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**The Impact of Intimate Partner Abuse on Women's Experiences
of the Workplace: A Qualitative Study**

By

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology**

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Declaration

I confirm that this thesis is my own work and that it has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Abstract

This thesis examines the impact of intimate partner abuse on women's experiences of the workplace, a topic that has been under examined within the UK. Taking a pro-feminist perspective, and drawing on Foucault's conceptualisation of power, the thesis examines the gendered power relations that survivors negotiate in their relationships with their abusive partners and work colleagues in order to sustain their employment. The thesis also addresses a major gap in the literature, namely the experiences of women in professional and/or managerial occupations and the coping strategies they employ in order to sustain their employment.

The thesis draws on 29 in-depth qualitative interviews conducted with survivors of intimate partner abuse who predominantly were employed in skilled, professional and/or managerial occupations. These interviews were conducted via telephone, face-to-face and the internet. Adopting a symbolic interactionist approach, coupled with a Foucauldian perspective on power, it is argued women in professional and/or managerial positions adopt different coping mechanisms to women in unskilled employment in order to sustain their employment. Furthermore, it is argued that for some women disclosure of abuse within the workplace can prove to be a positive coping strategy. However, for those women in managerial positions, it could seriously jeopardise their authority within the workplace. It is also argued that disclosure could undermine the coping strategies that women adopt in order to survive and sustain their employment. This thesis also argues that earning an income and assuming the role of breadwinner within an abusive relationship does not necessarily grant women economic independence, that gendered power relations are far more complex than previous arguments propose.

Finally, this thesis not only contributes towards our theoretical and empirical understanding of gendered power dynamics operating within abusive relationships, but it also has a practical application by informing the development of workplace policies and practices regarding intimate partner abuse.

Introduction

For more than four decades feminists have highlighted the prevalence of intimate partner abuse, attributing it to the unequal power relations operating within society, that grant men power and subordinate women. Furthermore, feminist researchers have been committed to documenting women's everyday lived experiences and how they continually have to negotiate oppressive gendered power relations within their private and public lives. Pro-feminist male researchers have also been active in exploring the connections between men, masculinities and violence/abuse in order to identify the means by which men and women can end violence against women. The theorisation of gendered power relations has been central to most feminist and pro-feminist scholarship, and this thesis is no exception. Taking a pro-feminist perspective, this thesis examines an area which has, until recently, been largely neglected and that is how intimate partner abuse impacts on women's employment.

Although intimate partner abuse has been connected to homelessness (Charles 2000; Chung *et al.* 2000) and seen to have serious consequences on women's mental and physical health (Campbell 2002; Humphreys and Joseph 2004), its impact on women's employment has been relatively unexplored. Research that has been conducted in the UK (Walby 2004) has identified the immense economic impact of intimate partner abuse on the UK economy, with both employers and employees losing financially. International research has indicated that the workplace is not only a site of intimate partner abuse (Brownell

and Roberts 2002; Lee 2005) but is also a sanctuary from abuse (Rothman *et al.* 2007, Parker and Elger 2004) and a place where women can gain support from co-workers (Swanberg *et al.* 2006b). Research has also illustrated how intimate abuse can seriously affect women's ability to sustain employment, with abusers utilising various means to sabotage their partner's employment (Swanberg and Logan 2005). This literature demonstrates that intimate partner abuse is not confined to the 'home', but that it affects all aspects of women's lives and impacts on wider society (Riger *et al.* 2002). Essentially this research indicates that intimate abuse is not a 'private' but a 'public' matter. Although research has documented the connections between intimate partner abuse and women's economic stability, there is still a dearth of literature exploring abuse and its impact on women's experiences of employment, particularly within a UK context.

This thesis explores a number of areas which have hitherto been neglected in the literature concerning intimate partner abuse and employment. By adopting a symbolic interactionist approach coupled with a Foucauldian perspective on power, this thesis examines how abused women sustain their employment through engaging in various coping strategies, and how this differs depending on their occupational status and workplace environments. With previous research predominantly focusing on women in low status, low income positions of employment, this thesis offers an insight into how women in high status, high income positions are affected by intimate partner abuse and how they sustain their employment. In documenting the strategies employed by women in order to sustain their employment, it highlights how work provides women with the

ability to construct a positive sense of self by immersing themselves within organisational roles, which although providing women with a sense of empowerment can also constrain them from seeking advice. This leads me on to explore another area that has been under-investigated and that is the context and consequences of disclosure of abuse within the workplace. Although previous research has investigated disclosure within the workplace (Swanberg and Macke 2006) it is still unclear how aspects such as occupational status or gendered power relations influence women's decisions to disclose. Furthermore, this thesis also investigates the negative consequences of disclosure, particularly co-workers pressuring the individual to leave the relationship, and how this can undermine women's coping strategies and the positive aspects of work.

In adopting a more nuanced approach to power, which a Foucauldian perspective offers, I examine how gendered power relations within abusive relationships are affected by women who assume the role of breadwinner, either through progressing in their career or as a consequence of their partner's unemployment. By highlighting how individual women's employment and their role as breadwinner does not necessarily present a fundamental challenge to dominant forms of masculinity, and that abusers draw on other forms of masculinity in order to regain or exercise control, I question the definition of the term 'economic independence' espoused by some scholars. This term suggests that earning money sufficiently grants women independence, whereas I argue that earning money does not necessarily grant women independence within abusive relationships. Finally, by specifically focusing on the experiences of abused women and the everyday practices they engage in to sustain themselves and

survive the abuse, I review a number of local authorities' domestic violence workplace policies and trade unions' responses to the issue of intimate partner abuse. By highlighting survivors' recommendations, I examine whether employers' and trade unions' current responses are adequately addressing the needs of women suffering abuse and are challenging the underlying gender power relations that perpetuate the stigmatisation of women suffering abuse.

Why Intimate Partner Abuse?

For most social researchers, the motivation to embark on a particular course of study is informed by their biography. As noted by Mills (1959) in his famous *Sociological Imagination*, an individual's life experiences can provide the motivation for undertaking a piece of social research. He explained that when an individual steps back to analyse their position and the ways in which it is associated with, and affected by, wider social forces they have taken the first steps towards acquiring the sociological imagination. Mills's comments regarding the sociological imagination truly resonate with me. My witnessing intimate partner abuse as a child has impelled me to address this pernicious issue that not only contributes to women's continued oppression within society, but also has a devastating impact on wider society. Intimate partner abuse is not only a 'women's issue' because it is not just women who are affected by it. As highlighted by Connell (1997), those women with whom men have close relationships, such as their mothers, sisters, friends and workplace colleagues, are affected by abuse. Furthermore, we cannot forget that boys who witness intimate partner abuse are both emotionally and sometimes physically scarred for life by

this experience. Men who witness abuse as a child sometimes go on to become abusers themselves, whilst others totally reject any forms of violence/abuse and distance themselves from negative performances of masculinity. I have taken the latter path, always distancing myself from certain forms of masculinity which I find destructive and oppressive.

Throughout my life I have continuously asked the question: what is the cause of intimate partner abuse? Also, for as long as I can remember, I have always felt like an 'outsider' in relation to certain forms of masculinity. Indeed this was more apparent during my school years, where I felt extremely uncomfortable with certain forms of masculinity that were associated with sport. My experiences have developed my interest with regard to how power operates on a micro level within social interaction. I am particularly aware that power is not static, but fluctuates depending on the particular context and social location of individuals. Thus, although certain forms of masculinity provide men with power, there are certain situations in which men are powerless and try to regain power by engaging in certain practices. In addition, due to my experiences, I am aware that women engage in numerous strategies in order to survive abuse and are not passive 'victims' of social structure as portrayed by some early forms of radical feminism.

To say that my experiences have led me to embark on a five year exploration of the nature of intimate partner abuse is an understatement. Rather my biography has fundamentally influenced every aspect of this research process, from engaging with feminist and pro-feminist texts, interviewing survivors of abuse, to

interpreting the data, and writing up the research. The role of my biography within the research process, particularly in relation to interviewing female participants, is explored further in Chapter 3. My experiences have also influenced my use of certain terminology throughout this study, noticeably the use of ‘survivor’ rather than ‘victim’, with the former signalling an active rather than a passive agent. However, this is not meant to diminish the severity of the situation or to suggest that women are complicit in perpetuating abuse, but simply to indicate that women do resist men’s attempts to control and exercise power over them. I also adopt the term ‘intimate partner abuse’ rather than the common parlance term ‘domestic violence’. My justification for utilising this term is briefly discussed in the next section.

Terminology

Over the last four decades there has been tremendous variation regarding the terms utilised by researchers investigating violence/abuse within intimate relationships. These include: domestic violence; domestic abuse; wife abuse; wife battering; intimate partner violence; and intimate partner abuse. The interchangeable use of these terms by researchers has enormous implications on estimating incidence and prevalence rates (DeKeserdey and Schwartz 2001; Saltzman 2004). Furthermore, the naming and categorising of violence/abuse has not only methodological (Johnson and Ferraro 2000), but also political implications (Bacchi 1999).

The term domestic violence is commonly used both within public discourse and within the women's movement, however feminists are increasingly questioning the validity of the term. Mullender (1996) comments that although the term 'domestic violence' has become common parlance within research and public discourse it fails to accurately convey the issue. First, she states that 'domestic' inaccurately conveys the idea that abuse/violence is confined to the 'private' sphere and with women being stalked or suffering abuse at their workplace I agree that the term 'domestic' is problematic. Secondly, Mullender suggests that 'violence', fails to take account of non-physical manifestations of abuse, for instance 'violence' does not necessarily imply threatening or intimidating behaviour, degradation and mental torture. Furthermore, it fails to capture stalking or harassing behaviour or other forms of control such as economic abuse. More importantly, 'violence' does not convey the full extent of the dynamics of power and control within abusive relationships, with power not simply being exercised or reclaimed through the use of physical force.

The inadequacy of the term 'domestic violence' has led some feminist researchers/activists to adopt other terms such as 'violence against women' to specifically highlight the gendered nature of abuse within intimate relationships. However, Saltzman (2004) argues that even this term is made problematic by the noun 'violence'. Therefore, some have advocated that the term 'abuse' should replace 'violence' because it incorporates non-physical forms of abuse. However, others have insisted that the term 'abuse,' although it connotes different forms of abuse, has the effect of diminishing the horrendous physical violence that women experience (McKie 2005). This has led some feminist researchers to call for the

term ‘violence and abuse against women’ to be adopted, which would allow for a broad interpretation of behaviours deemed detrimental to women’s physical, emotional and economic well-being (Saltzman 2004).

In order to accommodate a wide range of circumstances and behaviours, and to address abuse within different relationships, Saltzman *et al.* (2002) adopted the term ‘intimate partner violence’. The term ‘intimate partner’ is applicable to varying forms of relationships in which violence occurs, thus incorporating gay, bisexual, lesbian, transgender and polyamorous relationships. Furthermore, this term does not restrict abuse purely to the ‘private’ domain, thus recognising that violence can occur outside the home, for example, in the workplace. I believe Saltzman *et al.*’s (2002) term of ‘intimate partner’ is comprehensive, although their continued use of ‘violence’ does not accurately capture non-physical forms of abuse, such as emotional or economic abuse. Therefore, in order to take account of these behaviours, I will be utilising the term ‘intimate partner abuse’ throughout this thesis. Of course some have commented that ‘intimate partner violence’ de-genders the problem, by not making men’s violence against women explicit (Hearn and McKie 2008). This is a valid concern and I am aware of how the language utilised within research/policy can have serious implications on state funding (Charles *et al.* 2009; McMillan 2002). It is not my intention to de-gender the issue, however, I would argue that abuse not only occurs within heterosexual relationships, but also in same-sex, bisexual, transgendered and polyamorous relationships, and it is vital that these instances of abuse are not neglected. Furthermore, I believe this term allows flexibility in terms of

theoretical discussions of how aspects of gender and power operate within abusive relationships.

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis begins by locating intimate partner abuse within a pro-feminist framework, by placing gender power relations as central to any analysis of men, masculinity and violence. In Chapter 2, I review the various theoretical perspectives relating to intimate partner abuse which include feminist approaches, masculinities literature, and sociological and psychological frameworks, and highlight why I favour a pro-feminist approach since it places emphasis on gendered power relations and how men ‘do gender’ by engaging in violence/abuse. I then discuss the various conceptualisations of power and outline the reasons why I favour a more nuanced, ‘bottom up’ approach as opposed to a ‘top down’ perspective. My conceptualisation of power draws heavily on Foucault’s formulation of power, which highlights the fluidity of power. This perspective has allowed me to examine the dynamics of power operating at a micro level. Following on from these theoretical discussions I then review the empirical research that has addressed intimate partner abuse and employment and identify the areas that warrant further investigation. This chapter concludes by outlining the research questions and conceptual framework adopted in the thesis.

Chapter 3 outlines my methodological approach in investigating the issue of intimate partner abuse and its impact on women’s employment. In addition to

documenting the various interview methods utilised within this research I also address the personal, epistemological, and political aspects relating to men conducting research on such a sensitive and emotive topic as intimate partner abuse. In arguing that my personal experiences assisted me in terms of recruiting 29 survivors of abuse and developing a rapport with women interviewees, I discuss the concept of 'insider' research and whether this term is applicable to my position as a male researcher investigating women's experiences of abuse.

Chapter 4 is informed by the data gathered from in-depth interviews conducted with 29 survivors of abuse. It explores three substantive issues: the coping strategies that women employ in order to sustain, and minimise the impact of intimate partner abuse on, their employment; an exploration of 'boundary work', a coping strategy that a number of participants employed; and how certain positions of employment and workplace environments are more favourable in providing survivors with the ability to construct a positive sense of self, which also acts as a major coping strategy.

Chapter 5 focuses on the issue of disclosure within the workplace. Drawing from the data gathered from the interviews with survivors, it explores how those women occupying managerial positions feel empowered, but also prohibited from seeking help or assistance within the workplace. I then go on to discuss participants' reluctance about disclosing their situation with one of the reasons being that they want to avoid pressure from their co-workers to leave the relationship. Following on from this discussion, I examine the impact of gender on participant's decision to disclose. The chapter concludes by arguing that

disclosure is not always a positive strategy, in that it can undermine the coping mechanisms that survivors adopt in order to sustain their employment and might disrupt positive constructions of self within the workplace.

In Chapter 6 the focus shifts from the workplace to the home by examining how women's employment and their assuming the role of breadwinner affects the gendered power dynamics within their relationships. This chapter specifically draws on the experiences of those women in high status, high income positions of employment and how their access to economic resources does not necessarily empower them within their relationship. This chapter brings into question the argument put forward by some scholars that women's employment provides them with the means to gain 'economic independence'. I argue that these arguments are based on a simplistic view of power, which assumes that having access to economic resources automatically grants women economic power within abusive relationships.

In Chapter 7 I highlight survivors' recommendations as to how employers and trade unions can improve their response to the issue of intimate partner abuse. The majority of participants wanted to see a fundamental change regarding assumptions relating to gender within organisations and that employers and trade unions take account of gender when developing and implementing workplace policies and practices. This chapter concludes with a review of current local authorities' domestic violence workplace policies, and identifies areas in which they could be improved.

In the conclusions I discuss how the findings within this thesis have both theoretical and practical implications relating to how we conceptualise gendered power relations within abusive relationships and how workplace policies and practices may be improved. I also suggest areas for future research.

Chapter Two:

Literature Review

Introduction

Just as numerous terms have been developed to incorporate the many aspects of violence/abuse within intimate relations, there is also diversity regarding theoretical perspectives. There are those who perceive intimate partner abuse as symptomatic of underlying psychological conditions, whilst others have identified societal influences as generating and perpetuating abuse. Feminists (and masculinities scholars influenced by feminist thinking) have conceptualised men's violence against women in differing ways, however, they all place violence within the context of gendered power relations. Some feminists place men's violence within a wider structure of male domination, in which institutions such as the family, the legal system and the state uphold gender relations that grant men privilege within society. Others view men's violence, which includes rape, sexual assault and symbolic forms of violence, as a performance, through which men buttress a fragile and contested construction of masculinity. As this thesis is taking a pro-feminist position regarding intimate partner abuse, I shall be reviewing these different conceptualisations of intimate partner abuse to explore how they associate violence/abuse with masculinity and power. In analysing these conceptualisations of gendered power relations, one needs to be mindful of the fact that physical and mental abuse are not the only means by which men exercise power. Both the fact that gendered power relations are

complex, and the theoretical approach which one adopts towards intimate partner abuse, will have an impact on how one understands power relations.

This chapter is in two sections. The first explores the theoretical perspectives relating to intimate partner abuse, ranging from feminist and pro-feminist perspectives to sociological and finally psychological approaches. With gendered power relations being central to the feminist and pro-feminist theorisation of intimate partner abuse, conceptualisations of power are also discussed. In the second section of the chapter I review the international literature that addresses the impact of intimate partner abuse on women's employment. This literature, predominantly emanating from the US and Canada, highlights the economic cost of abuse for both employers and employees. It also examines the connection between women's employment status, income level and intimate partner abuse. I then review research that investigates the positive effects of employment on abused women's self esteem and how the workplace can be a sanctuary from intimate abuse. Finally, I examine the literature on disclosure within the workplace and whether employers within the UK have taken into account the complexities associated with disclosure of abuse in their development of workplace strategies.

However, I first examine feminist theorisations of intimate partner abuse and how feminists have identified gendered power relations as central to their understanding of men's domination over and violence against women.

Feminist Perspectives on Intimate Partner Abuse

First wave feminists first raised the issue of violence against women in the early 20th century; at the time, however, it was eclipsed by other issues, such as property rights and suffrage. It remained hidden until the re-emergence of the feminist movement in the early 1970s (Maynard 1993). Early second wave feminists grounded their theorisation of women's oppression and men's use of violence upon biological essentialist arguments associated with man's innate instincts for violence, and thus neglected to consider cultural and historical influences (Edwards 1987). However, contemporary feminist theorising of men's violence towards women has moved away from biological essentialist underpinnings and instead places an emphasis on the unequal gender power relations within society. Yllo (2005) stresses that feminist perspectives on violence against women emphasise the fact that it is connected to the imbalance of gender and power relations prevalent within society, which are upheld by various institutions within the state.

Feminists draw upon the concept of patriarchy which emphasises the structural and systematic nature of gender power relations, in order to analyse the historical domination of men over women (Walby 1990). Dobash and Dobash's (1980) seminal publication *'Violence against Wives'* puts forward the thesis that men's violence against women is an historical phenomenon, that for centuries atrocities have been committed against women in the private sphere of the family, with little intervention from the state. In fact, Dobash and Dobash (1980) implicate the

state for upholding patriarchy and bestowing privilege upon men through legislative frameworks. They highlight the fact that historically men have not been held accountable by the state for utilising violence against their wives. In fact, it was only in 1991 that the law was amended within the UK in order to make it a criminal offence for a husband to rape his wife (Westmarland 2004). Kelly (1988), another influential feminist scholar/activist within the field of violence against women, argues that men utilise various tactics, both within the private and public spheres, to maintain control over women. In developing her theoretical perspective, she argued that there was a continuum of men's violence, which ranged from seemingly innocuous behaviour such as a 'wolf whistle' to men's use of rape and physical violence. Kelly (1988) states that although not all men rape or physically abuse women, the fear of being raped or attacked leads women to impose restrictions on their movements within the public sphere, and therefore fear is another means by which men maintain control. Of course one could argue that the level of fear one person may experience, might be totally different to another, therefore to suggest that all women fear violence or rape is a bold statement.

Like many other feminists, Kelly (1988) understands intimate partner abuse within the wider structure of patriarchy. However, these conceptualisations of patriarchy as a historical monolithic structure in which men universally dominate women have been criticised (Pollert 1996). Segal (1990) suggests that these theorisations of male violence seem to relegate women to passive agents and suggest that all women are in danger from all men. Therefore, she argues that, although there is a continuum of violence, not all men are a threat to women.

Nonetheless, social assumptions regarding men's right to dominate women have allowed men to use physical force "to get what they want, and get away with it – at least in the domestic sphere" (Segal 1990: 254). Feminist scholars have, however, debated whether men utilise violence as a means to uphold and assert power or whether violence is employed in situations where men's construction of masculinity or perceptions of privilege are challenged. Masculinities scholars have been particularly proactive in investigating the connections between constructions of masculinity and violence. Like their feminist counterparts, the question of whether violence is employed by those men who feel powerless or powerful still prevails. However, this question is further complicated by other social factors, such as class, ethnicity, age and sexuality.

Men, Masculinities and Violence

Pro-feminist masculinities literature pertaining to men's violence against women is grounded within existing feminist theoretical conceptualisations of the imbalance of power between men and women within society. The most influential masculinities theorist Raewyn Connell (1987; 1990) produced a structural account of how gender is regulated and reproduced by the state. However, Connell (1990) stressed that although the state upholds and reproduces the gendered hierarchy through certain institutions and cultural practices, it is not inherently patriarchal. In relation to men's violence, Connell (1987) argues that historically men have been trained in the use of violence and one only has to look at the military regimes around the world to see how this is a particularly masculinised institution. For Connell (1987) violence is associated with

‘hegemonic’ forms of masculinity which are associated with other forms of social hierarchies, such as class, race and sexuality. Connell (1987) took into account aspects such as class when discussing masculinity and violence and stated that men with no other means to exercise power, such as through economic or social status, etc., will resort to violence. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) posit that historically there has been a hierarchy of gender, with certain forms of masculinities coming into prominence in particular historical conjunctions and those that are dominant are thus ‘hegemonic’ forms of masculinity. In clarifying the concept of hegemonic masculinity, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) explain that it is an abstraction and does not necessarily relate to the everyday, lived realities of men. Nor is it an essentialist form of analysis or indeed heteronormative. Rather it describes a set of practices that men adopt in order to dominate women and other men. Furthermore, these practices are reproduced within cultural discourses that are perpetuated by material institutional practices such as economic relations and the division of labour within the workplace and the household and childcare.

Recently, the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ has been criticised for being too ambiguous and for shifting the focus from men’s actual practices of violence and domination to some abstracted notion of masculinity, thus marginalising women’s experiences of violence/abuse yet again (Hearn 2004). Others have argued that ‘hegemonic masculinity’ does not take account of dominant forms of masculinity that are not associated with hegemonic masculinity (Beasley 2008); or that it over emphasises the structural nature of men’s dominance over women (Whitehead 2002). Although I have some sympathies with these comments,

particularly those of Whitehead (2002), I do feel that Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) analysis of the gendered nature of the division of labour, childcare and men's use of violence is a valuable contribution. It illustrates that although there are differences in how men exercise power over women and how women experience this, overall heterosexual, white men are granted power and privilege within society. These aspects are particularly relevant when analysing how class, gender and ethnicity affect women's positions within the private sphere, but also their lives within the public arena, especially the workplace. Nevertheless, these 'top down' perspectives of male power and privilege have been challenged.

Whilst some argue that men utilise violence/abuse because they 'have' power, others propose that violence is employed when men feel as though they are powerless. Goode (1971) conceptualised the family as a system in which member utilised force or violence in order to impose their will on others. However, he argued that violence was the ultimate recourse within a resource theory framework, whereby individuals who lacked other means of power, for example, economic or educational status, utilised violence in order to establish dominance and to achieve their goals. Therefore, men with a lower socio-economic position, with limited economic resources, would be more likely to use violence in order to regain power. Although Goode's (1971) resource schematic is thought provoking, I believe his concept of power is limited. Vogler (1998) indicates that resource theory does not take account of the wider aspects of gender inequality, which have an impact on economic resources entering the household. Finally, Goode's (1971) conceptualisation of violence as a means of regaining power is

problematic, in that there are alternative means of exercising power and control other than through violence. One needs only to examine Lukes's (2005) various dimensions of power to become aware that power does not simply take the observable form of 'power over' individuals, that there are other dimensions by which power is exercised within abusive relationships.

Kaufman (1997) argues that men embrace masculinity through the process of socialisation and psychological development and therefore acquire a pre-formed concept of masculinity, which is associated with violence. However, because of the frailty of this social construction of masculinity, men utilise violence against women when they feel insecure in their masculinity. Therefore, Kaufman (1997) suggests that violence is employed by men as a means of buttressing their masculine identity, particularly when this is compromised or threatened. This perspective on men's use of violence when their masculinity is challenged has been adopted by a number of feminists within the field of intimate partner abuse. For example, Anderson and Umberson (2001) draw heavily on theories of gender as performance (Butler 1990; West and Zimmerman 1987) within social interaction, in which men construct masculine identities through practising violence. For Butler (1990) gender as performance conveys the instability of a masculine subject, and that it is only by embodying and performing these acts associated with 'masculinity' that masculinity exists. Violence is thus utilised by men to confront challenges to the performance of masculinity or heteronormative, social constructions that grant power and privilege to men.

Adopting the conceptual framework of performativity, Anderson and Umberson (2001) found that violence was not an essential or natural expression of masculinity, rather “violence represents an effort to reconstruct a contested and unstable masculinity” (pg. 375). They also stated that, by practising violence, men not only perform masculinity, they also reproduce the gendered hierarchical system of dominance. These findings resonate with Segal’s (1990) comments relating to violence and masculinity, in that violence and masculinity are not inextricably linked, although men have historically utilised violence in order to achieve their desires within the domestic sphere.

Feminist and pro-feminist scholars have focused extensively on the issue of intimate partner abuse, considering it to be demonstrative of gender inequality and men’s continuing abuse of power. However, later conceptualisations of men’s violence against women link masculinity and violence to powerlessness. As noted by Kimmel (2004), men’s violence against women and other men “derives from [a] thwarted sense of entitlement” (pg. 268). This sense of entitlement is derived from the unequal gendered relations operating within society that have historically bestowed privilege to men. However, Kimmel’s argument suggests that men’s violence is due to a frustrated sense of entitlement, indicating that violence occurs when this perceived sense of masculinity is challenged or threatened.

Viewing men’s violence as a means to construct and perform masculinity in social interactions where certain constructions of masculinity are threatened, allows us to explore the circumstances in which these forms of masculinity are

threatened. Anderson (2005) suggests that by utilising an interactionist lens, researchers will be able to obtain a thorough understanding of how violence/abuse is associated with masculinity. Adopting this perspective would also allow researchers to explore the relationship of employment to performances of masculinity. For example, how do male unemployment or female employment and women's success within their careers challenge certain constructions of masculinity within the public and private spheres? This is particularly relevant to the role of the breadwinner, which historically was reserved for men and gave them privilege and power in the labour market and within the household. However, with more women entering the workforce (Walby 1997) and more men experiencing unemployment (Hearn 1999) changes have occurred in gender relations. Yet, as Hearn (1999) points out, although these pose a significant challenge to men in terms of their construction of masculinity, it is difficult to assess whether this is associated with an increase in male violence. Others have also questioned whether a decline in traditional masculine roles, such as the breadwinner, fundamentally challenges the gender order, identifying other means by which men still maintain privilege within the household and wider society (Charles and James 2005).

The varying arguments relating to men's violence against women illustrate different conceptualisations of the relation between masculinities, violence and power relations. Some feminists, particularly radical feminists (Kelly 1988), perceive male violence as an expression of male power that is upheld by unequal gender relations. Other feminists and pro-feminist men (Katz 2006; Kaufman 1997) propose that male violence against women results when certain

constructions of masculinity are challenged. Therefore, in order to reassert their power or masculinity they engage in acts of violence. This conceptualisation of the relationship of masculinities to power and violence suggests that the construction of masculinity is extremely fragile and that acts of violence signal its fragility, but more importantly, men's powerlessness. Neither of these conceptualisations can be dismissed, or privileged over the other. Rather, men's violence against women should be seen as both a response to a lack of power and an expression of power. As Kimmel (2004) states, "men's feelings of both powerlessness and entitlement are also part of the backdrop to the problem of violence in the home" (pg. 282). Expanding on this statement relating to this apparent paradox, I would argue that expressions of power or powerlessness are not only enacted through violence, but are expressed in economic, emotional or indeed more subtle ways.

Sociology and the Family Violence Perspective

The role of gender in intimate partner abuse has been fiercely contested by family violence researchers, who posit that gender is simply one variable of many that are associated with abusive behaviour within relationships. Straus *et al.* (1980) argue that violence within intimate relationships is generated out of escalating conflict, which is caused by an individual's inability to resolve conflict situations. This inability to handle conflict situations stems from childhood experiences, with Straus *et al.* (1980) positing that males and females who have been subjected to physical punishment during their childhood having an increased propensity to use violence within adult relationships. Family violence

researchers also suggest that socio-demographics, such as unemployment and low income have an influence on the levels of abuse.

The family violence perspective regarding intimate partner abuse does address issues of employment status, income and other structural factors influencing violent behaviour. However, I feel that this perspective is inadequate because it fails to make connections between unemployment/employment, level of income and violence as aspects associated with masculinity and gendered power relations. Although Straus (2005) does acknowledge that social expectations relating to men's position within the family are factors in intimate abuse, the connections between masculinity, violence and gendered relations are not thoroughly explored. This is highlighted by Anderson (1997) and Ferree (1990) who both stress the need to consider carefully how gender intersects with socio-economic status and how this is linked to wider gendered power relations, both within and outside the household.

A major controversy surrounding family violence research lies in the methodological approach utilised, which produces findings suggesting that men and women equally engage in acts of violence within intimate relationships. In some cases, the statistics generated from these national surveys have suggested that women are more aggressive than men within intimate relationships (Straus 2005). Family violence researchers have drawn their conclusions regarding the limited influence of gender from large scale quantitative surveys that have utilised the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS), a measurement tool that categorises abusive behaviours into degrees of severity. Feminists and pro-feminists alike

refute the results of these national surveys, arguing that the CTS fails to take into account the motivational or particular gendered context in which the violence/abuse occurs (Dobash *et al.* 1992). A criticism of the CTS is that it does not distinguish acts of violence that are utilised as part of a wider pattern of power and control from violence utilised by women in self-defence (Kimmel 2002). However, Straus (2005) has responded to his critics by positing that although women do engage in violent behaviour towards their partners, these acts tend to occur after they have experienced abuse over a period of time. More importantly, these acts are more likely to be minor acts of violence. Straus (2005) also acknowledges that women endure more serious forms of violence and abuse and are more fearful of abuse. Due to these differences, he argues that funding for women's services should not be reduced on the basis of his research findings which illustrate a gender symmetry of violence. The latter point has been of particular concern for feminist researchers/activists who are fearful that research findings that contest the gendered nature of intimate partner abuse could jeopardise the already precarious and limited funding provided to women's services (Brush 2005; McMillan 2002)

Even though the schism between family violence and feminist researchers is still evident, some scholars have tried to reconcile their differences. Johnson (1995) claims that these two camps are not complete opposites, in that family violence researchers do acknowledge the role of gender in their conceptual framework and feminist perspectives also incorporate factors into their analysis other than patriarchy, such as economic structures. Johnson (1995) therefore puts forward a methodological explanation as to why these different schools of thought produce

such contradictory and controversial results. Essentially, Johnson (1995) argues that researchers are examining two distinctly different forms of abusive behaviour, which he terms 'common couple violence' and 'patriarchal terrorism.' He suggests that family violence researchers utilising survey methods, were recording acts of 'common couple violence', which is perpetrated by both sexes. Conversely, feminist researchers, who tend to utilise qualitative methods with self-selected groups, usually from women's refuges, were documenting 'patriarchal terrorism', which is predominantly perpetrated by men. In order to remove these differences researchers should focus on the form of violence/abuse they wish to examine and utilise the correct terminology and sampling types (Johnson and Ferraro 2000). More recently Johnson (2008) has replaced 'patriarchal terrorism' with 'intimate terrorism' and has distinguished three other forms of violence/abuse within intimate relationships, these being violent resistance, situational couple violence, and mutual violent resistance.

Even though I find Johnson's (2008) argument compelling, and agree that distinctions need to be made between context and motive in abuse, I am sceptical as to whether one can place abusive behaviours into such distinct categories. This is due to the complex and problematic nature of acts of violence/abuse and their association with expressions of gendered power relations. However, Graham-Kevan and Archer's (2003) investigation into the efficacy of Johnson's categorisations suggests that it is not the use of physical violence, but the level of control that is utilised, which distinguishes the different forms of abuse.

Compelling as these methodological arguments are, I find myself agreeing with Anderson (2005) who posits that “amid the controversy over the definition and measurement of violence, intimate violence researchers have neglected to recognise that there is equivalent controversy over the conceptualisation and measurement of gender” (pg. 854). Anderson (2005) recommends that, rather than getting ensconced in methodological arguments researchers should refine their theoretical perspectives on gendered power relations and how they operate in order to understand the complexity of intimate partner abuse. With research indicating that abuse occurs within same sex, bisexual and transgender relationships, Anderson’s (2005) comments are even more compelling.

Even though family violence researchers do not make the connection between violence, masculinity and power, they at least concede that gendered relations contribute to intimate partner abuse. Conversely, other explanations of intimate partner abuse, namely psychological, de-contextualise the issue from wider social factors such as gender, class, ethnicity and sexuality, and thereby individualise the problem.

Psychological Conceptualisation of Intimate Partner Abuse

In attempting to explain intimate partner abuse psychologists have tended to focus on individual factors, such as childhood experiences or other experiential events, that shape men to become abusers. Kimmel (2004) suggests that although psychoanalytical perspectives can contribute to our understanding of masculinity

and its association with violence, many psychological explanations assume universal generalisability and take little “account of either cross-cultural variation or the historical shifts in any culture over time” (pg. 267). However, Archer (2004) states that although cultural values do have an impact on aggression, they cannot account for evolutionary characteristics or individual psychiatric conditions, such as borderline personality disorder, etc. In addition, Dutton (2007) posits that ‘feminist’ arguments ascribing to patriarchy the underlying causal factor in male violence towards women fail to account for (a) the number of women who utilise violence within intimate relationships; and (b) why it is that not all men utilise violence against their partners if male privilege is ubiquitous. Consequently, Dutton (2007) argues that childhood traumas, such as shame, or emotional abuse by a parent, can lead to an abusive personality in later life. Essentially, like other psychologists (Archer 2004; Graham-Kevan 2007) Dutton (2007) fiercely disagrees with the gendered analysis of intimate partner abuse espoused by feminists and pro-feminist men.

This disagreement has led Dutton and Corvo (2006) to suggest that “there is a closed-mindedness shared by ‘left’ feminists [...] perspectives on the issue of domestic violence”, and that essentially the matter of abuse has been hijacked by feminist scholars/activists (pg. 477). In order to reclaim the debate and locate it within the ‘scientific’ domain, Dutton and Corvo (2006) stress the need for more psychological theorising. Although Dutton and Corvo’s (2006) article is laden with citations relating to feminist research, it fails to construct a thorough account of the feminist or pro-feminist perspective pertaining to men’s violence. Therefore, in referring to ‘left feminists,’ it seems that Dutton and Corvo (2006)

are conflating all feminist perspectives regarding intimate partner abuse, thereby constructing a polemical argument. In so doing they present feminist theorising of intimate partner abuse as some 'radical,' unscientific, mono-causal account of men's violence. As Mackay (1996) notes, labelling something as 'radical' is a common strategy by those who wish to marginalise certain perspectives. It seems as though this strategy is being employed by these psychologists in order to promote their perspective of abuse within intimate relations.

In constructing this polemical argument, Dutton and Corvo (2006) fail to make a compelling case. Furthermore, as Anderson (2005) points out, there are problems with these individualist approaches to intimate partner abuse. First, they reduce the issue of abuse to individual psychology and thus de-contextualise intimate partner abuse from the wider social environment. Secondly, they negate the impact of gender or, if psychologists do incorporate gender, they tend to perceive this as a fixed integral aspect of one's personal identity, whereas feminist researchers, adopting a gender schematic, understand that individuals differ tremendously in how they embody and perform gender (Anderson 2005). Dobash and Dobash (1992) comment that for decades feminists have been engaged in a continual battle to place intimate partner abuse within a gendered framework, only to find that psychological and individualistic perspectives are frequently accepted and privileged, as in the Select Committee on Violence in Marriage (1974).

The psychological lens provides us with an in-depth examination of *individual* behaviour, but does not place this within a broader social context. As Loseke *et*

al. (2005) comment, “environments matter”, particularly if one is examining how aspects of abuse impact on other areas of social life, such as the workplace and the wider community (pg. 3). Any analysis of intimate partner abuse, therefore, must take into account the gendered nature of violence/abuse and how this is connected to wider gendered power relations operating within society. Furthermore, one needs to consider factors such as female and male employment-income within a gendered power framework and how these are connected to intimate partner abuse. Finally, aspects relating to gendered power relations need to be considered in terms of women’s employment, particularly their occupational success compared to their male partners, and how this might challenge some constructions of masculinity and possibly result in men adopting various forms of abuse/violence in order to reassert or regain their sense of power.

Conceptualisations of Power: Domination or Negotiation?

Power is central to feminist or pro-feminist analyses of gender relations and is particularly important for any research examining the issue of intimate partner abuse. Feminists have drawn on different conceptualisations of power in order to illustrate how women are systematically disempowered with regards to material resources, such as housing and income, and as a result of male violence (Charles 1996). Many second wave feminists, particularly those analysing gender relations in relation to capitalism (Walby, 1990), based their conceptualisation of power within a Marxist framework. Feminists, particularly those working within the field of violence against women, have historically adopted this ‘top down’

model of power, in order to emphasise the universality of women's experiences of men's violence and to aid an emancipatory and collective action (Hague *et al.* 2003). Adopting this perspective on power places emphasis on the need for women to gain access to economic resources and to raise their consciousness in order to challenge the social structures responsible for their subjugated position within society. Hague *et al.* (2003) note how feminists have incorporated Lukes' (2005) conceptualisation of power as A exercising power over B in order to achieve A's interests. Lukes (2005) argued that there are three dimensions of power: observable conflict; unobservable forms such as controlling the agenda so that issues are not raised or discussed; and power to suppress and prevent conflict through indoctrination. Hague *et al.* (2003) illustrate how each one of these dimensions of power is related to intimate partner abuse, particularly the last, which they argue is akin to men's belief that their "power is absolute, right, legitimate and unquestionable" (pg. 36).

However, these conceptualisations of power have been criticised for being too monolithic and implying that "all men dominate all women" (Bradley 2007: 187). In order to counter this 'top down' perspective on power which locates women as passive victims of social structures upholding male privilege, some feminists have adopted Foucault's (1981) conceptualisation of power; and this has been extremely influential but is also problematic for many feminists (Charles, 1996). Essentially, Foucault argued that power is not something that can be found in structures over and above society, nor is it something which someone possesses. Furthermore, he proposed that power is ubiquitous within society and that it only acts upon free subjects; thus power is never totalising and

where there is power there is resistance. Hague *et al.* (2003) suggest that Foucault's analysis offers feminists a 'bottom up' perspective on power relations which takes into account the myriad ways in which "women experiencing violence typically explore a whole range of survival mechanisms" within abusive relationships (pg. 37).

Even though Foucault's conceptualisation has been utilised by many feminists, some are sceptical about whether this perspective on power can benefit feminism. For example, Walby (1990) criticises Foucault for his neglect of economic relations or the gendered division of labour and therefore proposes that his conceptualisation of power offers little to feminist praxis. Hartsock (1990) also voices her concern by stating that this perspective of power ultimately obfuscates domination and loses "track of social structures" that keep women subordinated (pg. 168). Whilst Connell (2002) argues that power is both diffuse and discursive, he believes that a solely Foucauldian perspective negates other forms, notably the material base of power. However, he suggests that it can inform a structural perspective of power. Bradley (2007) proposes that whilst Foucault offers a micro-level theory, placing individuals within a web of power, he fails to address two important aspects: "who holds power; and in whose interests is it exercised" (pg. 188). These shortcomings prompted Bradley (1999) to develop her own conceptualisation, which draws heavily on Giddens' analysis of power in stating that certain individuals have access to resources that can be deployed in order to achieve their goals. Bradley (1999) suggests that there are nine distinct resources available which allow men and women to exercise power: economic, positional, technical, physical, symbolic, collective, personal, sexual

and domestic. Although some of these have been traditionally dominated by men, such as economic power, Bradley highlights that women can and do exercise these forms of power, particularly personal and domestic power. This approach to power recognises the complexity and labile nature of power and more importantly, does not conceive of power as a zero-sum game (i.e. perceiving power as finite, with more power for men resulting in less for women). Furthermore, Bradley (1999) highlights the importance of interaction with regard to how power manifests itself within particular spaces, times and locations. Therefore, women who have status and power within the workplace, may not have power within their home. Also one has to take into account that within interaction there is performativity and that certain performances are governed by their social location and time. Thus, although women may perform the role of breadwinner, the level of power attributed to that performance is mediated by other situational factors, such as ethnicity, cultural location, age, education, class, sexuality, religiosity and the status of their partner. Nevertheless, one could argue that women's assuming the role of breadwinner subverts one characteristic of 'hegemonic masculinity', thus challenging this form of gendered power relations.

What these differing conceptualisations of power illustrate is how problematic it can be to arrive at a definition of how gendered power relations operate within society. Although Bradley's (1999) conceptualisation illustrates the fluidity of power relations and that power is diffuse and mediated by an individual's social location, it seems as though she still appeals to a notion of power as 'something' that one holds; that there are certain social positions in which individuals have

access to resources which grant them power ‘over’ other individuals. Even though I understand the reasons for Bradley’s (1999) wish to maintain a focus on the materiality of power in terms of access to resources etc, I would argue that, even in those cases where individuals do have access to material resources, this power is still negotiated. As argued by Scott (1985) even when individuals have access to economic, political and symbolic forms of power, the exercise of power is always contested and negotiated. Therefore, I am more inclined to a Foucauldian perspective on power, which highlights its contestable, fluid nature. Although as a pro-feminist who is committed to improving the everyday materiality of women’s position within society, I understand that this position is problematic. In adopting this perspective of power one can view men’s violence against women as a means both of exercising control over women, and also of regaining power when certain conceptualisations of masculinity are challenged. Additionally, it allows for a closer examination of the coping strategies women employ within abusive relationships. As Hague *et al.* (2003) note, this approach forces us to hear individual voices and to come to the realisation that there is no ‘true’ or ‘authentic’ experience of intimate partner abuse, but that women within different social locations of ethnicity, class, sexuality and age will have different lived experiences.

In the next section of this chapter I examine the literature connecting intimate partner abuse and employment. First, I review the literature that specifically addresses the economic impact of intimate partner abuse on both employers and employees. Secondly, I discuss the literature that examines the extent to which intimate partner abuse prevents women from obtaining employment or

progressing within their careers. Following on from this discussion I explore the differing perspectives relating to women's employment status and abuse, with some scholars arguing that women's increased economic independence may decrease abuse, whilst others propose that it may increase the likelihood of abuse. Finally I examine research that illustrates how employment assists abused women mentally in terms of providing a refuge from abuse and allowing them to engage in social relationships, thereby improving their sense of self.

Establishing Connections between Intimate Partner Abuse and Employment

The Economic cost of Intimate Partner Abuse

Over the last four decades, there has been a considerable amount of research documenting the detrimental effects of intimate partner abuse on women's lives. However, it was only during the late 1980s that feminist scholars began to examine how intimate partner abuse affects other aspects of women's lives, such as their employment. The realisation that abuse has an impact on employment has precipitated research across many academic disciplines, noticeably organisational studies, economics, public health and sociology. Overwhelmingly, this research has emanated from North America, a fact which Lyon (2002) attributes to welfare reform and the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). As a result, various US government departments have investigated the impact of intimate partner abuse on the workforce. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the

estimated cost of intimate partner abuse on the US economy is \$0.9 billion attributed to lost productivity and \$7.9 million worth of paid workdays lost each year (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control 2003).

Within the UK there has been considerably less research into issues relating to intimate partner abuse and employment. The British Crime Survey 2006/07 included questions relating to the impact of abuse on employment. Findings suggest that almost two-thirds of victims had to take less than a week off work, and a quarter were absent for a month or more within a one year period (Hoare and Jansson 2008). Absenteeism on this scale will no doubt have a tremendous impact on the individual employers and employees, but will also have a substantial impact on the wider economy. Walby's (2004) influential and informative research estimated that employers and employees lose £2.7 billion economic output per year, which can be attributed to absenteeism due to injury. Furthermore, Walby stated that intimate partner abuse "reduces a person's capacities and capabilities in many ways, one of which is the ability to work" (2004: 88).

The Impact of Intimate Partner Abuse on Women's Employment Stability

Research into how intimate partner abuse affects women's economic circumstances within the UK is sparse. However, the US literature illustrates that those suffering abuse lower down the socio-economic spectrum experience more financial difficulties. Tolman and Wang (2005) argue that rates of abuse are

higher amongst women receiving state welfare, and women who are experiencing abuse are more likely to depend on state support when leaving an abusive partner. Browne *et al.* (1999) also found that intimate partner abuse impeded impoverished women's ability to maintain paid employment for long periods of time, with women fluctuating between employment and welfare assistance. Australian research reiterates these US findings relating to abuse and employment instability: that women on low incomes experiencing abuse typically become dependent on welfare (Franzway 2008). Research has indicated that women with lower earnings experience more abuse, but also that women who suffer abuse earn substantially less (Farmer and Tiefenthaler 2004b). Therefore, not having access to a substantial income could result in women simply staying in abusive relationships (Tolman and Wang 2005).

Even though research has shown that poverty is a factor with regard to abused women maintaining employment, there is a substantial body of literature that suggests that abuse does not prevent women from gaining employment (Lloyd 1997; Lloyd and Taluc 1999; Moe and Bell 2004). As noted by Franzway (2008) the length that abused women are prepared to go to sustain their employment is underestimated. Although poverty has been acknowledged as contributing to women staying in abusive relationships, underlying economic conditions or other social factors may also prevent abused women who are actively engaged in the labour market and progressing within their careers from leaving their abusive partners. It is understandable that the US literature focuses on the devastating affects of abuse on women within lower socioeconomic positions, in view of their minimal welfare assistance. However, Bograd (2005) explains that most

academics do not take into account aspects such as class, ethnicity and culture when approaching the issue of intimate partner abuse. In neglecting the influence of these social factors on women's disclosure of abuse or leaving the relationship, these scholars have inadvertently created a 'universal victim' of abuse. Conversely, Bograd (2005) argues that there is no 'universal victim' of abuse, that aspects such as class, ethnicity and culture have a tremendous bearing on how women perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others. Women can sometimes internalise certain ideas relating to class or cultural norms, which act as a barrier to disclosing or leaving an abusive relationship. For example, women who are employed within high status professional occupations may feel less inclined to disclose their situation because they have internalised certain discourses associated with their particular socio-economic position.

Weitzman (2000) found that professional and highly successful women experiencing abuse did not regard their experiences to be intimate partner abuse because of a strong belief that abuse most likely takes place amongst poorly educated women occupying lower socio-economic positions. Subscribing to this assumption of intimate partner abuse also prevented many of Weitzman's (2000) participants from seeking help or disclosing their situation. Although, I question Weitzman's (2000) argument of 'reverse discrimination' with regard to middle class women being the forgotten 'victims' of intimate partner abuse, I believe she highlights how women's socio-economic position impacts on abused women's experiences. Furthermore, it also illustrates that intimate partner abuse not only affects women from lower socio-economic positions, but that women within high status positions of employment also endure intimate partner abuse.

Occupational Success and Impact on Intimate Abuse

Little research has been conducted on women higher up the socio-economic scale. As more women are entering the workplace and ascending the career ladder, one must consider how abuse affects their economic positions. Studies that have examined women who earn a high income suggest that abuse decreases as income increases (Farmer and Tiefenthaler 1997). A study conducted by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (2005) found that women on lower incomes reported more incidents of victimization which resulted in some form of workplace intrusion than those women earning more than \$50,000. However, a study conducted by Tauchen *et al.* (1991) found a possible positive relationship between women's income and intimate partner abuse. If anything, these contradictory findings illustrate that there is a complex relationship between intimate partner abuse, socio-economic status and women's income.

