussed on identifying objects that threw into sharp relief the practices on the basis of which men 'as victims of abuse' were 'problematized' (Foucault, 1985). From this starting point I then wanted to identify the discursive objects that were being constructed in and through men's talk (about their social practices and the discourses that make them possible) in relation their experience and responses to abuse. Finally, I wanted to consider how these men became positioned as a 'victim' (or not) and how they became constituted through certain discursive and material practices designed to exercise power over the self (Rose, 1996).

Such practices (commonly focussed on in FDA) have been termed 'technologies of power' and 'technologies of the self' (Foucault, 1988, p. 18) in order to distinguish between distal practices (e.g. institutional procedures) and proximal practices (e.g. rhetorical truth games). The following section deals with my positioning and ethics.

2.3. Positioning and Ethical Considerations

In formulating this research, I have sought to consider the ethical dimensions through articulating a number of questions, such as: 'in whose interests the research questions might be?' and 'how the findings of the research might be used by people and institutions?' (Willig, 2001). It is important to address these issues as the research may have direct implications for participants and others for whom it is relevant, such as clinical psychologists and service providers. In addition, such questions enable issues of power to be considered more explicitly, and this relates directly to an approach informed by Foucault, which addresses issues of power as linked to the construction of knowledge (Hook, 2001).

With regard to recruitment, an 'opt-in' method was used requiring participants to actively volunteer to take part by responding to an initial email or letter. At the start of each interview the researcher ensured that participants, a) had read and understood the information sheet and what the research was about (copies were made available where this was not the case); b) signed a consent form which was explained by the researcher; c) had the opportunity to ask questions about the research, and; d) were provided with researcher contact details should they wish to obtain further information at a later time. Further details of the procedures used can be seen in section 2.6.

With regard to my own positioning, I introduced myself at the start of each interview as a trainee clinical psychologist based at the University of East London, and my reason for doing this research as being for my qualification. I acknowledged that I had a limited personal experience of abuse but less familiarity with the issues than the people I was interviewing. These issues are acknowledged later in chapters 3 and 4. I also aimed to foreground interviewees' own thoughts and experiences from the outset by inviting them to consider themselves as 'co-authors' of the interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The rationale I gave to interviewees entailed four points:

1) That I was seeking their expertise in the experience of abuse;

2) That I was paying attention to how two heterosexual men were able to discuss the topic of partner abuse;

3) That I was interested to know their personal motivations for taking part, and;

4) That I was keen to include any points of their own on the interview agenda.

I then acknowledged their consent and noted any additional themes on the schedule, which I then referred back to during the interview. During the course of the interviews I also sought participants' more general views of how services and society perceive and respond to 'abused' men. Finally, each participant was asked if they would like to receive feedback on the findings of the project, some of whom agreed. This approach will be evaluated in Chapter 4.

2.4. Methodological Rationale

Further qualitative research would potentially offer alternative ways of conceptualising partner abuse for psychologists and increase the awareness of psychologists involved with the assessment and psychological treatment of men and couples. The studies that have been carried out with male victims have adopted ethno-methodological interview approaches to explore men's experiences of abuse (e.g. Brogden & Nijhar, 2005).

However, it is arguably important to not only report what these men say about their experiences, but also to explore how culturally-available discourses drawn upon in these constructions and warranting material practices and subject positioning of the abused man.

A Critical Realist Discourse Analysis of men's talk enables consideration of what social practices are warranted by the local and cultural discourses available to these men (Willig, 2008); and also enables consideration of how material factors might influence the deployment of these discursive resources.

It is argued that such an analysis of men's experiences of abuse would inform three areas:

1) The conceptualisation of associated psychological problems reported by these men;

2) Knowledge about their responses and help-seeking practices and;

3) Clinical psychology research and the future provision of treatment and appropriate psychological services.

2.5. Procedure

2.5.1 Participants.

In this study I decided to recruit male participants from the general public, as I was mindful that men may be less likely to present to or be categorised by health (or mental health) services as "abused by a female intimate partner". I also did this in order to attract participants with as broad a range of backgrounds, experience and material circumstances as possible.

In terms of sample size, Ritchie, Lewis and Elam (2003) outline seven factors that might affect the potential size of a sample.

> "the heterogeneity of the population; the number of selection criteria; the extent to which 'nesting' of criteria is needed; groups of special interest that require intensive study; multiple samples within one study; types of data collection methods use; and the budget and resources available". [p. 84]

I was mindful of these criteria, but also that sample size is not usually a main issue in discourse analysis, as the interest is in the variety of ways the language is used (Potter & Wetherell 1987).

Furthermore, I noted that Morse (1994, p.225) suggested that at least six participants are needed for saturation of data content to be achieved, while Atran, Medin and Ross (2005, p.753) suggested that in some of their studies "as few as 10 informants were needed to reliably establish a consensus".

My initial sample comprised nine men recruited for interview, which I considered reasonable given my intention to conduct intensive interviews lasting around ninety minutes.

The age range was 38-70 years, with an average age of 52 years. Participants were from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds including, as described by participants themselves (Patel, 1999): Naturalised Indian, Black British, South African, White Welsh, White English and White British. Partners were identified as Black African, Polish, Spanish, Sri Lankan-Australian, White Canadian, White British, White British-Irish and White English.

Five participants had children but only with their partner, one participant had children with their partner and step-children from a partner's previous relationship, one participant had grown-up children from a previous relationship living independently, two participants' partners had children from a previous relationship who were living in the family home. All participants had previously been married to but were now separated from and no longer living with their partners, some had divorced and had resolved custody of the children, while others were in the process of formalising a divorce and/or child custody.

All participants spoke English as a first or regular language. Participants employment status included employed, claiming unemployment and/or invalidity benefit, retired and self-employed. Four participants lived in Greater London, two on the south coast of England, two in Wales and one in Greater Manchester.

2.5.2. Inclusion Criteria.

Due to cost constraints the recruitment materials were produced in English and specifically identified that interviews would be conducted in English. Participants were initially invited to attend the University of East London for interviews, and if this was not feasible, interviews were arranged in participants' homes.

During the interview with one participant (participant six), it became apparent that he had not had a direct experience of what may be described as abuse from a female intimate partner, although he did report similar issues in terms of his positioning as a potential perpetrator by services. For ethical reasons I elected to continue with the interview in order to enable him to complete telling his story. However, it was decided, for the purposes of a consistent sample, that he should be excluded from the analysis. Consequently, the analysis comprised single interviews with eight participants, which produced over sixteen hours of interview material.

2.5.3. Recruitment.

The study initially recruited thirteen potential participants utilising a range of methods. Firstly, utilising the snowball method (Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004), two non-participating contacts of the director of studies referred two participants, one of whom then referred a further four people, which resulted in two interviews. Secondly, a 'human-interest' article with recruitment information was published in a paid-for local paper, which yielded four responses resulting in three interviews. Thirdly, with permission of the webmasters, an information sheet with recruitment information was placed on two websites of organizations with charitable status ostensibly offering support and advice to 'abused' men. This yielded three responses, of which two resulted in interviews.

Contact details provided within the initial recruitment material were an anonymous e-mail account and a central number within the University of East London Clinical Psychology department where confidential messages could be left. All potential participants were provided with an information sheet by post or email, and then followed up by phone or e-mail to confirm their willingness to participate and arrange an interview.

Having agreed the interview details, an interview pack was sent by post or e-mail containing a confirmation letter, an interview guide comprising a sample of likely questions and information about co-authoring, a sample consent form and directions to the University (if appropriate).

2.5.4. Data collection procedures.

Material for the study was collected through semi-structured discursive interviews with research participants. These interviews ranged in length with the shortest being 1 hour 40 minutes and the longest 2 hours 20 minutes (average approximately 120 minutes). An estimate of 90 minutes duration was given to interviewees beforehand. Finishing times were negotiated at the start of each interview.

The interview schedule was developed in collaboration with my director of studies, and amended slightly following an initial interview. Questions were developed based on the existing literature, and aimed to gain the participants' perception of the context and experience of abuse from a female partner and related events (e.g. seeking help).

An attempt was made to use simple, non-professional language which did not assume any particular professional stance or knowledge (Patel, 1999). This was important given that the participants came from a variety of backgrounds. In practice, I adopted a conversational interview style based on Potter and Wetherell (1987) allowing interviewees to elaborate on their views. I also adopted a discursive approach (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), using a cue-sheet to remind me to maintain awareness of potential discourses or assumptions deployed or influencing the participants' responses, as well as to identify inconsistencies and counter-discourses when apparent. In addition, I sought to be an active participant within the interview, maintaining awareness of potential discourses or assumptions influencing me, while remaining aware of the interview as a conversation/dialogue and our respective ways of speaking, positioning ourselves and relational styles.

Most interviews were held in an interview room at the university. At the participants' request two interviews were conducted at their home. Before beginning the interview, participants were asked to sign a consent form. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions about the research at the beginning and the end of the interview. They were also asked how they had found the interview process, and in instances where personal or potentially distressing information had been shared, I asked participants how they had experienced this.

In my role as a trainee clinical psychologist, I acknowledged and validated their experiences and sought to identify potential avenues of further support that they might access, if required. This process was extended to subsequent email contact with two participants in order to provide additional information about locally-available services. The interviews were audio-recorded using a digital recorder. Following completion of the interview, participants were thanked for their participation and travel expenses details organised, as appropriate.

2.5.5. Transcription.

I transcribed all interviews verbatim. A simplified transcription convention was used (as per Malson, 1998) and adapted from Potter and Wetherell (1987). This was because the research was not focussed on the use of rhetoric and speech patterns, but on broader 'global' discursive constructions (Malson, 1998).

2.5.6. Process of analysis.

Having made notes in my reflexive journal during the transcription stage, I identified a starting point for the analysis. The starting point was to articulate a question:

"Under what circumstances are men abused by a female intimate partner rendered problematic and what official discourses and counter-discourses render these problems visible and intelligible?"

The response to this question was that, within the talk, the man seemed to be consistently 'problematized' in the subject position of 'victim' of abuse, a finding that reflects the recent literature, notably George (2007). Similarly, the female partner seemed to be consistently 'problematized' in the subject position of 'perpetrator' of abuse. Consequently, three analytic foci were used to interrogate the data:

1) What objects are being constructed in and through men's talk (about their social practices and the discourses that make them possible) in relation to their experiences and responses in the context of being abused by a female intimate partner?

2) What material and discursive resources do men who self-identify as abused draw on and deploy (or not) to talk into being the objects identified above?

3) What technologies of governmentality are evidenced in men's talk of abuse and what are the implications of these processes for the subject positions enabled and his autonomy?

A full breakdown of the analytic steps taken, and how these map to the research aims and questions, can be seen in appendix 1. From initial coding, three major 'discursive sites' were identified, which seemed to account well for the constellation of constructions identified. The next chapter will report and discuss the outcomes of the analysis in the context of these three major 'discursive sites', namely: Constructing his experience: abuse as 'challenging behaviour'; Constructing his response: abuse as 'a call to action' and; Constructing the 'abused man': abuse as 'a negotiation of roles'.

CHAPTER 3 - ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The first chapter presented literature to show how individuals self-identifying as men abused by a female intimate partner ('abused men') are rendered problematic in several ways through a variety of social and institutional practices, enabled and sustained through historically-contingent and culturally-available discourses and ideologies.