In integrating family violence and feminist perspectives, Anderson (1997) found that the impact of income on the level of violence used by men and women is different. Women of lower income status than their partners do not engage in violence whereas men with a lower income than their partners do. Anderson (1997) concluded that income, employment status and the breadwinner role are associated with masculinity, and when women achieve a higher income or employment status than their partner this challenges these constructions of masculinity leading men to resort to violence in order to reassert their masculinity.

Other researchers also subscribe to this thesis (Lenton 1995; McClosky 1996). MacMillan and Gartner (1999) emphasise the symbolic nature of employment and how it is a vital component in the construction of male identity, so that female employment can be perceived as a challenge to culturally prescribed norms of male dominance and female dependence. Therefore, women's employment may increase the risk of intimate partner abuse, especially if a partner is unemployed or employed in a lower status occupation. Willott and Griffin (1997) found that unemployment seriously affected working class men's perception of masculinity and that violence is considered as a means of reclaiming a sense of entitlement and power. Many of the unemployed men interviewed by Willott and Griffin (1997) perceived the breadwinner role as a fundamental aspect of being a man. Therefore, if women assume the role of 'breadwinner' this further challenges conceptions of masculinity and can lead to intimate partner abuse.

Conversely, Villarreal's (2007) study of women's employment status and intimate partner abuse found that an increase in employment status decreases the risk of abuse. This is due to the fact that these women were less dependent on their partners and therefore could leave the relationship; this had an impact on the power dynamics within the relationship. However, he does stress that coercive control of women's employment needs to be taken into consideration. For example, a number of the women interviewed stated that they needed to ask their partner's permission before seeking employment. Villarreal (2007) states "clearly, needing permission to seek employment is an extreme form of control

over a woman's behaviour. Yet, male partners may influence women's decisions to work and which form of employment they seek" (pg. 431). MacMillan and Gartner (1999) also suggest that experiencing coercive control and violence might be motivational factors driving women to seek paid employment, in order to gain greater independence. Furthermore, "coercive control may also include forcing women to be the sole breadwinners in a relationship" (Richie 1996 cited in MacMillan and Gartner 1999: 957). This form of coercive behaviour is classified as economic abuse, in that an abuser utilises exploitive tactics in order to prevent women from accruing finances resulting in them having no economic means to leave the relationship (Adams *et al.* 2008). Many scholars assert that women gaining 'economic independence' will safeguard against intimate partner violence (Farmer and Tiefenthaler 2004b; Koepsell *et al.* 2006; Lloyd 1997; Shepard and Pence 1988). Farmer and Tiefenthaler (2004b) go so far as to state that "battered women realise that improving their economic status and bargaining power may give them more control over their situations" (pg. 323).

I would argue that advocating women's 'economic independence' as a means of safeguarding them against intimate partner abuse is a tenuous argument that elides the complexities which women face within their everyday lives. Firstly, an abuser may wish to sustain their partner's employment as another means of control, in that they know where to find their partner, even if the relationship ends (Moe and Bell 2004). One only has to review the works of Pahl (1995; 2005), Vogler (1998) and Zelizer (2005) to see how gendered power dynamics in relation to economics operate within the home and how these are difficult for women to negotiate. Finally, with women still being discriminated against with

regard to pay and being responsible for childcare, one has to consider the adequacy of the term 'economic independence'. In problematising this term, I do not wish to convey a sense of apathy or unwillingness to campaign or challenge the status quo with regard to women's economic position. On the contrary, women's economic stability certainly assists women to escape from abusive relationships. However, what I am suggesting is that the relationship between women's income and employment, and intimate partner abuse is more complex than this term suggests.

The Impact of Intimate Partner Abuse on Women's Ability to Conduct their Work Duties

Abusers employ many tactics in order to interfere with their partner's employment (Moe and Bell 2004). Swanberg and Logan's (2005) qualitative investigation into the impact of intimate partner abuse on women's employment found that abusers use a variety of interference tactics in order to disrupt their partner's employment. These were classified into three categories: tactics that were employed before work; disruptions at work, and actions taken after work. Those taken before work included abusers physically restraining their partner from going to work (including physical assault); sleep deprivation; destroying work material/uniforms, or disabling the transportation. Action taken at work involved abusers stalking their partners at work, contacting them by telephone, or threatening to assault them or their work colleagues. Many of the women interviewed by Swanberg and Logan (2005) indicated that they were frequently absent from work, which resulted in their employment being terminated.

Research has also illustrated how interference tactics can affect women's ability to concentrate on their job, which ultimately impacts upon workplace productivity (Swanberg and Logan 2005; Swanberg *et al.* 2006a).

Workplace stalking has been found to have a fundamental impact on women's emotional and physical well-being at the workplace, with Swanberg and Logan (2005) stating that "stalking behaviour produced more anxiety and stress for women than actual physical actions taken by the abuser prior to work" (pg. 14). Swanberg *et al.* (2005) distinguish the different acts of stalking as on-the-job surveillance and on-the-job harassment. The former includes behaviour such as the abuser looking in through windows and waiting for their partner to finish work, and the latter comprises the abuser physically appearing on the premises or making incessant telephone calls to their partner at work. Logan *et al.* (2007) found that although a number of women reported that they had not experienced stalking by their partner, they did report on-the-job harassment and that this affected their job performance. Overwhelmingly, Logan *et al.*'s (2007) participants had experienced harassing telephone calls at work, which had a serious effect on their concentration and ability to conduct their work duties. Moreover, they found that on-the-job harassment was a "source of intrusion into women's work that sometimes caused stress, distraction, and conflict or tension with coworkers and employers" (pg. 285). According to Logan *et al.* (2007) stalking produces overwhelming emotional anxiety for women, particularly due to the unpredictable nature of this form of behaviour. Also stalking not only has a direct impact on the victim, but also affects their co-workers with Logan *et al.* (2007) illustrating that abusers intimidate and harass co-workers and

management. Swanberg *et al.* (2006b) state that when intimate partner abuse crosses over into the workplace other people are also affected, in that some are injured or traumatised by witnessing acts of verbal or physical violence.

Research by Swanberg *et al.* (2007) found that once women disclosed their situation within the workplace co-workers assisted and supported them by implementing coping strategies, such as screening abusive telephone calls. However, when co-workers engage in such behaviour they are more likely to become embroiled in a matter which could lead to their personal safety and the safety of others within the workplace being compromised (Duffy *et al.* 2005). Also preventing the abuser from contacting their partner could cause further agitation and thus escalate the abuse. Swanberg *et al.* (2007) found that many individuals experiencing on the job harassment received a level of support from co-workers in that the workplace provided a support network. Conversely, Duffy, *et al.* (2005) note that on-the-job harassment that causes co-workers emotional and/or physical harm could seriously jeopardise the victim's relationship with colleagues. Duffy *et al.* (2005) posit that co-workers could start to resent the person experiencing abuse, particularly if it results in absenteeism or poor workplace performance thereby increasing their work responsibilities. A survey conducted by Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence in the US, in which 1,200 adults were interviewed, found that 27 percent of respondents indicated that they had been a co-worker of someone experiencing abuse and had been responsible for conducting their work for them (Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence 2006) These findings seem to support Duffy *et al.*'s (2005) argument of resentful employees.

It seems as though stalking and other interference tactics could have a negative effect on workplace productivity and safety, not just on the person suffering abuse but also on their work colleagues. Duffy *et al.* (2005) also note that harassment could damage a person's work-related identity, which could further decrease their emotional well-being. Therefore, on-the-job harassment and other interference tactics could threaten the feeling of security offered by the workplace, but it could also jeopardise abused women's ability to develop and improve their sense of self, which Rothman *et al.* (2007) stipulate increases the "capacity to formulate and carry out plans for leaving their abusive relationships" (pg. 141).

How Employment helps Women Experiencing Abuse

Hochschild (1997) discovered that men perceived the 'private' sphere (i.e. home) as a place in which they could 'relax' and indulge in their hobbies or socialise with their friends; whereas women described their 'private' life as stressful and having no time for themselves due to childcare issues. Hochschild found that many of the women she interviewed had a positive perception of their workplace, in that it gave them a sense of escape from the un-arbitrated quarrels and the pressures of childcare and domestic labour. Furthermore, she found that for a number of women, employment gave them a feeling of satisfaction and well-being and that they gained positive experiences within the workplace. Some of the women interviewed by Hochschild even suggested that friendships

established at work can be just as important as family members in helping individuals cope with the “blows of life” (1997: 42).

Studies examining intimate partner abuse and employment have produced similar findings to that of Hochschild (1997) with regard to how women experience the workplace. Wettersten *et al.* (2004) found that six out of ten women perceived work as a means of physically and emotionally escaping from the abuse occurring at home. Research conducted by Parker (2001) and Parker and Elger (2004) within the West Midlands, in the UK, found that employment was considered a sanctuary for those women experiencing abuse. Martin’s (2004) investigation into the impact of intimate partner abuse on employees of Devon County Council (UK) also indicated work as a means of escape. Many of Martin’s (2004) participants also stated that they worked longer hours and overstretched themselves by opting to undertake more work so that they could avoid going home. With intimate abuse having an effect on women’s self-esteem and sense of worth, engaging in overtime can be seen as not only avoiding going home but also confirming their sense of self. Lammers *et al.*’s (2005) qualitative investigation into emotional abuse revealed that relentless degradation by their abusive partner resulted in women’s loss of self-esteem, self-value and diminished identity. Undertaking an excessive workload and achieving certain goals within the workplace could provide what Mills (1985) classifies as outside ‘validation,’ in that women will receive praise from work colleagues or managers for their efforts (pg. 112).

Rothman *et al.* (2007) found that employment definitely had a positive impact on women's self-esteem and provided them with a feeling of social connectedness. With abusers utilising social isolation as a form of abuse and control, these feelings of social connectedness are understandable. In exploring the relationship between positive workplace experiences and a sense of self, Lynch and Graham-Bermann (2004) found abused women frequently commented that they felt differently about themselves at work with a number of their participants commenting that although they felt successful at work, at home they felt worthless. Even though Lynch and Graham-Bermann (2004) identified the quality of work as a major factor in improving a woman's sense of self, both within the workplace and possibly within her relationship, they did not discuss how occupational status may impact on one's sense of self.

Research exploring the emotional aspects of employment and how this improves women's sense of self suggests that employment is not merely a means of gaining economic independence, but it also provides women with the opportunity to preserve or construct a positive sense of self; this allows them to cope with or manage their experience of physical and emotional abuse. As Wilson *et al.* (1989) propose "income alone does not fully explain the relationship between paid work and women's decision to leave a violent partner" (Wilson *et al.*, 1989 cited in Lynch and Graham-Bermann 2004: 160). Thus the fact that employment improves women's sense of self within the workplace could contribute towards their leaving the abuser.

Swanberg and Logan (2005) suggest that safe working environments and improvements to self esteem are associated with workplace disclosure. However, Duffy *et al.* (2005) propose that disclosing intimate partner abuse is extremely difficult, with individuals reluctant to divulge negative information that could damage their presentation of self. Conversely, work leading to an improvement in women's sense of self, both within the workplace and at home, could be interpreted by the abusers as a threat to their control which might lead the abuser to sabotaging their partner's employment.

Disclosure of Abuse within the Workplace

With the level of stigma attached to intimate partner abuse one can understand why individuals experiencing abuse are hesitant about disclosure within the workplace. However, it seems as though many women choose not to disclose abuse believing it to be a private issue not to be discussed within the workplace (Reece 2006; Swanberg and Macke 2006). The fact that organisational environments reward gendered performances that are 'masculine' in character, such as dedication to the organisation, further prohibits discussions relating to 'private' matters. Many of the individuals interviewed by Swanberg and Macke (2006) believed that their experience of abuse was a 'personal' issue and that it would be unprofessional to discuss it within the workplace. Others refused to disclose due to fear of losing their employment (Swanberg and Logan 2005) or because they felt they could not trust their fellow workers (Swanberg and Macke 2006).

The British Crime Survey indicates that although people still subscribe to the view that intimate partner abuse is a private matter, a large proportion of those who do disclose do so to someone at work (Hoare and Jansson 2008). Research has shown that individuals disclose abuse within the workplace in order to increase their safety (Swanberg and Logan 2005) and to gain support from co-workers (Swanberg and Macke 2006). Swanberg *et al.* (2006b) found that disclosing women overwhelmingly told a co-worker, whereas very few disclosed to a human resource professional. It has been documented that when women discuss their predicament with a co-worker, it takes their mind off the situation and allows them to gain information about resources that may help them leave the relationship (Swanberg and Macke 2006). Many of the women who disclose their situation to a co-worker simply want to express their feelings to someone who will offer them understanding. Furthermore, Swanberg *et al.* (2006b) note that those individuals who received informal workplace support found this to be followed by formal workplace support, for example, workload flexibility and screening of phone calls.

According to Swanberg *et al.* (2006b) and Swanberg and Macke (2006) disclosure within the workplace can result in a positive outcome, with many women indicating their satisfaction at the level of support they received. However, Swanberg *et al.* (2007) comment that research on the issue of disclosure suggests that it is a precise process whereby the abused person simply informs someone at the workplace, whereas this is not the case. For example an employer may become aware of abuse as a result of frequent absenteeism, or work colleagues might suspect all is not well if the abuser appears at the

workplace and displays aggressive behaviour. Conversely, such behaviour exhibited by the abuser could make an individual less inclined to disclose their situation (Duffy *et al.* 2005). Indeed, Swanberg *et al.* (2007) acknowledge that disclosure is a complex issue and that it is associated with employment status, but they fail to elaborate on how this influences disclosure. Furthermore, Swanberg and Macke (2006) argue that gendered assumptions may prevent disclosure in many organisations, however they do not explore how gender dynamics operate on a micro-level in terms of disclosure.

In a theoretical paper Kwesiga *et al.* (2007) propose that women in higher wage, higher status positions of employment, for example managerial occupations, are less likely to disclose their situation because they wish to avoid being perceived as a 'victim' and not in control of their lives. They also posit that although women in high status positions probably have access to organisational benefits, they do not take advantage of them because doing so may damage their reputation as an effective manager. Kwesiga *et al.*'s (2007) argument is compelling in highlighting the gendered nature of the workplace and how women within managerial positions are expected to display a high degree of competence thus preventing them from disclosing 'private' matters. However, in discussing organisational benefits, they only address the formal and not the informal organisational benefits available to women in high status, high income positions. Women in these positions may have a higher degree of autonomy and control over how they conduct their work duties, thus granting them a certain flexibility which could potentially assist them in managing the impact of intimate partner abuse on their employment. Nevertheless, Kwesiga *et al.*'s (2007) argument is

commensurate with arguments espoused by scholar examining gendered power relations within organisations (Acker 2006; Halford and Leonard 2001; Halford *et al.* 1997) who highlight the difficulties that women, particularly those in managerial positions, have in negotiating within the workplace. Therefore, I would argue that Kwesige *et al.*'s (2007) argument relating to status and disclosure is highly credible. With more women occupying managerial roles, the issue of occupational status and how this impacts on women's decision to disclose is an area that deserves further investigation.

Scholars working within the field of organisational studies have increasingly become interested in examining stigmatisation within the workplace. Many, such as Ragins (2008), have drawn heavily upon Goffman's (1990b) work relating to stigma. Ragins (2008) argues that disclosure of a stigma within the workplace cannot be placed within a simple dichotomy of disclosure and non-disclosure, but rather disclosure should be viewed as a continuum. Individuals suffering from an invisible stigma face a dilemma, in that not having visible signs of a particular 'failing' could make it difficult for them to disclose their situation due to fear of not being believed. This is particularly the case for women who are experiencing emotional or economic abuse, due to these forms of abuse not having the same gravitas or legal recognition as sexual or physical forms of violence/abuse (Murray and Powell 2007).

Other organisational behaviour researchers (Colella 2001; McLaughlin *et al.* 2004) have discovered how co-workers' perceptions of disabilities and how they should be managed within the workplace are dramatically affected if they believe

the disability to be self-inflicted. Duffy *et al.* (2005) proposed that one could utilise this research regarding disability-based stigma in order to understand how co-workers might be unaccommodating towards women experiencing intimate partner abuse, owing to the pervasive belief that intimate abuse is self-inflicted. Duffy *et al.* (2005) proposed that co-workers may be less accepting of an abused woman's predicament, especially if her work performance is low which could result in an increase in their workload. The possibility of encountering a negative reaction from co-workers discourages individuals from disclosing abuse within the workplace. This is further exacerbated by the fact that many believe intimate partner abuse to be a 'private' matter not to be discussed in public. Duffy *et al.* (2005) therefore recommend "organizations [...] to carefully devise policies designed to manage [intimate partner abuse] in the workplace and programs so not to exacerbate existing stigmas or intolerance that may exist" (pg. 80). In order to develop effective workplace strategies to address intimate partner abuse, there needs to be a clear understanding of the process of disclosure and how this impacts on an individual's sense of self within the workplace.

Organisational Response to Intimate Partner Abuse

A survey carried out by the Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence, in which chief executive officers (CEO's) and employees were interviewed, revealed a mismatch between employee expectations with regard to workplace responses and those of CEOs. Of the 200 CEOs surveyed, 63 per cent considered intimate partner abuse to be a major problem in society, however, only 13 per cent

believed that employers should play a major role in tackling the issue. This is in contrast to 84 per cent of employees who stated that businesses needed to do more to address intimate abuse (Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence 2007). The survey also highlighted that the belief that abuse is a 'private' matter is still a major barrier to CEOs' fully engaging with the issue.

Nevertheless, organisations within the US have been more motivated in addressing intimate partner abuse than businesses within the UK. Many US organisations have come to the realisation that intimate abuse has a direct impact on their 'bottom line', in terms of loss of productivity and high employee turnover, and therefore have taken steps to address the situation (Johnson and Indvik 1999; Randel and Wells 2003). However, organisational responses within the US could also be attributed to their concern for legal liability (Randel and Wells 2003). Liz Claiborne and Polaroid are pioneering exemplars that have developed a set of policies and practices that specifically address intimate partner abuse (Swanberg *et al.* 2005). Despite research identifying the economic costs that an organisation incurs due to loss of productivity from those suffering abuse (Reeves and O'leary-Kelly 2007) and those utilising abusive behaviour (Rothman and Corso 2008), organisations have been slow to act.

Within the UK, there has been a steady increase in awareness regarding intimate abuse within the businesses community, thanks to continual campaigns by trade unions, women's organisations, such as Women's Aid and Refuge, and the Corporate Alliance against Domestic Violence. The Body Shop and KPMG have been particularly active in tackling the issue of intimate abuse, with the former

regularly running high profile campaigns and donating a percentage of profit on selected items to women's organisations. Awareness of intimate partner abuse has risen since New Labour came to power in 1997, which increased the number of women MPs elected to parliament and had a significant impact on bringing 'women's issues' to the forefront of government policy, particularly violence against women. After conducting a consultation within the voluntary sector, i.e. women's organisations, and with individuals who had experienced abuse, the Labour Party produced a publication titled '*Safety and Justice*' which outlined their agenda to tackle this pernicious issue. Within this document the government highlighted how employers are an important component in tackling abuse, because the workplace is a "place where victims may be able to get information and advice safely" (Home Office 2003: 24). Soon after this publication the Labour government passed the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act (DVCVA) (2004) which was hailed as the greatest reform of domestic violence legislation in the UK since the Conservatives' Family Law Act (1996). However many women's organisations were disappointed with the DVCVA (2004) stating that it was a 'missed opportunity' to develop more radical measures that would tackle the underlying injustices that spawn violence against women (Harne and Radford 2008). As Conway (2004) notes, the legislation was a disappointment to many for its failure to tackle the prevalent cultural perception of intimate partner abuse as a 'private' issue.

Organisations within the public sector, especially government departments and local authorities, have been advised to develop a domestic violence workplace policy. Because of the sparse research conducted on intimate abuse and

employment within the UK, it is difficult to arrive at an accurate account of how many organisations have domestic violence policies. Research conducted 5 years ago (Jones *et al.* 2005; Martin 2004; Parker and Elger 2004) suggested that, although a number of employers were addressing abuse, there were equally those who did not have a dedicated domestic violence workplace policy. After conducting a search of local authorities and other public organisations, I found that many do have policies in place. The Association of Chief Police Officers, NHS, Crown Prosecution Service and numerous local authorities and trade unions all have specific domestic violence workplace policies. However, as Jones *et al.* (2005) illustrate, even though an organisation may have a policy and be heavily committed to tackling the issue of abuse, their employees or members may be unaware of the organisation's provisions. Therefore, the success of a policy rests on: a) effective promotion within an organisation and b) whether the organisation has the cultural apparatus to translate policy into practice. Swanberg (2004) argues that gendered assumptions have stifled organisational responses to issues that affect female employees, for example work/life balance issues such as childcare, and an organisational culture and structures that prevent attempts to create a more family-friendly working environment. Swanberg *et al.* (2006a) also posit that "unless organizations create a workplace culture that promotes the use of policies and practices, programmes will have little impact on employees' well-being and organizational outcomes" (pg. 366). Most of the policies I have reviewed rely on self-disclosure of abuse within the workplace, however with disclosure being a complicated matter, one has to question whether organisations have considered aspects such as gender, power, sexuality, ethnicity and age in terms of disclosure.

Conceptual Framework

Throughout this chapter I have continually raised the issue of gendered power relations, particularly how masculinity, power and violence are connected. This was particularly evident in my discussion of the theoretical perspectives on intimate partner abuse, in which I stressed the need to place issues such as employment, occupational status and income within a framework of gendered power relations. This sentiment also resonated in my evaluation of the empirical research connecting intimate partner abuse and employment. However, in order to examine how gendered power relations operate, both within the workplace and at home, one needs to adopt a micro perspective of power. This is particularly relevant when investigating the various coping strategies women employ in order to survive intimate partner abuse.

As noted by Franzway (2008), women will go to great lengths to sustain their employment, but what coping strategies do abused women adopt in order to resist their partner's physical, emotional and economic forms of abuse? By adopting a Foucauldian perspective on power I will explore how abused women manage to exercise power in order to minimise the impact of intimate partner abuse on their employment. As Sheridan (1984) notes, "there are certain categories of person [...] whose ability to exercise power is severely limited, but few members of these groups do not find some means of exercising power" (pg. 218).

I am particularly interested in examining the relationship between the constructed personal and social identities of women who are experiencing abuse, how positive constructions of self within the workplace operate as a coping mechanism, and how factors such as occupational status and the gendered nature of the workplace, influence the effectiveness of these workplace identities. In order to examine the way in which the workplace provides a positive sense of self and issues relating to disclosure, I adopt a broadly symbolic interactionist approach. As Thoits and Virshup (1997) explain, symbolic interactionism, generally speaking, perceives “both self and society as created, sustained, and changed through the process of symbolic communication” (pg. 108). More importantly, symbolic interaction’s foundations (Mead 1934) mean that they approach the subject of the self as being both an ‘I’ and a ‘me’. The ‘I’ is the social aspect of the self and is a creative and active agent altering their performance for a specific audience. Conversely, the ‘me’ is the private self, which reflects on the social, active and performing self. In adopting this approach one can examine the process of disclosure in a Goffmanian framework in terms of managing stigma, but one can also analyse how gender identity is constructed within the workplace through interaction. However, these social identities are not merely performances but, as Hochschild (2003) and Nippert-Eng (1996) illustrate, they also produce certain emotions. Therefore, the workplace may offer women the ability to produce a certain construction of self which elicits certain positive emotions, whereas within their relationship, they may feel worthless, with low self-esteem. Giddens (1991) argues that women in contemporary society have the opportunities to engage in a variety of social experiences from which they had previously been prohibited. However, in

engaging in these social experiences that take place within a masculinist culture, many women “abandon their older ‘fixed’ identities”, and this leads to contradictory feelings of self (pg. 106).

I am aware of the uncomfortable relationship between feminism and symbolic interactionism, in that one cannot simply fit the study of gender into the framework of traditional, male-stream sociology. For example, Denzin (1993) notes that, although those adopting a symbolic interactionist perspective see gender and sexuality as constructions within a gendered hierarchy, where characteristics associated with femininity are given less privilege than masculine performances, traditional interactionist texts did not address the issue of gender or sexuality. However, Denzin (1993) argues that an interactionist approach is not insurmountable within a pro-feminist framework, in that one simply has to place these gendered social interactions within a wider social framework of gender inequality in terms of power and privilege.

In adopting a micro-perspective of gendered power relations and how perspectives of self within the workplace are constructed within processes of interaction, I essentially wish to focus on the everyday lives of women experiencing intimate partner abuse, how this impacts on their perceptions of self, and what strategies they employ in order to survive. Employing this conceptual framework I shall address four distinct, but interconnecting aspects of intimate partner abuse and employment that have been neglected within the current literature.

Research Questions

As I highlighted within my review of the literature pertaining to the impact of intimate partner abuse on women's ability to sustain employment, research has predominantly, and understandably, focused on those women occupying low socio-economic positions and how they are more vulnerable to unemployment. However, there has been little investigation into how women try to maintain their employment. This is particularly the case in relation to those women occupying professional and/or managerial occupations. Swanberg and Logan (2005) have documented the impact of the numerous interference tactics employed by abusers to disrupt their partner's employment. However, we still know little about the strategies that women adopt in order to minimise the impact of these tactics in order to sustain their employment. Research that has investigated the means by which women cope with intimate partner abuse has identified the importance of social networks within the workplace (Swanberg *et al.* 2006b) and found that employment can be an emotional and physical sanctuary. However, how are these factors affected by women's occupational status or the gendered nature of the workplace? I am particularly interested in exploring the various coping strategies that abused women employ in order to sustain their employment and whether the nature of these strategies differs depending on their occupational status, the gendered nature of the workplace, and their experience of the workplace.

Employers within the UK are beginning to address intimate partner abuse by developing specific workplace policies. However, these are predominantly based

on the premise that the employee suffering abuse has to disclose in order to access certain support. Although the US literature regarding disclosure of abuse, disability or sexuality within the workplace illustrates the negative and positive aspects of disclosure, I would argue that we still have not acquired a thorough understanding of the process of disclosure, particularly in relation to women's occupational status or type of employment. Furthermore, previous empirical research has not taken into account the gendered nature of the workplace environment, for example, whether abused women are employed within a predominantly male environment or a hierarchally gendered workplace, with men occupying senior or managerial roles and women employed in subordinate positions. Finally, although research has illustrated that many women disclose to co-workers in order to increase their safety or simply to take their mind off the situation, the extent to which disclosure within the workplace is a coping mechanism to deal with abuse has not been fully explored. I will, therefore, examine factors such as occupational status, type of employment and the gendered power relations operating within the workplace in relation to disclosure of intimate partner abuse. Furthermore, I shall also explore whether the act of disclosure has any bearing on the coping strategy implemented by abused women in order to sustain their employment. Thus, is disclosure itself a coping strategy or can disclosure counteract other coping strategies that women employ in order to survive and minimise the impact of abuse on their workplace?

In addition to examining coping strategies and factors relating to disclosure, I also believe that the relationship between women's employment and the power dynamics within abusive relationships warrants further investigation. As

discussed earlier, US literature has documented how employment is perceived by abused women as an escape and as providing an environment in which they can gain an improved self of self. Employment has also been perceived by many scholars as a means by which women can gain ‘economic independence’, thus diminishing their dependence on their abuser and allowing them to leave the relationship. However, I argue that the term ‘economic independence’ elides rather than elucidates the everyday complexities women have to negotiate within abusive relationships. Furthermore, research investigating women’s occupational success and how this affects power relations within abusive relationships is still sparse. In order to improve our understanding of the connection between women’s employment and gendered power relations within abusive relationships, I shall examine to what extent women’s employment helps them emotionally, in terms of improving their self-confidence and sense of self, and whether this enables them to leave the relationship. In addition, I will explore whether women’s employment empowers them economically within their abusive relationship and the extent to which it provides them with the ability to leave.

Finally, in order to improve and inform the development of organisational and trade union policies and strategies in addressing intimate partner abuse within the workplace, survivors’ voices need to be heard and their experiences incorporated into policies and practices. As Hague *et al.* (2003) state “who better to give meaningful information and to suggest possible solutions and effective responses to such violence than those who have had direct experience of it [...] [h]owever, this does not happen nearly as often as it should” (pg. 77). Therefore, I shall

document survivors' recommendations relating to workplace policy, particular those aspects which they perceive as paramount. Following on from this I review a range of current workplace policies to see where they are a positive effectual step in addressing intimate partner abuse within the workplace or simply a 'token gesture'.

In the following methodological chapter I explore the political and epistemological difficulties that male researchers have to negotiate when conducting research on a sensitive topic such as intimate partner abuse. Underlying these epistemological and methodological discussions is a continual awareness of how gendered power dynamics impact on all aspects of the research.

Chapter Three:

Methodological Issues in Researching Intimate Partner Abuse

Introduction

Within this chapter I shall be discussing issues that have arisen during this research. These include aspects associated with any piece of sociological research, such as obtaining or gaining access to research participants, but also issues relating to the social location of the researcher and their biography, and how this has an unquestionable impact on all aspects of the research process. Being a male researcher investigating a sensitive topic such as intimate partner abuse has presented me with difficulties on an emotional and political level. I shall discuss these issues in detail and highlight the epistemological and political difficulties one faces as a male researcher investigating such an emotive and politically sensitive topic as intimate partner abuse. My presence as a male researcher within a predominantly female domain impacted on every aspect of the research process in terms of gaining trust and building a rapport with women's organisations and businesses in order to garner support for the research. My being male also had implications for gaining access to certain spaces, recruiting research participants, and conducting in-depth interviews. How I negotiated the practical difficulties involved in conducting this research, for example, adopting various interviewing methods, will also be discussed within this chapter. I begin by discussing the research process, including the many pitfalls and challenges that I had to overcome. Highlighting these aspects dispels

the myth that conducting a piece of research is a linear process and also illustrates that throughout the research process a researcher may endure tremendous emotional difficulties. Next I discuss the various recruiting practices that I adopted, and the reasoning behind my selection of different interview methods along with the advantages and disadvantages of each method. The chapter concludes by highlighting the ethical dilemmas associated with conducting research in a sensitive area, paying particular attention to issues surrounding consent.

Men conducting Research on Intimate Partner Abuse: A Valid or Unwelcome Contribution?

“We cannot change society unless we put more men at the table, amplify men’s voices in the debate, enlist men to help change social norms on the issue and convince men to teach their children that violence against women is always wrong” (Esta Soler cited in Katz 2006: 10).

This statement by Esta Soler of the Family Violence Prevention Fund operating in the United States is extremely poignant and enlightening. In order to fundamentally change society, particularly gender relations, men’s proactive involvement is necessary. I wholeheartedly agree with Soler’s perspective, however, I would suggest that it elides myriad problems associated with incorporating men into the area of violence against women, an issue that has been fundamental to second wave feminist activism. Men’s entry into this area

poses significant problems, both at an individual and wider political and theoretical level. Men conducting research on the issue of intimate partner abuse is not a new phenomenon, with a number of male scholars having investigated the issue of abuse and violence within the family or intimate relations for over 30 years. Murray Straus, one of the leading family violence researchers, has been working within the area of family relations and violence since the early 1960s. In addition to male sociologists, a number of prominent male psychologists have also conducted studies on abuse and violence within intimate relations. However, these scholars have not specifically allied themselves with a 'feminist' political agenda. In other words, although these researchers have categorically stated that gender is a significant component in understanding the prevalence of intimate partner abuse, they refuse to ground their theoretical perspective within a gendered framework. I would argue that by adopting a different ontological perspective these male researchers have bypassed certain political and personal difficulties associated with men's engagement with feminist theoretical arguments. Furthermore, they do not enter into a process of reflexivity, in which they analyse their social location in relation to those individuals they are researching, and how this shapes and impacts their research processes, interpretation of data and perspective. For a male researcher adopting a pro-feminist perspective, there are certain issues that need to be addressed, the primary one being: is my presence within the domain of intimate partner abuse research constructive and informative, both on an epistemological and political level? In other words, can men produce a particular form of knowledge that will be useful and inform a feminist praxis, which is directed to ending violence against women and challenge existing gender/power relations?

Engaging with Feminist Theory

Throughout this research project I have continually asked myself this question. In approaching organisations such as Women's Aid Federation England in order to recruit research participants, to the final stages of writing up the thesis, I have continuously engaged in a process of reflexivity regarding my position as a male researcher and how this impacts on every aspect of my research. At times this process of reflexivity has been difficult, with moments of despair followed by temporary breakthroughs. Immersing myself within feminist theory has been exceptionally challenging, making me re-evaluate certain assumptions I previously held regarding gender. Feminist literature has made me realise just how society privileges men and how women face particular constraints. However, my biography has had a profound influence on how I have engaged with theoretical debates surrounding the issue of violence against women and issues relating to power. Certain forms of feminist theory have been problematic for me, particularly radical and some strands of Marxist feminism, which have a tendency to place women within the role of 'victim' devoid of agency and power. Reading these texts I felt tremendous guilt due to being male and, as such, believed that I would forever be castigated as an 'oppressor' and thus part of the problem and not part of the solution. These feelings were particularly potent because intimate partner abuse is such a gendered issue, in which men's use of violence is the focus of attention. Hearn (1998) highlights the difficulties with regard to male researchers confronting men's violence against women, stating that even though conducting research became routine, there were periods in which he became emotionally overwhelmed. Furthermore, Hearn (1998)

indicates that he continually examined both his experience of, and potential to use, violence throughout the research process.

I too experienced similar emotions. In addition, I started to question what it is to be a man and constantly re-evaluated my interactions with both men and women. Kahane (1998) argues that men who embrace feminism have a lot to lose in that they begin to fundamentally question their masculinity, which affects their emotions and desires. Even though I can relate to certain aspects of Kahane's (1998) argument, I do feel as though he privileges the negative aspects of men's encounter with feminism, thus marginalising the positive outcomes.

My engagement with the many different feminist perspectives has been and, continues to be, a rewarding experience. It has also forced me to critically reassess my practices within everyday life and my position in relation to issues that have historically been labelled as 'women's issues.' Reading feminist texts I have come to realise that feminism is fractured, consisting of many different perspectives making the term 'feminisms' more apt. Even though there are differences within feminism, the one attribute all feminists share is a political commitment to analysing current gender relations and improving women's position within society. Some, notably poststructuralist feminists, deconstruct the category 'women' in order to highlight differences amongst women and in order to destabilise the 'grand narratives' produced by certain feminisms. I have some sympathy with this perspective, in that it highlights plurality and deconstructs the category of men, thus accentuating differences between men and acknowledging that they are not a homogeneous oppressor group. Men do utilise violence and

abuse against women, but equally there are men who love and support their female partners and do not harm women. I believe these men have a role in challenging violence against women and educating men, women and children that violence/abuse within any relationship is wrong. However, men's engaging with this issue, particularly within academia and the third sector, raises questions relating to their encroachment on spaces carved out by women for women.

Men's Colonisation of Women's Spaces

Since the emergence of second wave feminism there has been an ongoing debate as to whether men should be involved in the movement. Allowing men 'entry' into 'feminism' raised not only political, but also theoretical issues for feminist scholars. Feminists such as Harding (1987; 1991) and Kremer (1990) and pro-feminist men like Pease (2006) outline their concerns regarding men colonising and appropriating feminism. Kremer (1990) argues that feminists should learn to claim power and 'say no' to men who wish to conduct feminist research, because by allowing males to enter into this hard fought for space, women will effectively be ceding power. In arguing this point Kremer adopts a 'strategic essentialist' perspective regarding feminist praxis. I understand Kremer's (1990) scepticism regarding men's 'entry' into certain areas which have been carved out by women, the issue of violence against women being a major area of feminist activism and scholarship. Nevertheless I ultimately disagree with Kremer as I believe that men can and do make a valuable contribution to feminist knowledge.

In discussing men's incorporation into feminism, Harding (1987) indicates that some feminists may be reluctant to collaborate with men due to their dominant positions within society. Harding (1991) continues by stating that it is hardly unsurprising that marginalised groups, such as women, wish to retain control over what discourses are generated about them, and upon whom the label 'feminist' is bestowed. Nevertheless, Harding (1987) argues that men can and should contribute to feminist thinking, and that they can gain access to areas where it would be difficult or even impossible for women to go, such as the male locker room (pg. 12). Furthermore, Harding (1987) comments that for male researchers to critique men's behaviour is valuable to feminism, and that insights acquired from studies that examine the 'male self' can make a significant political contribution to the emancipation of women.

Feminist concerns regarding men's colonising female spaces are not located at some abstract theoretical level, rather they have serious political and economic consequences. For example, Kulick (2008) states that within academia it is virtually impossible for men to be hired for positions that are advertised as addressing gender. He says that "positions focused on gender are still viewed by many as strategic gateways that facilitate the entry of women into the academy", and a decision to appoint is made on political rather than epistemological grounds (2008: 190). Concerns have also been raised about men's presence within the third sector organisations that specifically address intimate partner abuse, with Kremer (1990) emphasising the need to keep women's spaces such as Women's refuges and Rape Crisis centres female only. Kremer (1990) raises a crucial point regarding women's refuges and services, and it is vitally important

for men to respect the wishes of the women who use these facilities. However, many women fleeing intimate abuse and seeking refuge are accompanied by their children, some of whom are young boys. By prohibiting men completely, refuges run the risk of reinforcing an ideology that all men are abusers thereby demonising men. I would argue that men need to acknowledge their position of privilege within a patriarchal society, and as Pease (2006) states, should listen to and be led by the women's movement. As Connell (1997) quite rightly asserts, men who enter into feminist research, whether straight or gay should not be disheartened if certain avenues are closed to them. They should understand why some feminists may be deeply distrustful of men and make a political commitment to solidarity with women.

Throughout this research I have often commented to colleagues that the whole process would have been far less challenging, both politically and emotionally, if I had been female. However, reflecting on this statement I am not sure whether this is entirely correct. It is possible that if I had been a woman the level of suspicion would have been reduced, but I would still have had to contend with certain epistemological and ethical issues. Simply being a biological woman would not have mitigated aspects of gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality and power within the research process. Conversely, some feminists vehemently argue that occupying the social location as a woman allows one epistemological privilege. It is to these epistemological arguments which I now turn.

Can Men Contribute to Feminist Knowledge? Some Epistemological Considerations

Traditionally feminist activists/scholars working within the area of intimate partner abuse have utilised standpoint theory in order to develop feminist knowledge and understanding regarding violence against women (Hague and Malos 1998). Standpoint theory starts from the premise that women's historical oppressed and marginalised position within society has given them a unique perspective on the world. Feminist standpoint theorists (Harding 1992; Hartsock 1983; Smith 1988; Stanley and Wise 1993) argue that women's social location affords them a better insight into how androcentric institutional power operates within the family and wider social institutions. This epistemological position originates from Marx who argued that experiences encountered by the proletariat could be used to criticise the bourgeois capitalist system. Hartsock, a leading proponent of feminist standpoint theory, states "like the lives of proletarians according to Marxian theory, women's lives make available a particular and privileged vantage point on male supremacy" (1983: 231).

However, not all standpoint theorists subscribe to this Marxian perspective. Stanley and Wise (1993) are highly critical of the perspective that argues that women's social position allows them access to the 'truth'. Instead, they propose that one develops a 'feminist consciousness' and that this consciousness is "rooted in the concrete, practical and everyday experiences of being, and [being] treated as, *a woman*" [italics original] (pg. 32). This consciousness does not grant access to a 'truth' but rather acknowledges that some states of consciousness are

preferable to others. Stanley and Wise (1993) argue that when women's consciousness is raised they begin to see reality in a different way; that the everyday experiences that were taken for granted are seen differently. For example, the simple act of a man opening a door for a woman is viewed differently, in that it could be regarded as an act of sexism. However, Stanley and Wise (1993) are quick to point out that these everyday acts have to be viewed in context, thus the aforementioned act should not necessarily be perceived as a sexist act. Put simply, 'feminist consciousness' is a new way of seeing reality, whilst at the same time, still possessing an old perspective, and this 'double vision' is the key to 'feminist consciousness'.

Interestingly, Stanley and Wise (1993) accept that women will experience this 'double vision' differently depending on their social positions. Furthermore, their 'feminist consciousness' is not comparable to Marxist notions regarding consciousness raising in which there is a beginning, a middle and an end. For Stanley and Wise (1993) 'feminist consciousness' is a continual process that one engages in, in other words, it's a journey without a destination. Nevertheless, their 'double vision' is still akin to a Marxian perspective that a certain position can provide feminists with a perspective on reality which provides a base for social change.

In addressing whether men can attain a 'feminist consciousness', Stanley and Wise (1993) state that this is unachievable because men experience a different social reality as a result of both their biology and socially constructed differences. They argue that men and women have a material physical existence,

which is embodied, and that these physical aspects, as well as the socially constructed meanings placed on bodies, will cause men and women to experience social reality differently. Stanley and Wise (1993) also address the issue of difference between women by agreeing that there is diversity, however, they still appeal to a universal experience that all women share through their material physical existence as women. It is clear that Stanley and Wise's (1993) argument is not intrinsically essentialist in terms of biological reductionism, in that they take into account the social construction of gender. However, I do feel that it regresses to a form of essentialism, since their argument suggests that there is a universal essence which all women share, and that it is intrinsic to how they experience social reality.

Conversely, Harding (1991) questions the basis of these essentialist arguments in relation to standpoint theory and the production of feminist knowledge by asking whether social location is determined by gender, race, class, etc. Furthermore, Harding argues that being a woman does not automatically make one a feminist, instead "feminists are made, not born" and thus biology is not an *a priori* (1991: 279). She also rejects the argument that experience is the basis for generating a standpoint, stating that it is not necessary to have certain experiences in order to generate a less partial and distorted perspective. Rather perspectives have to be "wrestled out against the hegemonic dominant ideologies that structure the practices of daily life as well as dominant forms of belief, and that thus hide the very possibility of the kind of understanding that thinking from women's lives can generate" (Harding 1998: 185). For Harding (1992) knowledge is generated from a historical and social location and not from biology or experience. She also

acknowledges that men are granted privilege due to their social location, which they must continuously try to overcome (Harding 1991). However, she stresses that men can, if they wrestle with these 'hegemonic ideologies', attain an understanding and a feminist standpoint (Harding 1998).

Some have criticised Harding's perspective on men's ability to contribute towards feminist knowledge. Kremer (1990) challenges Harding by stating that if men can successfully attain this level of consciousness, then they should recognise and respect that the label feminist should be left to women. Furthermore, Kremer states "if Harding has illustrated anything, it is the contradictions and dangers inherent in working with the oppressor group" (1990: 464). I agree with Kremer (1990) in that there are some aspects that are problematic regarding men's involvement and contribution to feminist knowledge. Nevertheless, I disagree that these difficulties should prohibit men's engagement and contribution. I would also argue that Kremer's argument is weakened by adopting the oppressor/oppressed dichotomy, that these arguments can, if used irresponsibly, reproduce patriarchal gender relations. In addition, Kremer (1990), although she strenuously denies essentialism by stressing the socially constructed nature of gender, finally returns to the argument that a man cannot know what it is like to be a woman.

Ultimately this is the question that is posed by certain feminists, that men cannot possibly know what it is like to be a woman. In response to this argument, Kulick (2008) suggests that one has to look at how certain questions are framed, for instance if we consider the question: can we ever actually be someone else and

experience their emotions, feelings etc? Then the answer is clearly no. But if the question were: can a male researcher understand a woman or a group of women? Kulick believes the answer is a resounding yes. Moreover, Schilt and Williams (2008) suggest that essentialist arguments have largely been debunked within the social sciences, particularly as a result of postmodern, third wave feminist thinking and queer theory. They continue by suggesting that these outmoded arguments contribute to the belief that only women should interview women and that being a woman one can obtain the 'truth.' Furthermore, male researchers are paralysed by relentless worrying that their research will be invalidated because they cannot access the 'truth.' But Schilt and Williams (2008) posit that arguments relating to 'truth' are preposterous and that one should not view accounts as being right or wrong, instead researchers should acknowledge that all knowledge is situated and that there is value to 'insider' and 'outsider' perspectives (pg. 220). But even if essentialist claims put forward by some feminists can be rejected, this does not necessarily lead to women relinquishing their reservations about men conducting research on women. As highlighted above, some may oppose it on purely political grounds, arguing that men should not interview women on sensitive issues, such as intimate partner abuse, in view of the ultimate imbalance of gender/power relations. Some have even raised the question of whether men can or should speak 'authoritatively' on women.

Speaking on behalf of Women

The problem of speaking for others has been raised by a myriad of feminists, for example, black feminists criticised white, middle class feminists for speaking on

behalf of all women (Collins 1990). Alcoff (1996) addresses the issue of speaking on behalf of others and argues that those in a privileged position should interrogate their motivations, scrutinise what they are going to say and the likely impact their discourse will have on those they are speaking about. Also, Alcoff (1996) warns that even if the intentions of the privileged speaker are sincere, there is a possibility that people will listen to them instead of the people who are marginalised and that ultimately this reinforces the status quo. Conversely, Alcoff (1996) rightly states that if we were to take this argument to its logical conclusion we would arrive at a position where one could only speak for oneself. To adopt this stance would be to abandon a political responsibility to speak out against discrimination and injustice.

Due to my biography, I have felt compelled to examine the issue of intimate partner abuse, believing that it is fundamentally wrong and that it damages generation after generation. However, I acknowledge that my position as a male researcher does place me in a contentious position, as there is a danger that people will privilege a male account of intimate partner abuse. We only have to look at how women who publicly speak out on issues regarding discrimination against women are dismissed and marginalised by being labelled as ‘radical’ feminists (Mackay 1996). Being privileged is a concern and one that I am fully aware of, however the alternative of sitting back and not challenging the status quo, I believe, would be more detrimental and would hinder social change. Nevertheless, it is important that social researchers address the issue of speaking for others from a privileged position and carefully consider whether their discourses help those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. Essentially, male

researchers need to engage continuously in reflexivity and, as Schilt and Williams (2008) suggest, should not feel excluded because of their gender but reflect and incorporate their experiences or feeling of exclusion into their findings. In exercising reflexivity, I feel as though my biography has been a considerable factor in terms of motivating me to undertake this research and providing me with experiences that were invaluable during the interview process. However, it has also been extremely difficult to disengage from my experiences through the research process, and I feel this point needs elaborating.

The Positive and Negative Implications of Disclosing One's Biography

Acknowledging or incorporating biography within one's research is a technique that has been utilised by feminist scholars within both the social sciences and humanities. However, how one utilises personal experiences within research has caused some contention. Roseneil (1993) incorporated her 'at hand' knowledge and experiences when conducting research on the women who participated in the Greenham Common peace demonstration. Together with the data gathered from interviewing women who also resided at Greenham, Roseneil incorporated her own experiences as valid data. Roseneil (1993) argues that instead of trying to exorcise our prejudgements and values, which is impossible, we should disclose them so that the reader can make an informed judgement regarding the quality of the research. Although traditional social scientists would argue that value neutrality should be preserved, Roseneil states "I have no qualms about rejecting 'value neutrality' and taking sides" (1993: 179). Roseneil draws heavily on Stanley and Wise's (1993) thesis which posits that researchers should locate

themselves on the same 'critical plane' as the subjects they are studying and, in doing so, one acknowledges that personhood cannot be left out of the research process. But as Roseneil expounds, placing oneself in the research results in exposing oneself, which is extremely difficult. By disclosing one's experiences one could expose other individuals, therefore one should consider the possible repercussions relating to this approach.

In addition to the data generated from in-depth interviews with other women who resided at Greenham, Roseneil (1993) integrated her own experiences into the data. Throughout the interview process, certain issues were discussed, or specific language was employed to describe situations, which immediately prompted Roseneil to examine her own experiences. These personal experiences were later incorporated into the data. Utilising these retrospective interpretations of events led Roseneil to characterise her methodological approach as 'retrospective autoethnography.' During the course of my research I too drew on personal experiences, although unlike Roseneil I do not intend to utilise these as data. What is most appealing and informative about Roseneil's (1993) approach is her frankness regarding her biography and her argument that one cannot simply disentangle or separate it from the research process. Therefore, I concur with Roseneil's position that a researcher cannot simply detach them self from their feelings and experiences when engaged in research.

By documenting and disclosing my biography I wish to demonstrate to the reader the path which has led me to explore this issue and to highlight how this has had an impact on the research process. Bradley (2006) also highlighted how his

biography had had an impact on all aspects of his research on men's mental health. He indicated that his having personally experienced mental health issues had a profound effect on the direction of his research, negotiating access to research participants and the analysis of data. Even though Bradley (2006) states that his research is not autoethnographical in that his experiences are not utilised as data, he acknowledges that he has adapted certain aspects of this approach. For instance he questions the legitimacy of the distinction commonly made between the researcher and researched and, like Roseneil (1993), rejects 'value neutrality' by directly stating how his research is fundamentally guided, informed and influenced by his biography. Like him, my research is not an autoethnography, in that I do not incorporate my own experiences as data, but simply acknowledge that my biography has had an impact on the direction of the research and how I have 'interpreted' the data. The term 'interpretation' is preferable to analysis, in that it connotes a more subjective approach to one's data. As Bradley (2006) states, interpretation allows for a more interactive approach regarding one's data and it also "allows for greater recognition of the pre-conceptions and prior experiences of the interpreter [...] and for an acceptance of the fact that multiple realities may exist simultaneously, just as multiple interpretations are possible" (pg. 53).

Of course some have criticised researchers who incorporate their personal experiences thus placing themselves firmly within the research. Wolcott's (1999) argument, although it is specifically directed at auto-ethnography, raises important issues relating to researchers drawing on personal experiences within their research. Wolcott (1999) proposes that such terms as auto-ethnography,

native ethnography and ‘insider’ conceal rather than highlight “the vexing question of how intimately involved the [researcher] can or should be” (1999: 173). Essentially, Wolcott (1999) believes that these labels conceal more than they elicit. Moreover, Wolcott (1999) brings into question the validity of reflexivity and whether this is simply disregarded or employed glibly as a means of conforming to some academic standard when conducting research on a subject in which one is emotionally and historically invested. Pillow (2003) argues that the term reflexivity is employed as a ‘seal of approval’ to indicate that a piece of research is a ‘truthful’ and ‘unbiased’ account and not as an illustration of the researcher’s continual discomfort and negotiation within the research process (Pillow 2003b: cited in Pillow and Mayo 2007: 166).

However, in discussing the issue of ‘closeness’, Bradley (2006) states that his life experiences provided him with a sense of ‘interpathy’, a quality that allowed him to genuinely enter into the experiences of the other and understand their worldview. Yet, this ‘closeness’ also caused Bradley (2006) to experience ‘emotional stress’, in that listening to participants talking about their experiences aroused emotions within him which caused tremendous anguish. In some sense Bradley (2006) displays what Pillow (2003b) classifies as ‘reflexivity of discomfort’, in that he makes explicit the emotional turmoil that arose from his position in relation to the issue of inquiry, which also highlights his vulnerability (cited in Pillow and Mayo 2007).

Like Bradley (2006) I also experienced a level of emotional stress when interviewing women who have experienced intimate partner abuse.¹ Nevertheless, being close to the subject of inquiry does have certain advantages. This is illustrated by Bradley (2006) and Roseneil (1993) when describing how being an ‘insider’ can produce a better insight than being an ‘outsider’. However, due to my social location as a white, heterosexual man, interviewing women who have suffered abuse/violence inflicted by a man, I have to ask whether the term ‘insider’ is appropriate.

Being an ‘Insider’ but a Gendered ‘Outsider’

Conducting research in an area with which one is familiar, due to shared experiences or a sense of belonging to a certain group, has been termed ‘insider’ research. Roseneil (1993) and Bradley (2006) both consider themselves to be ‘insiders’, in that they were interviewing participants who: a) had experienced similar events and b) shared a particular social location, e.g. their gender, which allowed them to enter the field with a certain level of ease and develop a rapport with interviewees. Conducting research on women’s experiences of intimate partner abuse, an issue that was present in my childhood and deeply affected me, led me to question whether my biography meant that I too was an ‘insider’. At the same time I was conscious that due to my social location as a man, the term ‘insider’ was probably not appropriate or indeed an adequate descriptor. Nevertheless, I came to the realisation that in negotiating access to research

¹ Issues concerning researcher’s wellbeing are elaborated within the discussion regarding research ethics.

participants and within the interview process, my biography certainly had a profound impact.

Accessing the Field

On entering the field I was initially reticent about disclosing my biography to others. However, while I was contacting numerous women's organisations in order to recruit participants, it became apparent that having a male researcher investigating the issue of intimate partner abuse was uncommon, and therefore they were extremely curious as to why I was interested in this area. With many women's organisations, particularly some members of Women's Aid Federation England, having a no man policy, I thoroughly understood their concern and desire to know my motivation and intentions in conducting this research. McKee and O'Brian (1983) have highlighted how a researcher's sex can be problematic, especially when investigating sensitive topics such as intimate partner abuse, rape or sexual abuse. Essentially these gatekeepers, particularly those who control access to women residing in refuges and safe accommodation, were concerned for participants' emotional and physical welfare. As Lee (1993) states, in order to gain access to social settings or research participants, in which there is a possibility subjects might be harmed either emotionally or physically, there needs to be an established degree of trust on the part of the researched. In many cases gatekeepers who control physical access will seek ways of ensuring trust (Lee 1993). Therefore, when gatekeepers inquired as to my interest in the topic I disclosed my biography in order to demonstrate my openness.

In response to this revelation, most of the gatekeepers responded positively, with many stating that it is encouraging to see a man interested in addressing intimate partner abuse. Being so candid with these individuals, with whom I did not have a close relationship, was extremely difficult. In many respects, I felt emotionally vulnerable in disclosing such personal issues. One could attribute this feeling of vulnerability to certain constructions of masculinity, in that men perceive that disclosing one's emotions and feelings is a sign of weakness. However, I strongly felt that I should be honest and as open as I could with gatekeepers as to my motivation for conducting research in this area, in order to foster a level of trust. But more importantly, by asking women who have suffered abuse to be interviewed, in which they would possibly disclose deeply personal events, I felt that it was only right that I be similarly open with gatekeepers and interviewees. Therefore, I followed Oakley's (1988) mantra that there can be "no intimacy without reciprocity" (pg. 49). Even though many organisations were supportive of my research and particularly intrigued regarding my biography, some still refused to assist me due to my being male.²

Fortunately, a number of organisations that I approached offered their assistance and even those that refused on the grounds of my being male provided me with information and contacts. For those gatekeepers that offered assistance, I felt as though my openness elicited a level of understanding and trust; that disclosing my biography allayed any suspicion they might have regarding my interest in this area. It also allowed gatekeepers to 'place' me within a favourable position.

² Since 1974 certain members of Women's Aid Federation England (WAFE) have adhered to one of their main tenets, that men are to be barred from entering refuges (this includes male children over the age of 12) and men cannot be trustees or refuge workers. Some members even refuse to work with male counsellors or researchers.

Edwards (1993) suggests that researchers and the researched locate each other within certain groups, such as class, sex, gender, sexuality and ethnicity, which has implications for the research process. It could be argued that some gatekeepers placed me in a favourable position by reason of my biography, whereas my being male led others to place me in an unfavourable location.

Having a close connection with the research topic is clearly beneficial, as Bennett (2003) suggests, it acts as “a way in” (pg. 189). Bennett (2003) argues that this close connection to the topic under investigation, in which a person has experience or familiarity, positions the researcher as an ‘insider’. My experience suggests that Bennett’s argument relating to familiarity as a means of getting a ‘way in’ to the field has some credence. Having a high level of proximity to the issue of intimate partner abuse granted me access to a profoundly gendered domain. However, unlike Bennett (2003), I am reticent about adopting the label ‘insider’ since I am a male researcher engaging with female survivors of intimate partner abuse. Also, on a more abstract level, I question the validity or usefulness of the term ‘insider.’

The term ‘insider’ is dismissed by Narayan (1993) who argues that we should move beyond this dichotomy of researchers being either insiders or outsiders, as there are many factors that disrupt the shared cultural identity associated with being an ‘insider’ such as gender, class, sexual orientation and ethnicity. Instead Narayan (1993) suggests that we should view the researcher as inhabiting multiple locations within a field of “interpenetrating communities and power relations” (pg. 671). Furthermore, after the influence of poststructuralist thought,

in which plurality, difference and the de-centred self are celebrated, the notion of being an ‘insider’ is untenable. Essentially, there is no ‘true’ insider position. Hodkinson (2005), however, rejects the call from some scholars to abandon the terminology insider/outsider. Even though he acknowledges the problematics associated with the term ‘insider’, he argues that it allows us to distinguish between differing levels of proximity to the researched. Thus the use of the term ‘insider’ in the non-absolute sense is intended to designate “situations characterised by a significant degree of *initial* proximity between the sociocultural locations of the researcher and researched” [italics original] (Hodkinson 2005: 134). Where the distance between the researcher and the researched is low, individuals share a particular set of characteristics or have experienced similar instances and Hodkinson (2005) calls this connection ‘cultural competence.’ This ‘cultural competence’ allows researchers to gain access to certain spaces and also facilitates the development of rapport. Even though there are advantages to being close to the research topic, Hodkinson (2005) indicates that there is a danger that ‘insiders’ become blasé about power relations within the research process or take too much for granted within interviews and therefore fail to ask participants to expand or clarify certain issues.

I believe Hodkinson’s (2005) conceptualisation of ‘insider’, connoting a close proximity between the researcher and the researched, describes my position within the research process. Having this ‘cultural competence’ facilitated my access and developed a level of trust and rapport with gatekeepers. Nevertheless, a number of gatekeepers, especially those controlling access to women in

refuges, maintained a high level of control over the selection process and how and where interviews should be conducted. However, when negotiating access it is not uncommon for gatekeepers to impose certain criteria to which the researcher must conform if they are to proceed (Lee 1993). In negotiating access with one gatekeeper, who was a member of a women's organisation, she informed me that her organisation does not normally grant access to men. However, due to my biography and the importance of the research she allowed me to conduct in-depth interviews via the internet. Thus although my close proximity to the research topic was beneficial, for some gatekeepers my social location as a man took precedence.

'But you're still a Man': Interviewees' Perspectives

Having this close proximity to the issue also had a positive effect within the interview process. Many participants indicated a sense of relief that I had a connection with the issue being discussed; a few even stated that they were pleased that someone who had 'experienced it' was conducting research and not an academic that simply had an interest in the topic. In fact a number of participants stated that they felt more comfortable discussing issues with me because they knew my biography. Some even stated that the interview felt more like a conversation with a friend rather than a stranger. Participants who had children were particularly interested to know more about my experiences. Becoming aware of how my experiences as a child have deeply affected my life, participants voiced their concerns regarding their children's emotional well-being and hoped their experiences had not 'damaged' them.

Disclosing my biography to interviewees also allowed them to 'place' me. It provided them with an aspect of commonality regarding experience, not as a person who had personally experienced abuse, but someone who understood their experiences. Nevertheless, participants frequently commented that certain issues were beyond my comprehension due to my being male. When I asked participants to clarify this assertion, many of them explained that due to their experiences they tended to categorise men as a homogeneous group with distinctive characteristics. Therefore, although my biography positioned me as an 'insider', my being male located me within this universal category 'men'. However, when I inquired as to whether participants believed I belonged to this homogeneous category 'men', they stated that although I was not 'one of them', nor was I the same as them because of my sex. I was neither considered an 'insider' because of my sex/gender, nor an 'outsider' due to my familiarity with the subject. Therefore, my position in relation to the interviewees continually fluctuated.

Naples (2003) argues that it is not the insider/outsider status that is of prime importance in the research process, but rather how the researcher's identity and position continuously changes (Naples 2003 cited in Hesse-Biber and Piatelli 2007: 499). Thus, there are times when the researcher acquires varying degrees of insider/outsider status in relation to the people they are studying and this fluctuation is based on shifting power relations that are connected to differing social locations. One should therefore be conscious of this fluidity regarding one's insider/outsider status and how this is connected with power relations.

These comments relating to power are important, however, whether one's identity is as fluid as Naples suggests is questionable. Hodkinson (2005) takes issue with arguments that overemphasise the fluidity of identity, by stating that individuals do cling to certain characteristics in order to construct identities. Therefore, by interviewees raising the issue of my being male, they were highlighting the power differentials between men and women within wider society, but also differentiating their experience from my experience. Making this distinction also reinforced their sense of identity, with many of them indicating that experiencing abuse had totally shaped their lives.

Disclosing my biography definitely had an impact within the interview process, my close proximity to the issue of intimate partner abuse placed participants at ease and thus facilitated a rapport. However, I am mindful of the fact that my proximity does not grant me any more authority or access to the 'truth', rather it has simply allowed me to produce a different perspective. Furthermore, I would argue that closeness to the issue of intimate partner abuse is not a prerequisite for men wishing to conduct research within this area. I agree with Schlitz and Williams (2008) when they state that male researchers should not feel "shut out" from conducting research with/on women (pg. 224). Men can successfully conduct in-depth qualitative interviews with female survivors of intimate partner abuse, however, they need to be mindful of 'doing gender' and the power dynamics within the interview and research process.

The In-depth Interview as a Gendered Encounter

Like any other social encounter the qualitative interview is a site in which aspects of gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, age etc have an impact on how people present themselves, their behaviour and what they choose to disclose. There has been some debate as to whether men can or should interview women (Oakley, 1988), with some positing that gender congruence, particularly amongst women, reduces social distance and facilitates talk (Finch 1984). However, arguments appealing to a notion of ‘sisterhood’ have been heavily criticised, for example, Cotterill (1992) suggests that it is naïve to believe that individual and collective experiences of female oppression override other structural and cultural barriers such as class, ethnicity, age, and sexuality, thus facilitating a unique means of communication and understanding.

Song and Parker (1995) also question the assumption that gender congruence will produce preferential and ‘valid’ accounts. Instead they suggest that one should not conclude that gender difference or commonality will produce either ‘good’ or ‘bad’ results, rather researchers should accept that interviewee accounts produced upon the assumption of difference are just as revealing as those produced within an interview where there is commonality. Kane and Macaulay’s (1993) position is similar to Song and Parker’s (1995) in that they suggest that not having gender congruence within the interview process should not be considered detrimental to the research process. Rather gender differences within the interview process should be acknowledged for producing differing

perspectives on issues and for representing the gendered nature of society. Nevertheless, Song and Parker (1995) do concede that where commonality is present within the interview process, participants may feel 'safer' about disclosing certain thoughts and feelings.

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic being investigated, Song and Parker's (1995) comments regarding participants feeling safe within the interview process are of particular importance. Ensuring participants' safety was a major concern for me, but it was also a matter of utmost importance for the gatekeepers. In order to create an environment in which participants felt safe and relaxed, I adopted strategies which Websdale (2001) advises male researchers interviewing women regarding intimate partner abuse to adopt. Websdale (2001) recommends that male researchers need to be aware of the subtleties in body language, voice intonation and how these can have an impact on power relations within the interview process. In addition, he suggests that men have a tendency to dominate in conversations with women, thus male researchers interviewing women need to listen more and allow women space to talk. Therefore, I was mindful about these aspects when conducting interviews and consciously reminded myself to be aware of certain stereotypical gender dynamics relating to body language and the use of language.

Having spent a considerable amount of time in the company of women throughout my childhood, during which discussions about intimate partner abuse arose, was definitely beneficial when conducting interviews. Being open about my emotions with these women when young developed my ability to discuss

sensitive issues and not to be reticent about engaging with emotion. Therefore, having these experiences during my childhood has made me question certain aspects of masculinity, particularly regarding the disassociation from emotionality due to emotion being connected to the feminine. As Websdale (2001) states, men who conduct research on violence against women are not all “cut from the same cloth”, in that some may have been brutalised in their own families as they were growing up (pg. 55).

Having a close proximity to the issue of intimate partner abuse and being comfortable about discussing my emotions and feelings certainly helped in facilitating a rapport, but these attributes did not negate the issue of gender within the interview. On one occasion when the tape recorder started malfunctioning at the beginning of an interview I attempted to fix it, to which the participant commented that my behaviour was stereotypically male. But rather than having a negative impact on the interview, I felt as though this somehow diminished the tension and led to a rapport, even though it was based upon and, to some extent, reproduced gender stereotypes.

Many of the arguments relating to men interviewing women construct gender as some form of barrier which male researchers need to overcome in order to produce informative and ‘valid’ research. Kratz (2008) argues that this assumption of acquiring ‘validity’ within cross-gender research reproduces the perception that there are two separate spheres of study regarding gender. Kratz continues that “gender is not so much a category to ‘overcome’ or ‘minimise’ in research relations, but a dimension of social interaction to take account of and

consider in relation to other roles and identities” (2008: 196). Essentially, Kratz (2008) is arguing that men should not perceive gender as a barrier prohibiting their research, however she does state that the topics which men choose to investigate could be problematic. I agree with Kratz’s argument. No matter what strategies I employ in conducting interviews with women, I cannot expunge aspects such as sex, gender, age, class, or ethnicity. But more importantly, I do not regard my being male as having negative implications on the research process or in interviewing women. However, I do acknowledge that the data generated within these interviews might be different to the data generated from an interview in which there was gender congruence. Furthermore, this does not make my data any less valid, it simply provides a different perspective. Nevertheless, I am aware of my position as a white, heterosexual male and how this grants me privilege within society, and therefore aspects relating to gender/power relations need to be taken into account.

Power within the Research Process

Skinner *et al.* (2005) state that gender violence is “one of the most sensitive areas of research that feminists are engaged in”, and therefore the issue of men conducting research in this area is bound to raise serious questions (pg. 10). This is certainly the case with regard to male privilege and how it is associated with power relations within the research process. Even though Hackett (2008) is a supporter of male researchers investigating women’s lives, she urges them to reflect on their privileged position and how it may affect the questions they ask and how women answer. She also suggests that male researchers need to be

aware that their social location will ultimately impact on how they interpret their data and how their findings are read by others. I admit that my position as a male researcher does pose significant problems relating to power within the research process. I have questioned whether conducting this research in order to achieve an academic qualification, which will facilitate my career progression and thus improve my socio-economic position, is in some way exploiting or re-victimising participants who have been abused by men. The question on exploitation and power imbalances within feminist research is addressed by Stanley and Wise (1993), who posit that one must acknowledge that even in the most egalitarian feminist research, in which participants are incorporated fully into the research process, the researcher leaves the field and gains an academic accolade for their endeavours, whilst participants gain little in terms of academic recognition.

Adopting this perspective, power is perceived to be in the hands of the researcher. Although Stanley and Wise (1993) illustrate the complex nature of power relations within the research process, I would suggest that there is a possibility that adopting this view of the researcher ultimately having power hides the fact that for some participants agreeing to take part in a research project is an act of power. A substantial number of the women interviewed for this research were involved, in varying capacities, with either women's refuges or organisations addressing intimate partner violence. These women were knowledgeable of the services available to women within their area, but also were familiar with feminist and non-feminist literature pertaining to intimate partner abuse.

There was a distinct difference when interviewing these women compared with those who were not versed in theoretical and political arguments relating to violence against women. During the interview many of them indicated their commitment in tackling intimate partner abuse and stated that their agenda was political. For these women the very act of participating in the research signified a political act, with participants stating that they were motivated by the desire to prevent other women from experiencing abuse. As Hague *et al.* (2003) note, it can be extremely difficult for survivors to speak out about their experiences, faced with the level of stigma attached to abuse, but nevertheless speaking out can be an empowering and political act. Those women who were actively engaged with organisations operating within the domestic violence sector had a clearer understanding of the issue, and had a certain perspective which they wanted to communicate. There was a clear distinction between the power dynamics and the impact of gender within these interviews, where women had made sense of experiences with the aid of feminist literature, which gave them a level of awareness that translated into confidence and assertiveness.

The issue of power therefore becomes complex, in that these women had (a) experienced intimate abuse and (b) worked or campaigned within the field of violence against women for a number of years and thus had more knowledge than I did. In interviewing these women my experiences were similar to those of Skinner (2005), who also described the power relations in interviewing women in power. Skinner (2005) states that for a PhD student, interviewing women who have authority or knowledge about a particular subject can be challenging, in that

they feel ‘in control’ of the interview and can use the interview to put forward a particular political discourse. Of course the fundamental and important difference between Skinner (2005) and myself is our gender/sex.

Power relations within the interview setting are complex. As Shuy (2003) states “when one person is the designated question asker, the power of the interaction clearly falls to that person...the respondent is thus placed in a subordinate position in relation to the questioner” (pg. 180). Although this may be the case on one level, one has to consider how aspects such as gender, class, ethnicity, age, etc., also impact on the power dynamic. Even though I tried to minimise my power in the interview process by allowing participants to choose the interview method and when and where they would like to be interviewed, it was impossible to mitigate power completely. In addition, I also sent interview transcripts to the participants thus allowing them to make any changes or omit certain sections; but essentially I had control over the research process. Therefore, I would agree with Cotterill (1992) who argues that even if the researcher employs myriad strategies to minimise power differences within the research process, they ultimately have overall power.

Ethical Issues in Conducting Research on Intimate Partner Abuse

There are many ethical issues involved in conducting any form of social research, but especially research on sensitive topics, such as intimate partner abuse when safety of the participants should be paramount throughout the research process. Researchers need to consider the safety and protection of the

participants before, during and after conducting interviews. Sullivan and Cain (2004) stress that it is vitally important for researchers to remember that women throughout the research process are vulnerable to physical or mental violence. It is important that the abuser is not made aware of their partner's participation, because this could jeopardise the participant's safety. The location where the interviews will be conducted therefore needs to be carefully considered. Sullivan and Cain (2004) recommend that interviews should be conducted in an environment where participants feel safe. Granting participants the ability to choose where, when and how they wished to be interviewed decreased their feeling of vulnerability, in that it gave them a sense of control within the process. However, some participants opted to conduct the interview either at their workplace or their private residence, which ironically placed me in a vulnerable position. Interestingly, there is a dearth of literature regarding the vulnerability of male researchers entering the field. However, Lee (1997) in discussing her sense of vulnerability within the field explained how she implemented certain strategies in order to maximise her safety when interviewing male participants. Lee (1997) explains how she was apprehensive when conducting interviews in male respondents' private residences. I too was concerned for my physical safety, but this was to do with the risk of being physically assaulted or challenged by a women's partner rather than fear of a sexual attack.

In addition to participants' physical safety, I was also concerned for their psychological well-being. I therefore arranged for Coventry Victim Support and Coventry Relate Counselling service to provide counselling support to those research participants who, after conducting the interview, felt the need to discuss

or explore some of the issues raised. Many gatekeepers stipulated that counselling support for research participants was an essential criterion, which I needed to meet in order to proceed. In addition to these services, I also collated various other contact details of women's organisations and the national domestic violence helpline to offer to participants at the beginning and end of the interview. I believed that offering participants this information would clarify my role as a researcher and not someone who could offer them counselling. However, at times I did feel as though the interview became a pseudo-counselling session. This made it extremely difficult for me to achieve the correct balance within the interview of offering words of comfort and reassurance but not to be seen as giving advice or presenting as an 'expert'. Barter and Renold (2003) discuss how problematic it can be when interviewing individuals about traumatic events, with participants "using the interview as a space in which to unburden themselves" (pg. 101). They state that in engaging in 'active listening', where the researcher acknowledges painful events, etc., there needs to be a clear understanding that their role is not to provide counselling.

In addition to participants' emotional welfare, I was also concerned for my own psychological well-being. Conducting interviews on such traumatic subjects is emotionally challenging for both the researcher and researched. However, the impact upon researchers investigating intimate partner abuse is rarely discussed in methodological literature. Ellsberg *et al.* (2001) specifically address support for interviewers conducting research on abuse and recommend that the researcher should be provided with emotional support in order to avoid 'burnout'. Chatzifotiou (2000) also addresses the emotional distress she encountered during

her research into Greek women's experiences of abuse. She describes how she experienced bouts of depression and anxiety both during and immediately after conducting interviews. Even though I tried to prepare myself emotionally before entering the field by discussing the possible emotional difficulties with friends and colleagues, I thoroughly underestimated how listening to participants' experiences would arouse repressed feelings or memories. Immediately after conducting interviews, I entered periods of deep introspection, in which I tried to come to terms with my own thoughts and feelings. I, too, felt the urge to discuss certain issues with others, but like Chatzifotiou (2000) was conscious of participant confidentiality. However, I did find solace in discussing certain aspects with other researchers and practitioners working in the domestic violence sector. I also took advantage of the counselling service offered by the university.

Confidentiality within any sensitive research needs to be rigorously employed and therefore, before commencing interviews, I made it explicitly clear that all information divulged would be confidential. I did however indicate that if information relating to child abuse, suicide or the intention to harm others were to be disclosed, then confidentiality might legitimately be breached (British Sociological Association Code of Ethics; Kimmel 1988). In order to preserve participants' anonymity, identifiable features, such as names, locations, etc., were not included in the transcriptions. However, not all participants wanted their stories to be anonymized, particularly those actively campaigning against violence against women.

Consent is another major issue in conducting research on sensitive topics. Therefore, I requested that all participants complete a written consent form. For those interviews conducted by telephone and the internet, I initially established verbal or textual consent, but asked that participants complete and return a written consent form³. Although consent was confirmed at the beginning of the interview, I did seek to reaffirm consent at various times throughout the research process. As recommended by Campbell and Dienemann (2001) I continually stressed confidentiality and the freedom to not participate or to withdraw from the research at any time.

Finally, disclosing my biography in order to illustrate those life experiences that had orientated me to conduct this research and allowed me to gain a close proximity to the research topic also raised ethical issues relating to consent and confidentiality. In discussing my biography I have inadvertently identified family members who are still alive. This poses a dilemma, one which I am not sure how I can overcome. Morse (2002) and Ellis (2004) highlight the complications of including family members and friends within one's research, with the former stating that "writing about others violates anonymity [even] [i]f these 'others' do not know about the article, it still violates their rights, for they have not given their permission and they do not have the right of withdrawal or refusal the informed consent provides" (2002: 1159). In order to avoid these complicated issues relating to consent, Morse suggests that the author should adopt a *nom de plume*, thus the privacy of individuals alluded to is secured. Conversely, Ellis (2004) argues that adopting a *nom de plume* in some ways silences those who

³ See Appendix 3 for copy of consent form.

have experienced abuse. However, adopting a pseudonym is not always feasible, in that scholars adopting a *nom de plume* cannot receive recognition for their work, which is essential within academia (Morse 2002). After giving these issues long and careful thought, I have decided that my biography is an integral part of the research process and therefore believe that it should be documented. More importantly, however, highlighting my experiences illustrates that not all men who witness abuse as a child go on to abuse others, and that one can transform these traumatic experiences into something positive and thus break the cycle of abuse.

Recruiting Female Participants

Gaining access to research participants was difficult and involved exploring many avenues, some of which were unproductive. Worried that I might not succeed in recruiting sufficient female participants, I developed a contingency plan which involved an investigation into whether there was an active ‘men’s movement’ against intimate partner abuse. I conducted a number of interviews with men campaigning or employed within the domestic violence sector, in which I explored the extent to which their campaigns or organisations were effecting social change and whether they were assisting employers in developing domestic violence workplace policies and practices.⁴ The data gathered from this small sample informs the last data chapter which addresses women’s experiences

⁴ See Appendix 2 for a breakdown of this research sample and a discussion about gaining access and interviewing male participants.

and recommendations regarding domestic violence workplace policy and practices.

Because of the difficulties involved in recruiting participants for sensitive research (Renzetti and Lee 1993) and this being augmented by my being a male researcher (McKee and O'Brien 1983), I utilised an array of approaches. One which proved to be particularly fruitful was gaining the assistance of a family member, who was employed as a midwife, to recruit participants. In effect, my family member acted as a gatekeeper, but my relationship with her was completely different from that of other gatekeepers. I did not have to negotiate what Form (1973) called the 'politics of distrust' with my family member, because she was aware of my intentions and knew of my experiences (Form 1973 cited in Lee 1993: 123).

In conjunction with this method, I also pursued more 'formal' routes of recruitment, such as contacting organisations and agencies operating within the domestic violence sector. I first contacted Women's Aid Federation England, Refuge and other women's organisations during my Masters degree and after explaining my intentions regarding my research inquired as to whether they were interested in assisting me. The response was both encouraging and discouraging. Although many organisations were interested in the actual area I wished to investigate, they were less enthusiastic about my being a male researcher. At this point I started to wonder whether I would fail to recruit support through being male. However, I persevered and finally gained support from the Warwickshire Domestic Violence Co-ordinator. Like many other individuals I approached who

worked within the domestic violence sector, she was encouraged that I was interested in conducting research into this aspect of intimate partner abuse, but was sceptical and concerned about granting me access to women who had experienced abuse. However, after a number of meetings, by which time I had disclosed my biography and discussed many aspects of intimate partner abuse with her, she agreed to assist me by distributing my call for participants to all the Domestic Violence Co-ordinators within the UK.

Her emailing all the co-ordinators gave my research ‘approval’ in that a member of the domestic violence sector recommended that this research had merit and needed to be conducted. Furthermore, the co-ordinator introduced me to Fiona Bowman of the Corporate Alliance against Domestic Violence (CAADV), who became a key gatekeeper during my research. Due to Fiona’s enthusiasm and tremendous support for me and my research, I was granted access to locations and other ‘gatekeepers’. Fiona not only invited me to a CAADV conference, at which I established links with many other women’s organisations I subsequently worked closely with, but I was also invited to attend an event at 10 Downing Street. Being invited to these events indicated to others present that I had obtained a certain level of ‘trust’ and ‘legitimacy’. This ‘legitimacy’ was indicated by a member of Birmingham Women’s Aid, who stated that they received numerous emails/letters from students requesting access to women who have suffered abuse, however, rarely is access or support granted. Like many other members of Women’s Aid, this contact indicated that she would be unable to assist me because I was male, but she did invite me to their head office and granted me access to documents/literature etc.

Altogether, I contacted over 60 agencies or organisations that dealt, albeit in various capacities, with women escaping from, or gaining support against intimate partner abuse. Many of these organisations, particularly those affiliated with Women's Aid Federation England (WAFE), rejected my request to conduct in-depth qualitative interviews with their clients as a male researcher. Some members of WAFE proposed that one of their refuge workers could conduct the interview and then pass on the data. Others simply stated that if my research method took the form of a questionnaire then they would happily distribute it to their clients. Nevertheless, not all members of WAFE refused, with some members being extremely helpful and supportive, such as Basildon Women's Aid, Northampton, and South Devon Women's Aid. Also numerous Domestic Violence Co-ordinators offered their support and assistance in granting me access to women who had experienced abuse.⁵ In addition to contacting organisations operating within the domestic violence sector, I also approached a number of public and private sector organisations for their assistance.

Accessing Local Government and Private Sector Organisations

After gaining a level of 'legitimacy' due to attending certain conferences and meetings, I approached a number of organisations that were tackling intimate partner abuse as a workplace issue. This included KPMG, The Body Shop, the NHS, and a number of local authorities. Although I established a rapport with many of these organisations, only the Body Shop and Coventry City Council

⁵ See Appendix 5 for a copy of the poster distributed to members of WAFE to display within the refuge.

came forth with support and assistance. After some negotiation, the Body Shop agreed to advertise a call for research participants in their employee newsletter, *BodyNews*, which is received by every Body Shop employee nationwide. Coventry City Council and Coventry Primary Care Trust, in coordination with Coventry Domestic Violence Partnership, also advertised my research on their intranet and in the employee magazine, '*Insight*', which is delivered to Council employees along with their pay packet.⁶

Even though I wrote the synopsis of the research and designed the poster for recruiting research participants, I unfortunately had little control over how my research would be represented by these companies within their publications. Furthermore, before gaining permission to advertise the research, the synopsis and poster had to be approved by various departments within Coventry City Council. Gaining approval was therefore a long process, which involved redrafting the synopsis several times in order to meet certain requirements. The different means of dissemination by the Body Shop and Coventry City Council, for example the former utilising a newsletter and the latter using both printed media and their intranet to advertise for research participants, placed restrictions on the level of information that could be conveyed. This was especially the case for employee newsletters/magazines, in which space is limited. It meant that information regarding the research was reduced to a bare minimum. In one case, all that was advertised was the call for participants to take part in domestic violence research, without elaborating on the research aims or objectives. Lee (1998) highlights the pitfalls of advertising one's research by stating that

⁶ See Appendix 5 for copy of participant recruitment campaigns.

although certain media can be beneficial, complications can arise especially if certain material is misrepresented and beyond the control of the researcher. However, unlike Lee (1998) who recruited a large percentage of her participants through advertising, I recruited only 11 of my 29 participants through these means.

One issue to which I gave considerable thought was what contact details should be included in the call for research participants. This was also raised by Coventry City Council and the Body Shop, in that they were concerned for their employees' anonymity and confidentiality. However, because I did not have recourse to certain resources, such as a dedicated telephone line, I had to decide whether to use the Sociology Department's telephone number; my personal mobile number, or my private home telephone number. Utilising the Department's contact details was not favoured by me or these organisations, due to concerns regarding confidentiality. The use of my mobile was also considered problematic, since it would make it prohibitively expensive for participants to inquire about the project. Coventry City Council and the Body Shop wanted a dedicated private contact number and suggested that I use my home contact details. In response to this request, I explained how this could be problematic, in that by giving my private home number I could inadvertently place myself, and the people I lived with, in danger. I was particularly concerned about receiving threatening or malicious telephone calls from abusers if they became aware that their partner had participated in the research. However, after careful deliberation and discussion with the individuals I lived with, I reluctantly agreed to use my

private contact details, fearing that if I did not I might not be successful in recruiting participants.

Altogether, I worked closely with 13 organisations who agreed to provide me access to research participants (see Table 1 pg. 106). The 13 organisations working closely with women escaping abuse granted me access, although they maintained a level of control over the selection process and how and where the interviews were conducted. Conversely, Coventry City Council and the Body Shop did not place restrictions on how or where interviews should be conducted, although they did request that research findings be made available to them. All of the organisations that I worked with requested that research findings be shared with them and I agreed to send a copy of the finished thesis, prepare a report or make a presentation at a conference.

Table 1: Breakdown of Recruitment of Research Participants

	Number of Participants
Body Shop	1
Coventry City Council	12
Women's Organisations	13
'Informal' Recruiting	3

Research Sample

By utilising various avenues to attract research participants, I successfully managed to recruit 29 women from various locations throughout England.⁷ Recruiting participants via women's organisations, public and private sector organisations, and 'informal' means resulted in a varied research sample in terms of geographical location, occupation and their partner's occupation/employment status. The sample also varied in terms of the length of time since participants had left the relationship, ranging from one still in an abusive relationship to those who had left years prior the interview (see Table 2 pg. 110 for a breakdown of the research sample). Only one of the 29 research participants was still in an abusive relationship at the time of interview, and three participants had just recently left the relationship. The remaining 25 participants had left/divorced their abusive partner over 12 months prior to being interviewed.

A large proportion of participants started to experience abuse at a relatively young age, with some indicating that the abuse started when they were as young as 16 whilst they were still dating the abuser. The figures in Table 2 relating to the age when participants first experienced abuse do not take into account the fact that a number of them reported having experienced abuse within previous relationships. In fact, five participants indicated that they had been physically or emotionally abused by a previous partner. A number of participants also disclosed suffering abuse within their family of origin. One participant indicated

⁷ See Appendix 1 for a comprehensive list of participants.

that she had been raped at the age of 13 by a family friend and that her mother inflicted both physical and emotional forms of abuse.

In relation to part and full time work, the six participants who identified as being in part time employment indicated that prior to having children they were employed full time. Also I felt it was necessary to clarify the employment status of participants, hence the third category regarding employment status in Table 2. This participant could not identify as being in full or part time employment due to the sporadic nature of her employment, which she attributed to the level of abuse she encountered and whether her partner would allow her to work.

With regard to participants' employment, housing and economic status, Table 3 (pg. 111) illustrates that a substantial proportion of those women interviewed were educated to degree level, with one holding an MBA. At the time of interview a number of participants stated that they were pursuing a degree or some other form of professional development. Examining Table 3 one also sees that the research sample includes women from a range of occupations and at varying levels of employment status, from managerial positions or self-employed to those employed in unskilled positions. The one participant who identified as being self-employed owned and managed a catering business with her abusive partner. With previous research particularly focusing on women in low income, low status positions of employment (see Chapter 2), these women's experiences will be particularly informative. Also many of the participants employed within health care or social work highlighted that they were aware of some of the issues

relating to intimate partner abuse, having had to attend to patients or clients who had suffered or were suffering abuse.

Regarding house ownership, participants were unlikely to own their own home or be the sole titleholder of the mortgage or rental agreement. Overwhelmingly, participants indicated that their home was mortgaged, with a large proportion stating that both parties were responsible for the mortgage repayments. Participants were also asked about the level of household income, however, as many indicated that they could not give an accurate figure, or refused to answer this question, this has been omitted from the table. It is also interesting to note that 13 participants identified themselves as the breadwinner within their relationship, with a further three indicating equality regarding household income.

Table 2: Demographics of Research Sample

	Total Sample 29	Full time Employment 22	Part-Time Employment 6	Fluctuated from Part/Full Time 1
Ethnicity				
White British	26	20	5	1
White Australian	1	1		
White Hungarian	1	1		
British Caribbean	1		1	
Age when abuse started				
16-21	13	10	3	1
22-31	9	6	2	
32-41	5	4	1	
42-51	2	2		
52-65				
Age at time of interview				
18-21				
22-31	3	2	1	
32-41	10	10		
42-51	13	7	5	1
52-65	3	3		
Nature of Abusive Relationship within which Abuse Occurred				
Dating				
Cohabiting	8	7	1	
Married	21	15	5	1
Number of Children at Time of Abuse				
0	5	5		
1	4	2	1	1
2	14	11	3	
3+	6	4	2	
Educational Qualifications				
None	3	3		
O Level/GCSEs	7	4	2	1
A Level	5	4		
Diploma	7	5	4	
Degree	6	6		
Higher Degree	1	1		

Table 3: Participants' Employment, Housing and Economic Status

	Full Time Employment 22	Part Time Employment 6	Fluctuated from Part/Full Time 1
Women's Occupation			
Healthcare Professional (Midwife/Nurse)	2	2	
Managerial (Health Care)	1		
Managerial (Retail)	1		
Finance/Accounting	1		
Education (Teacher)	1		
Social Worker	2		
Health Care Assistant		1	
Administration	10	2	
Skilled Service Worker (Hairdressers)		1	
Retail	1		
Unskilled Manual	2		1
Self-Employed (Catering)	1		
Household Tenure			
Local Authority Rented	3	1	
Housing Association Rented	1		
Private Rented	3		
Mortgage	14	4	1
Owned	1	1	
Type of Accommodation			
Detached	2	1	
Semi-detached	11	3	1
Terrace	6	2	
Flat	3		
Home Ownership or Named Renter			
Participant	4	1	
Abuser	5	4	
Joint Ownership	13	1	1
Identified Breadwinner			
Participant	9	4	
Abuser	10	2	1
Equal Contribution	3		

Elaborating on their assuming the role of breadwinner, many participants attributed this to their partner's employment status. As one can see from Table 4

(pg. 112), only 13 of the 29 women interviewed stated that their partners were in full time employment, with a large number being either unemployed or sporadically employed. One participant even indicated a role reversal, in that her partner stayed at home to look after the children whilst she went to work. Even those participants who had partners that were self-employed, particularly those within the construction industry, highlighted that at times they experienced periods of unemployment due to shortage of work.

Table 4: Abusers' Employment Status and Occupation

	Number of Abusers
Employment Status	
Full Time	13
Part Time	0
Sporadic Employment	7
Self Employed	6
Unemployed	2
'House Husband'	1
Occupation	
Managerial (Corporate)	2
Managerial (Retail)	1
Managerial (Construction)	1
IT Services	1
Civil Service (Police)	1
Catering	3
Transport/Haulage	2
Skilled Trades (builder, painter, plasterer etc)	9
Manual Unskilled	6

Regarding abuser's occupations, 17 could be considered 'blue collar' workers, employed within traditional 'masculine' industries such as construction/building, auto and transport industries. The other nine abusers were employed in various industries, with four holding managerial positions, one qualified IT technician, two qualified chefs, one senior police officer and one jointly owning a catering business with their partner.

Mixed Interview Methods: Positive and Negative Aspects of Telephone and Internet Interviewing

As highlighted earlier in my discussion regarding power within the research process, in order to make the interview process more egalitarian, I gave participants the opportunity to choose where, when and how they would like the interview to be conducted. Participants could choose to conduct the interview via telephone, the internet or in person at a time and location of their choice. Allowing this flexibility granted participants more control over their involvement within the research process, but it also simultaneously increased my chances of recruiting an adequate number of participants. In view of the sensitive nature of the topic, I was concerned that my being male would deter female participants.⁸ Therefore, I felt that employing multi-interview methods would diminish power differences within the interview process and simultaneously maximise my chances of success. Of the 29 in-depth interviews, 19 were conducted via telephone, eight face-to-face and two via the internet. However, the two participants interviewed via the internet did not specifically choose this method,

⁸ See Appendix 4 for a copy of the interview schedule.

rather the gatekeeper would only allow this form of interview because of the level of anonymity that it offered and the fact that participants would not come into direct contact with me. The remaining 27 participants contacted me either via email or telephone to make further inquiries as to the nature of the research project before agreeing to participate. It was during this initial contact that I gave participants the opportunity to choose how the interview would be conducted. Each method had positive and negative aspects, and it is these which I wish to discuss in this section.

Telephone Interviewing

The use of the telephone method has been identified as having cost saving potential (check Sturges and Hanrahan 2004). Also participants are more willing to disclose embarrassing or personal experience due to the level of perceived anonymity that it offers (Sturges and Hanrahan 2004). Although it could be argued that this level of anonymity is granted to participants in random telephone surveys, this is not the case in my research, due to the fact that I asked all participants to complete a written consent form, for which I required their postal address. However, Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) comment that telephone interviewing reduces participant anxiety in discussing personal and upsetting experiences. With an overwhelming number of participants who opted for the telephone method stating that they would have refused to participate if the telephone method had not been available, it seems that Sturges and Hanrahan's (2004) argument has some credence.

In discussing why they opted for the telephone method, participants indicated that they felt more at ease conducting the interview in an environment in which they felt comfortable and safe. They also highlighted the convenience of the method, in that it did not involve travel, and that fact that the interview could be conducted in an evening.

A small number of participants stated that the telephone method would make the experience 'less personal' and that conducting the interview in person would have been 'too real'. On asking one participant to clarify these feelings, she said that the telephone method, being less intrusive, did not disrupt one's everyday life; but more importantly, after the interview is concluded, one simply puts down the telephone and forgets the issues discussed. Therefore, conducting the interview via telephone facilitated a form of emotional boundary maintenance. Furthermore, the absence of a physical interaction between researched and researcher, and the temporariness of the telephone method, i.e. not disrupting participants' materiality of everyday life, allowed participants to compartmentalise their emotional experiences and view the experience as 'not real'. Also participants stated that if it started to cause them distress they could immediately discontinue the interview, whereas if the interview was conducted in person they would feel uncomfortable about abruptly terminating it. This suggests that the telephone method grants participants a level of power within the interview process. This is because participants not only have control over the environment in which the interview is conducted, but they can also discontinue the interview at any given moment. For a pro-feminist researcher committed to

making the research process more egalitarian, the ability of the telephone method to ameliorate power relations is welcome.

However, there are numerous difficulties associated with this method; for example, the absence of certain visual cues and the impersonal nature of the method were highlighted by participants. Some participants commented that if they were to conduct the interview again they would opt for the face-to-face method, because it would allow for a more nuanced and emotional narrative. Shuy (2003) states that “face-to-face interaction compels more small talk [...] joking, nonverbal communication and asides in which people can more fully express their humanity” (pg. 179). Certainly, the lack of visual cues such as body language can be problematic, as non-verbal forms of communication, such as gesticulation or displays of emotion, can contain important and sometimes crucial information. One is therefore left to determine the nature of a participant’s voice intonation, the sound of laughter, weeping or sighing, which can be extremely difficult. I particularly found it difficult and sometimes distressing to have to assess whether a participant was upset or uncomfortable during the interview. Prolonged silences were also difficult to judge. There were many times where I misinterpreted prolonged silences and inquired as to a participant’s well-being, only to find that I had disturbed their line of thought.

My experiences suggest that the telephone method of interviewing can be extremely beneficial in conducting research on sensitive issues such as intimate partner abuse. It has the potential to make research more egalitarian by granting participants more power within the interview process. However, the telephone

method does not make the interview any less of a gendered encounter in that “the gender of the voice in cases of telephonically collected data remains a possible influence” (Rosenbaum *et al.* 2006: 463).

Internet Interviewing

Both internet interviews were conducted using Windows Messenger (MSN) which allows text based conversations to occur in ‘real-time’. In many respects the use of ‘real-time’ internet interviewing has similar limitations to the telephone method, in that it prohibits a more nuanced narrative from being produced. However, unlike the telephone method where one still has the ability, albeit questionably, to gain additional information from audio cues, the internet provides neither researcher nor participant with any verbal cues. Furthermore, as the gatekeeper exercised a high level of control over the interview process, for example arranging access to the internet and computers etc., this also constrained the character of the on-line interviews difficult.

Aspects which are integral to everyday interpersonal and telephonic interaction are totally absent, making communication difficult. Some have argued that it is precisely this level of physical disconnection which makes the internet an appropriate method for conducting research on sensitive issues (Wallace 1999 cited in Mann and Stewart 2000). However, due to the ‘virtual’ nature of the internet there is a danger that the information provided is inauthentic. This criticism could also be levied against interviews conducted via telephone. Conversely, one could also ask the same question about the authenticity of

information provided by participants within the traditional face-to-face interview. But as Jones (1998) suggests, arguments relating to the authenticity of data collected via the internet are no more problematic than data collected by conventional methods of communication. Jones (1998) argues that it is only because certain methods of communication have been privileged within our society that data gathered via the internet is viewed with suspicion. In addressing this dilemma regarding authenticity of data, Paccagnella (1997) recommends that since the internet lacks ethnographic context, on-line research should be conducted in conjunction with off-line research where possible. The fact that these on-line interviews are arranged off-line with the gatekeeper, I believe grants a level of validity to the data gathered from them. However, the gatekeeper, having such a high level of control within the process also raises questions with regard to validity. During the interviews it was the gatekeeper with whom I was conversing, in that she was relaying my questions to the interviewee and then typing their reply. Using the gatekeeper as the conduit by which the interview was conducted, raises a distinct possibility that certain aspects of the participants' responses might have been misinterpreted or omitted by the gatekeeper in order to save time or be concise.

The internet has the capability of allowing the researcher and the researched to perform different identities (Beusch 2008; Wynn and Katz 1997), which suggests that social classifications of gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, age, etc., have less of an impact on the interview process, or are simply more problematic to analyse. However, the data gathered via the internet method within my research was completely influenced by aspects of gender. Essentially, it is due to my being a

male researcher that this method was utilised at the gatekeeper's request. Furthermore, the gatekeeper informed the interviewees that I was male. I would argue that although gender/power relations were imbued within every interview I conducted, they were simply made explicit through the level of control exercised by the gatekeeper.