From the literature, it is argued that the putative identities of 'man as victim' (of abuse) and 'woman as perpetrator' (of abuse) are 'problematized' in (at least) three inter-connected ways. Firstly, as a result of historical ideology and regulatory practices of patriarchal 'male dominance' enacted to maintain the social order. From this mode of thought the identity of 'male as victim' is 'problematized', even from childhood, as is the identity of 'woman as perpetrator'. Secondly, and in the context of a capitalist political ideology, certain forms of masculinity, such as physical strength and resilience, have become idealised to represent the man as valued and, as such, are privileged over feminine traits. Conversely, certain forms of femininity, such as the capacity for caring and emotionality, have been idealised to represent the woman as valued, but at a disadvantage to male traits. However, this dialectic renders the construction of 'man as victim' (i.e. damaged) as difficult for society to acknowledge; while the identity of 'man as perpetrator' is rendered less difficult for society. Similarly, the construction of 'woman as perpetrator' is rendered difficult for society to acknowledge (as violence is seen as masculine); while the construction of 'woman as victim (i.e. damaged) is rendered less difficult for society. Thirdly, the influence of first-wave feminist liberatory politics on scientific thought has produced a pervasive model of partner abuse informed by a critique of patriarchal 'male dominance' and 'masculine privilege'. This gender-dichotomous model has constructed the 'man as putative perpetrator of violence' (and unlikely victim) and worthy of public condemnation, while the woman is constructed as a 'putative victim of violence' (and unlikely perpetrator) and also worthy of compassion and public support.

In this section the main findings of the analysis will be presented and discussed. In doing this, reference will be made to the research sub-questions:

a) What social practices comprise and/or are warranted by these constructions of abuse by an intimate female partner?

b) What subject positions are enabled and what are the implications for action of these subject positions, particularly in relation to the seeking of support?

c) How do these 'abused men' become constituted through the government of regulatory powers and discipline of the self?

Extracts from the participants' transcripts will be used to demonstrate how constructions are made possible, the subject positions and social practices enabled by them, and power will also be addressed. As suggested by Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2008), extracts will be used that throw into sharp relief the practices on the basis of which abused heterosexual men are 'problematized' as a 'victim of abuse'. An example of such practices arose during the interview with me, when the men engaged in rhetorical practices, apparently aimed to substantiate a claim within the talk (e.g. of acceptable masculine behaviour). Foucault (1988) referred to such linguistic practices as 'truth games', to assert that the person speaking (or the writer of a text) is making a specific claim about the nature of truth. In the analysis these 'truth games' were observed to be deployed in the context of the conversation between two heterosexual men, and as occurring when the speaker appeared to draw on aspects of common humanity (e.g. masculinity) to substantiate a truth claim.

Constructions of three main discursive sites which are inter-penetrated by social practices and technologies of governmentality and which sustain certain positions and therefore not others will be presented. These have been termed: 'constructing his experience: abuse as challenging behaviour ', 'constructing his response: abuse as a call to action' and 'constructing the 'abused man': abuse as 'a negotiation of roles'. These sites should not be considered as separate but more as an interconnected network of discursive practices producing the concept of partner abuse (Morris, 2003: 136). Each of these sites will be addressed in turn in the following sections.

3.1. Constructing his Experience: Abuse as 'Challenging Behaviour'

The men's' talk constructed the immediate experience of their partner's behaviour as a site of challenge within the relationship in terms of coping with the immediate behaviour, assessing its personal impact and seeking an explanation for it. The following sections will present three modes of 'challenging behaviour'.

3.1.1. Abuse as 'problematic behaviour'.

In constructing experiences of abuse, various accounts were deployed, which served to produce the behaviour as problematic, in terms of both the immediate experience and its consequential effect on the man. These constructions also enabled different practices in terms of how the male partner might respond to the behaviour, as well as having different implications for the subject positions of both himself and his partner.

Extract 1:   She often ended up in an angry, abusive or shouting way that deliberately humiliated me. She called me every_ she called my family mentally ill, she called me mad and things like that. And she said: "oh, the village know about you because you're either mad or really stupid or, so you're not, we're not going to stay in this marriage". Then I found out that she was seeing another man by the name of M - Michael, and she was writing vitriolic letters and allegations about me to those people on my graph [family tree provided] which is my father in particular, but also my sister and my brother, cos I come from London, they're in London. Really vitriolic letters ending up that he never supports his children emotionally or materially, he neglects the children's welfare, completely selfish and then the later letters were saying he's an abuser, and there wasn't any explanation. (**Russell:** 80-89)

In this extract, the problematic behaviour is constructed as simultaneously aggressive and humiliating, '…ending up in an angry, abusive or shouting way that deliberately humiliated me'. This is supported by other accounts in the transcripts in which the experience of a partner's behaviour is similarly constructed (e.g. **Ken:** 152-159). The woman is constructed as aggressive, denigrating and powerful and clearly as abusive towards the man. The man's talk clearly suggests, at least privately within the family, that he positions himself as a victim of undeserved abuse and attributes some responsibility to his female partner (Rhatigan, Stewart and Moore, 2001). However, he draws on accounts of masculinity and men's fear in public (i.e. non-domestic) space (Day, Stump and Carreon, 2003)) as he shows awareness of how his problematic public positioning as a victim as a result of her public denigration of him to the family and wider community. These constructions also suggest that his agency to resist is constrained by a 'technology of power' acting on him as a result of his wife's public denigration (Foucault, 1982).

As such it is likely that he will be obliged to occupy the subject position of unacknowledged victim and constrained in his ability to access support within the local community as a result of his putative positioning as 'bad' husband and father.

In the next extract, the behaviour is constructed as selfish and domineering.

Extract 2: **Mark:** I don't know. I really don't know. I don't know why she took it   out on me.

Simon: Did you have a sense of what she gained from it?

Mark: Probably gained a sense of power. She's got summat over me because she likes to be in control of everything that was going on in the house. No one else was allowed an opinion well you were allowed an opinion but it didn't matter it was whatever she said that goes. If we were going anywhere for a day out or booking a holiday I wasn't allowed an input it was: "no I've booked it, this is where we're going". (**Mark:** 231-236)

Here, the man constructs his partner's problematic behaviour as selfish and domineering, saying, '…she likes to be in control of everything that was going on in the house. No one else was allowed an opinion well you were allowed an opinion but it didn't matter it was whatever she said that goes…'. This construction is supported by other accounts in the transcripts (e.g. **Matthew:** 132-135). The woman is constructed as unreasonable and powerful, while he constructs himself as a reasonable but powerless man, at least at home. These constructions suggest an apparent switch in the relationship roles, which challenges expectations of universal patriarchal 'male dominance' (Dobash & Dobash, 1979) and draw on an account of 'feminine privilege' in the domestic space (Bondi, 1998). Within such an account, the woman is enabled to resist her positioning as a submissive wife and exert power over her husband, while the man's agency to respond to his wife's behaviour is constrained by these domestic power relations.

In the next extract, the behaviour is constructed as irrational.

Extract 3: I didn't even expect anything like that and I said to her: "well, it's too late. There's nothing we can do because you know, you've had months to change your wedding dress. It's the day before; there's not much we can do". So she went and got a knife from the kitchen and started cutting up all of the

wedding dresses and so I basically said to her when I saw her doing that. I said: "look, forget it. We're just not getting married". You know? Literally, I just said, I just couldn't believe it and she then went for me with a knife. Well, actually, sorry, that's not true. What she then did, when I said that, she went into the kitchen and I went and followed her to the kitchen and said: "we couldn't do that. Just calm down", and she pulled out and opened the cupboard and got some tablets out and said she was going to kill herself, and so I kind of wrestled the tablets out of her hand. Then, she got out the kitchen knife and, I remember actually, it was two kitchen knives, and went for me with the kitchen knives, and I remember holding her arms to one side and the knifes going in the wall behind me. Yeah, so, and eventually once I got the knives off her and I think I might have been throwing them out of the kitchen windows, she calmed down and it was just like we were sort of talking things through and whatever. (**Christopher:** 165-177)

Here, the man constructs the female partner's problematic behaviour as irrational, saying, '…she went and got a knife from the kitchen and started cutting up all of the wedding dresses…' and dangerous, saying '…she got out the kitchen knife and, I remember actually, it was two kitchen knives, and went for me with the kitchen knives…'. This construction of behaviour 'as irrational' is supported by other accounts (e.g. **Neil:** 65-75). From a feminist perspective such a view of the woman's behaviour draws on 'misogynistic' accounts of the woman as emotionally unstable (Ussher, 1991). In so doing, he also draws on the local materiality of domestic finances and imminent marriage to emphasise the unreasonableness of the behaviour, as well as the embodied threats to himself and his partner to emphasise the dangerousness of the behaviour. In this extract, the woman is 'problematized' as perpetrator through being constructed as an irrational (unreasonable and extreme) woman, while he constructs himself (in 'dualistic' relation to her) as a rational (reasonable and moderate) man. The man's claim to victimhood is diminished by the physical power and control he exerts to prevent embodied harm.

In so doing, the man is responding rationally as a man (Connell, 2005), first in his verbal responses, then to calm her down and then to seek a resolution to the situation, but his agency to respond is further constrained by an apparent 'technology of the self' (Foucault, 1982), namely of non-violence to women (Reece, 2009) .

3.1.2. Abuse as 'impactful behaviour' (or not).

The men's accounts presented here served to produce the experience of a partner's challenging behaviour as 'impactful' (or not).

Extract 4:   And then she had a couple of drinks and started screaming at me. I said to her you know I said "if you carry on like this I'm gonna lob you through that window", which I wouldn't do, and on my grandson's life I'd never hit her. But she was being unbelievable so I got up and I went "I'm gonna go out there. If you want to carry on shouting then you shout on your own", so I left her to it. (**Ken:** 152-156)

In this extract, by constructing the behaviour in terms of being verbally abused in public, the man seeks to emphasise that he perceived the behaviour as meaningful and unacceptable, saying, '…and then she had a couple of drinks and started screaming at me. I said to her you know I said if you carry on like this I'm gonna lob you through that window'. This construction of behaviour as impactful (embarrassing) and worthy of response (leaving her in the pub) is reflected in other extracts from the same participant (e.g. **Ken:** 338-343), although not commonly by the other participants.

These constructions draw on a traditional cultural account of patriarchal 'male dominance' (George, 2003) where manhood is called into question if a husband is chastised by a wife, leading to ridicule and a loss of social currency in the public space (Day et al, 2003). Within such an account, the woman is enabled to resist her positioning as a submissive wife and exert control over her husband, while the man's agency to respond to his wife's behaviour or seek support is constrained by his embodied feelings of embarrassment associated with his masculinity. In so doing, the man's conduct is constrained by an apparent 'technology of power' (Foucault, 1982), namely 'fear of public embarrassment' (Migliaccio, 2002) and a 'technology of the self', namely non-violence to women (Reece, 2009).

This construction positions the woman clearly as the perpetrator of verbal abuse, while the perceived threat to the man's masculine identity forces him to withdraw from public gaze and so constrain his rights to speak and receive support as an 'abused man'.

In the next extract, the behaviour is constructed as somewhat impactful.

Extract 5:   **Simon:**   What were the other occasions? Had she punched, slapped...?

                Martin: Slapped. Punched.

                Simon: Slaps and punches and…?

                Martin: I don't know, but most of the times it was verbal.

                Simon: And did you... how did you consider those? Did you consider her to be dominant? Did it make you scared, or...?

                Martin: It didn't seem to make me scared of her because as I said, I don't defend myself and it was actually quite innocuous.

                Simon: Is it something, maybe, that she…?