Face-to-Face Interviews

Of the 29 interviews conducted only eight were conducted face-to-face. These eight interviews were conducted in a variety of locations: four participants opted to come to the university; three requested that the interview be conducted at their workplace; one interview was conducted at the participant's residence; and one took place at the residence of my family member who acted as a gatekeeper. The different locations and environments in which the interviews were conducted make it difficult to generalise about the gendered power dynamics operating within the interview process. However, out of the eight participants only one agreed to being interviewed within her residence. Also, this participant was recruited through what I have termed 'informal' channels of recruitment i.e. through my family member and, as I stated earlier, this method mitigated some of the difficulties associated with other means of recruitment, particularly the issue of trust. Furthermore, the participant's teenage son was in the house, although not present during the interview, which would have reassured her concerning safety. Although the presence of her son had a positive impact in bolstering her sense of security, there were a few occasions when the interview was interrupted by his entering the room. These interruptions made me feel

uncomfortable, especially on one occasion when the participant was discussing her experiences of rape by her ex-partner, who was the father of her son.

Interviews conducted at participant's workplaces were also frequently disrupted by participant's co-workers accidentally entering the room, or telephones frequently ringing. Even though I respected participants' decision to conduct interviews within these differing environments, I was increasingly concerned about privacy and confidentiality. Conversely, participants did not display any signs of uneasiness regarding these interruptions, accepting them as 'par for the course' of the workplace and something that we would just have to 'work around'.

Conducting interviews in unfamiliar locations has a significant impact on the power dynamics operating within the interview process. Entering these environments in which I had no 'control', for example not being able to ensure privacy or provide a secure environment, placed me within a powerless position. Being committed to a pro-feminist standpoint, which posits that researchers should make the research processes more egalitarian, I thoroughly welcomed this shift in power relations. However, it did make me feel uncomfortable and, at times, vulnerable. Another unexpected aspect of the face-to-face interviews was how emotionally challenging they were in comparison to the telephone or internet methods. Although I disclosed my biography to those women interviewed via telephone, doing so face-to-face elicited far more powerful emotions within myself. This was exacerbated when participants also became emotionally distressed. During one interview a participant became extremely

upset and after a short period of time I decided to discontinue the interview. However, terminating the interview raises question relating to power and whether I, although I thought I was acting in the participant's 'best interests', was exercising power and thus denying her the opportunity to talk.

In discussing their experiences of interviewing children about violence, Barter and Renold (2003) illustrate the difficulties involved in conducting interviews in which traumatic and upsetting issues are discussed. They stated "we had to make rapid judgements about whether or not to stop the interview, take a break, change direction of the interview and return to the 'distressing' bit later" (pg. 101). In interviewing children, they had to contend with certain issues; however, what is interesting is that in reviewing their conduct during the interviews they questioned whether they made the right decision regarding many aspects. Websdale (2001) recommends that male researchers need to be mindful of their body language and intonation, and how these have an impact on power relations within the interview process. Even though I consciously reminded myself to be aware of certain 'stereotypically masculine' behaviour, on reflection I believe I could have made better decisions in terms of the language utilised and allowing participants the space to talk.

Analysing the Interview Data

All the interviews conducted via telephone and in person were digitally recorded, then transcribed. Transcriptions of these interviews and copies of the internet interviews were sent to participants so that they could delete, expand or correct

aspects of their transcripts. The amended transcripts were then analysed and coded using Nvivo 7. Although I initially found Nvivo useful, in that it allowed me to manage and store large amounts of qualitative data, I found that coded extracts became somehow detached, not representing the essence that was conveyed within the original transcript. Therefore, I combined the use of Nvivo 7 with a manual approach to coding and generating particular conceptual themes. In evaluating the use of Nvivo, Welsh (2002) suggests that researchers should recognise the value of both manual and electronic approaches to analysing qualitative data, that one should not value one over the other, but simply combine and make use of their advantages, and I followed this advice.

Analysing Workplace Policy Documents

In addition to data gathered from in-depth interviews, materials such as workplace domestic violence policies, legislation and trade union literature pertaining to intimate partner abuse were also analysed. With public sector organisations, particularly local authorities, taking the lead in developing workplace policies as a result of Government initiatives and legislation addressing gendered inequality, it is these policy documents that will be under review. Most of these documents are in the public domain, however, Coventry City Council's workplace policy is not, and it is through my connection with the Council that I was able to obtain access to their policy documents.

The policy documents were analysed utilising a feminist critical policy approach. This approach differs from 'traditional' policy analysis, which tends to focus on

the structures and functioning of political systems. Shaw (2004) and Marshall (1997) criticise this ‘traditional’ approach as being inadequate in determining the underlying gendered assumptions and power relations within policy documents. Traditional approaches to policy analysis work on the assumption that there is parity between male and female experiences, and therefore do not take into account the fundamental influence of discourses regarding gender upon society (Shaw, 2004). More importantly, for Shaw (2004) policy analysis can never be conducted from an ‘objective’ viewpoint and those appealing to such a position are not challenging the androcentric nature of policy. Therefore, in order to correct this androcentric bias inherent within traditional policy analysis, Shaw argues for a feminist critical policy analysis, which challenges positivistic assumptions and provides “a more complete understanding of policy from the perspective of both policymakers and those affected by the policy” (2004: 57). By integrating feminist perspectives with policy analysis, feminist and pro-feminist scholars can produce a critical perspective on how gender/power relations operate in framing particular issues.

However, in discussing the analysis of interview and policy documents I do not wish to convey the image of an uncomplicated and linear research process, whereby transcribed interviews are immediately followed by interpretation or analysis. As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, research is never a linear process in which as soon as one aspect is completed another commences. Throughout the writing-up stage and during the initial coding of the interview transcripts, I was continually analysing and re-analysing my data. At one particular point, after a month of coding the interview data I discarded the major

conceptual themes that I was working with and started anew. As illustrated by Beusch (2008), one never ceases to analyse and re-work ideas in order to develop one's understanding of particular issues.

Conclusion

Within this chapter I have highlighted the difficulties associated with conducting research on such a sensitive issue as intimate partner abuse. In particular I identified the myriad aspects, which as a male researcher conducting research with/on women, one needs to address. These include issues relating to gender/power relations, and the political implications of male researchers entering an area of inquiry that has historically been seen as a bastion of feminist praxis. Within this chapter I have tried to illustrate how my position as a white, heterosexual, young, working class researcher has had an impact on every facet of the research process, from gaining access to participants to the way questions and answers were formulated and conveyed within the interview process. In addition, I raised the issue of my biography and how this granted me a certain 'proximity' to the topic under investigation, but by no means allowed access to the 'truth' or 'insider' perspective. Rather my experience allowed me to be 'placed' by both gatekeepers and interviewees, which fostered a relationship of trust or understanding. My experience has not allowed me to produce a 'better' insight or perspective, as Wolcott suggests "every view is *a* way of seeing [and] not *the* way" [italics original] (1999: 137). Equally, my experiences have been problematic, in that I have found it difficult to adopt a critical distance or be 'desensitised' as Roseneil (1995) puts it, which has caused me great difficulty in

engaging with certain theoretical perspectives. Furthermore, it undoubtedly has had an influence on how I have approached and analysed the interview data.

The following chapters address the substantive themes that emerged from the data gathered from in-depth interviews and the policy analysis. Chapter 4 explores how women suffering abuse engage in ‘boundary work’ as a coping mechanism. Chapter 5 discusses the issue of disclosure within the workplace and identifies disclosure as a controlled cognitive process, rather than an arbitrary occurrence. Chapter 6 examines the impact of women’s employment on the power dynamics within an abusive relationship, particularly for those women who ascend the career ladder and assume the role of breadwinner in their relationship. Finally, Chapter 7 highlights survivors’ recommendations on what they would like to see employers provide for women experiencing abuse.

Chapter Four:

Management of Intimate Partner Abuse: Boundary Construction and the Negotiation of Self

Introduction

As I stated at the end of Chapter 2, taking a micro perspective, where we can examine individuals' everyday practices, can elicit a deeper understanding of interpersonal gendered power relations and how abused women negotiate expressions of power within their daily lives. Adopting a micro perspective, this chapter will specifically focus on the various coping strategies that abused women employ in order to survive their experience of abuse and to prevent it impacting on their employment.

This chapter will address three substantive issues. First, it will explore how some women tried to manage and/or counter the interference tactics used by their partners. This exploration will draw heavily upon Swanberg and Logan's (2005) classification of interference tactics utilised by abusers to disrupt their partner's employment. Expanding on this discussion of the strategies sometimes employed by women to minimise the effects of abuse, I then go on to examine one particular coping strategy, which Nippert-Eng (1996) calls 'boundary work'. This involves participants' constructing a conceptual boundary between their home and work in order to compartmentalise these aspects of their lives. Even though women differed tremendously in how they engaged in boundary work, there were commonalities, particularly amongst those who held high status

positions and those in unskilled occupations. Also women who worked in a hostile working environment seemed to experience difficulty in constructing a conceptual boundary between their home and workplace. Conversely, those who indicated that their workplace environment was antithetical to their experiences at home, generally found it easier to compartmentalise their lives and construct favourable workplace identities that allowed them to manage the abuse. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how women, by engaging in boundary work, were able to construct positive workplace identities which, as well as acting as a coping strategy, also allowed them to retain a positive sense of self.

Managing Intimate Partner Abuse

Most of the women I interviewed spoke about their 'home' and 'workplace' as two distinct social settings and, to some degree, they embodied this hegemonic discourse by constructing emotional and physical boundaries between these different aspects of their lives. However, after a close examination of the data, it became apparent that home and workplace were not separate spheres that were independent of each other; rather there was considerable 'spill-over' from the home (private) into the workplace (public) and vice-versa. These revelations highlight the problematic nature of the ideology ingrained within society that suggests the workplace and home are two separate spheres. However, it is interesting how many participants subscribed to this ideology as a means of managing and negotiating their situation. In internalising this discourse relating to the separation of the public and private spheres, many participants initially

stated that their experience of abuse did not have a direct impact either on their ability to conduct their work or on their workplace sense of self. By engaging in what Nippert-Eng (1996) calls 'boundary management', participants felt that they were able to minimise the impact of the abuse on their employment. Although this coping strategy was successful in many respects, for example in allowing participants to construct an alternative sense of self within the workplace which provided tremendous emotional well-being, it also had potential negative ramifications. In particular, it made disclosure of abuse within the workplace extremely difficult. For some women, disclosure of abuse within the workplace resembled a wrecking ball in demolishing their conceptual boundary between home and workplace, which resulted in participants leaving the abusive relationship, losing their job, or receiving support from co-workers.

Swanberg and Logan (2005) and Swanberg and Macke (2006) found that abusers employ interference tactics in order to disrupt their partner's employment, such as physically attacking their partners as they leave for work; preventing them from going to work; causing sleep deprivation; disabling their transport; and stalking and harassing their partner at work. Many of the women interviewed reported that they had experienced one, if not all, of these interference tactics at some point within their abusive relationship. And all, to a certain extent, tried to minimise the disruption caused by these tactics. However, certain tactics, such as sleep deprivation, were harder to manage than others. In what follows I examine each of them in turn, exploring how the women attempted to cope with these. As stated within the last chapter, all the women are referred to using pseudonyms except Fiona (Bank Clerk).

Sleep Deprivation

A number of women indicated that their partners would disrupt their sleep and, as a consequence, they were exhausted at work. Shannon, employed as a factory operative, stated that her partner frequently used to keep her awake and, as a result, she regularly went to work feeling extremely fatigued. She reported that she was so tired at work that on one occasion she nearly had a serious accident, but fortunately escaped with minor injuries.

“I was mostly exhausted, it did have an effect on what I could do and how well I did it, I once had my hand trapped between the forklift truck and the conveyer belt because I did not register the truck coming towards me, very little damage was done fortunately because I was wearing rings” (Shannon, Factory Worker).

This statement not only indicates that sleep deprivation had a direct impact on Shannon’s ability to concentrate, and thus reduced her ability to do her job, but it also illustrates that this form of abuse can have serious ramifications for the health and safety of all employees within the workplace. Swanberg *et al.* (2006a) argued that indirect forms of intimate partner abuse, such as sleep deprivation “may affect work performances in a number of ways, including productivity” (pg. 361). Furthermore, they highlight the liability costs that organisations potentially face if employees are injured or killed within the workplace. Therefore, Shannon’s experience not only highlights the possible financial impact that intimate partner abuse could have for employers in terms of injuries

occurring on workplace premises, but also illustrates how this form of abuse affects workplace productivity.

In discussing how lack of sleep affected her employment, Joanne stated that her workplace productivity began to suffer, which came to management's attention. According to Joanne, she was reprimanded on more than one occasion by management for her substandard performance.

"I used to do picking for them but I got taken off that, I was always in trouble obviously because when I was kept up all night through the weekend I was not getting much sleep and I had to be at work for 6 a.m. so I would be going in to work very tired, and they would be constantly on at me about picking rates, they would call me in to the office and say 'well, your picking rates are not high enough, you're going too slow, why aren't you doing your performance targets? We are going to give you one more try; the next time...' you know"
(Joanne, Warehouse operative).

Not only does this statement illustrate how sleep deprivation can seriously affect productivity within the workplace, but it also highlights how management can simply perpetuate an already difficult situation for those suffering abuse. The act of threatening to terminate employment is likely to prevent individuals suffering abuse from disclosing to their manager/supervisor to gain assistance or support. Swanberg and Logan (2005) argue that the predominant factor preventing those suffering abuse from disclosing their situation to a supervisor or manager is fear

of losing their job. Swanberg and Macke (2006) stated that because of the financial burden placed on employers resulting from intimate partner abuse, some employers have resorted to dismissing women experiencing abuse. They go on to argue that termination of employment simply “exacerbate[s] the economic abuse from which the victims often already suffer” (Swanberg and Macke, 2006: 394). Joanne’s experience highlights the benefits of management being informed about the complexity of intimate partner abuse and how it can affect employees in a variety of ways, one of which is reduced productivity. An informed management could approach the subject of performance in a more delicate manner and thus place employees suffering from abuse at ease. However, having a well-informed management does not guarantee positive action, so that organisations also need appropriate policies and practices. Essentially, what is needed is a fundamental change in organisational culture allowing employees to be seen as gendered individuals who have family commitments which impact on their working lives. Swanberg and Macke (2006) advise employers that the archetypal ‘ideal worker’ is an inaccurate construction - that employees are affected by events occurring outside the workplace which have an impact on their working lives. Furthermore, they suggest that employers’ promotion of this conception of the ‘ideal worker’, who as Acker (2006) stated is assumed to be male, fails to address issues that impact upon women’s working lives, such as pregnancy, child care, parental issues, and intimate abuse. Conversely, Swanberg and Macke (2006) recommend that organisations should be more understanding and give women the opportunity to disclose issues such as abuse, without the fear of being labelled a ‘trouble employee’ (Swanberg and Macke, 2006: 402). Although Swanberg and Macke (2006) highlighted the gendered nature of this

‘ideal worker’, which may prevent organisations from adopting more policies that assist female employees, they neglect to mention that workplaces are also divided in terms of class. Women in low status and low paid positions are less likely to be employed within workplaces that will improve the situation for women. But if the workplace is segregated hierarchically in terms of gender, with men occupying positions of power and women in lower status positions, as in Joanne’s case, it is unlikely that change in the organisational culture will occur to accommodate women (Charles 2000).

Rebecca (Social Worker) indicated that throughout her relationship the abuser drank heavily. The abuser’s excessive use of alcohol caused Rebecca economic anguish, in that the abuser would constantly demand money from her so that he could buy alcohol, even though she was trying to provide financially for her family. She continued to explain that the abuser would constantly come home on an evening drunk and would disturb her sleep. Like other participants, Rebecca reported that she felt extremely tired at work which affected her concentration. However, due to the lack of sleep and the abuser’s behaviour becoming more unbearable, Rebecca started drinking as a coping mechanism.

“I didn’t leave, no, I started drinking, yes, but to the point of really drinking and having to go to bed drunk just to get to sleep, because I couldn’t cope with him, he was awful when he was drunk unless I was drunk as well, you know, the only way I could cope with his drunkenness was to get drunk, but I coped with it by drinking, but that affected work because I would be drinking and having to get up

for work the next day with a fuzzy head and going into work not really being with it, but it was the only way” (Rebecca, Social Worker).

The use of alcohol or drugs is one means by which survivors of intimate partner abuse cope with physical and/or emotional abuse (Humphreys and Joseph 2004; Humphreys *et al.* 2005). According to Rehn *et al.* (2001) a large proportion of women suffering abuse in Iceland reported having used alcohol as a coping mechanism. Raine (2001) argued that many women suffering from abuse turn to alcohol or drugs in order to cope with the repetitive assaults and the “painful reality” of their experience (pg. 16). Rebecca’s use of alcohol could be interpreted as a means of dealing with the reality of the situation, which is indicated by the statement “*it was the only way I could cope.*” Riger *et al.* (2002) also highlight the issue of drug use amongst those who have suffered abuse, with one of their participants reporting that she too had used alcohol as a means to numb her emotions. One can see from Rebecca’s statement that her use of alcohol was a means of allowing her to survive the horror of her partner’s alcoholism, but it also acted as a remedy to cure the problem of sleep deprivation. Yet, as Rebecca’s statement illustrates, utilising alcohol as a coping mechanism not only had serious consequences for her physical and mental well-being, it also impaired her performance at work. Employees working whilst under the influence of alcohol could have serious financial implications for employers in terms of loss of productivity, or compensation resulting from accidents at work. Furthermore, the use of alcohol as a coping mechanism can seriously impair one’s capacity to provide appropriate childcare. Although

Rebecca did not disclose the specifics relating to the effects of alcohol use on her children she did, however, indicate that the children witnessed certain incidents which were inappropriate. Rebecca's experience illustrates how certain coping mechanisms not only affect women's physical and mental health, but they also have implications on childcare, and their ability to work effectively.

Management of Physical Abuse

Some participants stated that their partner would be physically abusive to them as they were leaving the house for work. Janis, who was employed as a personnel officer, stated that occasionally her partner would prevent her from going to work, by either confiscating the house or car keys or by physically assaulting her.

"There were times where he had been physically abusive to me literally as I was going out to work, there was one time when I remember him holding me and shoving a screwdriver into my neck, you know, and that was the morning before I was going to work, he was literally pushing and shoving me around, pushing me out the door and telling me that I won't be able to get back in when I come back from work. There were also occasions where he took my keys off me as well, but that never transpired into him actually then stopping me, he would make it difficult for me but I would still at some point still get out of the door and get to work" (Janis, Personnel Officer).

Although Janis states that the abuser attacked her and generally made it difficult for her to go to work, this had never prevented her going to work. She indicated that after these events she was left emotionally shaken, but was determined to go to work. During her journey to work Janis would stop and compose herself in order to contain these emotions before entering the workplace.

“I would be going into work feeling very upset and sometimes I would have to stop on my journey into work to sort of get my head together and compose myself, I would just sort of deal with the emotions, but once I was in work I just developed this ability to just sort of cut off and just focus on my work, I sort of like cut the emotion off if you like in order to cope with work, it was this coping mechanism, I developed this ability to cut off my feelings you know, not letting myself cry and just focus on my work, just get on with it”
(Janis, Personnel Officer).

Although this form of abuse had an impact on her both physically and emotionally, what this statement illustrates is Janis’s attempt to contain and manage this experience. One notices how Janis composed herself before entering the workplace, that during her journey to work she tried to detach herself emotionally from this traumatic experience so that she could function at work. What is important here is the physical separation of the home from the workplace and the emphasis that Janis places on controlling her emotions. In discussing home and workplace commuting, Nippert-Eng (1996) suggests that the journey allows individuals to engage with and adopt the “ways of being” associated with

these experiential realms (pg. 123). She also states that the commute is not only a physical but a symbolic separation of these two realms and that it is an essential aspect of boundary work. However, what is particularly striking about Janis's statement is the phrases 'cut the emotion off' and 'not letting myself cry'. Janis states that her ability to distance herself emotionally from the events occurring within her 'private' life was a very important coping mechanism, allowing her to conduct her workplace duties.

Hearn (1993) argues that organisations have been constructed as 'unemotional' places; this is due to the historical nature of the public and private divide; with the 'public' traditionally associated with the masculine and the private with the feminine. Although this has typically affected men's control of their emotions within the workplace, Hearn (1993) warns us not to forget how this also impacts upon women and that some women may embrace this discourse, especially if they associate emotionlessness with success. Even though Hearn (1993) argues that there is a hegemonic discourse which suggests that organisations are devoid of emotion, this does not mean that emotions are not felt or performed within organisations, but simply that they are regulated within organisations. He also suggests that some emotions are condoned whilst others, especially emotions that are considered feminine, are prohibited. However, the gendered nature of the organisation, for example whether an industry is traditionally perceived as 'feminine' or 'masculine' will influence which displays of emotion are prohibited or condoned, and where and in what context these will be performed.

Halford *et al.* (1997) argue that depending on the employment sector, for example, finance, health or the civil service, there are certain discourses which relate to gender and have specific consequences for women. They posit that in certain sectors, women have had to adhere to a certain organisational script in order to succeed within their career. Displaying competence in compartmentalising their 'private' and 'public' lives was one practice that women had to adopt in order to ascend within the career ladder. This requirement is based on the premise that 'private' issues interfere with the ability to effectively carry out the duties associated with a job. Failure to separate one's home and work lives thus signifies weakness of character and incompetent managerial skills. Even though emotions are regulated within organisations, Halford and Leonard (2006) propose that there are numerous places within organisations, such as corridors, office corners and cloakrooms where people can perform certain identities. I would also argue that these spaces also allow employees to perform or express certain emotions. However, this is not to suggest that organisational expectations cease to impact upon individuals within these spaces, rather these areas allow individuals to create identities that deviate from the organisational script.

One could argue that Janis's experience of not displaying her emotions within the workplace is illustrative of the power of what Hochschild (2003) calls the 'organisational script'. The need to adhere to the organisational script is undoubtedly a strong force and one that can restrict individuals from deviating, and displaying 'private' emotions. However, viewing organisational scripts as inherently oppressive would negate the fact that Janis's ability to detach herself

from these 'private' emotions acted as a coping mechanism and thus allowed her to manage the impact of abuse. It is remarkable how a number of the women I interviewed managed to maintain stable employment by compartmentalising their public and private lives. Although a number of women successfully engaged in 'boundary work' allowing them to construct a more positive sense of self within the workplace, there were some who could not manage their situation. Those working within hostile working environments - typically low status, low paid women - found it extremely difficult to minimise the impact of abuse on their employment. However, women who could not make a distinction between the workplace and home environment also found it difficult to engage in 'boundary work'.

Boundary Work

As highlighted above, women employed various means in order to cope, and one of the most interesting and effective method, in terms of allowing women to retain a positive sense of self, was the construction of a conceptual boundary between the home and workplace. The process of erecting mental boundaries between these two realms has been described by Nippert-Eng (1996) as 'boundary work'. This compartmentalising of certain spheres of an individuals' life allows them to make sense of their home and work. Or as Ashforth *et al.* (2000) succinctly put it, "individuals create and maintain boundaries as a means of simplifying and ordering the environment" (pg. 474). Mental boundaries are erected in order to demarcate certain locations, times, and people, and certain performances. Moreover, Nippert-Eng (1996) explains how these boundaries

demarcate identities, and that the workplace may be the place where individuals feel their 'true' selves, because of the perceived freedom that it offers. Boundary work therefore demarcates different role or "territories of the self", that are either completely distinct or morphous (Nippert-Eng 1996: 34) Thus, for Nipper-Eng "'home' and 'work' are not merely places, then, but 'experiential realms'", however, the extent to which individuals segment their lives and construct different identities within these two environments is idiosyncratic (1996: 25). Therefore, one person's boundary may be more permeable than the next. However, for some, the construction of a conceptual boundary between home and work may be more difficult than others.

This was the case for Judith, who ran a small business with her abusive partner from their private residence. For Judith there was no means by which she could emotionally or physically separate her home and workplace environments. She indicated that the abuser would physically and emotionally abuse her whilst at work in view of other employees. Also, as her work was also her home, there was no geographical separation between the two realms, but more importantly there were no symbolic means, such as interaction with others, by which these environments could be delineated. Consequently, unlike some other participants, Judith could not construct a more positive identity within the workplace, which would have improved her sense of self.

"There was no difference between the workplace and my private life, he brainwashed me if you like, I didn't have my own identity, I didn't have an identity, I didn't know who I was" (Judith, Self-employed).

Throughout the interview Judith stated that the abuser frequently physically assaulted her, however, like Karen (Nurse) she also indicated that the emotional abuse had a far more devastating impact on her sense of self. As this statement clearly illustrates, Judith felt as though the abuser had robbed her of her identity, that the years of being told by her partner that she was ‘no good’ or that ‘nobody else would want her’, made her feel as though she had lost her identity. Lammers *et al.* (2005) found that those women who experienced perpetual emotional manipulation by their partners, who were constantly told that “they were not attaining certain expected standards of behaviour”, suffered a sense of diminished identity (pg. 51). Judith stated that as the years of abuse continued, she simply capitulated every time a disagreement arose regarding home or work issues. This was mainly due to fear of being physically attacked, with the abuser resorting to physical violence if he did not succeed in ‘getting his own way’. As a result of this continual onslaught, Judith explained that she simply forgot who she was, that her sense of self totally erased. She also explained that she craved social interaction and found some solace in talking to customers and her employees, but even these fleeting moments of interaction were thwarted by the abuser. This lack of social interaction left Judith feeling extremely isolated, but it also meant that she could not symbolically differentiate her work and home environments. Judith was unable to construct a different sense of self within her workplace, which could have helped her retain some sense of identity. Nippert-Eng (1996) suggests that “realm-specific contents not only promote a realm-specific sense of self, but they insulate us from other-realm selves” (pg. 36).

The fact that the workplace was not emotionally or physically distinguishable from the 'private', resulted in Judith's having no recourse to a workplace environment that allowed her to gain a sense of self. Or on a more fundamental level, the lack of separation between these two spheres meant that Judith had no respite from the abuse. Rothman *et al.* (2007) found that women experiencing abuse valued their employment as a means of interaction with other people and that, by interacting with co-workers or other people within the workplace, individuals felt less socially isolated and became emotionally stronger and developed a sense of self.

For many women experiencing intimate partner abuse, employment is more than simply a means to earn an income. All of my participants, with the exception of Judith, stated that going to work gave them an avenue to escape the abuse. Therefore, my data supports other research findings (Parker 2001; Rothman *et al.* 2007; Wettersten *et al.* 2004), which illustrate the workplace can be an escape or sanctuary from the abuse. However, for Judith the workplace did not offer this feeling of escape. What is clear from Judith's experience is that not having the ability to distance oneself emotionally or physically from the abuse can have a tremendous impact on a person's sense of self. Judith's experience also alerts us to the fact that intimate partner abuse not only impacts on women employed within organisations, but it also affects women who are self employed.

All women engaged in 'boundary work' indicated that they had to be able to differentiate home and work environments, be it physically or emotionally. But speaking to some women revealed that the work environment was an essential

aspect in their ability to differentiation between the two realms. Ashforth *et al.* (2000) and Nippert-Eng (1996) propose that stark contrasts between home and workplace can be problematic for individuals in negotiating their identities within each realm. However, many women indicated that it was this stark contrast between home and work that facilitated their ‘boundary work’, allowing them to develop a more positive sense of self within the workplace. As Catherine’s experience suggests, contrast between home and workplace ‘experiential realms’ is key. Catherine had two positions of employment during the time of the abuse, one full-time the other part-time. When describing the environment of her full-time workplace, Catherine explained that although work was a financial necessity, it also provided her with the ability to socially interact with others and gave her a sense of normality.

*“I mean I was out with **friends** all day and then would come home with money at the end of the day, plus things were normal if I was going to work, we weren’t fighting, so it felt like, a relief mostly to be out of the situation. If I was going to work normally things were ok, that is if he wasn’t keeping me hostage [laughter] things were going along ok, I enjoyed it and loved working there”* (Catherine, Sales Assistant/Cleaner).

Contrasting this statement with the one below, one sees how it was difficult for Catherine to differentiate her part-time workplace and home experiences.

“The second job I never had that camaraderie at all, it was another part of him really, I felt as if I was a loner, I went cleaning at ____ in _____ and they were all old women and they all smoked to death [laughter], and it was just a very aggressive place to be and it felt like being at home. It didn’t feel comfortable like the other workplace did, but I had no friends as such there, I was mainly working on my own, which wasn’t bad, but I didn’t feel any self worth like I did at the other workplace” (Catherine, Sales Assistant/Cleaner).

The negative language utilised by Catherine to describe her second workplace suggests an aggressive and joyless atmosphere and it is due to this that she was unable to distinguish between her home and work environment. Catherine also indicates that the feeling of isolation within the workplace augmented her sense of negative self-worth, whereas her full time workplace environment had the opposite affect. Catherine’s experience illustrates how important the workplace environment is for participants’ ability to distinguish between home and workplace and improve their sense of self. As Nippert-Eng (1996) suggests, the more a person attempts to differentiate work from home ‘experiential realms’, “the larger mutually exclusive territory of each realm becomes” (pg. 100). By contrast, similarities between home and workplace experiential realms thwart successful implantation of ‘boundary work’, thus preventing Catherine’s construction of an alternative sense of self within the workplace.

Rothman *et al.* (2007) found that work allowed women to counter the feelings of low self-worth they experienced within their relationship. Nevertheless, if one

does not have a sense of being valued by one's employer or experience social connectedness at work, this diminishes the effectiveness of the workplace being a bulwark against the continual verbal and physical assaults on the self taking place within the home. Thus Catherine's experiences suggest that the type of employment may be an important aspect in allowing women to construct a more positive identity within the workplace. In describing her full-time employment she indicated that she had more autonomy and felt rewarded and confident within her role. Lynch and Graham-Bermann (2004) commented that the quality of work was a factor in improving women's sense of self both within the workplace and at home, however they failed to specify what type of work would contribute towards an improved sense of self. From Catherine's experience, one could argue that employment which allows a level of autonomy and facilitates social interaction improves a survivor's sense of self.

She also stated that work gave her a sense of 'normality' and going to work made her feel as though everything was 'going to be ok'. This response resembles findings by Rothman *et al.* (2007) that the workplace can offer survivors a sense of normality, and that social interaction with work colleagues could "change their [...] perspectives on what was acceptable or tolerable in their relationships" (Rothman *et al.* 2007: 140). Many of the women I interviewed commented on how interacting with co-workers and overhearing conversations regarding their personal relationships, led them to re-evaluate their own relationship. For some this re-evaluation of their relationship made them question their internalised self-blame for the abuse. Becoming aware that it was their partners who were to blame and not themselves contributed to an improvement in their sense of self.

Successful Boundary Work: Uniforms and Gateways

Many of the women who successfully managed to minimise the impact of abuse on their experience of the workplace worked within highly skilled or professional positions of employment. Furthermore, many of these women had the ability to differentiate their home and workplace ‘experiential realms’ by placing symbolic meaning on their uniform. Louise (Midwife) stated that the abuse has less effect on her performance at work, because her uniform acted as a barrier, keeping the public and private spheres separate.

“It affected me less at work because with our job you put on a uniform, if you had interviewed me at the delivery suite you would see a different side of me to what you are seeing now, you tend to hide behind the uniform, and that uniform’s a bit of protection, you leave your personal life at home and you have to deal with other people’s problems, I don’t bring much home and I don’t take my home life to work, as soon as I put that uniform on I was more confident, I’m a different me, even now I’ve always been a different me in the uniform” (Louise, Midwife).

As one can see from this statement, Louise’s uniform was symbolic in that it demarcated her home and private lives, thus allowing her to detach herself from the emotional and physical abuse that was occurring at home. Nippert-Eng (1996) suggests that individuals differentiate home and work identities by placing symbolic meaning on items such as clothing and keys. She also states

that “the more we segment home and work, the more likely we are to feel as if we are ‘two different people’...[and] the more we rely on wearing different clothes to help us adopt and maintain each realm-specific persona” (pg. 51). Therefore, for Louise, wearing her uniform not only acted as a barrier between these two realms, but it also elicited a certain performance within the workplace. Louise’s experience suggests that her uniform was a ‘prop’ behind which she could hide. Goffman (1990a) argued that individuals utilise certain ‘props’ or ‘backgrounds’ to present a favourable performance to an audience, and that this successful ‘front stage’ performance allows them to obscure their ‘backstage’ or ‘real’ selves from their audience. Goffman (1990b) particularly believed this to be the case for stigmatised individuals, who had characteristics or attributes that they believed an audience would deem socially inappropriate, therefore they would try and ‘pass’ as ‘normal’. For Goffman (1990a) this presentation of self was a process that individuals were conscious of at some level and, that if the ‘actor’ were to remove the grease paint, one would discover the ‘authentic’ self. Louise’s use of the term ‘hide’ certainly suggests a conscious effort to conceal a certain part of her life when she was in the workplace. However, it seems to denote more than simply concealing the abuse from her work colleagues, rather the use of the uniform facilitated a process of disassociation. Donning the uniform allowed Louise to construct another identity within the workplace, one which gave her more confidence.

Uniforms are a means by which organisations try to regulate their workforce, however, and women and men do resist these machinations of power. Nippert-Eng (1996) posits that uniforms are symptomatic of organisational policies, in

that they are utilised by organisations to encourage their employees to demarcate ‘territories of the self’, or more specifically home and workplace identities. Therefore, uniforms also signify an organisation’s desire to separate the public and private realms. This power of uniforms to separate the public and private is clearly illustrated in Louise’s statement, in that “*you leave your personal life at home and deal with other people’s problems*”. Thus, engaging with the discourses relating to midwifery that are materialised within the uniform allowed Louise to manage the impact of abuse.

Karen (Nurse) also placed symbolic meaning on her uniform, however, she also placed significance on physical landmarks, which allowed her to compartmentalise the home and workplace.

“Like I said, it didn’t affect me much, because at the gate at the hospital I know that I am going to have a good day and I am not going to worry about this, basically what happened was that, the more I am there, the moment that I walk through the hospital gate I forget about him, because of the environment I work in there is a good team, so I have a very good environment in the workplace. The team are excellent and I love my job because you get lots of positive feedback from the patients, and I am wearing my name badge with my name on it and some patients ask for me, you know, we want Karen, so it makes you feel important that people love you” (Karen, Nurse).

This statement seems to suggest that for Karen the hospital gate has some symbolic meaning, for example, it demarcated not only the physical separation between 'home' and 'work', but it also allowed Karen to distance herself from emotions relating to the 'private' realm. Nippert-Eng (1996) posits that physical environments shape our behaviour, how we feel and the meanings we construct within certain places. "The physical features of our workplace and home contribute to our personal experiences and meanings of home and work in what are sometimes the most undeniable but taken for granted ways" (Nippert-Eng, 1996: 189). In addition to the physical landmarks, Karen also suggested that the workplace environment facilitated her ability to distance herself from the events at home. She stated that the abuser would relentlessly make negative comments about her abilities, attractiveness and character, which seriously affected her self-confidence. Aguilar and Nightingale's (1994) study of intimate partner abuse and its impact on self-esteem tried to ascertain what forms of abuse had the largest affect on self-esteem. They argued that different forms of abuse, such as physical, emotional and sexual abuse co-occurred and thus it was difficult to determine with any accuracy which form of abuse had the greatest impact. Their results however suggested that those women who had experienced emotional abuse were most affected.

It seems as though Karen's workplace offered her a high level of satisfaction or reward, due to receiving positive feedback from colleagues and patients. Nippert-Eng (1996) suggests an individual's desire to segregate their home and work experiential realms could be associated with the level of reward gained within each realm. However, as we have seen, not all workplace environments offer a

sense of reward. Karen is employed within a skilled profession, one that has been professionalised thus requiring a certain level of educational attainment (Halford *et al.* 1997). This type of position will provide a higher sense of achievement and reward than manual, unskilled positions of employment. As Pollert's (1981) research indicates, unskilled work can be dehumanising and unrewarding for women. Hochschild (1997) also found that women's perceptions of work being a haven differed tremendously between those employed in "desirable" and "undesirable" jobs, with the latter offering women little refuge, no matter "what the realities of their actual homes lives" (pg. 202). Therefore, workplace environment and, more importantly, occupation have an impact on how successful boundary work and the construction of a positive sense of self can be within the workplace.

Reversed Worlds: Work being like Family

A number of participants, when describing their workplace, utilised language one would associated with descriptions relating to the private sphere. In some instances, participants used familial language to describe their work colleagues. What was particularly interesting is that the gendered nature of the workplace seemed to have an impact on the language utilised. Many of the participants likened their male work colleagues to members of their family. Susanne, for instance, indicated a siblingship bond with her male co-workers. She explained that she started working in the predominantly male dominated engineering firm at the age of 18, and her young age made her feel like a 'little sister' in relation to her male co-workers.

“I was only 18 when I started there and they treated me like their kid sister, so they were actually quite protective, not so much a flirty thing, but quite protective you know. I used to make a few jokes and stuff and they used to think “well she is quiet but she can have a laugh,” but it was nice because it felt quite comforting because, you know, they were looking after me and the prat I was with wasn’t looking after me very well [laughter]” (Susanne, Administration).

It is interesting in Susanne’s description of her male work colleagues she invokes specific language such as ‘kid sister’ and ‘comforting’, terms that signify powerful emotions and feelings. On the one hand, this statement highlights the gendered power dynamics operating within Susanne’s workplace, particularly the fact that she worked within a masculine environment. Pollert’s (1981) study of women workers within a ‘man’s world’ documents the sexual dynamics between male and female workers, with women continuously having to negotiate “sexist patronisation not just from the [...] foremen, but from any men that worked around them” (pg. 142). In order to survive these sexist jokes and/or flirtations “with some pride”, Pollert found that many of the women responded with a witty riposte, which sometimes resulted in them colluding with and, therefore, perpetuating “the language of control” (pg. 143). However, Susanne’s case is interesting because at the end of her statement she compares the relationship she had with her male colleagues to her relationship with the abuser, commenting that her workplace provided her with a level of comfort and protection, which was missing at home. Approaching Susanne’s experience from a macro

perspective, one could argue that Susanne was negotiating gendered power relations within the workplace and at home. Yet, this would neglect the fact that she placed positive symbolic meaning on these people at work, so that interacting with these individuals elicited certain emotions and feelings for Susanne.

One normally attributes 'comfort' and 'protection' to the home environment, in that one can retreat from the harsh realities of the 'public' realm to the security and comfort of the 'private'. However, as scholars working in the field of intimate abuse have tirelessly argued, the 'private' sphere may provide men an escape from the brutalities of the 'public' realm, but for women it is the place where they are most likely to suffer sexual, physical and emotional abuse (Dobash and Dobash 1980). Hochschild (1997) also highlights the inaccuracy of this conception, stating that the traditional perspective of the 'home' as a place in which people relax, and 'work' as an environment in which people are coerced into behaving in a certain manner is completely reversed for some women. Hochschild's (1997) research showed that home life was stressful, particularly for working mothers, who not only had to participate in the labour market, but were also burdened with the responsibility of childcare. But even when the stresses of work outweighed those of home, Hochschild found that women who were employed felt less depressed, thought better of themselves and were more satisfied with life than women who were not employed. She also found that, for one of her participants, work became a place where she could escape her husband's abusive behaviour and "recover from traumatic experiences" (pg. 171). In discussing how the workplace, for some individuals, becomes their home, Hochschild states "the emotional magnets beneath home and workplace

are in the process of being reversed...some people find in work a respite from the emotional tangles at home. Others virtually marry their work, investing it with an emotional significance once reserved for family, whilst hesitating to trust loved ones at home” (1997: 44-45). Susanne experienced tremendous emotional and physical abuse at home, and she viewed her workplace as an environment that offered her respite; moreover the interaction with her co-workers offered her something that was missing from her ‘private’ life. She gained a ‘social connectedness’ from her interaction with her co-workers, which made her feel secure, feelings that are often associated with familial relationships (Rothman *et al.* 2007).

Other participants likened their male or female co-workers to parental figures. Halford *et al.* (1997) discovered that certain individuals utilised familial language to describe relationships within the workplace, with a number of female nurses describing their occupational equivalent male counterparts as ‘brothers’ and superiors as ‘uncles’. They found that men, but predominantly women, employ familial or kinship discourses in order to circumvent the heterosexualisation that is forever present within the workplace. “These discourses offer women a range of ‘subject positions’ through which they can position themselves in relation to men as equals or authoritative, and through which men can position themselves in non-hegemonic masculine roles, both subordinate to female authority and in positions of authority themselves” (Halford *et al.* 1997: 238).

It is difficult to arrive at a definite understanding of why a number of participants utilised familial language when describing their relationship and feelings regarding the workplace. It could be, as Halford *et al.* (1997) propose, that participants adopted this perspective in order to eschew the gender power relations within the workplace and, given the fact that these women experienced unequal power relations within their home lives, it is not inconceivable that this is the case. However, the workplace offered Susanne the feeling of being protected, or as Rothman *et al.* (2007) put it 'emotional safety' (pg. 141) and in this context the use of familial language could simply connote, as Hochschild (1997) suggests, a 'reversal of worlds' (pg. 44). I would venture to suggest that both perspectives apply to a certain degree. Albeit the workplace granted participants interaction with other people and a feeling of social connectedness, they also had to negotiate organisational gender relations in their construction of conceptual boundaries and constructing a positive sense of self.

Workplace Providing Autonomy: A Place We Can "Be Ourselves"

A number of women explained that they felt as though they could express themselves within their workplace environment, in contrast to their 'private' lives in which they felt repressed. This feeling of freedom within the workplace gave these women a sense of physical and emotional escape, which contributed toward developing a more positive sense of self. Janis explained that the workplace gave her a sense of normality and the freedom to enter into workplace discussions and air comments relating to certain issues without the fear that a work colleague would react negatively. This contrasted with how she felt within

her relationship, where the abuser would constantly imply that she was stupid and would therefore not allow her to have an opinion. Lammers *et al.* (2005) found that women who experienced emotional abuse stated that their partners would prevent them from voicing their opinion. This led to abused women feeling angry, but also resulted in their loss of self-esteem or sense of identity. However, as the statements below suggest, Janis felt confident in her abilities at work and could voice her opinion, which dramatically improved her sense of self, compared with the repressive environment within her relationship.

“He could be very verbally abusive and shouting and quite threatening, so I guess I became much more fearful over time, I started becoming very sort of submissive and would agree with him even if I didn’t really agree with him, do anything not to aggravate him, it was a whole host of emotions is what it was like living with him, he was completely unpredictable, I never knew what I was gonna say that would, you know, it could be something completely innocent as far as I was concerned, but he would take it the wrong way”.

“You know, this ability to come into work and have this, you know, a bit more of a normal sort of life really, communication and relationships with people that I wasn’t getting at home and that did help, it also helped in that I just threw myself into my work, I did tend to throw myself into my work, which meant that I was focusing and thinking about other things rather than thinking about what was

happening at home, it was an area where I had some control over for me” (Janis, Personnel Officer).

By immersing herself in the workplace, Janis was able to develop and construct an identity which improved her confidence and sense of self. Hochschild (1997) found that women, more than men, felt more at home within the workplace due to feeling more competent and appreciated in that environment. Many of the women Hochschild interviewed attributed these feelings of ‘home’ to their workplace relationships which provided a level of emotional support that was lacking within their private life. As we can see, Janis certainly lacked emotional support within her relationship, with the abuser constantly deriding and criticising her; whereas in the workplace she was able to engage in discussions with work colleagues, in which she could express her viewpoint without fear of condemnation. It is also interesting that Janis raises the issue of ‘control’ with regards to her workplace. Rothman *et al.* (2007) found that women suffering intimate partner abuse felt as though work not only gave them access to economic resources, but it also gave them a sense of control. Work, therefore, is a part of their lives in which abused women can exercise a level of control, whereas in their relationships their power and control are thwarted by the abuser. Work not only offered Janis an escape, but it also allowed her to construct a contrasting sense of identity to the one she had within her relationship.

Workplace Environment Facilitating an ‘Authentic’ or ‘Inauthentic’ Sense of Self

An overwhelming number of those women interviewed said that their employment gave them a sense of purpose in life and self-worth. This included those women within low paid, low status positions of employment. Furthermore, some women even reported that at work they felt more themselves, that the workplace environment provided them access to their ‘authentic’ self. The construction of these ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ positive identities within the workplace was not achieved by all participants, but this was contingent on their workplace environment being decidedly different from their home. Nippert-Eng (1996) has argued that “*work* may be the place we can be really ‘ourselves’”, due to home being associated with “distasteful work” [italics original] (pg. 25). However, for the women I interviewed home was not necessarily associated with ‘distasteful work’, rather it was an environment in which they were completely stripped of their sense of self.

Many of the participants discussed feeling more ‘themselves’ within their workplace than they felt at home. However, in discussing how she felt within the workplace, Sarah initially stated that at work she adopted a more ‘professional’ identity, suggesting that she was conscious of putting on a ‘front stage’ performance for the ‘audience’ at work (Goffman 1990a), rather than the workplace facilitating the feeling of an ‘authentic’ self.

“I suppose they just knew what I wanted them to know, whereas my partner knew the real me, you know what I mean, there is that professional you isn’t there and there is a personal you, and they just saw what I wanted them to see” (Sarah, Health Promotion Specialist).

This statement does suggest a certain level of presentation management, that Sarah was simply adopting a certain façade in order to prevent her work colleagues from seeing her ‘real’ self or ‘back stage’ (Goffman 1990a). When I asked Sarah to expand on this feeling of professionalism within the workplace, her response was ambiguous at first, illustrating a level of uncertainty as to who the ‘real’ Sarah was. However, after a moment of contemplation, Sarah indicated that perhaps the ‘real’ self was the Sarah at work and that the Sarah at home was a ‘performance’ that responded accordingly to the abuser’s wishes.

*“I suppose, I think that is **me** and perhaps that was the **real me** at work and the person at home was the person he made me, the **real** person was the person at work, happy, safe, I felt very secure with these people at work and the person at home was the person he turned me into, you know, lack of self-esteem, confidence etc”* (Sarah, Health Promotion specialist).

Sarah indicated that these different senses of self were informed by the different environments. For example, she stated that whilst at work she did not have to worry about pleasing her work colleagues in the same manner as she would her

partner; that within the workplace she could display confidence and self-esteem, whereas at home she acquiesced to her partner in order to prevent verbal assaults.

Rebecca's experience was similar to Sarah's, in that there was a level of ambiguity regarding her 'real' or 'authentic' self. Initially, Rebecca stated that going to work allowed her to connect with her 'real' self, but then suggested that at work she was merely performing. However, as this statement illustrates, Rebecca found it extremely difficult to describe these different senses of self.

*“Going to work there was actually part of **me** that was still there and it wasn't just somebody's partner or mum, it was **me** that was there, ok it wasn't the real me, but it was still, I don't know it is really difficult to explain, I am still finding out [laughter] I know that I think the real me is very loud and laughs a lot”* (Rebecca, Social Worker).

In their investigation of how mothers balance their work and family lives through boundary work, Cunningham-Burley *et al.* (2005) found that many of the women they interviewed stated that work allowed them to be more themselves, or as one woman put it “I'm not a mother in work, I'm an individual if you like” (pg. 25). That the workplace offers mothers the ability to construct an alternative sense of self was also found by Halford and Leonard (2006), with many of their interviewees stating that they felt more 'themselves' or 'me' at work. Halford and Leonard (2006) attribute this feeling of fractured identity to an ontological

crisis derived from the traumatic and emotional upheaval of motherhood. Moreover, they argue that there is a distinction between men's and women's construction of these separate identities, with the latter constructing an alternative identity in order to cope with the general demands of family life. Hochschild (2003) has argued that because individuals have to perform 'emotional labour' within the workplace, they begin to question who they really are. For Hochschild (2003) 'emotional labour' detaches employees from their 'real' sense of self, a process which she believes is psychologically damaging. However, Ashforth and Tomiuk (2000) question Hochschild's negative perception of 'emotional labour' by suggesting that individuals either exit the roles informed by organisational scripts or internalise them as a means of reducing the dissonance between their perception of their 'true' selves and the organisational role. Building on Hochschild's (2003) concepts of 'deep' and 'surface acting,' Ashforth and Tomiuk (2000) propose that there are two forms of authenticity, surface and deep authenticity. Surface authenticity is concerned with behaviours within a given encounter, whereas deep authenticity is concerned with identity. Deep authenticity occurs when one's emotional expression or display is consistent with a specific identity that one has internalised or wants to internalise as a reflection of self. Therefore, by internalising this organisational role, which many of the women indicated gave them autonomy and a feeling of self worth, they were constructing a specific identity that allowed them autonomy and a feeling of self worth. Furthermore, with many of the women commenting that within their 'private' lives they were stripped of their identity or lost that connection with 'who' they were, internalising their organisational identity could be a means of retaining a sense of

self which they had before the abuse occurred. Therefore, for those women who reported a sense of diminished identity within their abusive relationships, the workplace could grant them access to more 'authentic' positive identities. However, access to this positive sense of self was contingent on the workplace experiential realm being different to their home realm, and for some women this was not the case, particularly those in low paid, low status positions.