                Martin: She er I don't know why it might reflect my pacifism? I'm not sure what would happen if push comes to shove… (**Martin:** 350-360)

Here, the man seeks to convey that he perceived the behaviour as abnormal and inconvenient but also that it did not have a significant emotional effect on him, saying, '…it didn't seem to make me scared of her because as I said, I don't defend myself and it was actually quite innocuous...'. This construction of moderate impactfulness reflects a familiar tendency of men to 'minimise' the impactfulness of the woman's behaviour (e.g. **Neil:** 444-452). In so doing, he draws on accounts of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005), of man as strong and enduring, but also on 'dualistic' accounts of gender role 'complementarity' in marriage (Antill, 1983), with the woman constructed as weak and inconsistent in relation to the man. Such accounts serve to sustain dominant accounts of patriarchy (Dobash & Dobash, 1979) through stereotyping gender roles.

These constructions offer examples of how the significance of the roles of both victim and perpetrator are diminished as the abnormal behaviour is perceived as less impactful and is thus accepted as tolerable by the man in the context of the relationship. Martin's acknowledgment that he is capable of absorbing the abuse and his declaration of pacifism speaks of a 'technology of the self', namely, 'turning the other cheek' (Brogden & Nijhar, 2005, p. 51), as a result of which he is enabled to develop self-limiting strategies to cope with the challenging behaviour, without actively responding to it.

In the next extract, the behaviour is constructed as non-impactful.

Extract 6:   **Simon:**   Were you aware of this side of her when you met her, when you got together and decided to get married?

   Neil: Yeah, I thought that she'd get over it, but she didn't. I was aware of it but I don't take it seriously. That's my, that's the way my life is <laughs> I don't take things seriously.

   Simon: So, in the sense that you didn't think it was important or if anything happened that you could deal with it?

   Neil: I can deal with it, yes. (**Neil:** 444-448)

Here, the man constructs the behaviour as non-meaningful and minimal, and is supported in other extracts (e.g. **Ken:** 526-537). In the context of the interview it was perceived as a rhetorical 'truth game' (Foucault, 1982) to stress his claims to masculinity. As a consequence he constructed his experience of the behaviour, at least initially, as non-impactful and tolerable. These constructions again draw on masculine accounts of man as strong and enduring (Connell, 2005) and implicitly (and 'dualistically') of the woman as weak and ephemeral within the context of a traditional marriage dyad and drawing on and sustaining accounts of patriarchal 'male dominance' (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). This construction again diminishes the significance of the roles of both victim and perpetrator (of abuse) since the challenging behaviour is minimised and ridiculed and also normalised in the context of the marital relationship. His acknowledgment that he is capable of absorbing the abuse and his laughter when referring to this capacity speaks of constraints to his agency to respond directly.

He is thus enabled to use rhetorical strategies (i.e. humour) that demonstrate his resistance to the woman's challenge to male superiority, but by seeking to minimise the impactfulness of the behaviour he also limits his ability to assertively respond to it.

3.1.3. Abuse as 'explainable' behaviour.

The men's accounts served to produce the experience of a partner's behaviour not only as problematic and impactful (or not), but also in terms of how it may be explained or rationalised.

Extract 7:   **Dave:**   And so we coaxed her to get some help (.) so we go to the GP (.) she was denying it at the GPs surgery then she broke down in tears and said: "I don't know what's going on with me". GP sends a referral and a psychiatric nurse comes to the house two days later. And she was right as rain smiling. She interviewed us separately and afterwards jointly and wrote up some notes. Then she was referred to the Department of Psychiatry and they called it three years post-natal depression /**Simon:** ok/; okay.

      Simon: And how did you respond to that how did you feel about that? Did you…?

      Dave: Okay let me stop there. They said three years retrospectively because the behaviour that my friend noticed was after the birth of my son /**Simon:** ok /; ok let me get that one in because after that it began to get worse. Well you know I thought these psychos, excuse my language but that's the way I regard them, I thought they must know what they were doing you know so they put her on some medication some antidepressants the good old er Prozac. (**Dave:** 148-159)

In this extract, the man draws on lay accounts of mental illness (Pilgrim & Rogers, 1997) as he attributes his partner's abnormal behaviour to the consequences of post-natal depression (PND). Within this construction, the woman is re-positioned as a victim, and blame is removed as a result of her feminine (maternal) role (Benson, 2010) and by 'pathologising' her behaviour as caused by mental illness (Szasz, 2008).

As a result of the woman's agreement to accept psychiatric treatment (and the position of a victim of mental illness with its attaching stigma; Byrne, 2000), the man's rights to the position of victim are contested.

He is, however, enabled to perform the patriarchal role of protector of the woman (and children), but his conduct in this role is further constrained as a result of him accessing external legitimisation and support for the woman. As a result, his ability to respond as an 'abused man' is compromised by the ongoing involvement of mental health services and his self-imposed positioning in the role of protector, alluding to his preferred alignment with dominant accounts of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005).

In the next extract, the behaviour is constructed as explicable as a result of childhood experiences of the female partner which have caused her ongoing psychological problems.

Extract 8: So I think she'd been through a lot in her childhood and as part of her childhood she used to see herself as the protector of her brothers and always used to tell me stories of how she used to beat up the boys at school who were maybe threatening her brother. I don't know, I kind of know, she called herself Lee, but her name is [name], and even in an e-mail it's almost as if they are two separate people. I, personally I think she's bipolar, but it's almost, the person I fell in love with, and then it's the alternate person who comes out when things aren't going her way. (**Matthew:** 153-159)

Here, the man rationalises the female partner's abnormal behaviour as deriving from ongoing psychological problems, describing her as 'bipolar', which he associates with her atypical 'non-feminine' experiences in childhood (i.e. beating up boys). As a result, and in a similar way to the previous extract, the woman is 'problematized' in the role of 'perpetrator' by Matthew explaining her behaviour as stemming from learned behaviour as a child (Szasz, 2008), which in turn has caused her to develop ongoing psychological problems, leading to her abnormal behaviour. Foucault criticises the positivist assumptions that negative experience causes mental illness, which causes violence (Foucault & Khalfa, 2006).

Matthew is thus enabled to perform the role of active protector of the 'damaged' woman (thus sustaining her positioning as a 'victim'), and is consequently 'problematized' himself as a 'victim' of abuse. He may potentially seek external support for his partner from mental health services, but is constrained to endure the personal consequences of the abnormal behaviour as a masculine patriarchal male (Connell, 2005).

In the next extract, the behaviour of the female partner is constructed as explicable as a result of problematic drinking in the context of current traumatic experiences.

Extract 9:   Unfortunately someone set fire to our flat and we had to go and live in a homeless hostel and she got quite aggressive there a few times punched me, slapped me, pushed me over. I never retaliated cos I saw my dad hit my mum and I wasn't going to do that. He used to hit me as well my dad (.) but it was always in drink always once he was drunk. When he was sober he was the nicest person going, he would do anything for anybody. And then I told ya when we moved to this house, when we first moved in, the first couple of months were fine and then she started getting really stressed. I don't know why. I was working sorry I wasn't working then I'd been hospitalized, I'd knocked my back. And she got really stressed with it I don't know <inaud.> as I said she was drinking again and it seems to depend when her period is due on and she gets really aggressive. (**Mark:** 72-80)

Here, Mark draws on lay accounts as he attributes the female partner's violent conduct to hormonal changes (Nicolson, 1995) and problematic drinking (O'Farrell, 1999). He also draws on the material context of current stressors (i.e. homelessness and his hospitalisation). This construction is reflected in other extracts from the same participant (e.g. **Mark:** 210-218), and seems to reflect not only his attempt to 'pathologise' his wife's behaviour and remove blame (Szasz, 2008) but also, as feminists might argue, to diminish her position as a woman (in a 'misogynistic' way) as a result of her 'female' embodiment and vulnerability to materially stressful conditions (Gannon, 1998). In so doing, the woman becomes positioned as a victim within the talk and is 'problematized' as a responsible perpetrator of abuse, while the man becomes positioned as a passive and unacknowledged victim of his partner's aggression.

In addition, the man's reference to witnessing partner abuse as a child suggests that he is constrained in his agency to criminalise his partner or to seek help as an abused man. Such a constraint could be viewed as a 'technology of the self', by which he gains moral credence as a strong but non-violent man (George, 2007) and as a protector of his partner (Connell, 2005).

3.2. Constructing his Response: Abuse as a 'Call to Action'

The label conveys that the abnormal behaviour of the partner serves not only as a challenge but as a call to action to respond appropriately in his masculine role(s) of partner, husband or father.

Four ways in which abuse as a 'call to action' was talked into being were identified. The first of these concerned ways in which he responded directly to the challenge presented by his partner's abnormal behaviour, in terms of both the decision to act and his response. The second of these concerned how the man positioned the need to receive help or support, and then sought to enact this positioning. The third of these concerned the man's predicted experience of involving others in crisis, while the fourth concerned the man's actual experience of involving others in crisis. The following sections will address each of these in turn.

3.2.1. His immediate response to challenging behaviour.

The men's accounts served to produce the challenge of a partner's abnormal behaviour as a 'discursive dilemma', warranting certain actions to respond appropriately, with differing implications for his positioning, in the moment of responding to the 'challenging behaviour'.

The four dilemmas were:

1) Escape and self-protection vs. voluntary endurance (the 'altruistic' response)

2) Escape and self-protection vs. involuntary endurance (the 'catch 22' response)

3) Assertiveness vs. avoidance and displacement (the 'denial' response)

4) Self-regulation vs. expressed anger (the 'retaliatory' response)

In the next extract, the man's response is constructed as 'Escape and self-protection rather than voluntary endurance'.

Extract 10: Then (.) I couldn't take any more because all the behaviour came back, chasing me around the room, spitting, scratching, punching, kicking. So 25th May 1996, oh she threatened to kill me if I tried to take the kids but at that stage I believed she would have. So 25th May 1996 I made the big mistake of leaving the house without the children. Fundamental problem one: I should

have done a runner with the kids but she threatened me and all her behaviours were coming back and I thought what I need to do is get the statutory agencies and social services working. (**Dave:** 300-305)

In this extract, the man constructs his response to the challenge presented by his female partner's abnormal behaviour as causing him to fear for his life and needing to protect himself. This construction of his response as necessitating escape is reflected in other extracts (e.g. **Mark:** 279-284) and, in so doing, the man draws on accounts of the embodied effects of interpersonal violence to characterise his fear of harm, in addition to his own materiality of fatherhood to characterise his fear of loss. As a result, the woman is positioned as the powerful perpetrator of abuse, while he is positioned as the powerless but unacknowledged victim.

At the instant of his challenge, he is potentially enabled to remain at the cost of his safety and future access to his children, or to leave in order to protect himself. In addition, although not verbalised, it is implied that a 'technology of the self' is serving to constrain his potential physical response (Reece, 2009), and so influences his move to escape.

By leaving (and not retaliating) he may also occupy the socially-favourable role of family protector and seek support from outside agencies. However, by leaving without the children, his rights to speak as an 'abused man' are constrained, in addition to compromising the fatherhood role he had sought to protect (Stitt & Macklin, 1995). This dilemma speaks also of a more pervasive 'crisis of masculinity' arising through the changing expectations of men in society (Taylor, 2006), and associated with the feminist challenge to patriarchy over the past thirty-five years (Connell, 2005).

In the next extract, his response is constructed as involuntary endurance (or the 'catch 22' response).

Extract 11: I moved outside and I'm literally sitting on the paving stones outside with my head in my hands just crying because I didn't know what to do. I couldn't take my kids to go anywhere cos I had no refuge. I didn't have any money to pay for any hotels or anything to go and stay, and at the same time I didn't want to take my daughter away from her mum either. And my daughter wouldn't want to leave her home and friends and everything. So I was just in a 'catch 22'. I'm sitting there crying and she came up underneath, poking her finger in my throat, in my face, slashing my face, I would go in to the back

garden to try and get some solace, she would follow me through to the back garden. (**Matthew:** 528-534)

Here, the man constructs his response as wanting to leave with his children but feeling constrained from doing in the face of the challenge presented by his partner's behaviour. This construction of feeling 'trapped' is reflected in several other extracts (e.g. **Christopher:** 256-262). In so doing, the man draws on popular accounts of the idealisation of motherhood (Weizmann-Henelius, Viemerö & Eronen, 2003), in addition to the sacralisation of the mother-child attachment and proscribed avoidance of maternal deprivation for the child (Bowlby, 1969). In addition, he draws on the materiality of his living and financial situations to characterise his lack of agency. Furthermore, by saying that, 'I had no refuge', he also sheds light on further constraints to his response in terms of his expectations of external support.