However, as Rebecca's experience illustrates, these identities are fluid; there is a level of tension between her public and private identities, and which one is 'authentic'. In a study of mature-age students in higher education, Adams (1996) also found a tension between 'personal' and 'social' identities and explored how gender identity penetrates the process of reconciling these differences. She posited that even though men and women both experience this tension, the latter are more ambiguous regarding their feelings relating to identity. However, many of Adams's (1996) female participants commented that they pursued higher education in order to discover themselves and to 'take control' of their lives. Similar comments were made by many of the women I interviewed when discussing their experiences of the workplace and what employment meant to them. In a sense, this conflict between the public and private sense of self which Adams (1996) found confirms Giddens's (1991) argument that women in contemporary society do engage in a variety of social experiences, which can produce contradictory feelings of 'self'. However, as the experiences of some of the women I interviewed illustrate, some women do not have the opportunity to engage in differing social experiences, and employment within some working environments does not cause this conflict regarding feelings of self. Conversely,

those women who did report feeling as though the workplace allowed them to be more ‘themselves’ indicated that these senses of self were fragile and could be disrupted.

Disrupting Sense of Self within the Workplace: Confrontation at Work

Even though many of the women engaged in boundary work in order to prevent the abuse from impacting on their workplace environment and sense of self, boundaries, as Cunningham-Burley *et al.* (2005) point out, “can be transgressed or threatened by a range of factors” (pg. 32). Disruption of workplace identities occurred as a result of aspects of women’s ‘private’ lives occurring within the workplace or the abuser contacting them via telephone or appearing at work. Susanne indicated that she felt extremely uncomfortable when confrontational situations arose within the workplace.

“I don’t like it even being slightly confrontational at work, I don’t like situations like that, even now when things get a bit shouty I don’t like it” (Susanne, Administrator).

Jane, like many other participants, indicated how working gave her a positive sense of self. However, at one point she stated that she was being bullied by one of her co-workers. She explained that she felt confident in her workplace abilities and that she found her employment rewarding, which gave her a positive sense of self. Yet, these positive experiences within the workplace were rapidly being eroded due to her co-worker’s harassing and inconsiderate behaviour. The

combination of experiencing abuse within her home life and encountering emotionally abusive behaviour within the workplace resulted in Jane having to take time off work.

“It was really difficult because I was working with a girl who was very bullying, not just to me but all members of staff, to the point where I tried to say to her, look, you know, we have got to work this out. I’m a teacher and you need to follow these things, and she started yelling at me and she went to the head teacher and said that I swore at her and stuff, which was total lies, and at that time I was working half days because I was going through a rough time and I just couldn’t cope with it, so I ended up having time off” (Jane, Teacher).

Not only did this incident of confrontation within the workplace result in Jane having to take time off work, but it also drastically affected her self-confidence within the workplace. Franzway *et al.*’s (2008) Australian study relating to intimate partner abuse and employment found that many women had difficulty in dealing with violent or abusive situations at work. In some cases confrontation or bullying within the workplace resulted in women losing their employment. Confrontation within the workplace is also highlighted by Costello *et al.* (2005) who argue that women try to avoid situations at work which “replicate abuse dynamics, such as men in the workplace shouting or power imbalances with trainers/bosses” (pg. 258). Although Nippert-Eng (1996) does not address the issue of intimate partner abuse when discussing boundary work, she does

highlight the fact that individuals do associate certain characteristics and behaviour with particular realms and if certain behaviours occur out of their specific context, this can cause discomfort, resulting in “conflicting aspects of self” (pg. 74). Therefore, these instances of confrontation within the workplace can sometimes damage women’s ability to construct or access an ‘authentic’ sense of self.

However, not all participants indicated that they felt uncomfortable about confrontation occurring within the workplace. Rebecca stated that within the workplace she felt as though she could effectively handle confrontation. She explained that within her employment, she occasionally came into contact with abusive men and handling these clients in a confident and assertive manner gave her a sense of empowerment.

‘I never shied away from confrontation. We had this one guy who was really really aggressive, violent and nobody else would see him and I, it was a really challenging interview I have got to say, but I stuck to my guns. I think because it gave me power it was like getting a little bit of power back, if I can control that I can control anything, I just couldn’t deal with it at home’ (Rebecca, Social Worker).

In contrast to other participants who stated that confrontation within the workplace made them feel uneasy and, in a sense disrupted their sense of self. Rebecca’s engagement in confrontational issues in the role of social worker provided her with a means of gaining power. Interestingly, however, she

indicates that this sense of control within the workplace and especially in dealing with abusive men did not transfer into her home life. Ben-Ari and Dayan (2008) also found that social workers who worked with clients suffering intimate partner abuse were unable to utilise their professional knowledge or ways of being at work within their personal relationships. My findings resemble theirs in that a number of the women they interviewed also indicated a complete separation of their work and home lives. Ben-Ari and Dayan (2008) argue that one of the reasons why so many of the women did not employ the knowledge or aspects of their professional identity within their personal life is because “bring[ing] the professional world into the personal world could jeopardise the existence of their own intimate relationship” (pg. 1434). Furthermore, they argue that it could threaten their ‘professional’ identity and, more importantly, their workplace sense of self.

In interpreting this statement one has to take into consideration Rebecca’s employment and the specific power resources that this role is granted within certain interactions. Being a social worker and confronting abusive men within the public sphere, in which one is afforded a level of protection, is contextually different to a woman standing up to their abusive partner within the private realm. Furthermore, one has to take into account how workplace environments are not simply physical realms but experiential realms that elicit certain emotions and senses of self (Cunningham-Burley *et al.* 2005; Nippert-Eng 1996). Internalising the role of social worker granted Rebecca a certain level of power within her interaction with these abusive men. Therefore, her workplace identity gave her a sense of empowerment, which improved her sense of self. However,

due to the fractured nature of ‘social’ and ‘personal’ identities (Adams 1996), this sense of empowerment did not transfer into her private life.

Even though confrontation at work was highlighted by a number of women as compromising their sense of self at work, Karen stated that within her role as nurse she frequently came into contact with patients who reminded her of the abuser. As I highlighted earlier Karen engaged in boundary work by placing symbolic meaning on her uniform and the hospital gates in order to compartmentalise her home and work experiential realms, thus preventing the abuse from impacting on her workplace. Nevertheless, Karen stated that she found it extremely difficult to provide care for black African men, due to the abuser being a black African man.

“I find it difficult to treat black guys, because some of them come in from Africa with the high-temperature or something and I find it difficult because it reminds me and I don’t need to deal with this, because sometimes they are flirting with you, you know and then they ask you ‘hello nurse’, you know, but otherwise it doesn’t affect me much in the workplace” (Karen, Nurse).

It is clear that Karen achieved an improved sense of self from engaging in certain practices associated with nursing, however, this statement explicitly indicates the gendered nature of nursing. It also highlights the gendered power relations that Karen has to negotiate within the workplace, with male patients utilising certain language or practices to exert power. Halford *et al.* (1997) document how nurse-

patient interaction is sexualised in a heterosexualised manner, particularly by young men. Karen's experience illustrates how women have to continuously negotiate the unequal power dynamics within both the public and private spheres. Moreover, it re-confirms findings by Costello *et al.* (2005) that abused women may find it difficult to negotiate those power imbalances within the workplace which are indicative of their experiences within the 'private' realm. Nevertheless, one cannot forget how internalising the role of nurse granted Karen an improved sense of self, which contributed substantially to her mental wellbeing. Finally, Karen's experiences support Riger *et al.* (2002) whose findings document how intimate partner abuse impacts on women's ability to do their job, and their workplace relations.

On-the-job Harassment

Along with negotiating the gender and sexualisation within male dominated workplace environments, participants also highlighted how their working in close proximity with male work colleagues affected their abusers' behaviour. Rebecca was employed as a social worker in a department that had a large proportion of male employees. Initially, she used to do night shifts where she typically worked predominantly with men. However, as her relationship progressed she discontinued working nights because the abuser obsessively accused her of having sexual relations with her male co-workers.

'I got accused of sleeping with people and getting called a slag every day and you know, I got every time in my employment I have been

accused of sleeping with most of the men that I have worked with, which made it very difficult. I never went out to any social functions with work and I would be walking on egg shells at work in case he turned up at work' (Rebecca, Social Worker).

Continuing to describe how working in a male environment affected her emotionally and physically, Rebecca stated that as the relationship progressed the abuser became increasingly paranoid about her interactions with male colleagues at work. One evening the abuser became so convinced that Rebecca was having an affair with one of her work colleagues that he physically assaulted her. For Rebecca, working with men had a profound effect on her safety within her relationship. As a result, it became vitally important that she constructed a boundary between home and work life in her relations with her male co-workers.

Rebecca's partner would also regularly appear unannounced at her workplace, which made her feel on edge all the time. In explaining how this made her feel, Rebecca stated that it was as if she had to monitor constantly her interactions with her male co-workers. She became consciously aware of her behaviour around male colleagues, making sure that she did not walk out of the building either at lunch or on an evening with a male co-worker. This strict routine of self-surveillance within the workplace needed to be implemented because Rebecca never knew when her partner would appear.

"I would have to make sure that I wasn't around anyone, that I wasn't talking to anyone. I used to stand outside absolutely dreading

it if someone came out the door and started talking to me at that moment when he would pull in, I would be coming down the stairs and if any males came with me I would think “I can’t walk out with them”. I would have to pretend that I had forgotten something and go back just so that I didn’t have to walk out those doors with them, just in case he was waiting” (Rebecca, Social Worker).

Although Rebecca stated that going to work allowed her to develop a more positive sense of self and construct an identity that was empowering, she was also consciously maintaining a degree of emotional and physical distance between her and her male co-workers out of fear that her partner would be watching. Cunningham-Burley *et al.* (2005) suggest that although some breaches of the conceptual boundary between home and work can be managed by most women, there are some occasions when these can have a fundamental impact and undermine this boundary work. Abusers appearing at the workplace unannounced can disrupt women’s construction of a positive sense of self within the workplace. This disruption of the boundary is also highlighted by Nippert-Eng (1996) who states that family members coming to the workplace can present certain individuals with a dilemma in terms of adjusting their workplace and home selves to accommodate the presence of the family member. In Rebecca’s case, this continual awareness and self surveillance was a means by which she maintained the boundary between her home and workplace. However, her experience also illustrates how women’s conceptual boundaries can too easily be disrupted by abusers appearing at the workplace, and how this can impact on one’s sense of self within the workplace.

Logan *et al.* (2007) found that many women who suffer intimate partner abuse were stalked and harassed by their partners at their workplace. This included the abuser physically stalking their partner by following them to work, continually calling them at work and coming to their workplace unannounced. They discovered that these tactics had serious consequences on women's ability to concentrate at work and resulted in poor productivity. In addition, they found that many of the women who reported being stalked and harassed at work suffered extreme psychological problems, which resulted in absenteeism. A small number of their participants indicated that their partners would show up at their work because they were extremely jealous and obsessively afraid that they would meet someone else at work and leave them. Though Logan *et al.* (2007) believed that jealousy and control were motivating factors in abusers' harassment of their partners, they did not take into account the gendered dimensions of the workplace, such as survivors working within a predominantly male environment, and how this might contribute to the level of harassment. However, Rothman *et al.* (2007) and Wettersten *et al.* (2004) found that abusers would appear at their partner's workplace through jealousy of their partner's workplace relationships. Wettersten *et al.* (2004) found that abusers even accused their partners of infidelity with work colleagues, which in some cases resulted in women having to leave their employment. All the women I interviewed who had experienced 'on-the-job surveillance' worked in a male dominated environment. This suggests that the gendered dynamics of the workplace in which abused women are employed may increase the risk of 'on-the-job' harassment.

Harassment via Telephone

Incessant telephone calls by the abuser to their place of work was the most common form of harassment experienced by the women I interviewed. Swanberg *et al.* (2007) also found that harassment by telephone was the most common form of interference tactic employed by abusers. These telephone calls ranged from the abusive to the pointless. Nevertheless, women indicated that these telephone calls were a major distraction that constantly interrupted their concentration at work. Rebecca indicated that the relentless telephone calls diminished her ability to separate her home and work life. Although she tried to leave her 'private' life at the office door, these telephone calls destabilised her conceptual boundary between home and work. This breach of home into the workplace was also highlighted by Alison, a social worker, who commented that her partner would relentlessly try to contact her throughout the day on her personal mobile phone.

"He [the abuser] constantly phoned me, you know, 'what you doing', you know that kind of thing general idle chitchat, and he would text me throughout the day too, so I suppose in some ways it can be quite distracting, but he phoned me sometimes 10 times a day whilst I was at work" (Alison, Social Worker).

Although Alison states that these telephone calls were of an idle nature, there is no doubt that they were distracting. Nippert-Eng (1996) comments that telephone calls received at work are perhaps one of the most 'brutal' incursions of the 'private' realm into the workplace and due to their 'instantaneousness' it places

great strain on the recipient and disrupts their workplace sense of self (pg. 142). She continues by suggested that in order to reduce the “transitional stress of cross-realm calls” individuals can refuse to give the caller their attention, therefore retain their workplace sense of self (pg. 144). However, this strategy of ignoring the telephone calls or not giving abusers attention was not an option for many of the women I spoke to. Alison said that even though the telephone calls were not inherently abusive, she was compelled to answer them because failure to do so would simply escalate the harassment and aggravate the abuser, which could increase the risk of assault when she got home.

“If I didn’t answer and you know, if he had something important to tell me or wondered where I was, that would get me into trouble so I had to answer the phone or text to justify why I couldn’t answer the phone at that time” (Alison, Social Worker).

In Alison’s case, the incessant telephone calls from the abuser resemble a form of surveillance and control, therefore; even though the abuser was not physically present they tried to exert their control via telephone. This is especially made explicit in the last line of the above statement, where she says that failure to answer or respond to these telephone calls would have to be explained, otherwise she would face repercussions. Therefore, not only were unremitting telephone calls a serious source of distraction throughout the working day, they were also a means by which the abuser could monitor Alison’s whereabouts.

Swanberg *et al.* (2007) and Swanberg and Macke (2006) found that one successful response to women disclosing abuse within the workplace was assistance from co-workers in addressing this form of interference tactic. Many of the women they interviewed indicated that co-workers would screen incoming telephone calls and thus prevent the abuser from contacting their partner at the workplace. Although this illustrates a further form of resistance and alternative coping mechanisms employed by abused women in order to survive, it also raises questions relating to disclosure, and whether this is another coping strategy. Furthermore, it raises the important question of whether this coping strategy totally undermines the conceptual boundary between home and work, thus resulting in the disruption of the workplace sense of self which could otherwise provide an improved self-esteem and self worth.

Conclusion

In adopting an interactionist approach and examining the micro relations and practices that women engage in, this chapter has established that abused women adopted various strategies in order to survive, and prevent intimate partner abuse from impacting on their employment. However, some women were more successful in adopting effective coping strategies than others. Also, some interference tactics were more problematic for survivors than others for example sleep deprivation seemed to be especially difficult to manage, with some women turning to alcohol in order to manage this form of abuse. Employing this form of coping strategy can not only exacerbate the impact of the abuse on women's

employment but it also can have negative consequences on childcare, mental health and health and safety within the workplace.

For many women, engaging in 'boundary work' was a major coping strategy. The establishment of "mental fences" around their home and working lives allowed them to contain their experience of abuse within their private lives and from impacting on their employment (Zerubavel 1999 cited in Ashforth *et al.* 2000: 474). However, not all women could successfully engage in boundary work, especially those who could not make a distinction between their home and workplace experiential realms. This was particularly evident for Judith who was in a business with her abusive partner which they ran from their private residence. For Judith, work was not a mental or physical escape. Other women, particularly those in low status and lowly paid positions of employment also indicated some difficulty in distinguishing their home and workplace realm. One participant even suggested that her workplace environment reminded her of the abusive relationship, with her work colleagues being very cold and her own feelings of isolation at work. Having a workplace environment in which women gain a sense of reward or appreciation therefore seems a crucial aspect in constructing a boundary between home and work. Lynch and Graham-Bermann (2004) suggested that the type of work is a factor in abused women's positive experiences of the workplace. But I would expand on this by suggesting that class needs to be taken into consideration when examining women's positive experiences of work. With women in low status low paid positions doing, as Pollert (1981) puts it, repetitive and dehumanising work, one has to ask whether this form of work provides the same level of escape and whether it allows abused

women to construct a positive sense of self within the workplace. Nippert-Eng (1996) has commented that the level of reward that women feel within their work or home realms has a strong bearing on the level to which they compartmentalise these aspects of their lives. Although reward from one's work is necessarily linked to class or occupational status, it is likely that those engaged in rewarding work, which allows them autonomy and control, are likely to be women in professional or skilled positions of employment.

Constructing a conceptual boundary between work and home not only allowed women to prevent the abuse from impacting on their employment, but it also allowed them to construct a positive sense of self identity, which was seen as more authentic. For many participants, immersing themselves within their organisational role and engaging in emotional labour within the workplace provided them with a positive sense of self. Ashforth *et al.* (2000) and Nippert-Eng (1996) suggest that individuals who engage in extreme compartmentalisation of their work and home lives face difficult challenges in negotiating the transition between home and workplace identities. However, for many of my informants the more they could compartmentalise their lives the more they felt as though they could manage the abuse and construct a positive sense of self within the workplace that countered their lack of self, or damaged sense of self, within their 'private' lives.

Even though this positive sense of self within the workplace provided women with a sense of self worth and, in some cases, a feeling of power, very rarely did these positive senses of self translate into their private lives. Furthermore, these

positive senses of self and the construction of a conceptual boundary were regularly challenged and/or disrupted by behaviour occurring within the workplace that resembled the abusive behaviour taking place at home (Costello *et al.* 2005). Abusers appearing at the workplace unannounced or making incessant telephone calls could also disrupt women's conceptual boundary and construction of self within the workplace.

Swanberg *et al.* (2007) have suggested that disclosure of abuse within the workplace allows women to manage interference tactics such as harassing telephone calls, with co-workers screening calls and preventing the abuser from contacting their partner. They go on to suggest that disclosure in itself can be a major coping strategy in that it strengthens women's support network within the workplace and thus increases the feeling of safety within the workplace. However, even though disclosure may result in a positive outcome, it is far from an easy process. Furthermore, there is a possibility that disclosure could fundamentally undermine other coping strategies, such as boundary work or the construction of a positive sense of self within the workplace. It is specifically these aspects which are examined within the next chapter.

Chapter Five:

The Interactional Dynamics of Disclosure and Non-Disclosure

Introduction

In the previous chapter I documented how a number of the women interviewed tried to manage and contain their experiences of abuse within the ‘private’ sphere. In order to accomplish this, they adopted coping strategies, such as constructing a conceptual boundary between their home and workplace and immersing themselves within their workplace identities.

This chapter focuses on women’s experiences of disclosure within the workplace and examines four particular issues. First, how women, particularly those occupying managerial positions of employment, experienced a tension between gaining a positive sense of self through engaging with certain organisational practices, but, at the same time, feeling constrained by them. In particular, these women feel inhibited from disclosing their situation within the workplace because doing so would disrupt the organisational roles that they internalised in order to construct a positive sense of self. Secondly, I will explore how some participants were reluctant to disclose their situation because they wanted to avoid being pressured by their work colleagues to leave the abuser. Following on from this discussion I examine the importance of co-workers in the process of disclosure and how gender relations have an impact on participants’ decisions to

disclose. Finally, I investigate how disclosure can have a profound impact on participants' constructed sense of self within the workplace, and suggest that it can undermine the conceptual boundary between home and work, or occur as a result of participants' inability to maintain their conceptual boundary. In the case of the latter scenario, it either resulted in participants leaving their employment or gaining tremendous support from work colleagues.

Workplace Identities: Barriers to Disclosure

Researchers have documented that women experiencing IPA suffer from extreme embarrassment and are ashamed of their situation (Swanberg and Logan 2005) and, in many cases, they internalise the negative comments that the abuser directs towards them and thus blame themselves for their predicament (Lammers *et al.* 2005). In addition, there is still a tremendous amount of stigma associated with intimate partner abuse, with individuals who experience abuse often being blamed for their situation; Hague *et al.* (2003) posit that stigma is one of the major factors prohibiting disclosure.

With regards to disclosure within the workplace, women not only have to overcome feelings of guilt and embarrassment, but the level of stigma still attached to intimate partner abuse means that they are also concerned that their employers will respond inappropriately to their situation. The international research conducted on intimate partner abuse and employment indicates that many women do not disclose for fear of losing their job. This fear is not unfounded, with research (Moe and Bell 2004; Shepard and Pence 1988;

Swanberg and Logan 2005) indicating that employers dismiss those employees suffering from abuse, due to expediency, in that they have neither the time, finances nor inclination to assist them (Swanberg and Logan 2005), particularly those who are frequently absent (Shepard and Pence, 1988).

A number of women interviewed commented that the fear of losing their job was a major barrier preventing them from disclosing within the workplace, but this was predominantly a concern for those women working in unskilled, low skilled and low paid occupations. This is not to say that those women working in highly skilled occupations did not also worry about losing their employment, but rather they were more concerned about their co-workers becoming aware of their 'private' self and, as a result, perceiving them in a negative manner. This was particularly apparent for those women who held managerial positions within organisations and is evident in Charlotte's experience.

Charlotte was employed as a nurse manager with the NHS during the time of the abuse. Like many participants, Charlotte constructed a conceptual boundary in order to compartmentalise her home and work realms and completely internalised the role of manager. When I enquired as to what her employment represented to her and how she felt at work, Charlotte said that she felt more 'authentic' at work. Throughout the interview she continually reiterated how proficient and professional she was within her role and that she was responsible for making important decisions relating to staffing levels and financial matters within her department. Moreover, in discussing these aspects of her workplace sense of self, Charlotte indicated that internalising the discourses relating to

management i.e. professionalism, decisiveness, and the ability to separate her public and private lives, gave her a sense of empowerment both inside and outside the workplace. However, in discussing an incident in which she had to attend work with a severe facial injury resulting from a physical attack, Charlotte stated that she felt compelled to conceal the abuse because she felt that disclosing her experiences of abuse would jeopardise her power and authority within the workplace.

“I didn’t want them to think that I could have possibly have gotten myself into that position, you know, I was supposed to be a capable person managing quite a lot of services in my own right, you know, a mental health nurse, I didn’t want them to think oh my god what a shit life this woman has and the fact that she can’t leave this obviously mad person” (Charlotte, Nurse Manager).

Charlotte indicated that prior to this physical assault, which left her with a visible facial injury, she had just received a promotion assuming a more senior and responsible role. It is evident from this statement that Charlotte was concerned that, if co-workers became aware of her situation, they would start to question her managerial capabilities. Throughout Charlotte’s narration of her experiences one senses a tension between her embracing and feeling empowered by management discourse, but also feeling constrained by it in so far as she was expected to embody this discourse and perform it convincingly and proficiently within the organisation. More importantly, from Charlotte’s interview one feels

as though this performance is regulated by surveillance, in that her co-workers would be watching to see if there were any flaws in her performance.

Halford *et al.* (1997) argue that although there has been a massive change in the discourses relating to women both within the home and workplace, there is still a gendered expectation relating to managerial positions, although this differs in degree depending on the employment sector. They suggest that, in order for women to succeed at managerial level, they must adopt attributes that are considered 'masculine', such as assertiveness and commitment to the organisation, and be visibly competent in separating their personal and private lives. Therefore, women within managerial positions may be acutely aware of the need to separate their home and workplace selves in order to prevent their co-workers, especially junior colleagues, from becoming aware of their situation and questioning their ability to manage within the organisation. Therefore, "workers may [...] restrict public knowledge of their lives outside work to prevent (them from being) subjected to discriminatory judgements", especially those in positions of authority or power within an organisation (Halford and Leonard 2001: 180).

"I think the fact that I worked in a caring environment looking after other people made it quite difficult, because I felt as though there was an expectation that this woman, me, that I surely should be able to look after myself, because I look after these vulnerable people all day, so how could I possibly not look after myself" (Charlotte, Nurse Manager)

Goffman (1990b) argued that stigmatised individuals engage in ‘passing’ within their everyday life and are continuously vigilant about concealing their ‘failing’, because this could leave those they have successfully deceived feeling betrayed and, as a result, they could question the individuals’ honesty. Interestingly, Charlotte stated that she had mixed feelings about deceiving her work colleagues. On the one hand she indicated that she was pleased that they could not see ‘back stage’, but, on the other, she desperately wanted someone to inquire as to the cause of her injury or whether she was OK. Or as Charlotte put it, she wanted someone to ask her ‘the question’.

“I was pleased they believed me but there was a few times when I just thought can’t one of you just ask a question because I might just tell you, but I think I also put up a barrier so people didn’t ask”
(Charlotte, Nurse Manager).

This statement suggests that Charlotte experienced an internal dilemma, in that she felt a sense of relief and success at being able to conceal the abuse, thus preventing the disclosure of a ‘spoilt’ private self, but, at the same time, she wanted her co-workers to know about her ‘failing’. Adopting a Goffmanian approach relating to stigma, Ragins (2008) argues that individuals generally want others to see them according to how they personally perceive themselves, even if their ‘real’ self is negative or ‘deviant’. “Individuals seek stable views of themselves to bolster their feelings of psychological coherence and display identity cues in order to create social environments that reinforce coherent self views” (Ragins, 2008: 198). As discussed in Chapter 4, although some workplace

environments allow women to develop a positive sense of self there is a continual tension between different perceptions of self (Adams 1996). This statement by Fiona highlights the tension that she experienced between what was expected within the workplace and wanting to disclose the abuse:

“You’re trying to keep everything right and your work is so important you don’t want to be disadvantaged and particularly for women nowadays, when there is such huge pressure on women to be successful career wives, if they were to admit to their employers that they are being abused a large number of employers would still see them as being weak, so what do you do if you’re a career girl and you’re going home and getting beaten up but you’re keeping it quiet, you’re not gonna tell your employer if you’re in a £50,000 or £60,000 a year job” (Fiona, Bank Clerk).

Halford *et al.* (1997) found that employees, particularly female employees, must be able to separate their private and work lives in order to illustrate their commitment to the organisations. Demonstrating one’s ability to compartmentalise home and work life was especially pertinent for female managers, where any evidence of an inability to prevent ‘personal’ matters impacting on one’s working life could damage one’s credibility as a manager. Therefore, one can understand Charlotte’s reluctance to disclose her situation and to allow co-workers to see ‘back stage’, because she felt that doing so could have seriously jeopardised her position as manager. Even though Charlotte’s position as manager helped her construct a more positive sense of self within the

workplace, it also prohibited disclosure. Swanberg *et al.* (2007) posit that there is a possible connection between employment status and disclosure within the workplace, although one should not assume that status determines disclosure, since other factors, such as organisational culture and situational contexts, influence disclosure. Charlotte's experiences suggest that not only did her employment status prevent her from disclosing abuse, but also her workplace environment exerted pressure to exhibit certain forms of behaviour which inhibited disclosure.

Interestingly, Charlotte highlighted another issue of contention regarding her position and disclosure. She explained that it was only after she left the relationship that she believed her workplace performance deteriorated, but because of her managerial position she found it easier to conceal this period of low productivity, through not having a superior monitoring her day-to-day performance.

"It went on for so long, I was completely chaotic for seven or eight months, you know, I was just fortunate enough to be in a position where I wasn't really being managed by anybody, so nobody was picking it up, but probably a manager would have got really pissed off with me, you know, if I was managing some money or something like that" (Charlotte, Nurse Manager).

Again, this highlights how employment status is connected to disclosure or the degree to which an individual can conceal the abuse within the workplace. Not

only does one's position within an organisation provide opportunities to construct a positive identity, which in turn constrains individuals from disclosing abuse, but those in managerial positions can also escape the problems which many with low paid, unskilled and tightly regulated production employment encounter, i.e. surveillance regarding productivity. Charlotte's predicament can be viewed from two perspectives: a) her educational achievement and professional occupation, which provided her with a level of financial and emotional security, allowed her to cope during and after she left the abusive relationship; and b) expectations regarding those occupying managerial positions i.e. displaying resilience, managing stressful situations, coupled with the expectations regarding successful women not being vulnerable, placed Charlotte in a difficult position. Ptacek (1999) argues that the 'class myth', that intimate partner abuse only occurs in uneducated, working class families, is still prevalent within society and prevents individuals from the realisation that violence against women is pervasive throughout society (pg. 21). Expanding on the issue of class, Weitzman (2000) specifically highlights the difficulties faced by successful women who experience intimate partner abuse, one of which is the assumption that abuse does not affect successful academic or business women. Weitzman (2000) argues that this common misconception that abuse only occurs within working class relationships presents an additional barrier to those women who are successful within their career but wish to disclose their situation. Not only does this myth inhibit successful women from disclosing their situation, but it also could have implications on how they perceive abusive behaviour within their relationships. For if intimate partner abuse is considered as something that women within lower socio-economic positions experience, then women

occupying higher socio-economic positions may not consider their partner's behaviour as intimate partner abuse.

Problematical or Unsupportive Co-workers: Pressure to Leave the Abuser

A number of women interviewed reported that they refrained from disclosing their situation to work colleagues because they believed that, if they did, they would face tremendous pressure to leave the abuser. Interestingly, those participants who indicated this as a prohibiting factor were employed in occupations in which they came into contact with families that were experiencing abuse. Therefore, their co-workers would have been knowledgeable about the complex nature of intimate partner abuse, however, this offered little comfort to these women.

Alison (Social Worker) reported that through her work, she and her co-workers regularly came into contact with families who were experiencing abuse and, as a result, issues regarding intimate abuse were frequently discussed within the workplace. From these lengthy discussions, Alison said that her colleagues knew that there were no 'quick fix' solutions regarding intimate abuse. Because of co-workers understanding and knowledge of intimate abuse Alison believed that they would offer her support and understanding. Nevertheless, she felt that she could not disclose her situation for fear of being pressured to leave the relationship before she was ready to do so.

"I didn't confide in anyone, I just kept it all inside, because I had no one to talk to. Because I thought if I mention this thing then I would

be taken away from somewhere that I didn't want to be taken away from at that time, because I thought I really loved him, you know, that he really needs me, so I wasn't ready to come out of that situation at that time. Because the love that I felt for him outweighed the violence in some kind of warped explanation if you like" (Alison, Social Worker).

This statement by Alison seems to indicate that at that time, she felt she was managing the situation and thus she did not feel ready to leave the relationship. Davies *et al.* (1998) expatiate upon the complexities regarding women's decision to leave an abusive relationship and state that although outsiders may consider those women who stay in abusive relationships to be passive 'victims', this is not necessarily the case. They maintain that women suffering abuse make appropriate decisions in order to maximise their safety; this may involve them engaging in extensive planning before leaving the relationship or in some cases, implementing staying strategies. Abused women may also wish to stay in an abusive relationship due to a number of reasons, one being that they still feel a tremendous level of attachment to their partner. Women who experienced "positive aspects to the relationship, little or no change in the frequency or severity of abuse, and ongoing expressions of love and affection [are] most likely to remain involved with their abusive partners" (Davies *et al.* 1998: 78). Furthermore, Davies *et al.* (1998) indicated that women who adopt staying strategies might seek employment or another means of social contact to enable them to develop an improved sense of self.

Alison compartmentalised her work and home lives as a means of managing the abuse. Furthermore, she reported that within the workplace she felt a sense of empowerment, that the workplace offered her more autonomy and allowed her to be more herself. Therefore, one could argue that by not disclosing her situation Alison was implementing a coping strategy and compartmentalising her home and workplace lives, allowing her to develop an improved sense of self, which would eventually lead to her having enough confidence to leave the relationship. Conversely, one could argue that Alison's implementation of these coping strategies prevented her from seeking help or support within the workplace, because doing so could have potentially undermined her conceptual boundary and disrupted her sense of self within the workplace. Therefore, Alison's wish not to disclose was her way of coping with the abuse, although as Davies *et al.* (1998) suggest, women implementing staying strategies should not be construed as women wanting to remain in violent relationships; rather it indicates the difficult and complex choices women have to make continuously within an abusive situation in order to survive.

Some participants indicated that, even though they did not disclose their situation, work colleagues gradually became aware that something was amiss either because of periods of absence or because they were visibly upset or unable to conduct their workplace duties. Swanberg *et al.* (2006b) describe this form of disclosure as a 'second thematic reason' for disclosure, that individuals experiencing abuse feel as though they have to explain absences to work colleagues or because they suspect that co-workers are aware of the abuse.

Laura stated that her work colleagues became suspicious after she returned to work visibly upset after a period of time off. In describing her workplace environment, she indicated that her position as a social worker brought her regularly into contact with families in which abuse was taking place. She explained that her work colleagues also managed clients who were experiencing intimate abuse, which made it difficult to conceal her situation within the workplace. On one particular occasion Laura came to work upset and her work colleagues immediately became concerned. Eventually, after being continually approached by co-workers enquiring about her well-being, she disclosed that she was having difficulty at home. However, the response of her co-workers was experienced as far from supportive, with many strongly advising her to leave the abuser.

“When I came into work upset people kind of became concerned about what's happening to me and I was off [work] for five weeks recently with stress, because people just constantly asked ‘how are things, how is he’, they think they’re being helpful but they aren’t, they are in a way because I know that they are concerned, but they are all saying ‘oh you should get out, you should get out’, you know ‘you need to leave him’ and any time I would say anything positive about him it is ‘that won’t last, that won’t last’ whatever, it just makes me feel at work more pressure to leave when I know the situation and I know that at some point I will have to leave or that there will be another incident, I have no doubt about it” (Laura, Social Worker).

Laura continued by commenting that because her work colleagues have worked with families experiencing abuse, she expected that they would be more understanding and empathetic to her situation and would not pressure her to leave the abuser.

There is a tension between co-workers' response to the 'disclosure' of the abuse and how Laura perceived their concerns and advice. To a certain extent one could argue that Laura's management of disclosure was sabotaged by co-workers enquiring about her well-being and, consequently, their actions placed Laura in a difficult and uncomfortable position. Nevertheless, their concern can be viewed in a positive light, in that they were trying to offer Laura support. This is acknowledged by Laura when she states "*they think they're being helpful but they aren't*". It has been argued (Staggs *et al.* 2007; Swanberg and Logan 2005; Swanberg and Macke 2006) that women who disclose within the workplace receive more support and that this allows them to continue their employment, helps improve their physical and emotional well-being and can, in some cases, give them the strength to leave the abusive relationship. However, Laura's experience suggests that the type of support provided by co-workers is a critical factor, and that advising the disclosing individual to leave their relationship could have a negative effect. In Laura's case she perceived the workplace as a space where she could escape to and, with co-workers knowing about her abusive relationship, this sense of detachment from her private life was eroded. Nevertheless, Laura indicated that although co-workers did continually pressure her to leave the relationship, they would always be there to offer her physical and emotional support. However, throughout the interview Laura reiterated that she

knew that one day she would have to make the decision to leave the abuser, but that decision would be made by her and no other.

A few other participants also reported that they had encountered pressure from work colleagues to leave the abuser after they disclosed. Unlike Laura, who disclosed to enquiring co-workers, Jennifer and Shannon opted to disclose their situation within the workplace in order to gain emotional support and physical protection. Jennifer reported that she specifically disclosed to her male co-workers because she felt as though they would provide her with physical protection whilst she was at work. Although Jennifer indicated that the abuser never harassed her at the workplace, he did occasionally come to the workplace in order to collect her after a shift or would accompany her to work on his days off. Like some other participants, Jennifer reported that the abuser could become extremely jealous or suspicious of men in close proximity to her (see Chapter 4 for discussion regarding jealousy). She explained that disclosing her situation to her work colleagues acted as a coping mechanism in that when the abuser appeared at the workplace her male co-workers would be vigilant and keep their distance from her. In implementing this strategy she minimised the abuser's jealousy and consequently reduced the possibility of abuse when she returned home. What is most interesting about Jennifer's disclosure is the fact that it was heavily influenced by her perceptions regarding masculinity. I will return to this later in the chapter. Now, I would like to return to the negative consequences of disclosure that both Jennifer and Shannon experienced.

What is interesting about Jennifer's case is that it was apparent that the boundary she constructed between her 'work' and 'home' lives was very permeable. However, the spill-over only seemed to occur from home into the workplace and not vice-versa, with Jennifer being very open about her 'private' life within the workplace. She explained that her level of openness was due in part to having been intimately involved with co-workers before her relationship with the abuser. Due to these circumstances Jennifer felt comfortable in disclosing her situation within the workplace. Jennifer reported that although she did receive a level of emotional support from both male and female co-workers, they also vigorously tried to persuade her to leave the abuser. Eventually, she gained enough courage to leave, mostly because of the high level of support provided by her work colleagues. Therefore, one could argue that disclosure of intimate abuse is part of the process of leaving. In fact, one of Jennifer's work colleagues assisted her to move her personal belongings out of the residence in which she co-habited with her abuser. But even with the help of co-workers providing both emotional and practical support, Jennifer returned to the abuser after he professed his love and offered to marry her. The response of her co-workers to her decision to marry the abuser was one of disbelief.

"Well the first time I moved out one of them [co-worker] moved me, and then thought I was mental when I went back and married him [laughter], a lot of them didn't go to my wedding because I married him, they wouldn't come to my wedding".

DB: Some of them [co-workers] didn't come to your wedding?

“No, none of my friends came to my wedding from work, because they all said ‘you must be off your head’”.

DB: So was there any tension between you and your co-workers after you got married?

“No, not generally, I don’t think they could understand why I stayed, but you stay out of fear really until you find the courage one day to walk out” (Jennifer, Department Manager).

Shannon experienced a similar situation, in that she built up a relationship with one particular co-worker, whom she thought she could trust. After disclosing her situation, her co-worker, although shocked and sympathetic, immediately advised that she should confront the abuser about his behaviour.

“At one place I told someone I thought I could trust, she lost interest when I didn’t take her advice and ‘kick him into touch’, she was sympathetic and shocked at first, as far as I know she never told anyone else and I think if I had said I wanted to leave him straight away she would have helped me, but as I didn’t say that, she seemed to think that it was a waste of time helping me” (Shannon, Factory Worker).

These instances of co-workers becoming uninterested when individuals disclose abuse but do not feel ready to make the separation from the abuser raise interesting questions regarding workplace support and suggest that co-worker

support may be contingent on their advice being heeded. But more importantly it illustrates that many people still do not understand the emotional, economic and practical complexity of intimate abuse and therefore find it difficult to provide appropriate help and support. Jennifer's decision to return to the abuser is not uncommon. Koepsell *et al.* (2006) found that a successful separation follows several unsuccessful attempts at leaving the abusive relationship. Although Jennifer's experience confirms research which suggests that workplace support is a key factor in helping women maintain employment (Swanberg *et al.* 2007) and that it can help women leave the abusive relationship (Rothman *et al.* 2007), the level of workplace support may be affected if an individual decides to return to the abusive relationship. Shannon's experience also highlights that trust is a crucial factor in terms of positive workplace support. There needs to be a relationship of trust between those suffering abuse and their co-workers in order for the workplace support to be beneficial.

Researchers Swanberg and Macke (2006) and Duffy *et al.* (2005) found that trust was a major factor within the disclosure process. For Shannon simply being able to trust a work colleague was a great achievement, and that makes it especially devastating when this trusting relationship is damaged. Ragins (2008), employing Goffman's (1990b) notions of stigma, explains that individuals that have an invisible stigma decide whether to disclose depending on the social interaction with others. Thus the stigmatised individual is continuously judging whether or not it would be beneficial or detrimental to their sense of self if they were to disclose, with one of the risks being social rejection. This decision making process which individuals continuously engage in within social

interaction is described by Goffman as, “to display or not to display; to tell or not to tell; to let on or not to let on; to lie or not to lie; and in each case, to whom, how, when, and where” (Goffman 1990b: 57). Ragins (2008) continues by suggesting that individuals may benefit from disclosure and that disclosure may reduce the emotional stress associated with continuously having to hide their stigma. However, the negative consequences of disclosure could range from “social isolation and avoidance to verbal harassment, job discrimination [and] job loss” (Ragins 2008: 201).

What Jennifer’s and Shannon’s experiences suggest is that there is a complex and evolving reciprocal relationship between co-workers and the individual experiencing IPA. This relationship was highlighted by Duffy *et al.* (2005) who noted that actions of the individual experiencing abuse will influence their co-workers, but co-workers’ responses might influence the individual’s behaviour, beliefs and self perceptions (pg. 79). In addition, Duffy *et al.* (2005) document the complex nature of the relationship between co-workers and individuals experiencing abuse and utilise research on disability based stigma (Colella 2001; McLaughlin *et al.* 2004) in order to illustrate that co-workers’ acceptance or accommodation of situations is contingent on certain factors. Colella’s (2001) research into co-worker judgements relating to accommodation of employees with disabilities reveals some interesting findings, which could be applied to employees suffering intimate partner abuse. Colella (2001) found that co workers are less accepting of individuals who are perceived to have an ‘illegitimate’ disability, for example, if an employee became wheelchair-bound due to having a car accident whilst driving under the influence of alcohol. Therefore, whether co-

workers perceive the disability to be 'self-caused' is a crucial factor in their willingness to accommodate that disability. Sadly, even in the face of continued activism by feminists and women's organisations, specifically the refuge movement, there is a prominent discourse within society that places the blame for intimate partner abuse on the women suffering abuse rather than on the abuser. As Duffy *et al.* (2005) state, "a frequently-held belief is that targets of [intimate abuse] simply could leave the abusive home situation and, by extension, that victims cause the [intimate abuse] by staying" (pg. 79).

As stated earlier, the workplace allows individuals to generate a more positive sense of self through positive interaction with other individuals, but also allows them access to other identities which can empower them and grant them more autonomy. Even though Jennifer indicated that she did not construct a strong conceptual boundary between her home and workplace, she did report that work gave her a sense of purpose and improved her sense of self. However, when individuals face pressure from co-workers to leave the relationship when they are not ready to do so, their sense of self and autonomy are affected and more importantly their sense of empowerment can be jeopardised. In addition to challenging an individual's sense of self within the workplace, pressure from co-workers could also have serious economic implications. Duffy *et al.* (2005) argue that if individuals experiencing abuse feel an increasing level of stress within the workplace as a result of the responses of their work colleagues, this is likely to have an impact on their absenteeism. This is because they no longer see work as an environment that offers them a respite from abuse and this diminishes their drive to go to work. This issue of workplace isolation is also addressed by Ragins

(2008) who posits that in extreme situations co-worker pressure could result in women leaving their employment; this would reduce their 'economic independence' and more importantly would prevent them from constructing a more positive sense of self which would counteract the lack of self or identity that they experience within the abusive relationship.

Disclosure to Similar Others

Although a number of participants encountered a negative or ambivalent response when they disclosed within the workplace, there were a number of women who gained constructive emotional support from work colleagues. There were also a number of women who reported that they became close to female co-workers who were experiencing or had experienced abuse at some point in their lives. Interestingly, even within the interaction with similar others, some participants still felt unable to disclose their situation. Nevertheless, these women all reported that conversing with these co-workers provided mutual emotional support, in that they would offer each other advice on how to cope with the abuse and the tactics they could use to maximise their emotional and physical safety.

Sarah reported that whilst she was experiencing both emotional and financial abuse she confided in a co-worker who had been in an abusive relationship for many years. In explaining her experiences of abuse, Sarah indicated that although the abuser would diminish her sense of self by continually commenting on her inability to perform certain tasks within the household, the predominant

form of emotional abuse related to financial issues, particularly relating to Sarah's spending patterns, which resulted in her being in debt. It was her financial situation which Sarah first started to discuss with this particular co-worker, because she too had experienced issues relating to debt.

"I would just listen to her as she would say things and she would listen to me and pitch in and go "that's terrible, why don't you try this or", we looked at solutions for each other, because she had some issues around debt and credit cards, etc., so we helped each other in that way to try and get each other out of situations" (Sarah, Health Promotion Specialist).

Although Sarah's initial disclosure regarded issues relating to debt, this evolved into a relationship in which both individuals would discuss issues regarding their experiences of abuse. Ragins states that "a key factor that affects the decision to disclose a stigmatized identity is the presence of others who share the stigma, particularly those who have successfully disclosed their stigma" (2008: 203). This statement by Ragins is particularly apt in view of the fact that Sarah's work colleague was the first to disclose her experience of emotional and physical abuse.

"He was very physical with her, but I didn't actually think that I was the same as her you know, that's terrible what she has been through and that kind of thing. We used to talk about, I mean her physical abuse actually ended but there was a lot of mental abuse going on in

the house. So we would talk about that and she would say “oh he went out and got drunk on such and such” and all that kind of stuff and I would say “myself and [abuser] are having a few problems, this is happening at home”, but we didn’t actually recognise, I never recognised the abuse and she never actually said to me you know, this is a form of abuse” (Sarah, Health Promotion Specialist).

Sarah’s experiences suggest that mutual disclosure of personal circumstances was therapeutic, in that it allowed them to discuss issues that they were ashamed of with another individual who would be supportive and non-judgmental. Ragins (2008) suggests that disclosing to similar others provides a support network and that having knowledge of similar others within one’s close proximity can bolster one’s self-esteem and confidence. Ragins (2008) points out that this is particularly the case for individuals with invisible stigmas, such as sexual orientation or socioeconomic status, because such individuals rarely get the chance to interact with similar others.

What is interesting is that, even though both Sarah and her co-worker supported each other by offering emotional support and advice, Sarah didn’t define her situation in terms of abuse. Even though she and her co-worker were ‘similar others’ there was some ambivalence on Sarah’s part about associating herself with her co-workers’ position. Alison was also ambivalent about associating herself with a work colleague who disclosed that she was experiencing problems within her intimate relationship. Alison explained that she would simply listen to her female co-worker and, like Sarah, would offer her advice on how to manage

the abuse. But unlike Sarah, Alison refused to disclose her abuse to this work colleague and therefore during conversations she would discuss certain aspects of her private life, but concealed her situation by presenting issues in the third person, i.e. stating that she had ‘a friend’ who was suffering abuse.

“There was this lady there that suffered with her husband and I used to find myself asking her questions, as if I was asking for someone else but really I was asking for me” (Alison, Social Worker).

As this statement illustrates, even though Alison did not disclose her situation to this ‘similar other’ this interaction provided her with information which helped her cope with and manage her situation. Goffman (1990b) posited that stigmatised individuals have some ambivalence regarding their relationship to similar others because that they have not reached the appropriate point in their ‘moral career’. Individuals who are at the beginning of their ‘moral career’, i.e. still in the process of coming to terms with their stigma, or have recently discovered their stigma, may feel revulsion towards ‘similar others’ because those stigmatised individuals are not like ‘normals’ whom the individual perceives herself to be. “[She] is likely, at the very least, to feel some ambivalence; for these others will not only be patently stigmatised and thus not like the normal person [she] knows [her]self to be, but may also have other attributes with which [she] finds it difficult to associate [her]self” (Goffman, 1990b: 50). As I discussed in the previous chapter, many of the women I spoke to constructed a more positive sense of identity within the workplace and they constructed a conceptual boundary between home and workplace in order to

manage their situation. With Alison not disclosing to this particular work colleague and Sarah not associating her predicament with that of her co-worker who was also suffering from abuse, one could argue that these women were deterred from identifying with these 'similar others' by the possibility that it might jeopardise their workplace identity.