As a result, and counter to patriarchal accounts of male superiority, the woman is positioned as the dominant perpetrator of abuse, at least in the private space, while he is positioned as the submissive and as yet unacknowledged victim. At the instant of his challenge, he is potentially enabled to escape, but at a cost he is unwilling or unable to pay at that moment (as in extract 10; **Dave:** 322-327). However, by staying (and not retaliating) he may un-problematically occupy the role of family protector and potentially seek support later. However, by denying himself the possibility of escape with the children he has retained his rights to speak both as an 'abused man' and as a father (Stitt & Macklin, 1995), but has, for the time being, prevented himself from receiving the public recognition and support that might be due to him as an 'abused man', and so remains 'problematized' in that role.

It might be speculated that his reluctance to seek any external support speaks of 'technologies of power' deriving from institutional practices perceived as unwelcoming or unhelpful to the 'abused man' (Tsui, 2010). In addition, he is called upon to negotiate multiple identities, such as the abused man, father or 'new man' (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). Thus, difficulties negotiating his multiple identities and the materiality of his situation with regard to the care of the children may further constrain his agency to respond and seek help (Migliaccio, 2002).

In the next extract, his response is constructed as avoidance or displacement activities.

Extract 12: I was very serious and very hard working and I didn't have much emotional response to her except for saying can we go and see a therapist or can we talk about it some more or that kind of thing. And then she became more defensive and "I don't want to sleep with you again, the marriage is over, that's why I've got a boyfriend". I made er I'm a defensive person and an insecure person, and I wouldn't have entered a good dialogue with her. And not only did I not enter a dialogue with her, although I suggested that we go into some counselling, I didn't er I had a certain amount of denial. And I went to sleep in the caravan which was the caravan which was on our land, you see. (**Russell:** 155-161)

Here, the man constructs his response as taking no further action and avoiding interaction in the face of the challenge presented by his female partner's powerful rejection of him sexually and as a marriage partner. In constructing the challenge of his rejection, the man draws on accounts of the primacy of the male sex drive (Hollway, 1989), enabled within the context of a secure marital relationship (Foucault, 1978). Furthermore, he draws on a traditional cultural account of patriarchy (George, 1994) while admitting that he had been publically humiliated (i.e. positioned as a 'cuckold') by his wife continuing to have an extra-marital affair. As a result, the man appears to have experienced the rejection as a powerful challenge to his masculinity in two ways: firstly, as a 'technology of the self', on the basis that he no longer has access to practices within in his marriage that validate him as a man and; secondly, as a 'technology of power', as a consequence of the perceived negative public evaluation (Day et al., 2003) as a man not living up to the ideals of a hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005) or of a male-dominated patriarchy (George, 1994).

In constructing his response as an inability to take action and avoid social contact, he appears to engage in a 'truth game' to take responsibility for his situation and justify his lack of response. In so doing, he draws on psychodynamic accounts of his own psychological defences (LaPlanche & Pontalis, 2006), in addition to deploying a practice of self-blame (Benson, 2010). Through the deployment of the 'truth game' and his withdrawal from public gaze, Russell has sought to bolster his identity as a man, but in so doing has constrained his agency to take up the position of victim. In addition, his wife has become 'problematized' as a perpetrator, firstly by his inability to challenge her or publically condemn her actions, but also through him taking some responsibility for the situation.

In the next extract, the man's response is constructed as a struggle between self-discipline and becoming angry.

Extract 13: Mark: She'd argue about nothing /**Simon:** yeah/; we never had a serious argument see it was always about stupid little things.

Simon: Erm and did you as it were join in with the argument?

Mark: No I tried to walk away but she'd just follow me from room to room and kept on having a go and in the end you do shout back. You do you can't stop it. That said it was never about anything important /**Simon:** sure/; and I'd pretend to be ill, sleep in bed, and she'd come up for an argument as I say I'd pretend to be asleep but if she couldn't get a reaction she'd jump on me to wake me up at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. There was no need for this. So I would try not to argue back but as I say sometimes you've got to argue back when someone's just constantly having a go. Pick pick pick pick pick. (**Mark:** 269-277)

Here, the man engages in a 'truth game' to justify his loss of self-discipline as he constructs his response to the challenge of his wife's relentless and annoying behaviour. This construction is reflected in other extracts (e.g. **Ken:** 222-229).

The 'truth game' suggested that he experienced a struggle (or discursive dilemma) between, maintaining self-discipline as a man in responding to regulatory accounts of 'anti-violence' (Reece, 2009) and 'gentle' masculinity (Connell, 2005), and responding to more traditional accounts of 'strong' masculinity and patriarchy that might enable the husband to re-assert control over his wife (George, 1994).

In seeking to re-assert control, he appeared to be seeking to bolster his masculinity by avoiding positioning himself as a victim, yet by becoming angry he has aligned himself with the position of perpetrator. In deploying the 'truth game', the man then seemed to be distancing himself from the perpetrator position by suggesting that he had no choice. From an original position of perpetrator, his partner's responsibility for abuse has been diminished as a consequence of his angry response and the 'truth game' deployed.

3.2.2. His response as positioning the need to receive support.

The men's accounts served to produce the challenge of a partner's abnormal behaviour as positioning the need to receive support. Almost invariably, the men positioned their partner and /or their children as warranting support, rather than themselves. The following extracts describe this call to action and the act of help-seeking itself. These constructions again have implications for the subject positions of both himself and his partner, in addition to shedding light on the work of governmental practices on the self to constrain or enable certain practices.

Extract 14: My mother always used to say to me: "I'm Mr fix it", whenever there was something wrong in our family or whatever I was always the one who would try and help fix it, that's exactly what I did. I was looking to try and fix and help her and to do everything I could to help her, and I just couldn't…
(**Matthew:** 297-299)

In this extract, the man constructs his response to the challenge presented by his female partner's abnormal behaviour as a call to action to take a lead in finding a resolution to the problems. This construction of his response as seeking to occupy the problem-solver role is reflected in other extracts (e.g. **Ken:** 403-408). In so doing, the man draws on hegemonic masculine accounts (Connell, 2005) to position himself as the husband/father as protector and problem-solver for the family.

He engages in a 'truth game' as he cites a family precedent for adopting this role rather than taking an alternative role (i.e. abused man). As a result, the family and, by extension, the woman is positioned, somewhat 'misogynistically', as 'damaged' and in need of fixing (Ussher, 1991), and simultaneously unqualified (as a woman) to perform such a role. As a result, the woman's position as a perpetrator of abuse again becomes 'problematized' by the removal of blame for her behaviour (Szasz, 2008); while the man has re-negotiated his role to be the potential saviour of his wife and family, which has in turn enabled him to avoid positioning himself as a victim.

In the next extract, the man's response is constructed as the act of help-seeking itself.

Extract 15: So of course nobody actually believes it unless they actually see these behaviours because the other times she'd be fine. She wouldn't go out of the house unless she was feeling good. So I was getting a bit disturbed by what

was going on, so I was watching sometimes and she wasn't keeping an eye on what our daughter. So I had a word with her best friend [name removed] /**Simon:** ok/; *and* she didn't really believe me, until one day she was at the house and she saw it /**Simon:** uhuh/; she saw the way been and said: "you're right she needs some help". And so we coaxed her to get some help (.) so we go to the GP . (**Dave:** 143-149)

In this extract, the man constructs his response to the challenge presented his partner's behaviour as taking action to seek support to resolve the problems. This construction of his response as taking assertive action to seek help for his partner is reflected in other extracts (e.g. **Matthew:** 389-394) and the qualitative literature (e.g. Brogden & Nijhar, 2005).

In the talk, a 'truth game' is enacted to justify his move to re-assert control and avoid his positioning as a victim of abuse. In so doing he draws tangentially on lay psychiatric accounts (Pilgrim & Rogers, 1997) to position his wife as unwell, in addition to his materiality, in terms of physical or emotional risks to his daughter from his wife's behaviour. Furthermore, he cites a confirmation of his opinion from a female friend of his wife to support his argument. In a similar fashion to extract 14, the man rather misogynistically positions his partner and children as in need of fixing, but also implies that the woman is unqualified to do that without (his) help (Ussher, 1991).

There is also an apparent 'technology of power' (Foucault, 1982) associated with how agencies perceive and respond to the abused man, that seems to constrain him from seeking help alone (Tsui, 2010). By positioning his female partner as in need of help rather than blame (Szasz, 2008), she becomes 'problematized' as a responsible perpetrator of abuse; while the man becomes positioned, not as a helpless victim / onlooker, but as a potential saviour of his wife and family. Furthermore, by taking action to protect his wife and family he appears to be responding to a 'technology of the self' to negotiate and maintain an identity as a masculine husband and father (Connell, 2005).

3.2.3. His response as <u>not</u> taking action to involve others.

The men's accounts served to produce their response to the challenge of their partner's behaviour as a call to action to negotiate a dilemma of whether or not to attempt to access external support.

The men who had not involved others constructed their responses in terms of their negative expectations of the process of accessing support and sought to justify their decision. The following extracts describe this call to action in relation to the idea of seeking external support, in addition to the expectations of seeking support from the police or a friend.

In the next extract, the man's response is constructed as his decision not to seek help from the police.

Extract 16: I felt that one issue is that she was a different race to me, which to the Police gives her an advantage to me if she goes to the Police or if I go to the Police, and secondly, the fact that she was a teacher. So you could put the two together and nobody's going to believe anything I say. That's what I felt at the time. I couldn't see any way around it. The fact that I had a cut on my head and I probably still have the scar from her biting me and everything, you know, she would have explained it away because she's capable of explaining and making up some story or another and that concerned me. And that concerned me because she couldn't even get... even the simplest thing. If something happened today: we were on a bus and we saw an incident, her version of the incident would not match what happened, and I don't know whether it's poor memory or if she's just incapable and just a compulsive liar. (**Christopher:** 782-792)

In this extract, the man constructs his response to the challenge presented by his partner's behaviour as opting to not to go to the police. In so doing he constructs his anticipation of a negative response from the police both as an 'abused man' (Brogden & Nijhar, 2005) and as a black man (Wolf et al., 2003). Furthermore, he anticipates that the effect of his report to police would be compromised by his partner's false allegations (Hines et al, 2007).

Again, the man engages in a 'truth game' to explain how he came to avoid becoming positioned as 'abused black man' with the police. In articulating his concerns about a negative response the man draws on accounts alleged institutional racism in the police (constructing his identity as a black man as further marginalised; Connell, 2005). In addition, he cites potential discriminatory practices against him, believing the police will favour his white female partner who, as a teacher, is a fellow power-holder in society.

Finally, he expresses the concern that, even with clear physical evidence, that his allegations will not be believed because of his female partner's misrepresented evidence being believed over his. As a result, the woman is tacitly positioned as abusive, yet shielded from public condemnation of her 'non-feminine' violent behaviour (Gilbert, 2002), while he is positioned as a 'silenced' victim. His talk constructs two apparent 'technologies of power' (Foucault, 1982) working at the level of police practices towards him as a 'black man' and an 'abused man', to constrain his help-seeking conduct (Lawrence, 2003).