Lempert (1996) argued that women who choose not to disclose their situation, thereby rendering the abuse 'invisible', employ a strategy which enables them to claim a sense of self. In particular this strategy prevents women from being categorised as 'victims', a term to which many of the women I spoke had a strong aversion. Leisenring (2006) suggests that women who experience abuse are involved in a process of identity construction and that "people are not inherently victims", rather women conferred 'victim' status during interaction with others, who interpret their position as being passive (pg. 308). This 'victim' discourse portrays abused women as passive and powerless individuals who are economically and emotionally dependent on their partners. However, as Leisenring explains, many of the women she interviewed were not passive and powerless individuals, rather they implemented strategies and engaged with various discourses in order to construct positive identities.

Sarah's and Alison's experiences illustrate that interaction with 'similar others' provides a means of gaining emotional support and acquiring knowledge regarding coping techniques. Thoits (1986) posits that individuals who inhabit the same socio-cultural location and have experienced the same problems can supply more effective coping assistance. Simply having a shared experiences is

not enough, with Thoits (1986) arguing that shame and embarrassment can prohibit individuals from connecting with ‘similar others’ (pg. 420). I would agree with Thoits that a shared experience or mutual socio-cultural location does not guarantee disclosure or a feeling of connectedness within the workplace. One only needs to consider other aspects, such as employment status, as illustrated at the beginning of the chapter, to understand how problematic the argument of a shared socio-cultural location is. Furthermore, one also has to consider how the act of disclosure can disrupt the sense of self within the workplace. Disruption of this positive sense of self, which the workplace offered for many participants, could have major consequences. For example, it could lead to individuals becoming more withdrawn within the workplace, further exacerbating their feelings of low self-esteem and, if there is a negative reaction from co-workers, this can result in individuals leaving their employment. Nevertheless, many of the women interviewed highlighted gender as an important factor, not necessarily in their decision to disclose, but in the level of support that was provided.

Gendered Workplace Environment and its Impact on Disclosure

Of the ‘similar others’ to whom participants disclosed or with whom they interacted, all but one were female. Also almost all of these interactions occurred within heavily gendered workplace environments. For example, Sarah reported that her workplace was predominantly female and, as a result, all the women would openly discuss work or home related issues. Although Sarah disclosed specific issues relating to her partner’s behaviour to only one particular co-

worker, she mentioned that she would frequently converse with other female work colleagues over a cup of coffee discussing aspects of her relationship.

“Yeah we would talk about stuff you know, not domestic violence or abuse because like, it was ‘oh I can’t seem to do anything right’ kind of stuff, you know, just sounding off to each other really over a cup of coffee, you know that kind of girly chat and I suppose girly support really” (Sarah, Health Promotion Specialist).

Halford *et al.* (1997) argue that the gendered nature of the workplace environment either suppresses or facilitates discussion of personal issues. “Talking about bodies, families, sex and emotions [is] most common where the office [is] all or predominantly female” (Halford *et al.* 1997: 226). In addition, they suggest that women are more inclined to discuss issues of a personal nature within the workplace than men, because the latter tend to consider talking about personal issues as a sign of incompetence. It indicates that they are incapable of separating their home and work life and this ultimately challenges the traditional male breadwinner role. Interestingly, all of the participants who worked in “pink collar” jobs, such as secretarial, service managers, social workers and health care workers indicated that they worked within a predominantly female environment and that co-workers usually discuss ‘personal’ issues during coffee breaks etc (Lempert 1996: 272). Hochschild (1997) also found that the ‘feminine community’ facilitated talk of a ‘private’ matter and that work was a “place where conflicts originating in the home were discussed, debated, and subjected

to sympathetic scrutiny and where possible solutions were devised and tested” (pg. 163).

Toni, for instance, worked in a predominantly female working environment. When explaining her management, or process, of disclosure Toni indicated that she disclosed to a close female work colleague at the time of the abuse, but did not feel confident in disclosing to others until after she had left the abuser. She stated that one of the reasons she did not disclose was due to a sense of failure, that she was to blame for not making the marriage work. It is particularly interesting that Toni deliberately disclosed to everyone within the workplace after she had left the abusive relationship. In response to this disclosure, Toni reported that her co-workers offered emotional support and words of comfort. However, taking into account Toni’s experience of abuse, one can begin to understand why she disclosed to her co-workers at this particular point. In fact, she indicated that at the time the stalking became so intense, with the abuser appearing at her workplace and regularly following her, that she applied for a restraining order against him. During this period she indicated that her work colleagues were very supportive offering her emotional support and assisting her to a certain degree with her work duties. Furthermore, they intervened when the abuser appeared at the workplace or tried to contact Toni via telephone by taking the calls and informing the abuser that Toni was not available.

“Most of the girls have been excellent and have given me emotional support and one in particular like, I was going around her house quite a lot, she involved me with her family, also I have actually been

promoted at work so that's quite good and they are being very supportive of me now, helping me in my new role" (Toni, Nurse).

Throughout the interview Toni emphasised how her work colleagues have been very supportive of her, when she returned from a six week absence after leaving the relationship and seeking refuge within secure accommodation. This statement illustrates the lengths to which her work colleagues went to provide Toni with emotional support throughout her experience post separation. Furthermore, Toni's experience illustrates that co-worker support is not simply confined to the workplace, but because they provide emotional support to they too are blurring the boundary between public and private. Not only does this illustrate how intimate partner abuse can affect co-workers' safety within the workplace, as Swanberg *et al.* (2007) have illustrated, but it also has the possibility of affecting co-workers 'private' lives. Duffy *et al.* (2005) note that intimate partner abuse not only has serious consequences for the psychological well-being of the one experiencing abuse, but co-workers' witnessing instances of abuse or feeling threatened when the abuser appears at the workplace can lead to increased levels of stress and can affect the emotional health of co-workers. Toni reported that although work colleagues provided her with emotional support at work and prevented the abuser from contacting her, this was also problematic in that the abuser would become increasingly paranoid and anxious; because he did not know where she was there was an increased risk of abuse.

Nevertheless, Toni's experience confirms Swanberg *et al.*'s (2006b) findings that women suffering abuse tend to disclose to a co-worker whom they consider to be a close friend. What is also interesting is Toni's wider disclosure to her work colleagues after leaving the abusive relationship, when she was being stalked by the abuser. This seems to suggest that the intention of disclosure was to gain some form of support from co-workers. Swanberg *et al.* (2006b) found that a number of women decided to disclose within the workplace because they were concerned for their safety, and that by disclosing within the workplace they could then help protect themselves and their co-workers.

Toni's experience also alerts us to the form of support that was fostered in the workplace environment. She indicated that not long after she disclosed her situation one of her fellow workers disclosed that she was also suffering abuse. Not only does this coincide with Ragins' (2008) thesis that the successful disclosure within the workplace of a stigmatised individual will encourage 'similar others' to disclose, but I would argue that it also illustrates the gendered nature of the support provided within Toni's workplace. Toni continually indicated that her work colleagues provided her with a tremendous amount of emotional support and, as Sarah described, her work colleagues would openly discuss issues within the workplace. Furthermore, Toni reported that when she disclosed her situation to her manager this led the manager also to disclose her experience of being stalked. Indeed, most of the women interviewed who worked within 'female' dominated occupations or environments, indicated a level of emotional support. Turner's (1994) research findings suggest that gender has a marked effect on the qualitative nature of social support within the

workplace. Turner found that women tend to experience a higher level of social support within the workplace and that they became more deeply involved within female networks, thus fostering more empathy and higher levels of emotional disclosure (1994: 536). Turner's findings to some degree support Thoits's (1986) argument regarding social support, that 'specific others' who share one's socio-cultural location, will be more empathetic and understanding and will offer more effective advice. Toni's experience does seem to suggest that a more emotional form of support was generated within the workplace, although what is interesting is that even though she reported that her manager also disclosed her experience of being stalked, she still felt as though she could not be as open with her manager as she was with her co-workers.

"The girls that I worked with were a lot more aware of what was going on than what the managers were, because you do, you know, when you sit down and have a coffee or tea you do tell each other don't you" (Toni, Nurse).

Parker and Elger (2004) found that gender was a major factor in women's decision whether or not to disclose or seek advice within the workplace. They discovered that women were more likely to disclose to a female union steward than their male supervisor/manager, but also that women suffering abuse would disclose their situation to female stewards within a 'friendship' rather than a formal union context (pg. 18). Many of the female stewards Parker and Elger (2004) interviewed indicated that they were more likely to build up a rapport with fellow female workers, which would facilitate disclosure. However, the

female stewards noted that the informal nature of the disclosure of intimate partner abuse placed them in a difficult situation. This was because they felt that they could not pursue formal lines of procedure because doing so would result in breaching confidentiality and betray that individual's trust. Toni's situation indicates that although gender congruity may provide an environment which facilitates disclosure, this does not necessarily transcend the gendered hierarchical power relations within organisations.

Gender Relations within 'Blue Collar' Workplaces

Not all participants who worked in an all female environment reported feeling comfortable within their workplace. As we saw earlier, Shannon worked in a factory environment in which there was a clear divide regarding status, with supervisors and technicians being male and the machinists female. Even though she worked alongside women she indicated that she never felt a sense of camaraderie. From Shannon's experience one gets the impression that she experienced a strong sense of isolation within the workplace, that she never felt comfortable with interacting with the other women. Shannon said that within the workplace sexist humour was commonly utilised by her female co-workers, they would engage in gossip and that she felt compelled to take part.

"I worked at a factory making car parts, I worked on the power press and once I worked making small electrical components, typical factory environment, supervisors male and machinists female, usual factory banter and gossip which you felt obliged to be part of, there

were always the sexist or sex related jokes, I was always afraid that my husband would get to hear what had been said, but if you didn't join in you were labelled as stuck up, kill joy, airs and graces" (Shannon, Factor Worker).

DB: was there a good feeling between you and your co-workers?

"yes, but there were cliques, I was fine as long as I could be one of the girls, but anything could cause a worker to fall from grace, being late, un-ironed clothes, bruises etc" (Shannon, Factory Worker).

Shannon's statement highlights the gender power relations at play within this 'blue collar' workplace. It not only highlights the rigidity of the gender hierarchy in terms of occupation level, with men occupying managerial roles and women being employed as machine operatives, but it also raises questions regarding female workers' use of sexualised language as a means of power within the workplace. Collinson (1992) posits that humour utilised on the shop floor could be construed as a form of resistance; that workers who were subjected to highly controlled tasks or conducted tedious, monotonous work used humour as a coping mechanism. Pollert (1981) also found that women engage in humour or, as one of her participants put it, "having a laff" in order to "defeat boredom and fear, to overcome hardship and problems" (pg. 139). She also found that 'having a laugh' was a means by which women could subvert the discipline within the workplace and being able to rebuff jokes of sexual nature from male co-workers

was a means by which women resisted the gendered power dynamics operating within the workplace.

There are striking similarities between Pollert's (1981) findings relating to the use of humour by women and Shannon's experience of working within a hierarchally gendered workplace, with men placed in managerial positions and the women carrying out the unskilled labour. Shannon explains that there were cliques and that in order to be a member of the group one needed to adhere to certain rules; Pollert (1981) also found that 'female solidarity' was fractured by "informal bids for control" (pg. 145). She also discovered that some women engaged in certain discourses of bravado and 'machismo' in order to cope with the tough world of work. These discourses were often directed towards other women who were not considered 'one of the group'. That being part of the 'clique' rested on a number of factors inside and outside the workplace, for example, a clique may form within the workplace because women came from a particular geographical location or came from the same schools. However, what is interesting is that Pollert found that those women who were "isolated at home were naturally quieter at work, and found it harder to gain entry into a gang" (1981: 148). In this regard Shannon indicated that her partner restricted her interaction with others, and she was therefore not able to socialise with co-workers outside of the workplace. Furthermore, Shannon's employment was continuously disrupted by the abuser, which resulted in Shannon frequently moving from one job to another. Thus she was repeatedly entering workplaces that already had established friendship networks and cliques. Therefore, one can understand how difficult it was for Shannon to feel a connection with other work

colleagues; additionally the nature of the work and the gendered nature of the workplace further exacerbated these difficulties.

It is particularly interesting that Shannon stated that bruises were considered taboo and could be a basis to ostracise an employee from the group. Her co-workers' behaviour could be interpreted as protectionist, in that her female co-workers believed that displaying signs of physical abuse symbolised weakness and could jeopardise how women were perceived by those in positions of power within the organisation i.e. men. It is particularly interesting that Shannon highlighted the fact that un-ironed clothing could also produce a negative reaction from co-workers. As discussed in Chapter 4, workplace uniforms not only represent organisational forms of power but they also allow and grant employees the ability to create a workplace identity. The uniform may also demarcate the workplace from home. This means that failing to meet the group's standards (Collinson, 1992), by not ironing one's uniform or presenting oneself appropriately may be seen to reflect an inability to separate home and workplace or manage one's life effectively. Essentially, Shannon's experience indicates that working in this particular type of gendered environment does not foster an environment which facilitates disclosure. Furthermore, it suggests some of the ways that class and occupation may affect an individual's decision to disclose. As Swanberg and Macke (2006) state, organisations have "failed to consider how gender assumptions influence workplace practices, policies and cultures" (pg. 392). They continue by stating that occupations that are perceived as masculine, such as finance or engineering, may inhibit the disclosure of abuse, and that

‘family friendly’ policies are unlikely to be promoted in such workplace environments.

Disclosing to Male Co-workers: Reservations versus Support

The importance of gender was also apparent in so far as many of the participants indicated that they would not disclose their situation to a male co-worker. This was due to the fact that they believed that men would not understand or be empathetic regarding their situation. This is voiced by Alexandra:

“I probably wouldn't say anything to a man no, I wouldn't have spoken to a man probably because of my attitude that men are all the same, not that I thought that any of the men I worked with were like that necessarily, but that they wouldn't understand as much as a woman, well my brothers but they were family, I just wouldn't felt as comfortable really for many reasons. I was educated in an all girls' school you see, so I didn't really have a lot of experience with men, like my daughters have a lot of male friends and I mean my generation, a Catholic upbringing like that, there wasn't that opportunity, I probably wouldn't regard men as equal to me, that wasn't the message I was being given to me all of those years ago was it” (Alexandra, Social Worker).

This statement reiterates Turner’s (1994) findings relating to women feeling more emotionally connected to one another, that other women are perceived as

being more empathetic. However, Alexandra's comment relating to men in general is very illuminating, suggesting that due to her experiences of abuse she is cautious about opening herself up to men. Indeed this view that men are '*all the same*' was highlighted by Jessica, who stated that due to her experience of being abused by a man she would not feel comfortable discussing her situation with male colleagues.

"I think it makes you too wary of men so you wouldn't confide in a male member of staff, where you'll confide in a woman, you can't confide in men. Because you think that all men are the same and it's wrong I know, its wrong, but you don't do it" (Jessica, Factory worker).

Jessica's statement indicates a lack of trust in men due to her experiences. As highlighted in the methodology chapter, many of the participants harboured some animosity towards men, which prohibited them from discussing issues of an intimate nature. This apprehension relating to male co-workers was also found by Rothman *et al.* (2007) with three out of 21 of their participants indicating that being abused had affected their ability to trust people, and that they found it particularly difficult to work in close proximity to male co-workers. Wettersten *et al.* (2004) also found that women experience a loss of trust and a general fear of men long after they have left the abusive relationship. One can clearly understand women's suspicion of men when they have experienced horrific incidents of emotional, physical and, in some cases, sexual abuse at their hands. As a male researcher and someone who has witnessed abuse, I was

saddened by the thought that some of the women I interviewed perceive all men as a homogeneous group. Indeed, I believe this issue of all men being associated with those men who commit these abhorrent acts of abuse should be a key motivating factor for men to address violence against women. This point is illustrated by Connell (1997) who argues that not all men gain from the abuses of other men, that men are not a homogeneous group and that all men have some interconnection with women, be it their mothers, daughters, grandmothers or co-workers, and that “very few men have a life-world that is blocked off from women, that is genuinely a ‘separate sphere’” (pg. 65).

Although many participants shared Jessica’s sentiment towards men, there were a few who stated that they had disclosed to male co-workers and received emotional support. Thus sometimes those working within a predominantly male environment reported disclosing their situation to male colleagues who responded by being both supportive and understanding of their situation. However, they also reported that some of their male co-workers responded to their situation by performing aspects of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Connell 1995). For example, when Joanne disclosed her situation to her male co-workers some were completely shocked and expressed their disgust, whilst others stated that they wanted physically to assault the abuser.

“They were a bit shocked my male co-workers, they were oh my god, they were very shocked, you know, how could he do that, you know, a couple of them said that they wanted to beat him up, but mainly a lot

of them were really disgusted and quite shocked about it” (Joanne, Warehouse operative).

Jennifer also experienced a similar reaction from her male co-workers. She explained that she had had a miscarriage whilst she was in the abusive relationship. I inquired as to whether the miscarriage was attributed to the abuse, to which Jennifer responded by stating that it was due to natural causes and that the abuser was very supportive during this period. However, Jennifer reported that she had simultaneously disclosed her miscarriage and the abuse within the workplace, as a result of which both her male and female co-workers offered her emotional support.

In describing her relationship with her male co-workers, Jennifer indicated that she had been sexually involved with a couple of her male colleagues and therefore described the relationship as close and thus felt able to discuss personal issues with them. But like Joanne, she indicated that a few of her male colleagues wanted to ‘handle the situation’ with violence.

“I’d been out with one or two of them prior to this so they were like ex’s but friends of mine, a lot of them had gone through the miscarriage with me so that had made them closer and a lot were just really close friends of mine, they knew that there was something wrong so I confided in them really sort of in case if he did come in and start playing up, I think, and a few of them would have liked to

have dealt with it permanently [laughter] but I said no that's not the answer" (Jennifer, Retail Manager).

Male co-workers wanting to address the issue with violence is indicative of what Connell (1995) posits as 'hegemonic masculinity', in that violence becomes a means by which men can claim or assert their masculinity. Engaging with this discourse may have been a way to strengthen their power base, due to the fact that Jennifer was in a position of power within the workplace. But one could argue that this reaction by Jennifer's male co-workers illustrates how violence is not necessarily appropriated by men in a conscious manner in order to buttress masculinity and regain power, but is utilised in order to protect. Katz (2006), however, has argued that men who adopt this form of counter action towards issues of intimate partner abuse fall into what he calls the 'chivalry trap' (pg. 52). He suggests that those men who state that they will protect women by utilising violence against the abuser are simply engaging with the 'damsel in distress' discourse which is very disempowering for women. Furthermore, men wishing to engage in these practices are simply perpetuating gender power relations by placing women in this 'passive' role, whereas it would be more empowering for women if they were offered moral and emotional support.

Although Katz (2006) raises an important issue and one that men need to be made aware of, the responses of male co-workers were also far more complex, as Jennifer's statement illustrates. Along with indicating her disapproval of her male co-workers seeking retribution, Jennifer states that disclosing to her male co-workers provided her with a level of protection. In fact, in the course of her

interview, Jennifer raised the issue of her male co-workers willingness to offer her protection if required three times. Indeed, at one particular point she suggested that gaining protection from male co-workers was a major factor in her decision to disclose.

“When he came to the shop his whole behaviour was threatening do you know what I mean, none of them would have said anything or done anything to make him rile up as much as to keep me safe, but I always felt safe at work though cause I always knew that from the lads that if he started at work they would fire up to him” (Jennifer, Retail Manager).

This statement suggests that Jennifer’s male co-workers were always vigilant and poised ready to protect her physically if necessary and that being aware of this support allowed Jennifer to feel safe at work. Interestingly, when I raised the issue of whether gender had an impact on her disclosing her situation within the workplace, Jennifer replied by stating that, if someone had approached her at work and inquired as to her ‘private life’, she would have been more comfortable discussing these issues with a woman. However, after I reminded her that she had openly disclosed her situation to her male colleagues, she again raised the issue of protection as motivating her to disclose. I have already addressed the need for protection as the motivational factor in participants disclosing their situation within the workplace. Furthermore, I have also explained that participants within a female environment received emotional support, which they considered to be a crucial aspect in their ability to function at work. But in

explaining the level of support that she received from her work colleagues, Jennifer indicated that there was a distinct difference between the type of support provided by her male and female co-workers. She went further by stating that her male co-workers were more supportive than her female colleagues, due to the type of support that they offered.

“Probably the men were more supportive than the women, but I knew them so maybe that’s what was different, and they were like supportive as in physically and if there’s work to do get a man to do it [laughter] whereas women were just supportive emotionally I think” (Jennifer, Retail Manager).

It seems that there is a tension here between Jennifer privileging male support over the female but not wishing the former to be invoked against the abuser. This tension is highlighted in Jennifer’s previous statement regarding male colleagues wanting to use violence against the abuser which she distanced herself from. Like Joanne who also experienced this reaction, Jennifer noted that if her male co-workers had carried out their vigilantism then this would have simply exacerbated the situation for her. Logan *et al.* (2007) suggest that abusers use a number of tactics with which to harass their partners whilst at work, two of which were intimidation of co-workers and the spreading of malicious rumours about their partners to co-workers. Interestingly, Logan *et al.* (2007) found that the former tactic was especially adopted towards male co-workers. Jennifer reported that her male co-workers did feel uneasy when the abuser came to the workplace. Although it is difficult to ascertain the abuser’s behaviour in this

instance, from Jennifer's description of her male co-worker's reaction to his presence it is clear that gender is intrinsic to this interaction. Her male colleagues' adoption of this 'masculine' approach, however, could jeopardise both their own physical safety and that of others and, more importantly, could put the individual experiencing abuse in greater danger.

Jennifer's and Joanne's experience therefore, suggest that the social support provided within the workplace exhibits gendered characteristics, with men responding by offering protection (underpinned by the threat of violence) and women offering more emotional support. Jennifer's privileging of male support could be construed as perpetuating certain constructions of masculinity relating to violence, power and aggression. For instance, her comment relating to how men conduct their work, "*if there's work to do get a man to do it*" is indicative of the binary passive/aggressive, which is associated with femininity and masculinity. In analysing Jennifer's experience one needs to take into account the gendered nature of the workplace and her status as manager. One could argue that engaging with this masculine discourse is connected to the gendered nature of the workplace, in that Jennifer was managing a high proportion of men and thus had to display certain aspects associated with masculinity. Conversely, she may have privileged this form of support due to the fact that she was particularly close to some of her male work colleagues.

Although Jennifer's and Joanne's experiences suggest that disclosure of intimate partner abuse within a predominantly male workplace can generate a problematic response, other participants indicated that they received a tremendous amount of

emotional support from male co-workers, with one participant even reporting that her male colleague disclosed his childhood experience of witnessing his mother suffering abuse. Jackie stated that due to the abuser's behaviour, i.e. stalking her whilst at work, her work colleagues and her managers were aware that she was suffering some form of abuse. Like Toni, Jackie reported that she would frequently discuss personal issues with her female colleagues, rather than her male managers. Furthermore, she did not openly discuss her situation with her managers because they were routinely insensitive to her situation; they advised her to leave the abuser and informed her that if ever the abuser entered the workplace they would contact the police. But there was one male colleague, her superior, with whom Jackie did converse, and he was the one who disclosed that he had witnessed abuse as a child.

"I used to talk to one of the dentists, the one that wasn't in charge, he started telling me about his mum, so I sort of just confided in him slightly, but I didn't tell him lots, he just told me, you know, you will be OK if you do leave and you will get financial help and things like that" (Jackie, Dental Nurse).

This statement suggests that Jackie established a quite close connection with this male co-worker. Furthermore, the co-worker was not pressuring Jackie to leave the relationship, but was simply reassuring her by providing her with information so that when she decided to leave the relationship, she had knowledge about the support that was available. But what is illuminating about this statement is Jackie's caution in revealing her situation. She withheld certain aspects of her

situation, whilst he was willing to disclose his personal experiences. This interaction is very difficult to categorise with the terminology utilised by Ragins (2008) and Thoits (1986) regarding disclosure within the workplace and social support networks. If one were to utilise a Goffmanian approach, as utilised by Ragins (2008), in understanding disclosure to 'similar others', then this would not take into account the gendered nature of the interaction. Likewise, Thoits's (1986) thesis regarding the sharing of socio-cultural locations as paramount in providing effective social support is also problematic. One could argue that this co-worker's close proximity to the issue of intimate partner abuse meant that he could be considered a 'similar other' despite being male. Nevertheless, there are gender/power relations at work within this interaction, with Jackie occupying a less powerful position as dental nurse compared to her male co-worker. Therefore, one could argue that Jackie refrained from full disclosure because she was concerned that full disclosure might have led to a negative reaction.

Nevertheless, Jackie's experience highlights the fact that intimate abuse is not simply a 'women's issue', but is something that impacts upon and concerns men. Like many contemporary feminist and pro-feminist thinkers, Katz (2006) suggests that in order to engage and mobilise men to address the issue of intimate partner abuse one needs to highlight the fact that many men will have witnessed intimate partner abuse during their childhood, and that this will have caused them both emotional and, in some cases, physical pain. Furthermore, Katz (2006) reiterates Connell's (1997) argument that men are not isolated from women and therefore should want to stop them from being abused. But just returning to Jackie's experience, I believe it is worth noting that this co-worker, by disclosing

his personal experiences, also placed himself in a vulnerable position. Halford *et al.* (1997) posit that men tend not to discuss issues relating to their personal lives within predominantly male environments, because within male dominated organisations intimate conversations are considered a weakness. This is not to say that there was parity between Jackie and her male co-worker's position, but rather that the gender regimes within organisations need to be considered when analysing any form of disclosure. As Swanberg and Macke (2006) suggest, aspects relating to disclosure within the workplace highlight how the gendered nature of organisational culture can either impede or facilitate disclosure of intimate partner abuse. However, as illustrated in the previous chapter, some participants chose not to disclose within the workplace because maintaining a boundary between home and work allowed them to develop a positive sense of identity within the workplace.

Disclosure Disrupting Boundaries and Workplace Identities

After a close examination of participants' narratives, one realises that disclosure within the workplace has a dramatic impact not only their workplace lives, but also on their home lives. Disclosure of abuse not only disrupts conceptual boundaries between home and work, but it also has an unquestionable impact on an individual's sense of self within the public and private realms. For some participants, disclosure of their situation within the workplace was undoubtedly beneficial; this has been explained by researchers stressing the positive outcomes of disclosure (Ben-Ari and Dayan 2008; Swanberg and Macke 2006). However, as I have highlighted within this chapter, for many participants disclosure

resulted in co-workers pressuring them to leave their partners, and if they failed to heed their colleagues' advice they were criticised and in some cases ostracised at work.

For some participants disclosure fundamentally changed the dynamics of the public/private divide. Some described their workplace as a sanctuary from the abuse prior to disclosure, which fundamentally changed after they disclosed their situation. They commented that disclosure disrupted their workplace sense of self and eroded their conceptual boundary between home and work. Not being able to differentiate between these two realms led some participants to leave their employment. This undermining of the conceptual boundary and sense of self within the workplace is evident in Jackie's experience. Although Jackie indicated that she had some level of support from both female and male work colleagues, this support was not provided by the management, with one of her managers commenting "*What has psycho boy done this time?*", which increased Jackie's emotional distress. Jackie also indicated that, when she informed her managers that she was leaving the relationship and going into a refuge because of feeling insecure, instead of offering her emotional support her managers requested her resignation.

"At first going to work was just, well I could get away from things, you know, I enjoyed it because I wasn't mummy or wife, I was just myself, I can be Jackie for a few hours, but, towards the end I didn't want to go to work, I dreaded going to work because I felt embarrassed, especially the longer I stayed with him, I just felt, umm,

that everyone knew my business and I felt a bit silly” (Jackie, Dental Nurse).

When Jackie left the relationship and sought refuge with one of the women’s organisations, she warned her managers that the abuser would come to the workplace looking for her. And as predicted the abuser did come to the workplace and demanded to know Jackie’s whereabouts. In fact he threatened to set fire to the workplace if her work colleagues did not provide him with this information. The abuser also started to harass one of Jackie’s co-workers via the telephone, both at the workplace and at her home. Not only does Jackie’s experience confirm research that documents that women are most vulnerable when they have left or are trying to leave a violent relationship (Harne and Radford 2008; Kelly 1999), it also confirms Riger *et al.*’s (2002) thesis that co-workers, friends, family, etc., can be placed in considerable danger when an individual leaves a violent relationship. Also having to leave her employment, at a point when she crucially needed both emotional support and economic stability, would have had a major impact on Jackie’s sense of self. Wettersten *et al.* (2004) have documented the many consequences that women face as a result of leaving an abusive relationship, such as loss of home, personal belongings and aspects of their identity, with one of their participants stating “it swept my whole identity away” (pg. 455). Many of Wettersten *et al.*’s (2004) participants reported losing their employment when they left the relationship. However, many also reported that they gained significantly as a result of leaving the relationship, such as by being able to pursue life opportunities and regaining a sense of self.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the factors that facilitate disclosure and the consequences of disclosure, both positive and negative, for the women I interviewed. Not all participants reported having negative experiences after disclosure, several indicated that if it had not been for the level of informal support offered by their work colleagues, and the formal support provided by the organisation, they would not have been able to survive the process of leaving the abusive relationship. Ben-Ari and Dayan (2008) suggest that professional women who integrate their private and public selves can gain support from co-workers and, more importantly, because the boundary between the professional and private self is removed in the act of disclosure, it makes their workplace self more accessible within their private relationships. In other words, disclosure allows women to enact or employ aspects of their workplace self, which provides them with self-esteem and confidence in their intimate relations. However, what is apparent from the interviews I conducted with survivors is that disclosure of abuse within the workplace can result in a negative response from co-workers and as a result a fundamental coping strategy is undermined. Furthermore, these women's experiences illustrate that voluntary disclosure of abuse, i.e. women disclosing their situation to a work colleague(s), is not a spontaneous divulgence, rather it is the outcome of an internal cognitive process in which individuals continuously assess the potential risks and benefits of disclosure (Ragins 2008). Furthermore, issues regarding class, type of employment, occupational status and the gendered power dynamics within the workplace all have an impact on this

process of disclosure. Some of the women I interviewed chose not to disclose their situation within the workplace because they desperately wanted to keep their public and private lives separate and, for these women, this approach seemed to work. But these women held professional occupations which provided substantial incomes and esteem, respect and professional identity. Conversely, there were those women, such as Joanne, who did disclose their situation at work in order to gain support, and who gained both support at work and the emotional strength to leave the relationship.

Essentially, this chapter has illustrated that, although disclosure can result in a positive response from co-workers and employers, equally it can fundamentally undermine other coping strategies that women employ in order to survive and minimise the impact of intimate partner abuse on their employment. Disclosure can disrupt participants' conceptual boundary and positive constructions of self within the workplace, which allow them the sense of escape and increase their self-esteem and self-worth. In consequence, the positive construction of self within the workplace, which acts as a coping mechanism, can also prevent women from disclosing, because doing so could threaten the efficacy of this coping strategy. This can place women in a quandary because as Lempert (1996) suggests, women are often "trapped by the complicity of their own previous presentations of self and situations" (1996: 279). Lempert continues by stating that, as a result of this dilemma, when women do attempt to disclose their experiences of abuse they are sometimes dismissed, because their presentation of self within the public realm was so convincing. This is particularly the case for those middle class, professional women where the 'class myth' (Ptacek, 1999)

and organisational expectations (Halford *et al* 1997) prevent them from disclosing. Although Swanberg and Macke (2006) and Swanberg *et al.* (2006b) stress the positive aspects of disclosure - that it can act as a major coping mechanism - the findings discussed in this chapter illustrate that disclosure within the workplace is not necessarily a good thing in that it can result in unsympathetic responses or unwanted pressure from co-workers to leave the abusive relationship. Consequently, abused women might perceive the workplace not as a place where they can mentally and physically escape the abuse and recover, but another realm where their sense of self and autonomy is threatened.

In the next chapter I focus on how disruption of the conceptual boundary between the home and workplace, which often followed disclosure, affected participants' sense of self within the 'private', and whether the positive sense of identity which they constructed within the workplace helped them in the private sphere. In other words, it is clear that events occurring within the private sphere had an effect on the public sphere, and that participants tried to manage this in various ways, but was there a similar 'spill-over' from the public into the private realm?

Chapter Six:

Being the Breadwinner: Economic Empowerment or Economic Entrapment?

Introduction

In the last chapter I argued that disclosure within the workplace was not a random or unconscious act, but rather it involved a cognitive process in which participants deliberated the possible positive and negative consequences, and that, in some cases, it is a momentous act signalling the first step towards leaving an abusive relationship. I also documented how certain workplace environments are more conducive to disclosure than others, depending particularly on the gendered nature of the workplace. Within this chapter the focus shifts from the workplace to the home in examining participants' perceptions of how their employment status affected the power dynamics within their abusive relationships.

Here, I will be exploring three key aspects. First, I will investigate the 'spill over' effects of the work into the home realm. As I highlighted in Chapter 4, participants constructed a conceptual boundary between their home and workplace experiential realms in order to uphold a certain construction of self within the workplace, which improved their self-esteem. However, this conceptual boundary was permeable, in that participants could not prevent certain elements of the private spilling over into their workplace and nor could they prevent the public realm impacting on the private. Some participants

brought work home with them or wanted to pursue academic or vocational qualifications, to which their partners reacted negatively.

Following on from this discussion of spill over, I will explore the circumstances in which those participants who identified as the breadwinner came to assume this position and whether this empowered them within their relationship. Certain theorists (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Giddens 1992) argue that women are excelling in their careers and are less restricted within 'high or late modernity', however one has to question whether this equates to empowerment or equality within the 'private' sphere, especially, but not exclusively, within abusive relationships? I shall argue that notwithstanding the diminishing prevalence of the masculine breadwinner discourse, there are still gendered assumptions regarding childcare or the division of labour within the household that disadvantage women. Nevertheless, a number of women stated that assuming the role of breadwinner had a significant impact on the power dynamics within their relationship, and this will be discussed.

Finally, I will examine whether participants perceived their employment as granting them a means of escaping their abusive relationship. A number of scholars (Shepard and Pence 1988) working within the area of intimate partner abuse and employment propose that 'economic independence' is a means by which women will negate abuse and gain equality. However, it is questionable whether either the effects or the motivation for leaving an abusive relationship are purely 'economic' while the notion of 'economic independence' may oversimplify the choices involved. Furthermore, I would argue that this discourse

of 'economic independence' does not make the distinction between access to resources and the motivational aspects associated with leaving an abusive relationship.

Bringing the Work Home: Upsetting the Boundaries

As discussed in Chapter 4, some participants went to considerable lengths to separate their home and work experiential realms. Compartmentalising their lives allowed them to construct a more positive sense of self within the workplace, but it also minimised the impact of abuse on their employment. In some cases participants indicated that they were more 'themselves' at work, thus suggesting a more 'authentic' sense of self within the workplace. This feeling more 'themselves', as highlighted by Nippert-Eng (1996), is particularly pertinent to women who endure relentless emotional abuse within their private life, which ultimately affects their sense of self (Lammers *et al.* 2005). However, just as participants' home lives could not be completely left at the office door, likewise work transgresses the organisational boundary into participants' home lives. This 'spill over' of work into the private realm was sometimes met with disdain, with a number of participants stating that their partners were unsupportive of their work commitments and the intrusion of their work into the private realm.

Rebecca (Social Worker) was particularly resentful of her partner's unsupportive and negative attitude towards her working overtime or bringing work home to complete. Rebecca explained that even during the periods when the abuser was unemployed he did not appreciate the fact that she was providing financially for

the family. Feeling under pressure both at work and home only exacerbated Rebecca's feelings of despair. To bring work home was the only way Rebecca could manage her workload, but her partner disapproved of this and would comment that she did not receive any additional income for working overtime. Rebecca stated that the motivation for engaging in overtime was not financial remuneration, but rather it was a means of emotionally escaping from her situation. She also said that it gave her a sense of accomplishment, which strengthened her sense of self.

“Looking back the pressure of the job wouldn't have been as great if I had had the support at home, because in order to do the job you had to bring stuff home maybe, I don't know, spend half an hour in peace and quiet, I was never allowed to do that, I could have gone in at the weekends and caught up for an hour without the phone going, it would have made a massive difference to me, but I was not allowed to do that, it was like ‘well you don't get paid to do it’ and ‘what are you doing it for’, but it wasn't about getting paid it made me feel better” (Rebecca, Social Worker).

One can understand Rebecca's motivation for completing her workplace tasks, in that it allowed her to escape from the negative environment she was experiencing at home and also improved her self esteem. However, bringing work home or wishing to do overtime at the weekends could be construed as threatening traditional gender norms of male dominance and female dependence. Charles's (2002) discussion of women's full time employment indicates the pervasiveness

of traditional gender ideology regarding women's work outside the home which suggests that women's work or careers should not dominate their lives as is traditionally the case for men. Villarreal's (2007) examination of Mexican women's employment status and the level of coercive control in abusive relationships found that a large number of women had to seek their partner's permission in order to engage in paid employment. Coercive control was defined as men controlling their partner's access to wider family and friends, particularly limiting their partner's interaction with other men. Even taking into account the differences in cultural attributes between Mexico and the UK, Villarreal's research highlights the control aspect within an abusive relationship in relation to women's work. Villarreal states that gaining permission is an extreme form of control, however, "male partners may influence women's decisions to work and which form of employment they seek in more subtle ways" (2007: 431). One could deduce from Rebecca's situation that the abuser wanted to exercise control over her level of employment, particularly when he was unemployed, because this allowed him to retain a sense of control and dominance within the relationship.

Spill-over from work into the 'private' realm was mainly an issue for those women who held professional or highly skilled positions. With these women having to work long hours in order to maintain a certain standard, particularly if they were in managerial positions, there was a pressure to conform to a certain script. Overwhelmingly, this script was 'masculine' and therefore disadvantaged women. Beck and Beck-Grensheim (2002) argue that, although women's position has improved within both the private and public spheres, nevertheless

old ideologies still persist especially regarding the division of labour within the household. They continue by explaining that employment within the public sphere is organised on the principle that employees are relieved of their everyday duties, such as childcare, with someone in the 'background' taking responsibility for them. It is evident from my data that this was not the case for the women whom I interviewed, who were responsible not only for providing an income in order to run the family home, but were also responsible for childcare. Even those participants with unemployed partners, who could easily have provided childcare, still conducted these duties. In fact many participants indicated the lack of support from partners, combined with the partner's jealousy and resentment as factors that prevented them climbing the career ladder.

Climbing the Career Ladder

There has been some debate as to whether the employment status of abusers increases or decreases women's risk of abuse or coercive behaviour. Villarreal (2007) argues that when men are in employment their partners are more likely to have an increased probability of employment and less likely to experience abusive behaviour. However, those women who have partners who are unemployed were at a higher risk of being abused. MacMillan and Gartner (1999) posit that women with partners who are unemployed are particularly at risk, because employment for men is a critical means of constructing masculinity and thus the effects of employment as a symbolic rather than solely economic resource need to be considered. Employment grants men not just economic capital but symbolic capital, and their partner's employment and career

progression may threaten their sense of masculine identity, thus resulting in violence. In discussing how women's increased status within a relationship can increase the risk of abuse, Anderson (1997) highlights the fact that men have traditionally married down and women have married up, thus strengthening the symbolic nature of employment for men, which reinforces men's dominance both inside and outside the household. Furthermore, Anderson (1997) discusses the impact of class on masculinity and utilises Connell's (1987) distinction of middle-class and working class notions of masculinity and how these notions are disrupted when women gain symbolic capital traditionally associated with 'doing' masculinity, such as success outside the household.

The effect of women's employment or, more specifically, their career progression in threatening certain constructions of masculinity is clearly evident in Fiona's (Bank Clerk) experience. Fiona explained that when she first started dating her partner she was enrolled on a nurse training course but, because this position required her to interact with male patients and staff, her partner became exceedingly jealous. He would appear at the training college unannounced and made it difficult for Fiona to concentrate on her work. Eventually, Fiona left the training course, although she attributes her decision to leave not to her partner's obsessive behaviour, but to other aspects occurring within her life at that time. After leaving the training programme, Fiona gained employment within the banking sector and quickly ascended the career ladder. She stated that her career progression gave her a sense of achievement, but her partner disliked her success and tried to make her feel guilty for wanting to succeed.

“He didn’t like it, he was quite jealous of it, he was quite jealous of the fact that I had a kind of successful career because he didn’t have that, he didn’t like it and he used to make me feel guilty about wanting to go to work and wanting to be with all these other people”
(Fiona, Bank Clerk).

It is interesting that she states that her partner made her feel guilty about wanting a successful career. Lempert (1996) found that abusers would deride their partners by defining them as ‘bitch’, ‘whore’ and ‘career woman hag’, thus instilling a feeling of guilt in their partners for pursuing their own interests and aspirations (pg. 274). Fiona went on to say that she believed her achieving success and assuming the role of breadwinner may have emasculated the abuser. Furthermore, she suggests that her success outside the household somehow undermined her partner and thus led him to reassert his control through violence.

“He wanted to be the king of the hill you see, that’s what he wanted, to be in charge, he wasn’t really though and I think that was part of it, I think my behaviour sort of emasculated him because I was the one, I was the breadwinner, I was bringing in the money and I was undermining him all the time by doing that, you know, he didn’t feel in control, so I think that’s the only way he could control me was through violence, the only way he felt that he was in charge was when he was hitting me” (Fiona, Bank Clerk).

This challenge to the masculine discourse of breadwinner was further exacerbated by the fact that Fiona's partner was frequently unemployed and, even though he received support from the state in terms of unemployment benefit, he was economically dependent on her. Willott and Griffin (1997) posit that one has to remember that men cannot be labelled as being powerful, simply through being a man, and that men may not feel or experience themselves as powerful any more than women automatically experience themselves as powerless or oppressed. Thus men are simultaneously positioned as dominant and subordinate depending on their position in terms of race, class, sexuality and culture. They also suggest that employment can be a central prop for men in constructing their masculinity, that most forms of employment "get the man out of the house and provide sufficient income to both contribute substantially to family upkeep and to spend money in the public sphere" (pg. 109).

Unemployment is thus a major ideological challenge to the construction of certain masculinities. Willott and Griffin (1997) also explain that working class men particularly draw on traditional discourses relating to the sexual division of labour, in that women belong within the home and men in the public sphere and, if their perceptions regarding gender roles are challenged, i.e. women engage in paid work in the public sphere, they may feel threatened. Many of the men in Willott and Griffin's study indicated how their being unemployed and their partners working and bringing in the money disempowered them; one of them even hinted at the use of abuse in response to his partner's independence. Concerning the use of violence by unemployed men, Willott and Griffin (1997) nevertheless state that "while some researchers have argued that the incidence of

domestic violence is likely to increase as a result of the stresses associated with prolonged unemployment and poverty, there is plenty of evidence that male violence against women is widespread and condoned as part of ‘normal life’ regardless of the unemployment rates” (pg. 118-119).

Returning to Fiona’s experience, whilst she perceived her career progression as somehow disempowering her partner, she also stated that he was aware that she was financially supporting him and was responsible for the running of the household. Therefore, even though Fiona’s success challenged her partner’s perceptions of masculinity, he still enjoyed and exploited the financial rewards of her hard work. This tension between abusive partners disliking their partner’s career progression but enjoying the financial benefits of their success was experienced by a number of women. Louise (Midwife) and Bridget (Midwife) both highlighted how their partners resented the fact that they were successful within their careers, but enjoyed the financial benefits relating to their career progression. Louise explained that in order to enrol on her midwifery training she had to acquire some additional academic qualifications, so she decided to pursue an A-level in English. However, her partner, a self-employed mechanic, thoroughly disliked the fact that she was trying to better herself.

“He didn’t like the fact that I did try to better myself, I did go to night school to do an A-level in English because I wanted to do my diploma in midwifery and so I did an A-level and I started the City and Guilds 7307 to do teaching, but he resented the fact that I was qualified” (Louise, Midwife).

Bridget (Midwife) also encountered some resistance from her partner, who was employed as an engineer when she decided to pursue a career in midwifery. The abuser strenuously objected to Bridget's decision to train as a midwife, mainly because doing so would require her to take a pay cut. Adams *et al.* (2008) state that abusive men prevent their partners from improving their marketability through, for example, such self-improvement activities as pursuing educational qualifications or improving their employment prospects by acquiring new skills. They also suggest that abusers may wish to prevent their partners from gaining new skills/knowledge, because this could lead to their acquiring more assets and income, which could lead them to leave the relationship.

Shepard and Pence (1988) have argued that 'economic independence' would protect women from abuse. However, Bridget's experience indicates that her partner disapproved of her decision to pursue a career in midwifery, not because this would grant her more status, but because it would result in her having to take a pay cut. It is not clear from Bridget's experience whether the abuser was simply discouraging because of the financial implications of her training or was threatened by the prospect of Bridget acquiring more symbolic capital. Nevertheless, the abuser utilised an economic argument to voice his displeasure about Bridget's wish to pursue her career.

Charlotte (Nurse Manager), like Louise (Midwife), also faced resistance to her career progression with her partner disliking the fact that she was committed to her work and that it invaded the 'private' sphere. However, when I enquired as to

whether her partner totally disapproved of her working, Charlotte responded by stating that her partner encouraged her because he was aware that work provided her with a sense of achievement and that she had an emotional attachment to work and therefore he could use this as a means to control her.

“He knew that if I went to work and what it meant to me, he could actually have something over me, so he knew that if I went to work that he would have a bit of power over me, because if he wanted to he could really fuck it up” (Charlotte, Nurse Manager).

Charlotte continued by stating that after the birth of their second child she suggested to her partner that she might go part-time in order to care for the children. However, her partner rejected this proposal on the grounds that he was uncomfortable with her being at home all day, whilst he was out working. Charlotte said that her partner was apprehensive about this arrangement because this would have placed more responsibility on him to provide for the family. Fox *et al.* (2002) found that in circumstances where abusers wanted their partners to work longer hours, this actually increased women’s risk of abuse. They proposed that the increase in abuse could be attributed to “his perception that she is not contributing ‘her fair share’ or his feelings of economic pressure, or some other dynamic” (Fox *et al.*: 802). Overwhelmingly, the literature pertaining to employment status and abuse suggests that women who have attained a higher level of education (Tjaden and Thoennes 2000) or whose partner is unemployed run a higher risk of experiencing abuse (MacMillan and Gartner, 1999).

Charlotte and Bridget's experiences suggest that some men do encourage their partners to work. Abusers encouraging their partners to engage in paid employment or their reluctance to undertake certain financial responsibilities within the relationship, could be construed as a form of control. MacMillan and Gartner (1999) put the case that "coercive control may also include forcing women to be the sole breadwinners in a relationship" (pg. 957). Even those participants in low wage semi-skilled positions sometimes assumed the role of breadwinner in their relationship, as a result of their partner's unemployment. Others stated that their partners simply refused to work. Interestingly, some women stated that assuming the role of breadwinner was economically empowering, whilst others indicated that assuming this role was simply another means by which their partners could control and exploit them. This will be addressed in more detail in the next section.

Being the Breadwinner: Economic or Symbolic Empowerment or Exploitation?

Many of the participants indicated that at particular periods throughout their relationships the role of breadwinner fluctuated between themselves and their partners. The majority of women who identified themselves as the breadwinner in their relationships typically held high wage, high status positions of employment, with only a few women employed in low-wage, unskilled or semi-skilled occupations identifying as the chief economic supporter. It has been suggested by many researchers working within the area of intimate partner abuse that women could gain power and protection from abuse if they had possession

of economic resources and financial independence (Shepard and Pence 1989). Dobash and Dobash (1980) proposed that women's liberation lay within their labour force participation and that women who are not economically independent will continue to depend on their partners and will therefore suffer male domination.