In the next extract, the man's response is constructed as his decision not to seek help from a male friend.

Extract 17: My chest was bleeding and it was probably about that size <demonstrates> cut in my chest. So I was pretty angry by then, because a lot of people said it was best not to hit back but actually I just physically pushed her to one side, opened the door and ran out of the house and left, and literally just went. Because I was bleeding, I thought I couldn't go and see my friend because I'd have to explain everything and I just didn't want to explain it to him, so I just literally just walked around for a few hours, maybe; I don't know how long; two or three. Until I thought she might be sleeping; then I came back and just went and slept on the sofa. (**Christopher:** 226-232)

In this extract, the man constructs his response to the challenge presented by his partner's behaviour as opting to not access support, anticipating a negative response from a male friend. This construction of perceived negative attitudes is supported in the literature (e.g. Harris and Cook, 1994). Again, the man engages in a 'truth game' to justify his decision to not seek help from a friend. In articulating his concerns about explaining his situation to another man, he draws on popularly accepted accounts of domestic violence which hold that a man should never hit a woman, even in self-defence (Reece, 2009). However, in acknowledging that he has been physically assaulted, his talk also speaks of a threat to his masculine identity and an awareness of societal expectations of him to be self-reliant and enduring (Migliaccio, 2002).

In the talk, the woman is tacitly positioned as abusive, yet shielded from negative condemnation of her non-feminine behaviour (Gilbert, 2002), while he has positioned himself as the enduring man, rather than as an unacknowledged and helpless victim.

It is arguable, that he is also drawing attention to a 'technology of the self', constraining any conduct (e.g. help-seeking) that may pose a threat to his masculine identity.

3.2.4. His response as taking action to involve others.

The men's accounts served to produce the challenge of a partner's abnormal behaviour as a call to action to negotiate a dilemma of whether or not to attempt to access external support. The men who took action to involve others talked of their experiences of the process of accessing support from friends, the police and health services.

The following extract constructs his response as seeking support from friends.

Extract 18: There's no one else with them so I couldn't go out. So I went round and they said "why haven't you been round?". So I said: "Well I have the kids you could have come round to my house". "No can't' do that" so I says "Well I can't come to you and I've got the kids in the house" "You've been lying to us for years". I says "what?" "Cos you didn't tell us about the abuse?" I says "That's not lying, that's keeping things that I shouldn't have to tell you" They told us I'd been lying to us. That's just not the attitude to have so I've not been round since. (**Mark:** 567-572)

Here, the man constructs his response to the challenge of being left by his partner with the children, as opting to access support from friends, but then experiencing an unsympathetic response (in contrast with another participant who receives an ambivalent response; **Matthew:** 450-457). Here, the man again engages in a 'truth game' to justify taking action to seek no further support from friends. In seeking to establish his position as worthy of help, the man draws on his materiality of being unable to go out on his own and alludes to his natural expectation of 'neighbourly' behaviour (Nixon & Parr, 2006). Then, in articulating the interaction with his friends he draws on the same social accounts to firstly position his friends as unhelpful, and then to cast their subsequent rejection of him in a negative light. As a result, the woman is tacitly positioned as abusive, yet again shielded from negative condemnation. Having sought external support as an 'abused man' and father, the man perceives that he has been further stigmatised as a male victim (Adler, 1992) for his non-disclosure.

Thus, he finds himself positioned as a social pariah, unworthy of support, alluding to traditional practices of social rejection of the man who is unable to adequately fulfil his patriarchal duties (George, 1994). Thus, by now rejecting the position of an 'abused man' and father seeking help, he is enabled to return to an arguably more favourable masculine position of the self-sufficient family protector (Migliaccio, 2002).

In the next extract, the man's response is constructed as a response to a false allegation made by his partner to the police.

Extract 19: So he [my youngest child] was very worried, and then she attacked me in the kitchen and then she called the police and said that I'd attacked her, so the police turned up and interviewed her, then interviewed me, but nothing was done. It just went on and they said: "tell me what happened", and I don't think he believed me because he just said: "your wife is very upset", and there was nothing they could do really… not when she'd accused me anyway, and that was it. (**Martin:** 107-112)

In this extract, the man constructs his response to the challenge presented by his partner's false allegation made about him to the police. In so doing, the man engages in a 'truth game' to lay claim to his positioning as a 'good father and husband' who, having chosen to not criminalise his wife, finds himself unjustly dealt with by the police.

This was a familiar scenario faced by other participants (e.g. **Christopher:** 520-527). In seeking to establish the credibility of his position prior to the police involvement, the man draws on the physical injuries caused by his wife's problematic behaviour towards his children and himself. Then, in articulating the action of his wife as calling the police, he is unequivocal in his positioning of her as making a false allegation against him. Finally, he constructs himself during the interaction with the police as being positioned as the perpetrator and consequently feeling that his version of events was not believed and that no action was taken against his wife (Lawrence, 2003). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the man speaks of a 'technology of power' acting at the level of police officers leading him to feel powerless to affect the outcome of the experience, having been accused already by his wife. The talk also suggests that the police were similarly constrained by gendered social attitudes (Rhatigan et al., 2001) informing their procedures for investigating incidents of partner abuse (Brogden & Nijhar, 2005). This account mirrors the predicted experience of the participant in extract 16.

As a result, the woman is shielded from condemnation of her abusive behaviour. Her decision to seek support from the police has resulted in him being positioned as a potential perpetrator of abuse, while she is enabled to adopt the public position of 'victim'. Thus, he finds himself as a 'silenced' victim of abuse but also now called upon to resist the procedural power of the police investigation of him as a potential perpetrator (Stenson, 1993). As a consequence, he is constrained from seeking further support and is arguably in a less favourable position, having been 'problematized' in the subject position of 'abused man'.

In the next extract, his response is constructed as a call to action to respond to his partner's misrepresentations to health staff.

Extract 20: Mark: The hospital ask why you've done it [taken an overdose] and you explain your home life but [wife's name] would ring up the hospital and say: "I acted like a loving wife" and they even said to me last time: "oh your wife's really worried about you. She sounds like a lovely person". I said: "It's an act!". "No, no I don't believe that", just "okay I'm lying, fair enough". They're trying to make out as if I'm lying about it.

Simon: Even when you were showing that you were the one in distress as it were /**Mark:** yeah/; they were_

Mark: The last time was after she stabbed me and I said "she even stabbed me" "there must be a reason for it" "yeah she was pissed". Nurse said: "Oh, I don't believe that". What's the point if no-one's talking to me, they're not even listening to me. "She's got a problem you've got to make allowances". It was like hitting a brick wall. (**Mark:** 299-308)

In this extract, the man constructs his response to the challenge presented by his female partner's problematic behaviour towards him as a call to action to respond to her misrepresentations to medical staff, and is a similar to another participant's construction of a meeting with RELATE[11] (**Matthew:** 475-482).

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[11] RELATE is a non-governmental organization offering a counselling service to couples.

In the talk, the man seems to engage in a 'truth game' to establish his 'victim' positioning (at least as man pushed to take an overdose), but one who is then denied that role by unsympathetic medical staff; a familiar complaint in the interview literature (Stitt & Macklin, 1995). His talk also articulates a particular 'technology of the self' (serving to constrain him from further help-seeking) saying, 'it was like hitting a brick wall.'. His talk constructs the medical staff's attitudes as unhelpful (Tsui, 2010) and as aligning themselves with the female partner. In so doing the staff are constructed as attempting to not only 'pathologise' his wife's behaviour to remove blame (Szasz, 2008), but also to de-emphasise the seriousness of violence perpetrated by a woman towards a man (George, 2007), despite his claim that his wife's behaviour had caused him to take an overdose.

As a result, the woman is explicitly positioned as abusive, yet shielded from condemnation of her non-feminine behaviour (Gilbert, 2002) , however problematic or impactful it may be. Her decision to intervene with medical staff has resulted in him being denied the role of victim of abuse, and thus positioned as unworthy of recognition or support.

3.3. Constructing the 'Abused Man': Abuse as 'a negotiation of roles'

The previous sections examined how the concept of 'partner abuse' is constructed as the man's direct experience of abuse and his responses to it. This section shifts the gaze to examine the 'abused man' as a subject constructed through the talk of 'partner abuse'. It will first identify and describe the subject positions enabled for the 'abused man' (and his female partner) within the talk. Next it will consider the processes by which the 'abused man' becomes subjectified within the talk: firstly, through the action of institutional practices upon the self that governs his conduct, both directly and from a distance, and; secondly, through the 'interpellation' of ideological accounts (Althusser, 1972) that serve to 'shape the behaviours and identity of the individual through the imposition of certain normalising practices of the self' (McNay, 2009).

3.3.1. Positioning the 'abused man' and 'abusing woman'.

The label 'subject positioning' refers to identifying what types of person ('subject') are talked about by the 'abused man' in relation to the constructions of his experience and responses to 'partner abuse'. In so doing, the analysis seeks to position the 'abused man' within a structure of rights to speak and duties to undertake (Davies & Harré, 1999: 35).

Furthermore, to consider what vantage points with respect to a version of reality of 'partner abuse' are constructed and performed by this position (Bamberg, 1994) and what moral location is afforded within the conversation with a male interviewer (Sacks, 1992).

The subject positions of note, as previously noted within the analysis, are those afforded with respect to the roles of perpetrator and victim of abuse. As Wetherell (1998: 401) points out, subject positions are 'local, highly situated and occasioned'. As a consequence, these extracts will draw a distinction between the positioning of subjects privately at home and publically in the context of contact with the police.

Extract 21: Martin: Yeah, I think that she's a victim of her illness, definitely, because if she was on the right medication, she would be leading a normal life and the only issue then is whether there are any psychiatric or psychological problems as a result of being ill for so long. That might be another equation which is unexplored.

Simon: If the roles had been reversed somewhat and you, for the sake of argument, had experienced a hypothyroid condition; it had involved you having temper outbursts and...?

Martin: Yeah.

Simon: How do you feel that you would have been perceived in comparison to your wife, by other people?

Martin: I would have been seen as a violent and dangerous character, especially by the kids, I think. And by my partner, I would have been considered a wife beater, well if I'd hit my wife. (**Martin:** 865-873)

In this extract, the man constructs his partner as a victim of a physical illness that may cause psychological problems; a construction reflected in a number of accounts (e.g. **Dave:** 243-251). In so doing, the man draws on lay accounts of mental illness (Pilgrim & Rogers, 1997) to suggest a cause for his partner's behaviour and thus diminish her positioning a responsible perpetrator of abuse. Foucault is critical of the 'positivist' assumption that mental illness causes violence (Foucault & Khalfa, 2006), because by 'pathologising' the person acting violently, blame may somehow be removed (Szasz, 2008).

In addition, he alludes to his potential positioning as a perpetrator of abuse as he draws on accounts to suggest that a man is considered more likely to perpetrate violence against a woman (George, 2007). When the man says, 'if I'd hit my wife', he also alludes to a 'technology of the self' regulating his behaviour, while drawing on feminist 'anti-violence' discourse (Reece, 2009) and accounts of 'gentle' masculinity (George, 2007). The most favourable subject position enabled for the man is family protector, which enables him to avoid the problematic roles of both victim and potential perpetrator. He aligns himself to ideals of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005) and marriage (Foucault, 1978) enabling him to be the rational, enduring, unemotional man, protecting and providing for his family.