These specific arguments can also be set in the context of wider debates about the relationship between gender relations in employment and the domestic sphere. Some optimistic commentators (Beck and Beck-Grensheim, 2002 and Giddens 1992) argue that, due to the process of individualisation within 'late modernity' or 'high modernity', women today have more money as a result of greater access to education which leads to higher paid careers and economic independence. Beck and Beck-Grensheim (2002) posit that, because of individualization, women in today's society have more money to contribute to the family's upkeep, and that their employment is not simply a 'top up' or 'supplementary' income which supports the male breadwinner wage, but rather their employment "brings them more money '*of their own*'" [emphasis added] (pg. 62). Conversely, Morris (1990) argued that just because a woman has the opportunity to increase her earnings this does not necessarily lead to an increase in her power within the household and where this does occur, for example when women assume the role of breadwinner, it may lead to a diminishing demand on their partner to contribute financially to the household. Nevertheless, Beck and Beck-Grensheim (2002) and Morris (1990) suggest that women's earnings may equate to more power within households where the woman's wage covers clearly

visible items of collective expenditure, such as the mortgage repayments or regular payment of large bills (Morris, 1990).

Walby (1990) has argued that, with women reaching ever increasing levels of education, attaining employment, and therefore finding their place within the public sphere, there has been a shift from private to public patriarchy and therefore the household is no longer the foundation that shapes public patriarchy. No doubt there have been changes with regard to women entering the workforce and acquiring high paid and high status positions of employment. Some women even assume the role of breadwinner within their relationships, but more sceptical commentators suggest that this does not necessarily signal a fundamental change regarding gendered power relations within the household (Charles and James 2005), with the household still being a site in which 'doing' gender and gender practices occur and where power is continually negotiated (Morgan 1999).

How, then, does my research connect to both the more specific and these more general arguments? Firstly, the experience of many of the women I interviewed suggested that although their entry into higher paid positions of employment increased their income, it did not equate to having more 'money of their own'. On the contrary, a few of the women said that their high income led them to assume the role of breadwinner, which further trapped them in the relationship. Bridget (Midwife) explained that she assumed the role of breadwinner within her relationship even though her husband was employed and had never experienced unemployment. She stated that, as she became more senior within her career, she

started to become responsible for paying the mortgage, council tax and utility bills and, as a result, at the end of the month she had no money left for herself.

“What happened was I was paying all the bills out of my salary, so mortgage, council tax everything was paid out of my salary, which meant that everything got paid, but there was no money left at the end of it for me and he could be quite happily paid and then broke within an instant, because he would go and drink it all away”
(Bridget, Midwife).

Not only did Bridget indicate that her partner was a drinker, but she also explained how his gambling addiction had serious financial implications for the family. At one point during the relationship, Bridget’s partner accrued gambling debts of up to £18,000, which placed a massive strain on the whole family, but particularly Bridget, who helped him pay off the debt. Bridget’s partner was gambling with his own income, but in doing so he was neglecting his financial responsibility with regard to the upkeep of the family home and, more importantly, his debts became so unmanageable that Bridget had to use her income in order to bail him out. Bridget stated that she felt disempowered through her partner’s reckless financial behaviour in terms of gambling and shunning his familial responsibilities.

Bridget’s experience resonates with the findings of other research. Adams *et al.* (2008) highlight the fact that abusive men exploit women’s resources in a number of ways, one being their refusal to contribute to the running of the

household, thus placing the financial responsibility on their partners. They also suggest that abusive men tend to gamble with their partner's or the family's finances and therefore diminish their partner's personal funds. Whether or not abusers are conscious of this behaviour, their actions diminish their partner's ability to accumulate any personal savings which, as a result, minimises the risk of them leaving the relationship. Thus, abusers' refusal to contribute financially to the running of the household or careless spending of their income on alcohol, drugs or gambling can be construed as another means of control.

In addition to assuming the role of breadwinner Bridget also indicated that her partner did not contribute towards childcare. Like Bridget, Charlotte (Nurse Manager) also assumed the role of breadwinner, however, this was not solely due to her career progression, but rather as a consequence of her partner's decision to change his career. Initially Charlotte was excited about her partner's decision, even though it would involve a reduction in pay, because the job provided more flexibility and the hours coincided with school times. As a result, she assumed that her partner would take more responsibility for childcare, which would allow her to focus more on her career. However, this was not the case. The predicted shift in the household division of labour did not occur, with Charlotte simply assuming more financial responsibility and providing the same level of childcare.

“When he was self-employed it fully suited his needs because it wasn't to our advantage for him to come out of work to pick up the kids, but when he changed job, he came home one day and said ‘I

have had enough of all this, I want to sell my business and I want to take a job, I have been offered a job as a caretaker', he said 'its much less money but I shall be working shorter hours, but in a different way 11.30am till 7.30pm and you know it's a good job, its got security'. I remember thinking great this means that he will help, 'cause if he doesn't have to start till 11.30am, like some blokes would get up and take the kids to school, and I thought maybe I can get to work earlier, but what I didn't realise is that it didn't mean that at all, what it meant was actually we are just going to be as rigid as we have always been, I will still have to sort the kids out in the morning and pick them up from school, he would even say that to me, he used to say 'its not my job, I didn't train for that job'[childcare] and I used to think that it's not my job either, you know, I didn't train for it" (Charlotte, Nurse Manager).

It is evident from this statement that Charlotte's partner has strong views regarding the gendered nature of childcare. This is demonstrated by his comment "*it's not my job*". Crompton (2006) discusses the issue of the domestic division of labour and whether there has been an increase in men's participation in domestic labour as a result of the ever increasing number of women entering the labour market. She argues that, as women's participation within the labour market has increased, men's share of household work has also risen. However, women are still responsible for carrying out a large proportion of household tasks, especially childcare. This is particularly the case in households where 'traditional' gender ideology persists relating to housework and childcare, with

Crompton (2006) highlighting that within more egalitarian relationships, where 'traditional' gender ideology regarding housework and childcare has dissipated, household labour tends to be shared (pg. 141).

In Charlotte's case it is clear that her partner adhered to a 'traditional' gender ideology regarding childcare and even though he did not have access to certain aspects of masculinity, such as the breadwinner role, he managed to resist the responsibility of childcare, by appealing to other aspects of masculine identity. In other words, he was 'doing' gender by not participating in childcare and therefore reinforced hierarchal gendered power relations within the household. Many of Willott and Griffin's (1997) participants indicated a level of disdain regarding housework and childcare, which some of them labelled as 'women's work'. In adopting a Foucauldian perspective of power, Willott and Griffin (1997) posit that men can be located in multiple positions, thus they can be simultaneously positioned as dominant and subordinate. Thus although some men cannot access some symbolic forms of masculinity, such as the breadwinner role, which can be seen as disempowering, by resisting housework and childcare and classifying it as 'women's work' they are still embodying certain aspects of masculinity and therefore exercise power within the relationship. More importantly, Charlotte's partner utilised physical and emotional abuse and thus performed other practices associated with masculinity that disempower women. As Charles and James (2005) posit, even though the male breadwinner ideology has been challenged, this has not necessarily led to the amelioration of wider gender relations, with intimate partner abuse and the division of labour being two examples in which fundamental change has not occurred.

Like other participants who identified as the breadwinner, Charlotte (Nurse Manager) also climbed the career ladder and began to earn more than her partner. But in explaining how the family finances were managed Charlotte (Nurse Manager) stated that her partner was open with her about his income in that he handed over his wage packet at the end of the month. Louise (Midwife) indicated that she also was responsible for paying the mortgage and utilities, however, her partner contributed a percentage of his earnings. She stated that since she had control over the finances she felt as though her partner was not financially controlling her, but she later indicated that her partner started to deceive her by not declaring his full earnings at the end of the month.

“I controlled the finances, I paid all the bills and I paid the mortgage, I dealt with the savings, the shopping and everything and he gave me the housekeeping and that topped up my wages, so he wasn’t financially controlling me in that way ‘cause I had the money, although he kept some back for himself obviously” (Louise, Midwife).

Louise continued by stating that at the beginning of their relationship her partner disliked her assuming the role of breadwinner and excelling in her career, but towards the end of the relationship, his attitude changed and he became more interested in her income.

“He did complain a lot about the shifts that I worked, he also used to state that my job was irrelevant and because he had a turnover of [...] then his job was more important than my job, even though I started to earn more than him. He always put a monetary value on everything, but towards the end all he was interested in was the money, he squirrelled some away, he was keeping back more than he told me [laughter] so he had a nice little lump sum when he did leave so I think he had planned it for a while” (Louise, Midwife).

Louise also indicated that towards the end of the relationship sex had become ‘mechanical,’ in that it would happen once a month and did not involve any emotional intimacy. She therefore compared their sex life to prostitution, in that the abuser would only provide housekeeping money in exchange for sex. This resonates with the argument of Charles (2002) that men withholding emotional intimacy within sexual encounters could be another way to maintain power and control (pg. 146). Reducing sexual encounters to a transaction is also a means by which the abuser is reasserting his power and dominance. It is also interesting that Louise’s partner dismissed her employment as unimportant even though, as the relationship progressed, Louise’s income became essential. Zelizer (1994) highlights that within the traditional gender ideology a woman’s wage has historically been seen as supplementary to the man’s wage, therefore if couples subscribe to this ideology it is irrelevant who earns more money (Zelizer, 1994 cited in Pahl 1995). Charles and James (2005) also found that even when the role of the primary earner fluctuated within the family, a number of men were reluctant to relinquish the ‘provider’ role. “It is clear that although who actually

earns more money is subject to change, there is a 'right' way round" regarding gender roles (Charles and James 2005: 490). By adopting this perspective regarding her employment, Louise's partner illustrates a level of resistance to the changing dynamics within the relationship relating to the provider role. Furthermore, in assuming this position he is drawing on a specific gender ideology in order to reassert dominance. As a result Louise's adoption of breadwinner did not pose a significant challenge to the gendered power relations operating within the relationship, with the abuser drawing on other forms of masculinity in order to exercise or reclaim power.

Louise states that she was in control of the finances even though her partner surreptitiously withheld some of his earnings and eventually exploited the fact that she was the primary earner. As I have already discussed, one could argue that the means by which Louise acquired the housekeeping money constituted a form of sexual abuse; it could also be construed as an imbalance of power, by which Louise's partner engaged in certain practices to reaffirm his dominance. Although Louise's partner did contribute to the financial running of the household he also withheld some of his earnings, and engaging in this behaviour granted the abuser a form of power. In bringing together Lukes (2005) and Foucault's (1981) conceptualisations of power, Vogler (1998) suggests that the practice of men disclosing or giving their wages to their partner can be associated with Lukes' second dimension of power, in that they are controlling the agenda and therefore limiting what can and cannot be said. In other words, giving or disclosing their wage prevents their partners from asking certain questions, for example, 'what are you spending your money on'. As long as men

are seen to be contributing, they will not be interrogated and can therefore engage in covert activities, such as withholding a large percentage of their salary. This was the case in Louise's relationship. As the relationship deteriorated and the abuser left the family home, Louise realised that her partner had been withholding a large percentage of his income for many years, thus allowing him the ability to acquire another property. Thus Louise's experience suggests that there is a more complicated relationship between income and power than often envisaged in the literature reviewed earlier, that women's ability to gain an income does not necessarily translate to them having more control over finances. On the contrary, abusers may be more inclined to relinquish their financial responsibilities, therefore placing the onus on their partner, effectively employing a form of economic abuse. In many respects, Louise's experience resonates with Morris's (1990) argument that women's assuming the role of breadwinner does not equate to their gaining more power, rather it can result in men avoiding their financial duties. Essentially this is a form of control in which abusers entrap their partners, not within a web of economic dependence, but of economic entanglement. This is particularly evident in Janis's experience which is considered in the next section, where a 'role reversal' occurred within the relationship, with the abuser assuming the role of 'househusband'.

Role Reversal

Janis explained that at beginning of the relationship her partner was employed as a landscape gardener, but as she began to ascend the career ladder they agreed that she should assume the role of breadwinner and that he would undertake

responsibility for childcare and household labour. Although Janis utilised the term 'role reversal' to describe her situation, she qualified this statement by stating that it does not connote a complete reversal of roles, in that he still controlled the finances.

“He had complete financial control, we had a joint bank account and basically he just spent all the money, he would just waste it and fritter it away, he would get us into terrible debt and he was also a heavy drinker and so a lot of money was spent on alcohol you know, so at the point of leaving the relationship I didn't have any money”
(Janis, Personnel Officer).

Janis also stated that her partner would also forge her signature when writing bank cheques so that he could access the household income and spend it on whatever he pleased. Adams *et al.* (2008) indicated that abusive men can demand that their partners hand over their income, thus denying them economic autonomy. Furthermore, they state that abusive men prevent their partners from accessing joint bank accounts, steal money or use their partner's credit cards without permission. “Thus women in abusive relationships are at risk for accruing personal debt when shared resources are under her name or both names. In other words, abusive men take advantage of such a situation and use it as a means of threatening their partner's economic stability” (Adams *et al.*, 2008: 567). Not all of the participants experienced this specific form of economic abuse, however some did indicate that their partner's accrued a high level of debt and consequently were financially constrained. In Janis's case, not having control

of her finances made it difficult for her to leave the relationship, but also having her partner financially dependent on her exacerbated the situation.

“The financial issues have been very difficult, so yes that was an issue in leaving ‘cause I never had any money and he couldn’t leave because he had no money, I mean we reached a point where we knew that the relationship was not going to work and he accepted that his behaviour was completely unacceptable and he knew I wanted out, but he couldn’t accept that, because he wasn’t earning and didn’t have any income, so he couldn’t get up and leave and I also had to keep paying the mortgage and things, so I was financially invested and I couldn’t just leave” (Janis, Personnel Officer).

Therefore, although Janis assumed the role of breadwinner within a relationship where there was a role reversal with regard to childcare and earnings, she a) did not have control of her income; and b) having assumed this role and thus being responsible for the upkeep of the household she found herself financially trapped within the relationship.

Charlotte (Nurse Manager) also stated that she felt trapped within her relationship by financial constraints/obligations. At one particular point within the interview Charlotte stated:

“Well you know, finances were a big issue and one of the reasons why I stayed, I was trapped in that relationship. I remember talking

to one lady at the housing office, I was so embarrassed one of the reasons why I stayed in that relationship so long was that I was so tied up financially within that relationship. Now, looking back, I realise that he was in control, he knew that I was in a position financially that if I left I was stumped” (Charlotte, Nurse Manager).

Charlotte continued by stating that her financial position and the mortgage agreement being in her name, made her ineligible for social housing. Farmer and Tiefenthaler (2004a) have argued that women who earn higher personal incomes are less likely to experience abuse, and the likelihood of abuse is decreased for those women who are the primary earners. However, these arguments relating to women’s economic resources seem to overlook financial difficulties that women may face when they are in relatively high paid, high status positions. The argument of ‘economic independence’ through employment expressed by some scholars needs to be questioned, for how does access to economic resources actually empower women within abusive situations, when they are responsible for financially supporting their children and, in some cases, their unemployed abusive partner?

Some have suggested (Diaz, 2002 and Nyman and Reinkainen, 2002: cited in Pahl 2005) that the term ‘economic independence’ is problematic, since scholars who advocate such a position seem to be implying that women can attain economic parity with men. Nyman and Reinkainen (2002) argue that “in everyday language the term ‘economically independent’ has different meanings for men and women. An economically independent woman is not dependent on a

man, while an economically independent man is not dependent on a job” (cited in Pahl 2005: 386). Women are still responsible for childcare and their earnings predominantly contribute towards the support of their dependents (Pahl 2005). Furthermore, Lewis (2001) states that the power of the male breadwinner as the ‘ideal type’ within the labour market can be seen in the palpability of normative expectations regarding male and female roles. The male breadwinner role may have waned in certain global locations, particularly in the West, but this does not equate to women having achieved equality in the economic sense of self-sufficiency. This is largely due to the fact that, although a large percentage of women have entered the labour market, the rates of remuneration have remained profoundly unequal. Lewis (2001) therefore argues that women, especially those with dependents, remain economically dependent on men.

Arguing that the term ‘economic independence’ is problematic is not to suggest that employment cannot help women to leave an abusive relationship, rather it suggests that there is more to consider than simply economic factors in women’s decision to leave. I would argue that although assuming the breadwinner role within an abusive relationships did not grant participants economic power, in the sense of having access to finances, etc., it did grant them symbolic power and, more importantly, it emotionally empowered participants. It is this issue of emotional empowerment which I will now explore.

Employment as a means of Emotional Empowerment

As I discussed in Chapter 4, many participants, particularly those within high paid and high status positions of employment, stated that work allowed them to construct a positive sense of self, which countered the feelings of worthlessness they experienced in their 'private' life, resulting from the relentless emotional abuse dispensed by their partner. However, this emotional empowerment achieved within the workplace was not solely reserved for those in high paid positions, with many of the women in low paid positions also describing similar feelings. When asked how their employment helped them within their relationships, the majority of participants placed more emphasis on the emotional rather than the economic empowerment that work provided. Participants particularly highlighted the fact that they had this 'other' self outside of the relationship, from which they gained strength and was something that the abuser could not control or acquire. This 'other' sense of self outside the relationship helped them to retain an aspect of their identity, which gave them confidence within their relationship with the abuser. Even those within low paid positions registered this emotional aspect of paid work and how this helped them to survive within their relationship. For example, Andrea (Secretary) explained that although her employment did not provide her with a large income, it did allow her to have some control over her life, that her work allowed her to retain a part of herself which was not destroyed by her partner.

“It made me feel that I still had some sort of control over my life and it was something for me, it was my last little piece of fight I had in

me, I wanted to work, I wanted to do something for me, I think when you're in an abusive relationship, it's like they get you, they get all of you, but if you can have some sort of fight left and just by going to work proved to me that I still had something there that was, you know, it's just that little bit of I'm not going to give in, you're not going to have everything, I wasn't gonna give him everything, I had to have something" (Andrea, Secretary).

Andrea continued by stating that her employment gave her a sense of autonomy with regard to making choices within her life and that if she had had a good day at work it gave her that extra confidence in her abilities, which could be counterposed to the relentless degradation from her partner. However, Andrea indicated that her partner soon realised that her work gave her confidence and allowed her to retain a sense of self and therefore disliked her working.

"He didn't like it you see, because the longer I was working and the longer that I kept my job, I gained my confidence and he didn't like it, he hated that" (Andrea, Secretary).

A number of other participants also indicated how work gave them a sense of achievement within their lives, that within the workplace they could gain a level of respect and self-confidence, in contrast to their relationships where their partners made them feel worthless and useless. Jennifer (Section Manager) stated that she was more 'herself' at work, whereas at home she felt worthless and it

was this sense of ‘self’ at work that gave her the strength within her relationship and the confidence to leave.

“I could still be that other person to a degree, so that other person was still there, whereas if I had been at home 24/7 maybe it would have gone completely” (Jennifer, Retail Manager).

Therefore, having the knowledge that they could conduct workplace tasks, even those that were repetitive and mundane, was empowering for participants. Fiona (Bank Clerk) stated that even though she was not economically empowered within her relationship, knowing that she was capable of supporting herself, if and when she left was empowering.

“Work just gave me a sense of achievement, it gave me a sense of self-respect and that if I managed to achieve within that environment despite what was going on at home then it was almost that would be a passport to getting away, cause at that time I knew that this life that I was leading wasn’t right, I didn’t know what was going to happen, but I always thought that if I’ve got a job then I’ve got a means of supporting myself and I can, you know, I can get out of it and I can live somewhere” (Fiona, Bank Clerk).

Like others who assumed the role of breadwinner within their relationships, Fiona stated that she did not perceive her employment as a means to gain financially; rather, knowing that she had the ability to support herself if and when

she decided to leave the relationship was empowering, so too was the sense of achievement and retaining a sense of self. Farmer and Tiefenthaler (2004a) argue that “the simple knowledge that [an abused woman] has a realistic ability to leave can affect the dynamics within the relationship even if she does not go” (pg. 9). At the same time they suggest that while a woman’s income and earning potential outside the relationship are the key factors in determining her well-being should she leave, there are other factors that need to be taken into consideration, such as external resources and services. Although Farmer and Tiefenthaler’s (2004a) comments relating to the need for external resources and services refers to features such as state welfare and emergency shelter and other domestic violence services, I would argue that women suffering abuse also take into account wider social support networks, including workplace support, when making the decision to leave.

Some women become financially entangled within relationships and therefore find it extremely difficult to leave. This is especially the case when they have children, as explained by Charlotte, who brings out both the vulnerability to impoverishment as a consequence of leaving and the complexities women face in this context:

“Well I didn’t have anywhere to live, I didn’t have any money so I was constantly broke. So things that weren’t a problem before I left were now a major problem, you know, like having enough money to get through the week to get to work, having enough money for petrol for the car, having enough money to send the kids to school, having

to leave where I lived, which was very organised and, you know, very comfortable to living in a place where I didn't have a computer or broadband, things that made my life easier for work. I could no longer do work at home, I didn't have a telephone, you know, the practical things made it hard, certainly the monetary things made it difficult when I first left, but I also struggled terribly to keep it together emotionally, I was extremely guilt ridden that I'd left and people were suffering because of me, a whole host of things happened when I left, like I literally couldn't function at work" (Charlotte, Nurse Manager).

Interestingly, Charlotte did not disclose her situation to any of her work colleagues whilst she was experiencing abuse or during the process of leaving the relationship. This was due to the fact that Charlotte occupied a managerial position and feared that by disclosing her situation it would jeopardise her authority and workplace sense of self (see Chapter 5). One can see from this excerpt that even Charlotte, who had a highly paid position of employment, found it extremely difficult financially when she left the relationship. Not only was it financially difficult for Charlotte, but she also found it emotionally traumatic to adjust to this new life. Charlotte's experience closely matches McKie (2005) comments relating to the consequences of leaving an abusive relationship. She argues that "the short-term impact of leaving a violent relationship is likely to include a substantial decline in living standards" (ibid 2005: 47). McKie also suggests that leaving a violent relationship is not an easy choice, in that one is not simply leaving a violent partner, but in most cases they leave their home and

therefore it is a life-changing decision and one that is worse when one has children. Therefore, it is vital that women have both financial and emotional support in order to sustain their self-sufficiency, especially those women in low-paid, low status positions of employment, who may choose to return to their abusive partner or, as highlighted by Edin (2000), enter into another abusive relationship due to experiencing financial difficulties.

Employment Status and Paid Leave

My data indicate that there is a recognisable disparity between those women who were employed in high paid, high status positions and those within low paid, low status positions. The fundamental difference was the level of support that women received from their employer in terms of paid leave. Jane (Teacher) explained that when she decided to leave her relationship she sought help from Women's Aid, who provided her with emergency housing. During the process of leaving the relationship Jane had three months off work on full pay, which covered the cost of staying in the women's refuge.

“Because I am a teacher I get paid anyway, do you know what I mean, like I had three months off and I got paid and that's just the way it is, and I would have got paid 6 months if I had it off and up to a year I would have got half pay” (Jane, Teacher).

But comparing Jane's experience with Andrea's (Secretary) it is clear that educational achievement and employment status have a tremendous impact on a

woman's emotional and financial well-being when leaving an abusive relationship.

“A lot of women who get out of a relationship nine times out of ten have got children and money is such a big thing for them, and this is why a lot of women don't leave because who's going to put food on the table and it's such a big fear of what's out there and if you're working, the same as it is for me now, if I have time off now, I mean I'm supposed to go into hospital for an operation on my foot, but I can't go because I don't get paid sick pay and if I don't get sick pay my rent doesn't get paid, so I am having to put my operation on hold until I can find another job so I can put a thousand pounds away so that I can have a couple of weeks off. When women are in an abusive relationship work is what holds them together and for them to get the support when they do decide to leave, just to be supported and know that they are not going to have their money stopped, I mean there were girls who I was living with in the refuge who work at the hospital and they were given three months off on full pay, I was like you don't know how lucky you are” (Andrea, Secretary).

Andrea's experience illustrates not only the dilemmas that women face when leaving an abusive relationship, especially when they have children, but it also highlights the difficulties faced by women who are employed in low paid, low status occupations, which do not offer the security or level of financial support necessary for women to feel confident about leaving. Shannon (factory worker)

indicated that throughout her relationship she regularly lost positions of employment through taking time off with severe physical injuries incurred as a result of physical abuse. Andrea's and Shannon's experiences illustrate that women who are not supported by their employer during these difficult times are placed under tremendous financial and emotional pressures, which could be alleviated by employers in terms of paid leave or sick pay provisions. Kwesiga *et al.* (2007) stress the importance of employee benefits for those women escaping intimate partner abuse by stating "benefits and workplace supports can give victims of [intimate partner abuse] physical, emotional and logistical support" (pg. 318). However, as scholars have pointed out (Bradley and Healy 2008; Halford and Leonard 2001; Swanberg and Macke 2006) organisations are gendered environments that tend to produce policies and practices which often sustain gender inequalities. Not only is workplace production affected by intimate partner abuse, but it possibly contributes for a large proportion of employees taking leave of absences under the pretence of illness. It is important, therefore, that employers should take intimate abuse seriously and tackle it with appropriate workplace policies and practices. As Farmer and Tiefenthaler (2004a) state "employers are in the best position to improve economic security and given that [...] battered women are well represented in the labour force, then the workplace is an excellent avenue for helping battered women" (pg. 30).

Conclusion

Within this chapter I explored how women's employment affects the power dynamics within abusive relationships. I first discussed how the boundaries

between the workplace and home are permeable, in that there is spill over from work, and how participant's partners responded to this negatively, in that they perceived this intrusion of work into the home as challenging their dominance. As a result of traditional gender ideologies, women's employment is perceived differently to that of men's, in that it should not dominate their lives and invade the 'private' sphere. Furthermore, I discussed how their career progression gave participants a form of symbolic capital, which challenged traditional conceptions of masculinity and resulted in their partners' feeling emasculated. This discussion concluded with my suggestion that, when women assume the role of breadwinner, this does not necessarily signal a fundamental change in economic power relations within their relationships, but rather can be perceived as a form of economic abuse. By relinquishing their financial responsibilities or refusing to gain employment, abusers place more responsibility on their partner, both in terms of financially running the household and being responsible for childcare. Finally, I discussed whether employment financially empowered women within their relationship and in doing so questioned the adequacy of the term 'economic independence', arguing that the term conceals the complexities facing women within society, such as gendered assumptions regarding childcare and unequal pay. I also suggested that one needs to look beyond the purely economic aspects of employment, that employment offers women a sense of self and achievement, which grants them confidence and improves their sense of emotional well-being.

Women do not just perceive their work as purely a mean of generating an income, but also as a means by which they have access to social support networks that assist them whilst they are experiencing abuse. Therefore,

employers need to take into account the fact that for those individuals experiencing abuse, their employment can literally be a life-line. Even though major steps have been taken by the Labour government and the domestic violence sector, in partnership with trade unions and organisations both within the public and private sector, towards addressing the issue of intimate partner abuse within the workplace, there is still more that can be achieved. Within the next chapter I will be reviewing the current provisions available to employees suffering abuse within public sector organisations.

Chapter Seven:

The Workplace Response to Intimate Partner Abuse

Introduction

In the last chapter I examined issues relating to survivors who took on the role of breadwinner, and how this does not necessarily lead to a fundamental shift in gender power relations within the household. Subsequently, I proposed that arguments espousing ‘economic independence’ as a means by which women can both avoid and protect themselves from abuse are problematic. These arguments elide the everyday complexities that abused women have to negotiate. Nevertheless, I agree that women’s access to economic resources and emotional support are key factors influencing their decision to leave the relationship. In particular, many of the women interviewed stated that financial and psychological support from an employer are vital after leaving a relationship; it is therefore these issues that will be explored in this chapter.

This chapter comprises three distinct sections. The first section highlights survivors’ experiences of work, particularly relationships with their co-workers and managers and how they can sometimes be unsupportive and insensitive. From these experiences, participants identify certain practices which they believe employers and trade unions should adopt in order to assist those women experiencing abuse. The second section of the chapter is a review of trade unions’ response to the issue of intimate partner abuse. Women’s organisations

have had a significant influence on trade union policy; I therefore explore the ‘feminisation’ of trade unions and how the issue of intimate partner abuse has won a place on unions’ bargaining agendas. The men’s movement has also approached trade unions in order to raise awareness of intimate abuse and this is particularly true of the *White Ribbon Campaign*. I therefore examine the extent to which these men’s organisations have influenced the development of domestic violence workplace policies. The third section of the chapter examines current local authorities’ domestic violence workplace policies to determine whether they adequately address the needs of women experiencing intimate abuse or are simply a ‘token gesture’.

Negative Experiences of the Workplace

One of the major themes emerging from the data concerned the implications of disclosure within the workplace. In Chapter 5 I argued that participants’ disclosure of their situation within the workplace was the result of a continual process whereby they calculated whether or not disclosure was in their best interests. Issues that influenced their decision included their position within the workplace, for example those in managerial positions experienced pressure to conform to the organisational script of public/private separation and the gendered working environment. Halford *et al.* (1997) have demonstrated how organisations are gendered environments, predominantly promoting and rewarding masculine characteristics, such as the successful separation of their ‘home’ and ‘work’ lives. As I have argued, some participants utilised this discourse of segregation of home and work life in order to construct a conceptual

boundary which acted as a coping mechanism. However, this boundary between home and work is permeable, in that certain aspects of each realm were difficult to contain; one of these was visible injuries from physical abuse.

Many of the women I spoke to indicated that, at some point during their abusive relationship, they went to work with some form of visible injury, be it a bruise on the arm or a black eye. In addressing the reaction of co-workers' to these visible injuries, participants' experiences were varied. Some stated that they believed their work colleagues were aware that something was amiss at home but did not inquire as to their well-being, others stated that some co-workers inquired once but desisted after being told that it was nothing. A small number of participants said that their co-workers made fun of their injuries or predicament. Susanne (Administrator) explained that she never disclosed her situation to anyone at work, that she engaged in boundary work and thus separated her work and home sense of self. In order to distance herself or, as Denzin (1984) puts it, resist a stigmatised identity, she would trivialise and even 'laugh' about her injuries. However, adopting this coping strategy had an undesirable consequence as her co-workers continually made fun of her injuries, and this started to challenge her sense of self within the workplace.

"The worst thing that he ever did [the abuser] was he kicked me in the nose and he broke my nose. The next day I went into work and by that point I was developing two black eyes because of the break and I was laughing about it and they called me Rocky at work. I was laughing it all off and saying yeah I smacked myself against the

wardrobe. Walking into a wardrobe, it was a bizarre concocted story, but everybody uses it don't they, I don't know, they must have bought it cause they were all saying 'Here comes Rocky, have you been in a fight?'. And for a while I laughed, but the more and more they mentioned it the more I thought I don't want to be reminded of what happened yesterday. They also said, you know, 'where have you been at the weekend and have you upset someone or did you kiss someone's boyfriend' you know, the usual things. One of the women I worked with found it hilarious and she would say to customers 'oh isn't she silly, how can you do that?' It was only when we split up did I finally reveal to people what the broken nose was all about".

(Susanne, Administrator).

Suzanne was employed by an engineering firm and therefore worked within a predominantly male workforce. The comments made by her work colleagues are particularly interesting. The queries 'have you upset someone?' and 'Did you kiss someone's boyfriend?' seem to imply that physical violence might be justified in some circumstances. Furthermore, these comments are not indicative of a caring or understanding workplace environment. In many respects it is reminiscent of the 'machismo' culture found by Pollert (1981) amongst some female factory workers. However, negative, unsupportive working environment were not only found in stereotypically male environments, such as an engineering firm, but were also present in the health care setting. Jackie (Dental Nurse) indicated that her boss, who was male and aware of her situation, continually made unpleasant remarks about her situation. After leaving the abuser and seeking refuge in secure

accommodation, Jackie was advised to take time off work by the staff at the shelter. She informed her employer that she would be unable to come to work because of the situation, but instead of offering her support her employer terminated her employment. In response to this Jackie commented that her boss was deeply insensitive and ignorant.

“They were ignorant and insensitive, do you know what I mean, they knew and they should have approached me and offered me some help, even if it was just talking to me or, I didn’t expect them to arrange [...] you know the refuge, but just felt that they could have been a bit more aware of things, especially working with women as they do” (Jackie, Dental Nurse).

One thing Jackie’s and Suzanne’s experiences have in common is the fact that they worked in an environment that was hierarchally gendered, with men occupying management positions, whilst women were employed in the less qualified roles. Jackie’s statement is extremely interesting, especially her last comment regarding her employer, in that they should have been ‘more aware of things, especially working with women’.

The experiences of both suggest that once the boundary between home and work started to deteriorate, the workplace no longer provided an environment in which they could uphold a positive sense of self, that bruises or the need to flee an abusive relationship and go into secure accommodation, permanently or temporarily, resulted in work colleagues seeing ‘backstage’ (Goffman 1990a) thus

questioning the workplace self. In Jackie's case her employer terminated her contract for the sake of expediency and out of fear for the safety of other staff members who had experienced intimidation as a result of her abuser appearing at the workplace. As Jackie's statement illustrates, she knew that it was not her employer's responsibility to arrange secure accommodation for her. However, she would have liked some assistance or even an understanding ear. Essentially, positive workplace environments are a fundamental contributor to improving women's self-esteem.

The Need to Consider Gender

When discussing the impact of gender on their experiences of the workplace, many women indicated that the gender of their manager/supervisor had an impact on their decision to seek help or advice. Some women stated that the gender of the individual was not a major concern, but that they would be concerned about their approachability. Conversely, a number of participants stated that they would prefer to discuss the matter with another woman. For instance Jessica (Factory Worker) explained that she would not have felt comfortable disclosing her situation to a male colleague because her experiences had affected her ability to trust men.

DB: Would you have disclosed your situation to a male colleague?

“No, because I think it makes you too wary of men so you wouldn't confide in a male member, where you'll confide in women you can't

confide in men, because you think that all men are the same and it's wrong I know it's wrong, but you don't do that". (Jessica, Factory Worker)

Similarly Rothman *et al.* (2007) discovered that many of the women they interviewed expressed a level of scepticism regarding their male work colleagues, with many stating that due to their experiences they were less inclined to trust male co-workers. One of Rothman *et al.*'s (2007) participants even stated that she made a conscious effort to distance herself from her male colleagues. The fact that Jessica worked within a factory environment, where many of the managers or supervisors were male, placed her and other women wishing to seek help or assistance in a difficult position. Shannon (Factory Worker) worked in a similar environment to Jessica, in that her immediate supervisors/managers were all men and women conducted the unskilled labour. In discussing whether she had ever considered approaching her supervisors for help/support, she commented that she had felt safer keeping the abuse secret from them. Following on from this I asked her whether her managers/supervisors had ever become aware of her situation. Shannon responded by stating:

"If they were aware they didn't say anything, but looking back I think some of them must have suspected. It was just something that you didn't talk about at work" (Shannon, Factory Worker).

With a hierarchical gendered working environment, where men are in positions of power, it is more likely that certain masculine values are upheld and promoted

within the workplace, such as the separation of the public and the private. And men's reluctance to discuss issues of a personal nature within the workplace (Halford *et al.* 1997) poses a significant problem for those abused women working in low-paid, unskilled positions who wish to seek help or advice, but are uncomfortable with the fact that management is predominantly male.

Recommendations for Change

In discussing recommendations for improving workplace environments so that they provide support to women suffering abuse, Bridget (Midwife) suggested that organisations need to foster a culture that is more accommodating and supportive, and builds up the self-worth of employees experiencing personal issues.

“I don't know how you go about building people's self-esteem but you need to do that because they won't do anything, I don't think, if they haven't got self-esteem, I think they will just take time off sick, you know, or be late whatever. So I think there's something around esteem building to make people move on and deal with the situation, I don't know how you would do that, that's not my job to think about that [laughter], I think managers need to be aware that domestic violence happens you know, so I think it's important to, sort of, share that amongst managers and colleagues, I suppose an open atmosphere if possible” (Bridget, Midwife).

Bridget's statement suggests that in order to achieve this open atmosphere within the workplace, there needs to be a fundamental shift in gendered relations within organisational culture. Organisations should stop rewarding practises that reinforce the status quo, such as successfully keeping one's personal lives separate from work, which essentially relegates the family to second place. Also employers need to recognise that job positions are not gender neutral and that this assumption is based on a historical presumption that all workers are male. Swanberg (2004) has argued that these gendered assumptions hinder or prevent organisations from creating workplace cultures that take account of female employees' needs, particularly work-life balance issues regarding childcare. Given that organisations have been slow in adopting family-friendly policies, she argues that it is no surprise that they have been dilatory in addressing intimate partner abuse.

Some have argued that in order to achieve an effective transformation with regard to an organisation's culture, the change has to be initiated and led by senior management. This perspective was reinforced by Janis (Personnel Officer) who explained how the Chief Executive had a fundamental impact within her organisation simply by taking the issue of intimate partner abuse seriously. Janis said that the Chief Executive's passion for addressing the issue, namely taking a proactive approach, reverberated throughout the whole organisation.

“Umm ‘cause some of the things have already happened in this organisation like the raising awareness of domestic violence, that was a very positive move forward, umm and also the, certainly at the

time when the policy was put into place there was messages coming out from the chief executive that the organisation was really supporting it and he apparently, he's gone now, it's a different one now, but his predecessor was a very strong advocate of supporting people within this position. And umm and, I guess a message from the top really is helpful, you know, I think that is very important, so it's not just odd little managers here and there that accept and understand it, it's got to be from the top down". (Janis, Personnel Officer).

As this suggests, it is vital that key individuals within organisations take matters of inequality in gender and class relations seriously, because without their support there is little chance of strategies or policies gaining legitimacy (Bradley and Healy, 2008). Kirk and Franklin (2003) and Randel and Wells (2003) particularly stress the need for a strong commitment from chief executives and senior management in order to initiate a fundamental organisational cultural change. Without the support of senior management, managers and supervisors will be “unsure about the scope of their responsibility and authority to assist victims” (Randel and Wells 2003: 829). Recognition by senior management is crucial if managers/supervisors are going to seriously address the issue of intimate partner abuse at all levels of the organisation. Furthermore, without this support, it would be difficult to develop and implement a domestic violence workplace policy and to promote awareness via training workshops, etc., throughout the organisation due to the fact that these activities need financial backing.

Another aspect which needs to be taken into consideration is the gendered dynamics operating within the workplace. For example, one has to question whether a radical transformation regarding more flexible and understanding policies regarding work/life balance issues would occur within 'traditional masculine' working environments, such as engineering firms. Additionally, one needs to ask whether change would occur in hierarchically gendered workplaces, where men occupy managerial positions and women conduct the unskilled labour. In discussing equal opportunities policy initiatives Charles (2000) suggests that these policies benefit middle-class, career orientated women, whereas working class women employed within low paid and unskilled positions will benefit less. Furthermore, Charles (2000) highlights the difficulties associated with radical organisational cultural change when men occupy positions of power within the workplace and thus resist changes to the status quo.

All participants agreed that for any domestic violence workplace policy to be successful there needs to be a fundamental change in organisational culture, and that this would only be achieved by extensive training and awareness raising. Overwhelmingly, survivors wanted to see more training for managers/supervisors and Human Resource management specialists, who they believed were vital in tackling intimate partner abuse within the workplace. Bridget (Midwife) recommended that managers need to be trained in order to develop the right skills to allow them to approach in a sensitive manner individuals they suspect of experiencing abuse. In order to accomplish this she proposed that managers/supervisors should be made to complete an insightful

training session in which they are informed about the many forms of abuse that women experience.

DB: Should managers approach those employees they suspect of experiencing abuse?

“Umm, very carefully [laughter] it’s a really difficult situation, it’s difficult because you’re all, people are different, in different situations but there needs to be a policy on it, there needs to be some understanding, there needs to be umm, what do you call it, education on it, cause people aren’t educated on it and don’t know, all lot of people don’t know. A lot of people don’t know they’re in domestic violence situations, do you know what I mean? They just think it’s normal and that’s even scarier, because you come into work not acting right because they don’t, they think it’s fine, do you know, so I think there needs to be education on it and there need to be a policy on it and umm they definitely need support” (Bridget, Midwife).

Speaking as a manager, Charlotte (Nurse Manager) thought that managers should have more of an understanding of the dynamics of intimate partner abuse, that there is more to the issue than physical abuse. For example, they need to be aware of the extent to which abusers control their partners and the way in which honourable intentions on the part of employers, such as calling the employee at home, could exacerbate the situation.

“I think an understanding that if you are in a controlling relationship that involves domestic violence or emotional abuse or whatever it is, it is more than just violence it can be a whole range of things, and that we as employers can make it worse. Like my boss used to call me at home and he wouldn’t have thought that it was causing me grief at home and if he did he wouldn’t’ve done it, but it’s little things like that, but what I say to the managers as well is, ‘Have you asked the question? Have you asked them if everything is ok at home?’ You know. ‘Have you asked her if there is anything she needs you to help her with? Have you asked her whether there is a problem within that relationship?’ But people are so anxious to ask because they do not want to offend that person, but if it’s not right-way I look at it if as maybe someone might think ‘well, it was very good of you to ask, but no there is isn’t a problem, but thank you for asking’, but maybe that girl just needs the opportunity to say ‘well actually yes it is fucking terrible yes and I really need some help with it” (Charlotte, Nurse Manager).

These comments by Bridget and Charlotte point out the necessity of providing training to managers/supervisors on issues relating to intimate partner abuser within the workplace. Training and/or awareness-raising are vital with regard to successfully implementing policy, particularly for front-line supervisors/managers, who are responsible for implementing policies. However, it has been noted by Johnson and Indvik (1999) that people within organisations “train themselves to stay out of other people’s lives”, especially managers who

subscribe to the belief that personal problems remain at the office door (pg. 365). Johnson and Idvik's comments further highlight the fact that front-line supervisors/managers are not only influenced by official organisational structures, but are also influenced by informal structures, such as class, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, which can prevent the successful implementation of policy. Dickens (2005) argues that even though an organisation's Human Resources department may produce guidelines and prescriptive practices for department and line managers, this does not necessarily translate into successful implementation. Front line managers/supervisors may see this as a threat to their authority or might feel they must follow 'traditional practices' in order to safeguard the success of the organisation, or their department. Dickens (2005) suggests that sentiments such as "this is the way things are done around here" connote conformity to traditional organisational scripts (pg. 199). Maybery (2006) also stresses the necessity for front-line managers to support policies, pointing out that it is these individuals within organisations that can resist and marginalise certain policies and practice. She continues by suggesting that stigma within organisations still persists, which prohibits employees from utilising workplace policies; this is particularly the case with regard to maternity leave or leave for childcare. Essentially, gendered dynamics operating within the workplace put women in a difficult position, in that they do not want to be seen in a negative light as a result of their taking advantage of these policies. Similarly, even though front-line managers may have received training relating to intimate partner abuse and the organisation may have a policy, the assumptions and expectations of managers and co-workers might inhibit employees from seeking help or taking advantage of certain

policies (Kirby and Krone 2002). As noted by Duffy *et al.* (2005), co-workers could harbour negative feelings towards individuals who gain workplace assistance for an issue which they consider to be self-inflicted. The fact that many people blame abused women for their own situation could prevent abused women from seeking assistance, and those that do could experience resentment from co-workers.

Disempowerment

In discussing the need for managers/supervisors to take a proactive approach, I asked participants under what circumstances, or in what context, would it be appropriate for a manager to approach an employee they suspected of suffering abuse. Alison (Social Worker) advocated managers taking a proactive approach in inquiring as to the well-being of their employees, but recommended that it should be made explicit that it would be confidential.

“I was dying to tell somebody, I couldn't believe I kept it from my mum of all people, but I was actually dying to tell somebody but just felt as though I couldn't because of the fear I had, so if an employer did go up to someone and say 'look, is there a problem, you know, this is like confidential', then that's a good idea because that might encourage people to be able to speak, because they are not allowed to speak their minds, so it is giving somebody the opportunity to have, like look have your say, yes. So I suppose I am all for that, I

think it would help, it might entice it out of some people that are too scared to say something” (Alison, Social Worker).

This statement not only highlights the importance attached to confidentiality, but also raises another equally important issue, namely granting individuals the space to talk. Many of the women interviewed explained how they were not allowed to speak or voice their opinion within their relationships and, as a result, became more isolated and suffered from low self-confidence. Offering a safe and confidential environment within the workplace so that they could discuss personal issues would allow them seek advice or assistance. Martin (2004) found that survivors would have liked the opportunity to discuss the issue at work if they had been given the opportunity. Catherine (Shop Assistant) agreed that managers should provide employees with the space to talk about issues that were not work related. However, she stressed that the context in which this discussion takes place is critically important. She suggested that if an employer approached someone on their return to work after an absence, it might make them anxious about losing their job, thus placing them in a position in which they felt as though they needed to conceal the situation even more.

In discussing when it would be suitable for a manager to ask an employee about a ‘personal’ matter, Alexandra (Social Worker) recommended that supervisions would be an appropriate context in which a manager could inquire as to an employee’s welfare.

“I think when you have a supervision, you know, a one-to-one with your manager. I think you should have an opportunity within that to talk about home, that might be the first sort of opportunity you might have to talk about home, that might be the first sort of opportunity you might get to speak about it in total confidence with your manager. But I think supervision is key and indeed in this job I am asked ‘how is it going with your family?’ Because since we have lost my grandson, my daughter has, so I am asked how things have been, you know, in that context I am asked, yeah I would say supervision is possibly the best place because if you have got a good relationship with that person then, yeah, it’s an opportunity isn’t it, it’s about giving people space to talk” (Alexandra, Social Worker).

Alexandra continued by emphasising that organisations need to provide “disclosure opportunities” but she also commented that this is most likely to occur in a “very supportive environment”. Moreover, she said that there has to be more than just the opportunity to disclose, in that women suffering abuse must feel that they are going to benefit from disclosing.

“I think you have to have the carrots for people don’t you, there had to be something in it what they want. It’s no good saying ‘oh we want to know if you are suffering domestic violence’, because the other side of it is that you could feel as though you are discriminated against by disclosing it” (Alexandra, Social Worker).

Alexandra's statement highlights the predicament that many women will face when deciding to seek help within their workplace. As I discussed in Chapter 5, disclosure is a calculated process in which women evaluate the possible negative effects and positive benefits. Alexandra's comments illustrate the possible negative responses to disclosure, that women could face discrimination. Furthermore, seeking help or assistance could compromise their constructions of self and boundary work, which are crucial coping strategies.

Following on from Alexandra's comments in which she highlights the conditions that employers need to attain in order for women to feel safe about asking for help, Charlotte (Nurse Manager) stated that employers should not make women seeking help feel disempowered by pressuring them into taking a specific course of action. She wanted managers to listen to employees and help them come to their own decisions rather than forcing them into doing something against their will.

"The other thing is often when people ask you the question and you say yes, they go into this automatic takeover mode of 'right, what we must do is we must get you and your children away from there', you know, and I went through terrible things like that where I kept thinking 'no, actually I don't want to get away, what I'm going to do is stay', I didn't want somebody taking over, but people do take over. They do think, it's that victim thing again, it's almost like 'poor you, what we must do is this'. I didn't want people to do anything for me, actually all I wanted was somebody to just talk through what the

options were and maybe to help me plan and plot a little bit, you know, well ok I will get away but how can I do it and how can I sort my life out, you know, my finances out and all those things”
(Charlotte, Nurse Manager).