Extract 22: I did a statement for the police and I made a big mistake. I said: "look", he said: "well what do you want me to do, arrest her, cos I have enough evidence?". Cos you know I had a Dictaphone and I had it recorded and you could hear my daughter screaming: "daddy daddy I don't want to her to hit you". So I went down this er procedure that lots of men do because they don't want to criminalise, they want her to get help. Because if the woman was helped *a* the relationship might resume and *b* even if they were apart everyone could have a much better relationship, you know? Well I said to the police: "no I don't want her charged". I said: "please can you pass it on to social services?". (**Dave:** 415-421)

Here, the man resists the opportunity to 'criminalise' his wife as a perpetrator of violence. Again, the man avoids the role of victim, by assuming the role of family protector and seeks help for his wife; an account reflected by several participants (e.g. **Mark:** 462-469). The man is reluctant to position his partner as a perpetrator of abuse, which speaks of his awareness of gender stereotypical attitude around partner abuse (George, 2007). As a result, the woman is shielded from negative public evaluation of her 'non-feminine' violent behaviour (Gilbert, 2002), however problematic or impactful it may be. As a man he negates his opportunity speak or act as a victim of abuse, but negotiates a more socially favourable identity where he may the protector of the relationship and the family.

3.3.2. Negotiating 'technologies of power' acting on the 'abused man'.

The label 'technologies of power' refers to 'any assembly of practical rationality governed by a more or less conscious goal' (Rose, 1996: 26). Foucault refers to such technologies as techniques whereby individuals understand themselves (Foucault, 1982).

In this context, 'technologies of power' are considered as institutional practices acting on the man to govern his conduct and influence the constitution of his identity. The institutional practices of note are those within the awareness of these men and talked into being within their accounts, and which serve to exercise power over their conduct. In the context of crises within the relationship, these men focused on police practices, but also talked about the practices of other agencies (e.g. court welfare and social services).

Extract 23: So I'm dragged out. I'm not sitting on the wall with curtains twitching, thinking, bloody hell yeah I'm the bad guy aren't I, look. They tried to calm her down and they says to me: "well you'll have to leave". "Why, I haven't done anything. Why have I got to leave? This is my home as well. Take her, she can stay at her mums, she's only round the corner". "No, you're going to have to go". So I had to go and sleep on the floor round my daughters, which I thought was great! Thanks a lot! So that was, you know, it got to the point where the cops were going if you say anymore we'll nick you. Nick me for what? What have I done. I haven't done anything. I've maliciously walked in to my own 'ouse when I've come home from work? (**Ken:** 239-245)

In this extract, the man constructs the police intervention as informed by stereotyped notions of partner abuse and the male propensity to violence. This construction of unhelpful police practices is reflected in the literature (Lawrence, 2003). In so doing, the man talks into being an explicit 'technology of power', the police domestic violence protocol, enacted to regulate the behaviour of (principally) men as potentially dangerous perpetrators of physical assault against their partners. He constructs the components of this 'technology' as the coercive powers of the police to remove a man from the premises during the police visit and then to insist that he remains away from the premises for a period of time. Such a protocol may be enacted against a man regardless of whether he is considered the perpetrator or not (e.g. **Matthew:** 699-711). A similar account of police involvement is alluded to in extracts 22 and 19; although in extract 19 it seemed less coercive.

As argued by Stenson (1993), the constitution and enactment of such a 'technology of power' draws not only on material resources (i.e. legal statute & crime records), but also on gender-stereotyped social accounts of partner abuse informing practices (e.g. training protocols; Brogden & Nijhar, 2005).

Such social accounts include a man being considered more likely to perpetrate violence against a woman (George, 2007) and a female perpetrator considered to be less blame-worthy than a man (Rhatigan et al., 2001). The effect of such a 'technology of power' is for a man to be positioned as a potential perpetrator of violence against a woman, a subject position he is called upon to accept without complaint (for fear of further public challenge to his masculine identity; Day et al., 2003).

Conversely, the female partner is positioned as a potential victim of physical violence, and afforded the support that such a position warrants for a woman. Thus, the man is called upon to engage in self-disciplinary practices to address his vulnerable public positioning as a potential perpetrator in relation to his partner, and is thus barred from the role of victim.

In the next extract, the man draws on localised social accounts that articulate a popular view that men need to militate against being viewed as a perpetrator of partner abuse.

Extract 24: At that stage I'd finally got a little bit more advice on how it works with separations and you know, Families Need Fathers, the support group, I was getting support, and many of the stories were quite similar as to what had gone on, some with DV um and a lot without, but some of the antics and the advice was, in order to get a decent CAFCASS[12] report you can't put them up and down because if you put them up and down you're seen as being an angry dad. And I guess now I'm very angry at what she's done to our daughter. But then I wasn't angry in any way, I was just trying to fix things again. (**Matthew:** 945-951)

Here, the man talks into being an implicit 'technology of power', that is enacted through child and family court practices to regulate the behaviour of men in custody battles who may seek to gain by making allegations against a female partner. From the man's account, a key aspect of this technology is the coercive threat that he will lose custody or access rights to his children unless he exercises restraint over the nature of evidence submitted to CAFCASS about the mother. Similar accounts of limiting judicial practices were mentioned by other participants (e.g. **Mark:** 451-455).

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[12] CAFCASS is the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service in England and Wales.

It is argued that the constitution of such a 'technology of power' and its enactment draws not only on material resources (e.g. case law or legal precedent), but also on more culturally-available accounts such as the man being considered more likely to perpetrate violence against a woman (George, 2007) and a female perpetrator being less blame-worthy than a male (Rhatigan et al.,, 2001). The effect this 'technology of power' is for the man to be constrained from undermining the position of his partner through allegations about her behaviour or parenting.

Thus, his female partner is positioned as an unimpeachable perpetrator of abuse and shielded from public condemnation. The man is required to engage in ongoing self-disciplinary practices to disavow the court (and other statutory agencies e.g. Child Support Agency) that he may be an aggressive man. Thus, he is again denied the rights to the identity of victim.

3.3.3. Negotiation as the 'interpellation' of the 'abused man'.

The label 'interpellation' refers to the constitutive process where individuals acknowledge and respond to ideologies, thereby recognizing themselves as subjects (Althusser, 1972). Ideology in this sense is defined as "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser, 1972: 162). The ideologies of concern in this instance are the social, cultural and historical discursive practices recognized by the abused man, as revealed in their talk. The men's accounts illuminated self-disciplinary practices or 'technologies of the self' (Foucault, 1988: 18) which served to exercise power over the men's identities and conduct, particularly help-seeking.

The following extracts will outline three contrasting accounts of the marginalization of the male victim.

Extract 25:   Simon: How do you believe society perceives men who are victims of abuse from a woman?

Russell: The biggest thing is embarrassment. Even more than fear and suspicion, which is there, what we have in our society, it applies to the mentally ill, it applies to the gay people, if they're not, one notch, or one square or one block or like me I'm a dyslexic, people are embarrassed and they don't know what to do or what to say and how to. And embarrassment is based on fear in my opinion. And I

have no relatives whatsoever who want to either talk to me or give credence to me. And that is the thing that keeps me awake at night. (**Russell:** 622-629)

Here, the 'abused man' is produced as a social embarrassment and as member of a marginalised group (Migliaccio, 2001), like homosexual people or those with a mental illness label (Byrne, 2000). The man feels the power of these marginalising accounts in the context of his family's rejection of him. In so doing, the man constructs a potential 'technology of the self' that reproduces this rejection of the identity of 'abused man' as socially unfavourable or blame-worthy (Cantos, Neidig & O'Leary, 1983). It might be speculated that the probable consequences of this for the man are for him to withdraw from public gaze (as in extract 12) and/or seek alternative, more socially favourable identities (e.g. father/protector), as in extract 22.

In the next extract, the man constructs a discursive 'site of action' (Foucault, 1977) with respect to the physical abuse of men or women within an intimate relationship.

Extract 26: Simon: I suppose, I wondered if you, I don't want to put the words in your mouth, but I just want er, sort of disagree with me if I'm wrong, but the idea that a big guy could be dominated by his wife might seem unlikely to people as well?

Ken: It's not, everyone's got this kind of false model of how things should be and that goes against how it should be, that's not what happens, but of course it does. Obviously we wouldn't be sitting here talking if it didn't. I mean I'm the world's worst fighter, I don't fight at all, but there is an old saying it's not the size of the dog in the fight it's the size of the fight in the dog. You know, if you've got a little bloke who can knock a big bloke, a little woman if she's put her mind to it_ /**Simon:** Absolutely, yeah/; and also, the thing is, if your hit by a woman, most blokes I know wouldn't hit a woman back. I think that's the other thing, is, I mean a bloke should never hit a woman. But for a woman to hit a bloke, most of us would go, you'd hang back from them. I mean the worst thing I pushed her over once cos she was screaming at me in the street. (**Ken:** 1069-1079)

The man's construction indicates an awareness of his 'interpellation' by dominant cultural accounts that are critical of a man who is physically abused by a woman (George, 2007), but are also critical of men who are violent to women (Reece, 2009). In so doing, he is also able to articulate 'technologies of the self' which are produced as constraining his physical responses to avoid the blows of an abusive female partner and also leading him to avoid public humiliation (Day et al., 2003; see also **Martin:** 868-873) . It might be speculated that the probable consequence of this is for the man is to avoid taking on the identity of the 'abused man' (i.e. by seeking help) and to seek alternative, more socially favourable identities to portray, drawing on idealised accounts of masculinity (Migliaccio, 2001).

In the next extract, the man draws on accounts of hegemonic masculine behaviour and traditional patriarchal roles, by which associated practices the positioning of man as 'victim' of abuse is 'problematized', through constraining his ability to respond to pain, be it physical or emotional.

Extract 27:   **Simon:**   Was it a different experience to that of a woman who might have been experiencing domestic violence?

      Neil: In a privileged, men are in a privileged position, <inaud.> so there is something of a gender difference in outlook.

      Simon: Do you think that that sense of privilege that men have is connected to why other people don't necessarily see them as victims of abuse or domestic violence? What is it about that privilege which you think that makes people view men differently? Tell me a bit about what you think.

      Neil: Men don't, from childhood they were conditioned and boys don't cry. And that is followed through to the grave.

      Simon: So there are certain things that men are supposed to do and supposed to not do?

      Neil: That's right, yeah.

      Simon: Like a set of rules almost?

      Neil: Almost unwritten rules.

Simon: And it sounds like one of those rules for you is about not being able to complain or not feeling that you should complain about the behaviour of a woman, or somebody else's behaviour.

Neil: That's how it has manifested in me. (**Neil:** 536-551)

In this final extract, the man articulates his awareness of his 'interpellation' by dominant social accounts that place men 'in a privileged position' as a result of their socially conditioned ability to endure pain and suffering without complaint and to control their emotions (Connell, 2005).

The above contrasts with a more culturally-specific ('West Indian') family expectation that a man should be able to 'manage' his wife (**Christopher:** 314-324). In so doing, his construction serves to 'problematize' his positioning as a 'victim' of abuse through engaging in a 'technology of the self' to resist complaining about his partner's challenging behaviour without going against a set of 'unwritten rules' for being a man, thus avoiding public humiliation as an 'abused man' (Day et al., 2003). Again, it might be speculated that the man seeks to avoid positioning himself as the 'victim' of abuse (i.e. by seeking help) in order to seek alternative, more socially favourable identities to portray.

Thus concludes the analysis and discussion chapter. The following chapter will summarise this chapter, offer an evaluation of the research and outline the possible implications of the analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR – SUMMARY, EVALUATION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this section, the aims of the research and the research questions will be revisited and discussed in the context of the analysis. The research project will also be evaluated, and implications for research, policy and clinical services will be presented.

4.1. Research Questions and Aims Revisited

The primary aim of the project was to explore how 'the 'abusive' behaviour of a female intimate partner is constructed in and through men's talk, and to identify the material and social practices produced in and through these constructions. This was addressed in the main research question, which was warranted by the lack of contextualised accounts of UK men's experiences of abuse from female intimate partners, despite the apparent prevalence of men reporting abuse in crime surveys.

However, the existing literature has done little more than speculate as to why 'abused men' continue to be a 'hidden' and 'silenced' group, apparently unwilling or unable to access external support. Consequently, the secondary aim of the project was to identify the subject positions enabled by these constructions and to shed light on institutional and self-disciplinary practices acting on these men to shape the negotiation of their identities and responses to abuse, including help-seeking.

Therefore, three further research questions were articulated in this study:

- What social practices comprise and/or are warranted by these constructions of abuse by an intimate female partner?

- What subject positions are enabled and what are the implications for action of these subject positions, particularly in relation to the seeking of support?

- How do these 'abused men' become constituted through the government of regulatory powers and discipline of the self?

The main research question has been addressed through the presentation of constructions of three main discursive 'sites', which are inter-penetrated by social practices and 'technologies of governmentality' (Foucault, 1982), and which sustain certain subject positions, and silence others.

The first of these was '*constructing his experience*', within which the men constructed their partner's behaviour as challenging, as a result of experiencing it as aggressive and humiliating, selfish and domineering, or irrational. These constructions drew on accounts of threats to masculinity and men's fear in public space, accounts of 'feminine privilege' in the domestic space and 'misogynistic' accounts of woman as 'damaged', in addition to aspects of the man's materiality including domestic power relations and finances. In general the men tended to construct the challenging behaviour as having little or no impact on their physical or emotional well-being, but as having more impact on his identity as a man, both publically and privately. Furthermore, the men drew on lay accounts of mental illness, problem drinking, monthly hormonal changes and psychodynamic accounts linking early trauma with later psychological distress, to construct the challenging behaviour as explainable. By 'pathologising' the challenging behaviour, the men's talk seemed to perform the action of separating their partner from responsibility or blame. The implications of these constructions of the 'abusing woman' will be considered in section 4.3.

The second of these was 'constructing his response', within which the men constructed their immediate problems as negotiating 'discursive dilemmas' in how to respond to the challenging behaviour. These dilemmas included whether to 'escape or endure', to 're-assert dominance or cope through avoidance', or whether to 'maintain self-control or get angry'. These constructions illustrated the complex conditions surrounding these men, as they drew on accounts of patriarchal 'male dominance', fatherhood and motherhood and non-violence to women, in addition to material factors including the embodied effects of abuse, practical constraints on escape and a lack of perceived support in the community. In addition, the men's talk regularly positioned their partner and/or children as needing support, and themselves as the husband/father and as protector/problem-solver for the family. Furthermore, the men's talk constructed their responses as a 'call to action', firstly to negotiate a decision to seek help, and secondly to take action (or not) to involve others in crisis. Those men who talked of opting not to access support drew on accounts of unhelpful institutional practices, perceived threats to their masculine identity and likely social stigmatisation of the 'abused man'. Those men who talked of deciding to access support drew on the same accounts to characterise their experiences as negative, and inform their subsequent actions to withdraw from public gaze and avoid further help-seeking opportunities. The implications of these constructions for how public support in offered will be considered in section 4.3.

The third of these was 'constructing the abused man', within which the focus of the extracts were the subject positions enabled for the man and the processes by which the 'abused man' became subjectified within the talk. Within the talk, the men sought to avoid the putative role of victim and take on alternative roles as rational enduring men and as fixers/protectors of the relationship/family. However, in order to manage threats to their masculine identity and achieve a more favourable positioning, the female partner was positioned, not as a responsible perpetrator, but often as a victim of physiological and/or psychological difficulties, which were also sometimes presented as limitations of 'womanhood' (e.g. monthly hormonal changes). In addition, the talk constructed certain institutional practices as 'technologies of power' (Foucault, 1982) acting on the man from a distance to constrain his identity and conduct as an abused man. In so doing the men talked into being two 'technologies of power', namely 'police responses to domestic violence reports' and 'family court practices to protect the woman/mother'. The effect of these was to produce the man as always already a perpetrator of partner abuse and, thus, to regulate his conduct by calling upon him to defend himself as a potential perpetrator of abuse, and discourage him from casting his partner in a negative light. Furthermore, the men's apparent 'interpellation' (Althusser, 1972) by feminist and patriarchal ideologies was indicated by the association of gendered accounts of partner abuse with constructions of 'technologies of the self' (Foucault, 1982), namely self-rejection, passive acceptance of abuse and self-restraint from making any public complaints against the woman. The implications of these constructions of the 'abused man' will be considered in section 4.3.

4.2. Evaluation and Critical Review

In this section, the research will be evaluated and critiqued in terms of a range of issues including epistemology and methodology, quality, research process and ethics, usefulness and providing feedback.

4.2.1. Epistemology and Methodology.

The epistemological position I adopted in this research was aligned with social constructionism and informed by critical realism. In so doing I drew on the work of Parker (1992), who argued that social structures and material practices can influence the deployment of discursive constructions.

Epistemologically relativist scholars (e.g. Edwards et al., 1995), who posit that everything is discursively constructed, have argued that adopting an ontological realism underpinned by an epistemological relativism may lead to inconsistency in what is re-ified and what is not (Speer, 2007).

In this study, critical realism was used to provide an account of how material practices and conditions influenced the deployment of particular discursive constructions in men's talk of partner abuse. These constructions warranted certain subject positions (e.g. the man as protector), and therefore not others and particularly self-governing practices (e.g. not 'criminalising' the 'abusing woman'). As per Sims-Schouten et al., (2007), these constructions were considered to be simultaneously material and discursive as they shed light on the complex mutually-sustaining and reinforcing relationship existing between 'knowledge', as contained in social accounts of partner abuse, masculinity and patriarchy, and the material 'practices' enabled, such as police responses to domestic violence or the withdrawal of the abused man from public gaze (Hook, 2001).

A critical realist version of discourse analysis informed by Foucauldian principles (Parker, 1992) was undertaken. Qualitative methods such as this have been criticised for being inconsistently applied, as lacking predictive certainty, and also requiring a degree of interpretation on the part of the researcher (Willig, 2008). However, such criticisms arise from a distinction drawn between naïve realist paradigms (drawing on normative, positivist and empiricist assumptions) and the more relativist epistemologies of qualitative research, where it is more readily acknowledged that alternative readings of the data are possible and researchers must account for the influence of their own subject position (Willig, 2008).

Critical realism, while acknowledging the material nature of the human world, nonetheless argues that understandings of the world and practices are constructed through language as ideology (Parker, 1992). I acknowledge that the composition of the discursive 'sites' reported in this study were produced as a result of my readings of the interview transcripts. As such, they should be considered as subject to my own constructions and positioning as a man with a limited experience of partner abuse and should also not be considered an exhaustive account of the male partner abuse, but as one, psychologically informed, way of representing it.

As pointed out by Willig (2008), FDA has been criticised for lacking a theory of how individuals are enabled to take up or resist particular subject positions. In the course of this research I have considered the influence of power, whether local power relations or institutional power, on the process of subjectification of the 'abused man', in terms of constraining or enabling his autonomy and agency. In common with Davies and Harré (1999), I take the position that it is unnecessary to invoke theoretical constructs to account for subjectification. I agree that it is important to acknowledge the emotional meanings attached to certain experiences, so I have drawn on certain accounts (e.g. the men's resonance with childhood experiences or past help-seeking) to account for their subjectification. In the circumstances, I believe my approach was adequate, although with more time I would have been able to give more attention to this aspect of the analysis.

4.2.2. Quality of the Research.

In considering how to evaluate my discourse analysis, I was mindful of not wishing to construct this section merely as a defence against the evaluation criteria applied to quantitative research. However, issues of quality, in terms of validity and reliability, are not exclusive to quantitative methodologies, otherwise qualitative research is left open to the criticism of 'anything goes' (Burman, 2004; p. 2).

Willig (2008) argues for the need to consider validity in qualitative work. To enable participants to challenge and correct my interpretations, I plan to send a report of the outcomes of the analysis when finalised, and will then address any feedback given.

To maintain a reflexive position, I continuously review my role in the research process, through keeping a reflexive journal and through supervision. I will consider my reflexivity in section 4.2.3.1.

In terms of reliability, the recruitment process prescribed no limits on the potential population of heterosexual 'abused men', beyond that conversational English was requested. In practice, the men who came forward had been in established intimate relationships and this was reflected in the age range of the sample (38-70). This study makes no claims of representativeness beyond reasoning that if such experiences or practices in relation to 'abuse' are possible, then they are argued to be more widely available within a culture or society (Willig, 2008). Finally, the analysis sought to integrate findings from other research to support the claims made.

4.2.3. Research process and ethics.

Before commencing this research, I had little experience of working directly with 'abused men', although I have had some experience of relational conflict and physical abuse from a female intimate partner. There were a number of issues which arose in the course of the project which I believe would be relevant to share with other researchers, in relation to the recruitment and subsequent interviews. Brogden and Nijhar (2005) highlight difficulties with accessing a self-selected sample. In the course of advertising on relevant 'men's' websites, I encountered two concerns from webmasters, one was that advertising research was considered beyond the scope of one locally-based organisation; the other being that some organisations have codes of conduct which preclude advertising links to other organisations not meeting similar standards. Therefore, from the further information section, I removed one website and the 'National Domestic Violence Helpline', since they will only respond to women. I also anticipated participant's needs for confidentiality and anonymity, so offered a range of methods to contact me including a dedicated email account and departmental telephone number. With regard to ongoing contact with participants, three participants requested further information. The first of these sought details of potential support local to him, which was subsequently supplied by email. The second of these sought appropriate therapeutic support which I identified through the BPS List of Chartered Psychologists and then supplied to him by email. The third of these sought legal support in the family court process and was placed in contact with another participant for this purpose (with express mutual consent).

4.2.3.1. Reflexivity.

Harper proposes an approach to 'developing a critically reflexive position using discourse analysis' (2003; p.78) consisting of three principles: firstly, that critical attention needs to be given to the practices by which the researcher constructs knowledge in relation to their own historical, professional, cultural contexts; secondly, that researchers should make themselves accountable for their analysis by drawing attention to these contexts; and thirdly, that the likely effects of power relations on the research process need to be identified and addressed. My personal contexts included my age, gender, culture and ethnicity, my professional status as both a researcher attached to an academic institution and an employee of the NHS, and my position as someone who would not have self-identified as an 'abused man', but brought with me a set of agendas and ideas for research.

I made it explicit to the participants that I was interested how they constructed their experiences in conversation with another man. I attempted to address some potential imbalance in power relations through inviting participants to be 'co-authors' of the interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), but acknowledge that the nature of our respective positions and University location meant that this was only partially successful.

One of my challenges concerned the development of the interview schedule as I needed to submit a formal academic research proposal requiring the specification of questions, whilst I also wanted to retain some flexibility to include additional agenda items from participants themselves. I allowed for this within the 'co-authoring' protocol both in terms of agenda setting but also in terms of asking the men to outline their own ideas for improving the situation for 'abused men' with agencies and society in general. On reflection, I might have initially sought to develop a stakeholder panel of survivors to advise me on the research process and review my materials. However, in practice, I sought the insights of a previous researcher in the area, Mike Brogden (personal communication, January 10, 2010), who offered advice on recruiting and engaging participants.

Within the interview I sought to establish a rapport with participants by asking them to clarify some basic information and then by adopting a conversational approach inviting them to communicate their own story. Whilst I did maintain a reflexive journal, most of my entries were brief and in note form, and I feel that I might have made more use of this, particularly to reflect on my positioning.

4.2.3.2. Recruitment.

I planned to recruit not only nationally, via websites and 'snowballing', but also in my local area of East London and surrounding areas in order to participants from a broad range of backgrounds. Three recruitment methods used, 'snowballing', website advertising and local newspaper advertising produced potential participants. All methods resulted in at least two participants who met the inclusion criteria and were willing and able to participate, with 'snowballing' being the most fruitful. A possible limitation in my approach to recruitment, that may have reduced variation in the accounts, was that I did not advertise directly to a younger cohort or specific communities, as recommended by Patel (1999).

4.2.4. Usefulness.

Harper (1999) asks who decides what is useful. In my view, it is the men themselves and the organisations with which they may come into contact, who determine this. I hoped that this research might offer some empowerment to the men taking part, either through validating their experience or through contributing to the broader knowledge in the area of partner abuse (Beresford & Evans, 1999). In addition, the research also sought to contribute to the literature on the conceptualisation of partner abuse from a male perspective, including men's responses and help-seeking practices, and potential psychological treatments. Furthermore, the project also aimed to influence institutional practices and service provision, through ongoing publication of the work in open-access form on the web and in relevant journals, in addition to establishing a practice of training and consultation to agencies providing services to 'abused men.

4.3. Implications

4.3.1. Implications for the concept of partner abuse and future research.

The starting point for the analysis was to consider how heterosexual 'abused men' were rendered problematic through a variety of social and institutional practices, enabled and sustained through historically-contingent and culturally-available discourses and ideologies.

The constructions presented have highlighted that these heterosexual men experienced considerable difficulty in adopting the position of 'abused man'. Adopting such a position, seemed incompatible with retaining a masculine identity, particularly, in the public sphere. It seemed less problematic for the man to position the female partner as 'damaged' (e.g. through mental illness) or 'lacking' as a result of her aspects of her female-ness, than to accept that she was dominant and responsible for behaving abusively. In order to achieve these re-positionings, the men engaged in a range of rhetorical practices (i.e. 'truth games) to stress claims of 'masculinity', as well as to minimise, normalise and explain the challenging behaviour and their response. In addition, the men's talk produced a range of self-disciplinary practices enacted to avoid being perceived as a victim or perpetrator of abuse; i.e. avoidance, non-retaliation and non-complaint. Furthermore, the men's talk revealed two institutional regulatory practices, 'police domestic violence response protocols' and 'family court custody practices'; both of which positioned the man as a potential perpetrator of abuse and required him to constrain his conduct in order to defend against this positioning.

These constructions also offer further criticism of feminist-inspired accounts and research practices, which have sought to minimise the seriousness of female-perpetrated partner abuse and to explain female aggression and abuse as a justifiable response to patriarchal 'male dominance' and 'masculine privilege' (Bettmann, 2009). It is argued that, rather than undermining ideas of patriarchal 'male dominance' and 'masculine privilege', the feminist-inspired model of partner abuse (e.g. Duluth Model) has in fact reinforced the underpinning gender stereotypes of men as 'violent' and women as 'vulnerable' (Dutton & Corvo, 2007). As a result, 'abused men' remain 'silenced' and 'hidden' and 'abusing women' are not afforded the responsibility for their actions or appropriate treatment.

The future research I would recommend would take a post-modern epistemological perspective. Specifically, for researchers to move in greater numbers from narrow gendered conceptions of those involved in partner abuse to 'give weight to the voices historically excluded from the public realm'(Taylor, 2006; p. 133), including 'abused men' and 'abusing women', and from <u>all</u> parts of our multi-cultural society. In so doing, researchers need to be mindful that terms such as 'victim' and 'perpetrator' are pathologising, totalizing and gendered. I do not proscribe terms, but merely ask that careful attention is given to the language used in all forms of research.

Furthermore, in terms of psychological treatment, I would welcome future research which seeks to develop and evaluate <u>new</u> treatment programmes, specifically designed around the experiences and responses of 'abused men', in addition to similarly tailored treatment programmes for 'abusing women'.

4.3.2. Implications for institutional practices, service provision and the profession of clinical psychology.

I further argue that the constructions presented in relation men's talk of partner abuse shed further light on the ways that men (as 'victims') become 'problematized' as a result of institutional practices and service provision in response to partner abuse.

I accept the critique of Morrison (2006) who highlighted the structural conditions which serve to 'hide' abused women who do not share the advantages of a dominant group (e.g. women from different ethnic backgrounds). However, I would extend such a critique to say that these same structural conditions serve also to 'hide' 'abused men' and 'abusing women' from all backgrounds and statuses.

These structural conditions are maintained through the material practices associated with 'male-dominated' patriarchy and 'masculine privilege', underpinned by a capitalist political ideology of man as unit of labour. However, I would also assert that first-wave Feminism has enabled women (albeit white Western middle-class women) to become the prime challengers to patriarchal 'male dominance' and 'masculine privilege' (Sarantakos, 1999), and in so doing to occupy a space arguably needed by other disadvantaged groups, including men. I support the argument of progressive feminist scholars (e.g. Kessler, 2011) who have espoused that this contested space should be open to all who may need mutual support to resist their social inequality, particularly the effects of physical and emotional abuse.

In terms of services, I cautiously welcome recent changes in provision for 'abused men' (e.g. refuge spaces) if they are accompanied by more widespread changes to institutional practices that seek to properly understand what has taken place in situations of domestic violence before attributing putative roles or causes, based on gender or an outdated feminist-inspired model of partner abuse (e.g. Bettmann, 2009). However, I would advocate that those who commission and manage services need to broaden their perspective to partner abuse, even if that means challenging the status quo. Furthermore, those in the front line of services should be trained to conceptualise partner abuse and respond to it in ways that do not automatically assume that the main recipient of such a service will be a female victim.

In terms of the role of clinical psychology, there seem to be four key issues that arose from participants' constructions of partner abuse. Firstly, that men feel constrained from putting themselves forward as being in need of help in the context of partner abuse, preferring to locate any psychological or emotional problems within their female partner. Consequently, they may seek help on behalf of, or in support of, the partner or possibly as part of a couple, rather than themselves alone. Secondly, that men may seek to endure and minimise the impact of abuse. Consequently, if they present to psychology services it may be for other more socially-acceptable reasons, e.g. work-related stress or alcohol dependency. Thirdly, that clinical psychology services and the kinds of support they offer may be considered inappropriate or inaccessible for men. Consequently, it would be beneficial to undertake further research to ascertain how clinical psychology services may Market themselves better to 'abused men' and men, in general.

Finally, since clinical psychology training courses are producing only a few male clinical psychologists each year, the interests of men in society and the conceptualisation of their psychological needs may suffer as a result. Seager (2011) has highlighted the not only the 'crisis for masculinity' in society but also the lack of interest in undertaking research with men. It is therefore recommended that clinical training courses critically evaluate the level of attention given to men and male perspectives within their programmes.

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APPENDIX ONE – Analytic steps

Step 1

After each interview, I made brief notes regarding interview process and practicalities, and also some ideas for themes in my reflexive journal. I returned to these during analysis and write-up.

Step 2

I produced my interview transcripts as tables, creating columns in which I entered my own comments and ideas on constructions, practices and subject positions produced in men's talk of partner abuse. I read the interview transcripts three times, changing the sequence (DAVE-8, MARTIN-1, random order) to ensure my ideas were not 'primed' by my first interview(s).

In the course of the initial reading I sought to refine my analytic foci by identifying a starting point from which to explore the research question(s). In so doing, I was consistently drawn to the ways in which the 'abused man' as 'victim' was 'problematized' in the context of seeking help. I noticed how the 'abused man' often seemed constrained or prevented from seeking help through his own practices, the practices of his partner or the practices of others. As a result I identified a starting point for my fine-grained analysis, in terms of this 'problematization' of the 'abused man' as 'victim' (Foucault, 1985). This starting point took the form of an initial question, with which I re-addressed the literature on male partner abuse:

"Under what circumstances are men abused by a female intimate partner rendered problematic and what official discourses and counter-discourses render these problems visible and intelligible?"

Step 3

From this starting point, I identified a range of discursive and material accounts and practices operating at the level of society and institutions, through which power was exercised over the 'abused man', and so rendered him 'problematic'. Consequently, I was then able to ground the coding and analysis within a wider politics of the present (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008).

Thus, I was then able to generate four further analytic foci, with which to interrogate the data and to ground the analysis within the men's talk:

4) What *objects* are being constructed in and through men's talk [about their *social practices* and the *discourses* that make them possible] in relation to their help-seeking responses in the context of being abused by a female intimate partner?

5) What *material* and *discursive* resources do men who self-identify as abused draw on and deploy (or not) to talk into being the objects identified above?

   a) How are *linguistic practices* (e.g. 'truth games') and *discursive resources* deployed (or not) within the interview space to construct an experience of abuse in dialogue with another male as interviewer?

   b) Within what broader *discursive* and/or *extra-discursive* contexts are the linguistic practices and discursive resources (as deployed or not within the interview) situated and made possible?

6) What *subject positions* are enabled for the 'abused man' and 'abusing woman' by these constructions?

   (1) Where are the 'man' and 'woman' using this repertoire located within a structure of rights to speak and duties to undertake?

   (2) What vantage point with respect to a version of the reality of 'partner abuse' are constructed and performed by this positioning?

   (3) What moral location is afforded within the conversation?

7) How do these 'abused men' become subjectified through the government of disciplinary powers and regulation of the self?

   (1) What institutional manifestations of power (i.e. physical institutions, institutional structures, institutional representatives and institutional practices) act upon the 'abused man' to govern his conduct from a distance?

   (2) What material and discursive 'self-regulatory' practices does the 'abused man' engage in which serve to exercise power over himself and constrain or enable his conduct?

Step 4

For each interview, I selected extracts that threw into sharp relief, the practices, on the basis of which, the 'abused man' as 'victim' was 'problematized'. In so doing, I paid close attention to constructions of the experience of (and responses to) abuse and associated help-seeking practices, as was the main research question. Furthermore, I drew out ideas linked to the secondary research questions, in relation to the social practices, subject positions and self-regulatory practices, warranted by these constructions.

Step 5

A list of key constructions was drawn up based on these and further notes on how these constructions were presented within the texts by participants were made. These included contradictory accounts or challenges to them. During this process, it was possible to identify three distinct arrays of inter-connected constructions, examples from which would serve to address the research questions. At this stage, I also began to make decisions about which constructions were to be included/excluded based on how they were constructed within the text, and whether they were supported by extracts within and between interviews and in this way were representative of and comprised constructions of 'male partner abuse'. Specific extracts were considered in terms of how they might or might not exemplify this.

Step 6

I began to establish some coherence to my analysis at this stage through choosing and contrasting specific extracts which demonstrated key constructions or parts of them and linking them together in a way which attempted to provide a narrative 'telling the story' of how men experience abuse. It was possible to identify groups of inter-related constructions which produced partner abuse in three contexts:

- Abuse as constructions of the men's immediate *experience* of and *explanations* for the 'challenging behaviour' of the intimate partner;
- Abuse as constructions of the immediate and crisis-driven *responses* of the men to the 'challenging behaviour' of the intimate partner;
- Abuse as constructions of the abused man and his intimate partner, in terms of how they become positioned within the talk; and in terms how the 'abused' man becomes constituted through the governing processes of self-discipline and self-regulation.

Step 7

At this stage, I began writing up the analysis, drawing upon my collated sets of extracts to elaborate key constructions and demonstrate their effects through the use of my chosen extracts. I began to link these in with relevant literature.

Step 8

The overall analysis was systematically refined and some constructions integrated or separated in order to provide an overall coherence. My decision to stop analysing was driven by time constraints and that what had been produced seemed coherent, useful and answered the research questions.