With the majority of women identifying the workplace as an environment in which they had some sense of control and one in which they could construct a positive sense of self, the last thing they need is pressure from their manager/supervisor to leave the relationship. This is highlighted by Lempert (1997) who suggests that, even though individuals who are approached by those suffering abuse want the violence to stop, they often have a different perspective on the situation from that of the abused. She argues that instead of being told what to do, women who seek help wanted to be able to clarify their perspectives on the situation and wanted the individual to whom they disclosed to share this perspective and not see them as a ‘victim’. When an abused woman is attributed ‘victim’ status her “competence is called into question if she does not leave” furthermore they “may lose control over their self-definitions, interpretations of experience, and, in some cases, control over their private affairs” (Loseke and Cahill 1984: 306). Encountering pressure from management or co-workers could potentially reinforce the feeling of powerlessness and further diminish women’s sense of self-worth. Moreover, this negative reaction from co-workers could have damaging consequences, in that it could lead to an inability to develop trusting relations with individuals and to feel comfortable about seeking help or assistance. It could also result in the individual leaving their employment, therefore restricting their ability to escape the relationship. From Charlotte’s

statement one could argue that managers/supervisors may believe they are acting with the best intentions when they ‘take control of the situation’, but in reality they are simply disempowering, or as Loseke and Cahill propose, re-victimising, the individual seeking help.

The Role of Trade Unions

For two decades women’s issues, such as equal pay and maternity leave, have been taken up by many of the major trade unions within the UK. However, it is only recently that they have started to address intimate partner abuse (Charles 2000). Even though the issue of intimate partner abuse has been firmly placed on trade union’s bargaining agendas, most of the women interviewed who were trade union members stated either that they were unaware that their union could help or believed the issue to be a ‘private’ and not a union matter. As this statement by Rebecca illustrates:

“I would not have even dreamed of going to the union rep, it's not something I would go and you know, well I had no cause to, I just got on with it I didn't feel as though I had to go and say, I need this, that, and the other, I just would not have dreamed of it” (Rebecca, Social Worker).

This statement clearly exemplifies Rebecca’s rejection of the possibility of disclosing her situation to her union representative on the grounds that she did not feel as though it was a matter with which the union could assist. Parker and

Elger posit “the division between public and private spheres remains central to the ways in which people cope with such violence, especially in relation to concerns about reputation and confidentiality” (2004: 5). As discussed in Chapter 4, many participants constructed a boundary between home and work, not only because they felt the need to compartmentalise their lives in order to conform to the organisational script, but this also acted as a coping strategy. Furthermore, just as many women stated that they felt uncomfortable about approaching their male manager for help, they also indicated some ambiguity about approaching a male trade union representative for assistance/advice. Parker (2001) found that many trade union shop stewards were aware of the gender imbalance with regard to female union workers on the front line and indicated that this probably inhibits many women from seeking assistance from union representatives.

My findings also echo Parker and Elger’s (2004) regarding the gender of shop stewards and the relationship women have with their trade union representatives. A number of their interviewees stated that women were more likely to disclose to another woman within an informal ‘friendship’ scenario rather than in a formal union context. Rebecca Gill, the TUC Women’s Policy Officer, indicated that one of the reasons why only 9% of women members disclose their situation to their union is due to the different relationship women have with their trade union. Gill suggests that many women still have this perception that trade unions are dominated by and only interested in men’s employment issues and do not represent the interests of women (Labour Review 2003). Parker and Elger (2004) suggest that one of the reasons why there is a gender imbalance regarding shop stewards is due to women having domestic and childcare responsibilities which,

in conjunction with paid work, makes it extremely difficult for them to be involved in union activities.

The trade union membership fee was highlighted as a problem by one of my participants. Stephanie (Administrator) explained that she was a member of the union but after she left the abusive relationship and was in financial difficulties, she could no longer afford the £15 per month membership fee.

DB: Are you a member of a trade union?

“No I used to be, but I am not now. To be honest when I left the relationship, I came out of the union because that £15 a month that I was paying I needed desperately so I came out of the union. And also the other thing was they wanted us to come out and strike and I just couldn’t afford to do that, you know, keeping myself on the one salary I just couldn’t afford to do it. So I came out of the union”

(Stephanie, Administrator).

This issue of financial burdens was also highlighted by Parker and Elger’s (2004) research participants, who wanted to see unions provide more financial assistance for those experiencing abuse. Although UNISON do offer financial assistance through their welfare system for those experiencing unforeseen financial hardship or personal difficulties (such as intimate partner abuse), this financial assistance is means tested, which can be problematic for those women in high paid positions who are also experiencing financial abuse and do not have

access to funds (UNISON 2009). Some trade unions offer their members loans, but they have the same credit rating system as a high street bank, and again this can disadvantage some women, especially those with poor credit ratings due to suffering economic abuse.

Only one participant indicated that she had sought assistance from her trade union. Joanne explained that, due to management reprimanding her for low productivity on a number of occasions, she had become concerned about the possibility of losing her job. Being fearful about this, she approached the trade union representative for assistance. Joanne went on to say that if it had not been for the positive and supportive response of the union she would have lost her job.

“It has been the union really, the union has been more behind it than my employer, the union have really looked after me most of all. Without the union I probably wouldn’t have been there because they have helped me with every meeting I have had with the managers, they have come in with me and they have supported me. One of them has even kept in contact with me say ‘if you feel bad, we’ll have a chat’ and they checked to see if I am ok and stuff like that, you know, they’re the ones who have helped, not work” (Joanne, Warehouse Operative).

Interestingly, all the trade union representatives at Joanne’s workplace were male, but when I inquired as to whether she felt uncomfortable discussing her situation with them she said not at all and emphasised how helpful they had been. It has to

be noted that at the particular point when Joanne sought assistance from the union she had made the decision to disclose her situation. Although this decision was initiated out of fear for losing her job, Joanne also stated that it came to a point where she had had enough of keeping the abuse secret and she simply wanted others to know. In many respects, Joanne experienced what Denzin (1989) refers to as an 'epiphanic moment', where an individual experiences a turning point in their life, one that will resonate and have noticeable consequences within their everyday experiences. One therefore has to understand the context and the motivation for Joanne's approach to the male trade union representatives. Essentially, she was in a position in which she was anxious about losing her job and she had made a decision which gave her the ability to discuss her situation with these male union representatives. Therefore, one should not interpret Joanne's experience as illustrative of gender not having an impact on this interaction. There were plenty of participants who indicated that they would feel uncomfortable about discussing their situation with any man, let alone a trade union representative. Nevertheless, Joanne's experience illustrates how trade unions can assist those women suffering intimate partner abuse, by providing support not only on a formal level but also offering emotional support.

These experiences relating to trade unions bolster the argument that trade unions need to become more representative of their membership base. This means that there should be more encouragement and support for female trade union representatives taking on the role of shop steward. More importantly, there needs to be a radical change in how trade unions are structured and what issues they consider to be important and deserving of a place on their bargaining agendas.

‘I have left, but that doesn’t mean that I’m ok’: Continuing Workplace Support

Some participants indicated that although they received tremendous support from co-workers and managers during the process of leaving the relationship, this quickly diminished after they had left their partner and returned to work. Janis (Personnel Officer) stated that there is an expectation that once a person has left an abusive relationship they will quickly recover and return to work as normal. However, Janis points out that she was deeply emotionally and physically affected from the experience and would have appreciated some support on her return to work.

“Umm and then the bit afterwards, you know, like I say I do feel a little better now, like I am out of the relationship ok but it’s not like that’s just the end of it and you can live happily ever after now, there is still a lot of emotion and you know, practical things that I need to sort out and that sort of thing. It’s almost like an understanding that you need them to understand that someone leaving the relationship that it isn’t a put the lid on it and forget about it sort of thing, there is still the ongoing support needed afterwards as well” (Janis, Personnel Officer).

This sentiment expressed by Janis was reiterated by many participants, that there is an assumption or expectation that once a person has left an abusive relationship they will quickly become ‘themselves’ again. Interestingly, participants indicated that friends and family particularly had this expectation

that they would 'recover' shortly after leaving. However, Evans and Lindsay (2008) problematise the term 'recovery' by suggesting that it inadequately captures the host of emotional processes that survivors experience for many years after leaving an abusive relationship. They continue by arguing that the dominant 'recovery' conceptual framework, which suggests that a person progresses from the injured stage to becoming fully resituated, is inaccurate because an individual does not recover in an absolute sense. In support of Evans and Lindsay's critique of the 'recovery' framework, Barnes (2009) found that even two years post separation women are still emotionally fragile and are engaged in a process of intense reflection and discovery of their sense of self. This discovery of self is illustrated in Rebecca's experience after leaving the relationship and returning to work.

"Knowing how I felt then to how I feel now it is a completely different contrast, but to me at the time that was the norm, you know, it's only now that I realise that I was really low, my self-esteem was really low, but now it's changed, like I said the contrast is amazing, everyone has commented that the change is amazing, after leaving it was like 'oh my god I'm free' and I just went wild. It has been an interesting year for healing and, you know, finding out who I am again" (Rebecca, Social Worker).

As one can see, this statement clearly illustrates Rebecca's level of reflection and self discovery. More importantly, it documents the length of time that this process of discovery takes, with Rebecca stating that it has been a 'year for

healing’ and that she is still finding out who ‘she’ is. Ben-Ari and Dayan (2008) argue that as a consequence of segregating their ‘professional’ and ‘private’ lives, after leaving the relationship many women enter a process of integration where their two worlds, or as I would argue their two constructions of self, come together. Ben-Ari and Dayan (2008) suggest that it is at this point of integration that women realise that their work colleagues are a source of significant emotional support, helping them through this process. They also found that it was at this point that many of their participants sought professional help from therapists/counsellors. Many of the women I interviewed indicated that they entered into counselling just before or after leaving the relationship in order to deal with the emotional aspects associated with coming to terms with their experiences. Overwhelmingly, participants recommended that one of the ways employers could assist women suffering abuse was to provide them with access to a counselling service.

Counselling

The majority of participants identified counselling as a fundamental service that employers should provide to women experiencing abuse; this parallels Martin’s (2004) findings which indicated that Devon County Council employees mostly desired a counselling service for those experiencing abuse. However, in discussing counselling provisions, many participants explained that these should be flexible and cater for the needs of the individual.

Bridget (Midwife) recommended that employers allow individuals to access counselling during normal working hours. She also suggested that external counselling would improve employee confidence and increase the likelihood of disclosure, because employees might be sceptical of the level of confidentiality regarding in-house services.

“I think probably external, I think it is better if it is completely different person, that it is somebody you don't know, I think with people within the workplace you know, you may not be as open and honest as you possibly could be, I think externally would be better”
(Bridget, Midwife).

Charlotte (Nurse Manager) indicated that she longed to speak to someone about her situation at work, but also wanted that person to be completely independent from her workplace, therefore minimising the potential risk of a negative response, which could affect her future career. Parker and Elger (2004) also found a similar level of scepticism regarding in-house counselling, with individuals displaying a preference for external services. If this service were available, co-workers would not become aware that their work colleagues were receiving counselling and the possibility of malicious workplace gossip would diminish. Conversely, however, Susanne (Administrator) identified the positive aspects of in-house counselling, that this arrangement would reduce the possibility of the abuser becoming suspicious of their partner's activities at work, particularly if they stalked or monitored their partner at work.

“It's hard because internally perhaps people would worry perhaps about their colleagues wondering where they were disappearing off to, externally it could impact on their personal lives, like their partner would wonder where the hell they were going to. Because there is a fear that they wonder what you are up to, ‘you are supposed to be home, where are you going now, what are you going to, who are you seeing’, and that is more hassle for them but then, I don't know, internally and perhaps externally whatever fitted in with the lifestyle. Internally might be better you know because it is all held in work then they have not got to impact it, they can talk and get it out and then go home and deal with it there, but counselling definitely” (Susanne, Administration).

Many of the women interviewed reported that they had been stalked by their partners at work so this is something that employers need to take into consideration. I would agree with those participants who recommended that counselling services should be flexible and accommodate those individuals experiencing abuse. Furthermore, I have documented that many of the participants emphasised their wish to talk to someone in order to confirm their sense of self or to discuss various means of coping with the situation, but also their fear of doing so because of possible negative repercussions. These findings further highlight the need for an appropriate counselling service.

Time to get it Together

In addition to counselling, many participants wanted to see employers offer women who were experiencing intimate partner abuse flexibility in terms of allowing them time off work in order to go and see the police or to attend solicitor appointments. Fiona (Bank Clerk) commented that employers should offer women leaving an abusive relationship compassionate leave so that they would have time to put their life in order.

“I think what they have to do is offering support in terms of time off perhaps to go see solicitors and time if you are planning to leave. Your employer should support you and give you some compassionate leave to take a few days off to go and find a flat or something”
(Fiona, Bank Clerk).

Jessica also recommended that employers provide women with time off work. However, in suggesting that leave from work allows women to recuperate and assess their situation, she also acknowledged that for some women this may not be appropriate.

“Yes I do, I think employers should let people have time out and have space, ‘cause a lot of women need that because it is a lot for a woman, especially if a woman has got kids as well and they are working and they have suffered either mental or physical abuse, I think they need that little bit of space where they can just sit at home.

But obviously a lot of women don't want to because they can go into a deep depression, which is really bad as well". (Jessica, Factory Worker).

Jessica raises an interesting point with regard to women taking time off work; she suggests that some might refuse this option because there is a possibility that it could escalate their feelings of depression. With work being a major coping device for many women, in that it allows them to escape the abusive environment both emotionally and physically and to construct a positive sense of self, it is understandable why some women would want to continue working during the process of leaving the relationship. Also a number of participants reported that they disclosed their situation to work colleagues at the point of leaving or just after and were relieved to receive a positive response, when co-workers offered them emotional and physical support; these experiences also help to explain why some women would want to keep working. Therefore, like counselling, this option must be flexible and suit the needs of the person seeking assistance.

All of the women interviewed, from those occupying low paid, low status to managerial positions, were in unison when it came to the issue of paid leave. However, women's experiences with regard to paid leave varied considerably, with those women occupying high status, high paid positions of employment receiving financial support from their employers, whilst those women employed in unskilled or semi-skilled positions received little to none. Jane succinctly encapsulated this disparity regarding paid leave when describing her experiences relating to time off work.

“Financial support would be really good. Because I’m a teacher I get paid anyway, do you know what I mean, like I had three months off and I got paid and that’s just the way it is. And I would have got paid for six months if I had it off and up to one year I would have got half pay, so in that sense it’s all in place. But if you’re not getting paid well you go to the doctor’s and you keep going to counselling and you get your doctor’s certificates and you can get financial help that way, but I don’t know about all workplaces, because some work places you only get so many sick pay days don’t you, so maybe something needs to be sorted out there, because if you have kids and then you suddenly you are not getting paid after 6 weeks then what do you do? Where do you go?” (Jane, Teacher).

Jane’s comments highlight the difficulties many of the women who were employed in low paid, low status positions experienced, particularly those with children who found it extremely difficult to establish themselves and support their children financially. There is still a gender gap in terms of pay and women are still predominantly responsible for providing childcare. Even those women within high paying occupations still faced financial constraints when leaving, often having no funds available to secure alternative accommodation due to being economically abused by their partners. It is also problematic for women who earn a substantial income and who are responsible for repaying a mortgage to gain housing assistance from the state.

The issue of housing or women's homelessness as a result of intimate partner abuse has been highlighted by many feminists (Charles 1994; Hague and Malos 1994), who specifically criticise the lack of government provision of housing for women fleeing abusive relationships. A number of women interviewed acquired emergency accommodation provided by women's organisations, such as Women's Aid and Refuge, after leaving the relationship. However, the average weekly cost of refuge accommodation was calculated by Southall Black Sisters to be £217 (Gill and Sharma 2005: 18). For those women not receiving state assistance and/or liable for mortgage repayments, this is a substantial sum. Parker (2001) and Parker and Elger (2004) also found that refuge accommodation costs were a barrier to employed women leaving the relationship, particularly for those women who were employed full time but did not qualify for paid leave. These women were presented with a dilemma in that they could leave their employment and thus become eligible for state assistance, but in doing so they would be relinquishing an aspect of their lives that gave them meaning. Again this reiterates the economic entanglement that abused women experience and further brings into question arguments relating to 'economic independence'.

Employers are in a position in which they could offer financial assistance to those employees experiencing abuse. However, in discussing the issue of paid leave, Charlotte (Nurse Manager) commented that there is a danger that employers could perceive this as a simple solution to a complex problem. Moreover, Charlotte stated that employers who advise their employees to take

sick leave do not understand the importance of work for those individuals suffering abuse.

“There is a whole host of things that employers need to be aware of and I don’t think that managers would necessarily think of them. A lot of the managers I have working for me would say things like ‘you need to take yourself off sick’, despite the fact that I have just said to you that work keeps me sane and safe, you know, it would be like ‘take yourself to the GP and get signed off for 6 months and then see how you feel’, you know” (Charlotte, Nurse Manager).

Charlotte continued by suggesting that managers need to understand the nature of intimate partner abuse and what employment means to women, that it provides more than a wage, and in some cases it is truly a life saver. Therefore, she believes organisations need to take a holistic approach regarding intimate partner abuse, with paid leave being only one of many vital components in supporting employees suffering abuse. Essentially, Charlotte reiterated many of the issues that have already been discussed, such as changing the workplace environment so that it provides women with a more positive sense of self, and allows for the de-stigmatisation of intimate partner abuse and other ‘personal’ issues such as mental health. These women’s experiences illustrate that there are no quick solutions to an issue as complex and sensitive as intimate partner abuse. Furthermore, taking into account women’s different experiences in relation to occupation, their economic position and the gendered power relations operating within particular workplaces, employers cannot simply adopt another

organisation's workplace policy and practices. As highlighted by O'leary-Kelly *et al.* (2008) management need to take into account the "unique characteristics and culture of the organization" when trying to implement a policy addressing intimate partner abuse (pg. 70). Expanding on this recommendation I would argue that management specifically need to take into account aspects of gender, ethnicity, sexuality and occupational status when developing, implementing and promoting their policy. Finally, employers have to be aware that workplace policies and practices must be flexible and address the needs of individual women seeking assistance.

In the following section I discuss the 'feminisation' of trade unions and how they have tried to address intimate partner abuse as an employment issue. I also examine whether men's organisations have had an impact on domestic violence workplace policies and practices.

Feminist Influence within the Trade Unions and their Response to Intimate Partner Abuse

Between 1979 and 1997 there was a dramatic reduction in trade union membership due to the lack of confidence by workers in the trade unions' bargaining ability (Colling and Dickens 2001). However, within this period trade unions recomposed and marketed themselves to the female workforce employed in public sector organisations, such as the NHS and local government. The increase in female membership had an impact on trade unions' bargaining agendas, with issues pertinent to women, such as equal pay, maternity pay and

abortion rights being incorporated. This commitment to women's issues was demonstrated by the Trade Union Congress (TUC) in 1979, when it publicly voiced its condemnation of Corrie's abortion Bill (Widdowson 1989). With trade union support, female employees, particularly those working part-time, have benefited by acquiring the same rights (on a pro rata basis) as those granted to full-time employees. The TUC have also been proactive in addressing issues considered to be 'private', with the TUC Women's Conference passing a resolution in 1981 identifying the unequal division of labour within the home as the major obstacle to women's equality at work and within the trade unions (Widdowson 1989). McBride (1997) posits that the TUC addressed issues that were previously considered 'private' due to a belief that women's inequality within the home stifled union democracy, and that women could not participate in union politics like their male peers, because of childcare responsibilities. Although many unions have indicated their commitment to tackling intimate partner abuse, including USDAW, GMB and the NUT, UNISON has been by far the most active and influential.

UNISON specifically addressed the issue of intimate partner abuse in 1994 by developing policies and guidelines in order to provide assistance to those individuals experiencing abuse. In 1995 they provided an arena for female members at local and regional conferences, where they could discuss abuse, sexual harassment and other issues that concern women and their employment. Women attending these forums were passionate about highlighting issues of abuse and workplace harassment, making connections between the public and the private (McBride, 1997). Due to the success of these forums UNISON produced

a 12-page booklet in 1995 entitled '*Violence in the Home*' to be distributed at regional level, and also raised the issue at the National Delegates Conference. UNISON has developed its intimate abuse campaign by forming alliances with women's organisations, such as Women's Aid, drawing on their expertise in designing strategies and workplace policies. One of the first domestic violence workplace policies to be implemented in the UK occurred in Edinburgh City Council within the context of their Zero-Tolerance campaign in 1994 (Mackay 1996). Collaboration between UNISON/NALGO and Scottish Women's Aid helped Edinburgh Council to develop appropriate policies and practices in relation to intimate partner abuse (Elger and Parker 2007). Of course other trade unions, such as the GMB, have also been influential in highlighting intimate partner abuse as a workplace issue since the 1980s. However, as (Parker 2001) found, employees still believed that intimate partner abuse was not a trade union issue. A survey conducted in 2002 by the TUC Women's Conference, in which 404 members were questioned on matters relating to intimate abuse, also found that many women believed that trade unions are still failing to bridge the chasm between the public and the private. Many of the women surveyed recommended that more needed to be done to highlight how aspects of women's private lives impact on their engagement in the public sphere.

Even though Labour passed legislation targeting gender inequality, providing a legal framework to which public sector organisations have to adhere, some trade unions have been calling for the government to go even further and develop a statutory definition of intimate partner abuse. Currently there is no statutory definition of intimate partner abuse within the UK, with those found guilty of

perpetrating violence/abuse being charged with Grievous Bodily Harm (GBH), Actual Bodily Harm (ABH) or Assault. Consequently, government departments and police constabularies have adopted differing definitions with regard to intimate partner abuse which some argue can be problematic. This matter was raised by UNISON's National Women's Committee, where delegates passed a motion that called upon the National Women's Committee to work with other women's organisations to lobby the government to develop a statutory definition of intimate partner abuse (UNISON 2007). They argued that a statutory definition would grant UNISON and other trade unions more leverage with regard to workplace policy. However, with the limitations of adopting a criminal justice approach to the issue of intimate partner abuse being so apparent, one has to ask whether a statutory definition would improve the situation or further marginalise the gendered aspect of intimate abuse. In the absence of a statutory definition of intimate partner abuse and a lucid legal framework requesting employers to address the issue of intimate partner abuse within the workplace as part of their gender equalities responsibilities, trade unions have utilised other legislation, such as the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) (HSWA).

The Act requires employers to provide a safe working environment for employees. This includes protecting them from violence or abusive behaviour within the workplace. Whilst the HSWA (1974) demands that employers provide a safe working environment, employers can only be held accountable if they have been informed of a breach of safety, for example violence occurring in the workplace, and do not act to rectify or prevent it from re-occurring. Therefore, in order for employees to be protected by this piece of legislation they would need

to disclose their situation to their employer or bring it to the attention of a trade union representative in order to receive assistance. However, as I have argued throughout this thesis, the act of disclosure is a complex issue that is influenced by aspects such as the gendered dynamics operating with the workplace, occupational status, ethnicity and sexual orientation. With the HSWA (1974) not specifically addressing intimate partner abuse, it offers no provision for supporting employees who disclose sensitive matters such as abuse. Parker and Elger (2004) comment that the use of the HSWA is problematic, since employers may interpret the nature of the act differently from trade unions. They also state that an employer's duty of care will be influenced by their finances and management structures. Finally, this legislation does not stipulate an employer's duty regarding third parties (i.e. non-employees) inflicting acts of violence/abuse within the workplace.

There has been a concerted effort by the TUC and trade unions to address intimate partner abuse, which has resulted in some organisations introducing workplace policies, however, there is still a level of ambivalence regarding unions' legitimacy in handling 'private' issues (Elger and Parker 2007). Elger and Parker (2007) suggest that some women may wish for a workplace policy that solely addresses the issue of abuse and that is distinct from other policies, whilst others may favour an integrated policy that concentrates on other work-life balance issues and which connects other aspects of the 'public' and the 'private'. Nonetheless, it is evident from the experiences of the women I interviewed that more needs to be done to raise awareness of the trade unions' commitment to addressing intimate abuse as a workplace issue and that unions

can assist those women seeking help or advice. Furthermore, with many participants indicating that they would feel uncomfortable about discussing their situation with men, unions need to encourage more women to take up positions as shop stewards. As noted in USDAW's (2006) guidelines for negotiating a workplace policy, employers need to take gender into account when appointing an appropriate contact within organisations, but this also applies to appointing shop stewards. Finally, and most importantly, there needs to be awareness-raising within organisations and trade unions with regard to intimate partner abuse. People need to understand that abuse is not a 'private' matter but a matter that affects everyone within an organisation. Also, men need to realise that it is not a 'women's issue' but it is something that affects women, men and children and that in order to stop it they need to become involved.

Men's Organisations and their Impact on Social Change and Policy Development

As indicated in Chapter 3, I conducted interviews with a number of men who work within the domestic violence sector in order to explore the impact they were hoping to have on policy.⁹ Some of these men believed that they were influencing social change, whilst others were a little sceptical. In explaining the nature of the campaign and the influence of the *White Ribbon Campaign*, Chris (White Ribbon) stated that he has been campaigning in Wales, where he organised a photo shoot with 40 Welsh assembly MPs wearing white ribbons, and has also been involved with a number of trade unions, schools and universities.

⁹ See Appendix for a breakdown of research sample and a description of the organisations these men were associated with.

Also he indicated that he has had an impact on a European level, with the Prime Minister of Spain and members of his cabinet wearing white ribbons for half a day. Finally, Chris said that he had also instructed the Council of Europe on campaigning against violence against women. Although commenting on these achievements with enthusiasm, Chris questioned whether they had any significant impact on the politicians and how they viewed the issue of violence against women.

“But is it really changing anything, that’s the biggie, all we’ve had is loads of really good effects on, I wouldn’t say tokenism, it might not be tokenism, but the visuality of people wearing a ribbon on a particular day, in some respect you could say that’s a great source of achievement [...] so we haven’t had a direct impact on any strategic policy making basis, we are sort of a thorn in people’s side if we are lucky” (Chris, White Ribbon).

As this statement suggests, Chris is sceptical about whether the *White Ribbon Campaign* has had a direct impact, stating that they have not directly influenced the development of policies addressing violence against women. The statement seems to suggest that for Chris a tangible impact is the only way one can measure the success of the campaign. However, according to the *White Ribbon Campaign* UK website, the campaign is described as an “educational organization to encourage reflection and discussion that leads to personal and collective action among men”

(<http://www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk/faq.html#goals>). Therefore, its goal is to raise awareness among men through education and not direct political action. Charles (2000) argues that measuring the success of social movements can be problematic, “particularly when the cultural effects of movements are considered” (pg. 50). It is therefore difficult to measure the impact that the *White Ribbon Campaign* is having on challenging assumptions regarding gender norms. However, as Chris (White Ribbon) points out, the campaign is continually engaging with men and boys and continues to challenge certain constructions of masculinity within society which, although not necessarily an obtrusive method in terms of political action, has the possibility of influencing and changing men’s perception of violence against women.

Respect, however, directly lobbies the government, statutory and non statutory agencies, at both national and local level, in order influence policy regarding perpetrators of intimate abuse. Neil (Respect) states that *Respect* has been responsible for providing training to the Crown Prosecution Service, and assisted them with the development and implementation of their domestic violence workplace policy.

“We typically get asked to comment on how organisations deal with perpetrators, because that’s our expertise if you like and there are a lot more organisations who have a lot more expertise working with victims, such as Women’s Aid and Refuge” (Neil, Respect).

Recently, Mark (Respect) gave evidence at the Home Affairs Committee on Domestic Violence that was conducted in February 2008. Respect therefore engages directly with central government and with state institutions such as the Crown Prosecution Service. As Neil's statement indicates, *Respect* is seen as 'expert' with regard to perpetrators of intimate partner abuse and therefore may have more influence politically. Charles (2000) notes that being perceived as 'expert' by the state can give a social movement a political advantage. The term 'expert' has a considerable amount of power attached to it, for example, Women's Aid have established themselves as 'experts' in relation to providing services to victims of abuse, which has proved to be advantageous when engaging with the state. Therefore, ability for *Respect* (an organisation addressing perpetrators) to access central government due to its formal organisational structure and bureaucracy raises critical questions regarding gendered power relations. Some feminists could argue that the legitimacy of an organisation that seeks to address perpetrators (who are predominantly men), rather than those experiencing abuse needs to be questioned. As Katz (2006) states, women are "happy to see more men shoulder the burden of responsibility for changing men's and boy's attitudes and behaviours, but they are also frustrated that some men can be heard in ways that women cannot" (pg. 63).

Mark (Respect) and Damien (Perpetrator Programme Co-ordinator) were aware of the paradox in speaking out on intimate partner abuse and inadvertently reproducing gendered power relations within the public sphere. Mark stated that one can immediately see a difference in audience response depending on the sex of the presenter.

“I have delivered training with a woman to predominantly male police officers and if the female trainer says something and I say exactly the same thing, there is a massive difference, she will get a lot of stick for it when she is talking about statistics or experiences of women or something like that and a lot scepticism and sarcasm, sometimes in terms of the remarks, you know, from men whether they are police officers or not, almost spoiling for a fight, you know, proving the little woman wrong, do you know what I mean, but if I get up and say it or if another man says it, there’s not a sound in the room” (Mark, Respect).

Damien also commented on the gendered power relations and how women who speak out about intimate partner violence are judged and instantly labelled as ‘feminists’.

“On some of the feedback forms I will get comments like ‘it’s really refreshing to see a man delivering this type of work because I was expecting to have a woman doing the training’. Often I will get someone coming to the training and they see it’s a man and they say ‘I am really looking forward to it now’. And I kind of think, gosh that’s really terrible you know, what some women will experience, you know, comments like ‘it’s just another feminist talking about how all men are violent against women and all this male bashing’, but if a

man comes to talk about it suddenly they're really interested in what he is going to say" (Damien, Perpetrator Programme Co-ordinator).

These comments indicate the nature of gendered power relations within the public sphere, that men are privileged and bestowed with power. Furthermore, these statements illustrate what McKie (2005) describes as marginalisation of feminist perspectives within the 'malestream' by branding those women who speak out against gender inequality and violence against women as 'radical' feminists. Mackay (1996), in discussing Women's Aid engagement with the local authority in Edinburgh in order to produce a Zero Tolerance campaign, states that "radical politics in general and feminist politics in particular encounter both general and gendered resistance" (pg. 207).

Mark and Damien's comments illustrate the micro-level gendered resistance that women speaking out against violence against women face. But women's perspectives on violence against women also face resistance on a macro-level from the state, which transforms feminist perspectives into more liberal interpretations that do not fundamentally challenge the gender order (Charles 2000). In addition to women encountering resistance, these statements also identify the paradoxical position in which men who speak out against violence against women find themselves, in that men's voices are heard within the public sphere and women's are to a large extent marginalised. Flood (2001) addresses this paradoxical position regarding men's mobilisation, by stating that it is highly problematic in terms of gendered power relations, since men are automatically granted power and privilege when they speak. This has led Pease (2006) to ask

whether men involved in pro-feminist men's movements inadvertently perpetuate male dominance? However, in addressing this dilemma Kaufman (2001) argues that "if the ability to dominate is a display of manhood, only by involving males in a redefinition of manhood will we effectively challenge these patterns of domination and control" (pg. 44). He continues by stating that, although the power is bestowed on men when they speak and they are more likely to be heard than women, if we are "effectively to reach men and boys, then men and boys must be involved" (pg. 45).

The impact of men's movements on shaping domestic violence workplace policies is uneven, in that some male interviewees indicated that they have directly informed the development of policies and practices, whilst others did not address the issue. For example, Neil (Respect) stated that his organisation was working closely with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in developing their workplace policy. He also indicated that they were in discussion with the CPS with regard to introducing screening tests for future employees, to see whether they are, or have the potential to be, a perpetrator of abuse. Mark (Domestic Violence Co-ordinator) explained how he had assisted a local employer with an incident in which both the perpetrator and survivor worked in the same organisation. The situation was resolved by the employer, utilising existing workplace policies, which led Mark to question the need for a specific policy to address the issue. However, these findings indicate that men's movements are having an impact on developing workplace responses to intimate partner abuse, but some organisations are having more direct influence than others. Overall,

however, it is difficult to assess with any accuracy the impact of the *White Ribbon Campaign* on challenging attitudes within trade unions or workplaces.

Within the last section of this chapter I examine current domestic violence workplace policies and practices from predominantly public sector organisations. This analysis will determine whether these policies address those aspects raised by my women interviewees and the extent to which these policies and practices facilitate a fundamental change in organisational culture and awareness of intimate partner abuse.

Domestic Violence Workplace Policies: Effective Action or Token Gesture?

The Equalities Act (2009) was partially implemented in the form of the Gender Equalities Duty in April 2007. The Duty specifically addresses organisations operating within the public sector, though private sector companies that conduct business with the public sector in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are also required to take a proactive stance to eradicate gender discrimination and harassment, and to promote equality between men and women. In 2008 the Women's Equality Unit released a publication stating that the Gender Equality Duty (2007) encourages government departments to examine the many ways in which they can tackle the issue of intimate partner abuse, which included raising awareness and implementing "robust domestic violence policies" and "providing employees with necessary support" (Women's Equality Unit 2008: 8)

Recently the Gender Equality Duty (2007) was incorporated into, and enhanced by, Labour's Equality Bill (2009) presented to the House of Parliament in April 2009. The Equality Bill effectively acts as a legal framework which government departments and public organisations need to adhere to in terms of gender, race, disability and sexual orientation. This bill also extends to the private sector in requesting private organisations with more than 250 employees to publish the pay gap in percentage terms between their male and female employees. Aspects such as employer liability for employees' experiencing harassment and/or victimisation are also covered by the bill. Clause 37 stipulates that employers will be liable for the harassment or victimisation of employees by third parties only if they are aware of the situation, fail to act and the incident occurs more than twice. Even though the Equality Bill (2009) recommends that organisations allocate specific funds to promote gender equality, and understand and tackle prejudices, it does not provide a specific code of conduct which organisations need to follow in terms of their responsibilities to individuals suffering abuse. For example, it does not address issues of paid leave to meet the needs of employee welfare specifically relating to abuse or make it mandatory that public organisations have a workplace domestic violence policy. Furthermore, initially the bill does not address all the private sector, only those organisations that have affiliations with the public sector. And as we have seen, within the current economic climate, policies that address inequalities within the workplace are marginalised in favour of economic prosperity. Nevertheless, the Equality Bill (2009) does provide a loose legal framework which places responsibility on organisations to address issues relating to gender inequality. Therefore, this could allow trade unions and employees more political and legal leverage when

negotiating with organisations to introduce workplace policies or practices to address the issue of intimate partner abuse.

In accordance with the Equalities Act (2009) and recommendations from government, government departments and local government organisations have been advised to address the issue of intimate partner abuse by developing appropriate policies and procedures. With the aid of the Corporate Alliance against Domestic Violence, a number of multinational organisations, such as the *Body Shop* and *KPMG* have developed workplace domestic violence policies. Other private sector organisations that have developed workplace policies include the *Co-operative*. Public sector organisations such as the Crown Prosecution Service, *BBC*, various Police Constabularies, NHS primary care trusts, government departments and local authorities have also developed workplace policies. However, the quality of these policies differs tremendously, with some organisations developing comprehensive and well designed policies and procedures, whilst others appear to be making a ‘token gesture’.

Promotion of Policy

With many of the participants placing emphasis on organisational change in terms of culture and attitudes towards issues considered private, this is one aspect that I was extremely conscious of when analysing the various workplace domestic violence policies. I particularly wanted to determine how workplace policies on domestic violence were to be promoted, how they were being

promoted and whether they offered any recommendations for achieving a more understanding and supportive workplace environment.

Nottingham City Council's domestic violence workplace policy was launched in 2004. The policy document states that Nottingham City Council wish to address the crime of domestic violence and to "raise awareness of the extent and nature of domestic violence" (http://www.ndvf.org.uk/download_185.php accessed 20/05/09). Furthermore, it stipulates that the organisation wishes to develop a zero tolerance approach to the issue of intimate partner abuse. In order to achieve these objectives the policy states that domestic violence information is available on the organisation's intranet, that new employees will be informed of the policy within their induction and that the policy and information will be included in the employee handbook. The policy also suggests that there will be regular awareness raising events that will take place throughout the year and that the policy should be updated regularly.

Compared to other workplace policies, Nottingham City Council's policy seems comprehensive. It specifically outlines their objectives and how they intend to meet them. However, after discussing the policy with a Human Resources representative from Nottingham City Council, I became a little concerned that the organisation had not been successful in raising awareness of the policy, never mind facilitating workplace cultural change. When I enquired as to how many employees had utilised the policy since its implementation in 2004, the Human Resource representative responded by stating that only two employees had taken advantage of the policy. The Human Resource specialist commented that the lack

of promotion of the domestic violence workplace policy was responsible for the low usage.¹⁰

Coventry City Council's policy, too, stated that it was committed to raising awareness through training and effectively promoting domestic violence workplace policy via the organisation's intranet. However, I was informed by a representative from Coventry Domestic Violence and Abuse Partnership that promotion of the workplace policy was a 'one-off' and that the council has not made plans or allocated a budget for the continual promotion of the policy or domestic violence awareness. If there is no annual budget for promoting the workplace policy or raising awareness of intimate partner abuse within Coventry City Council, then it is highly unlikely that there will be a yearly allocation of funds to support training. Coventry City Council's policy states that "the council strives to create a working environment that promotes the view that violence against people is unacceptable and that such violence will not be condoned or made the subject of jokes or graphical portrayal" (Section 1: pg. 1).

According to Silcox (2006) communication of a domestic violence workplace policy is essential if an organisation is going to challenge the current perception of the issue. Both Nottingham City Council and Coventry City Council promoted their policy at its launch, but this does not signify a concerted effort to fundamentally raise awareness of the issue of intimate partner abuse and it is unlikely to be effective in changing the workplace culture. Also, as Coventry

¹⁰ This discussion took place in August 2007 and therefore more employees might have utilised the policy.

City Council did not allocate a specific fund to promote awareness or train management/HR specialists in aspects relating to intimate partner abuse, it is unclear how they expect to foster an environment in which violence is deemed unacceptable. Elliott and Jarrett (1994) highlight the dangers with regard to training and promotion within organisations, in that in times of economic instability training programmes are the first to be axed in order to make savings. However, instead of perceiving training and promotion of workplace policy as draining valuable economic resources, managers should see these activities as an economic investment. This is because the prevention of intimate partner abuse will allow savings in terms of increased productivity and also higher staff retention rates which result in lower recruitment costs.

Even though promotion of workplace policies within these organisations is poor, their strategy of utilising their intranet to promote the policy and to disseminate information relating to intimate partner abuse does seem a positive step. Many of the participants highlighted company intranet systems as an effective means by which policies could be promoted and where information relating to domestic violence services within the local area could be made available. Martin (2004) also found that the intranet was the most favoured method among the people surveyed for promoting domestic violence workplace policies, with 42 per cent of 1092 female employees indicating that this would be the most effective method. Silcox (2006) suggests that communications regarding intimate partner abuse and the services and support available must be delivered in ways that allowed employees to access them privately. A company's intranet would meet the criterion outlined by Silcox, and it would also be an effective means by

which promotional costs could be kept to a minimum. Therefore, these organisations are utilising a method favoured by many participants. They are not, however, keeping the issue prioritised within the organisation. If Nottingham City Council and Coventry City Council wish to achieve the workplace environment they state in their objectives, they will need to allocate annual funds dedicated to the promotion and training of management/line supervisors in order to inform them of the complexities of intimate abuse. Without a financial and social commitment to keep the issue of intimate partner abuse on the agenda, fundamental change with regard to the workplace culture will not occur, thus not providing a supportive environment for those women experiencing abuse. As a result they will be less likely to seek help or ask for assistance within the workplace.

Gender Neutral Language: Inclusive or Diminishing the Importance of Gender

In reviewing various organisations' workplace policies, one notices how diverse they are in terms of the language utilised, and how they define intimate partner abuse. Coventry City Council's policy employs both 'violence' and 'abuse' as a means to overcome the inadequacies associated with either when used exclusively. This is also true of Nottingham City Council who have also utilised both terms in order to cover the wide range of behaviour associated with intimate partner abuse. Other organisations, such as Newcastle City Council and Leeds City Council have employed the commonly used 'domestic violence', whilst Medway Council have utilised 'domestic abuse'. In discussing the adequacy of

terminology McKie (2005) comments that although the Scottish Executive have utilised the term ‘domestic abuse’ to better encompass the psychological aspects of abuse, some healthcare professional propose that this softens the realities of violence. Hearn and McKie (2008) also problematise the term ‘domestic’ arguing that it “inadequately reflects, even diminishes, the extent and nature of the problem” (pg. 77).

In addition to the use of differing terminology within workplace policies, there is inconsistency regarding the language employed. For instance, even though Coventry City Council’s policy states that women are predominantly the ‘victims’ of intimate partner abuse, the overall language and tone of the policy is gender neutral. This is in contrast to Nottingham City Council’s policy which, although acknowledging that intimate abuse can occur within same-sex relationships and that men can also experience violence/abuse, overwhelmingly identifies women as the main sufferers of abuse. Medway Council have adopted totally gender neutral language within their workplace policy, refusing even to indicate that statistically women are at much greater risk of experiencing abuse than men. However, in adopting this totally gender neutral perspective, it fails to highlight the specific problems that gay, lesbian or bisexual individuals face when seeking help or assistance. Furthermore, using gender neutral language does not identify the myriad problems that women face when they experience intimate partner abuse. As many of the women interviewed indicated, they felt uncomfortable about approaching their male manager/supervisor or trade union representative in order to seek help or assistance with their situation. Consequently, participants recommended that managers/supervisors need to be

aware of gender, particularly when approaching an employee they suspect of suffering abuse. However, if the policy utilises gender neutral language, then how are the intricacies associated with gender and sexuality going to be conveyed effectively?

There has been some debate regarding gender neutral definitions of intimate partner abuse, with Charles *et al.* positing that “gender-neutral language has the effect of reducing the visibility of gendered power relations as a crucial dimension of domestic violence and has serious implications for the distribution of resources” (2009: 6). Hearn and McKie (2008) also argue that many of the descriptions utilised within policies, such as domestic violence, interpersonal violence or intimate partner violence, de-gender the problem and do not highlight the fact that overwhelmingly women are victims of men’s violence. They continue by stating that if those women experiencing abuse have to leave their relationship, their employment, their home and social and economic support systems, this further exacerbates the inequalities that they face and therefore it is essential that policies highlight this fact. Essentially, Hearn and McKie (2008) argue that neo-liberal notions of gender-equality, that men and women should be treated equally, are paradoxical because in order for women to gain equality or safety from violent men they need access to different resources. Therefore, adopting gender-neutral definitions reduces the possibility of gaining an equality of outcome for women.

Although Hearn and McKie (2008) make a compelling argument, I would argue that specifically gendered policies that make ‘men’s violence to known women’

explicit and visible inadvertently silence those experiences of women and men in same-sex relationships who experience abuse. I do not disagree with those who argue against the use of gender-neutral language in policies. Policies addressing intimate partner abuse need to take into account the gendered power relations operating within organisations and wider society and how these inhibit people from seeking assistance. Furthermore, not making the issue of gender explicit within a policy addressing a heavily gendered issue, such as intimate partner abuse, ultimately fails to pose a challenge to the status quo in terms of gender dynamics operating within the workplace. As I have illustrated in Chapters 4 and 5, women occupying managerial roles have to display certain gendered characteristics in order to succeed, but in adopting a gender neutral language these gendered organisational workings are left unchallenged. However, I would argue that we do need to consider the needs of LGBT individuals and those men who suffer instances of intimate abuse, but how one addresses these aspects within a policy without neglecting to emphasise gendered power relations is a complex matter.

Support Services: Counselling, Disclosure and Leave Options

The service that survivors most wanted to see employers provide was counselling. Affirmatively, Coventry City Council acknowledges the importance of providing effective counselling to those employees suffering abuse, and this is reiterated throughout their domestic violence workplace policy. The counselling service offered by Coventry City Council is ‘in-house’ but it is situated away

from the main office building. However, this is not made explicit within the domestic violence workplace policy. Participants stipulated that counselling services should be confidential and that externally provided counselling might improve this; this issue seems to have been addressed by locating the support away from the main building. Even though the Council have separated the services from the main office building in order to bolster employee confidence, this can be problematic, particularly in cases where women's partners stalk them at their place of work. However, the Council do provide a telephone counselling service which is available to all employees and, in exceptional circumstances, they will also provide home visits. A positive aspect of the Council's approach is the emphasis on assisting individual employees and not adopting a 'one size fits all approach' with regard to counselling services. They also show commitment to cultural diversity by providing translation services for employees for whom English is not their first language. Notwithstanding these provisions, in order to provide effective counselling services to individuals suffering abuse, counsellors need to be proficient in handling the complexities involved with intimate abuse.

Disclosure

Leeds City Council's policy specifically addresses the issue of disclosure within the workplace, whereas other policies I have reviewed have done so in an indirect manner. The Leeds policy emphasises the need for confidentiality when a person discloses their situation and highlights the possible consequences of breach of confidentiality, in that it could impact on their "working arrangements and social activity" (pg. 10). Furthermore, it points out that women are most at

danger when they decide to leave the relationship, and therefore managers need to take these matters seriously. Also, the Leeds policy highlights how features such as gender, sexuality, age and ethnic background influence the ways in which individuals experience abuse. However, the policy then goes on to state that “managers are not expected to understand all the cultural or emotional differences in each case but are obliged to treat people equally and with respect in responding to any additional needs” (pg. 5). I find this statement a little contradictory in that it highlights that gender, sexuality and so on, are additional factors that need to be taken into account, but that managers are not expected to understand how these operate to prevent women from seeking help or leaving an abusive relationship. I agree that managers cannot be expected to fully appreciate how aspects such as gender, sexuality or ethnicity operate within abusive relationships. However, in order to understand why some women may not wish to seek help or disclose within the workplace they need to have a basic understanding of how gendered power relations operate within the workplace. As Swanberg (2004) posits, if organisations were made aware of how gender operates, then they would come to the realisation that workplace policy and practice can greatly assist or hinder employees’ personal needs.

Nottingham City Council’s policy also addresses the difficulties that employees face when they wish to seek advice or assistance, highlighting that some individuals may feel uncomfortable about approaching their manager. Furthermore, it explains that abusive relationships are difficult to leave and therefore managers should offer support to those who leave and return to the relationship. Essentially, they should not neglect these individuals simply

because they have not left the relationship, rather they should allow them to talk about the issues and refer them to HR or specialist domestic violence organisations. What is particularly reassuring about the Nottingham City Council policy is that it specifically states that managers “listen, provide private space to talk and do not pressurise the employee”, something which many of the women I interviewed recommended (pg. 4). Also an aspect which I found most impressive was Nottingham City Council’s policy relating to managers/supervisors identifying intimate partner abuse. Under section 4.3 it states “it is for the individual to decide that they are a victim of abuse and whether to take action”. With a number of women indicating that they did not want to be perceived as a ‘victim’, this statement is particularly pertinent.

All of the policies reviewed emphasised the fact that it was not the manager’s/supervisor’s responsibility to provide counselling or to advise individuals about what course of action they should take. Instead, they suggested that it is the responsibility of management to refer employees to individuals specifically assigned to deal with issues of intimate partner abuse within the organisation, or to external domestic violence services. O’leary-Kelly *et al.* (2008) note that many managers feel uncomfortable about “‘fixing’ the employee’s abusive situation”, however, they argue that managers should not act as counsellors, rather they should recognise, respond and refer (pg. 67). But in order to help managers recognise, respond and refer, they recommend that training should focus on these issues and emphasise the fact that managers are not expected to counsel or advise individuals. Although most of the policies highlight the difficulties associated with disclosure, none of them address the

aspects associated with occupational status and how this relates to gender though as I have shown in earlier chapters, those women who were in managerial positions face specific difficulties.

Another important feature of these policies is that none of them addresses the fact that disclosure is not necessarily a good thing, in that it can undermine women's boundary work and construction of self within the workplace. With many of the policies addressing intimate partner abuse based on the premise of disclosure, one has to consider whether these organisations have taken into account the importance of boundary work as a coping strategy. Wasoff and Cunningham-Burley (2005) indicate that the ideology perpetuated within society relating to the separation of work and home, although it is often a strategy for "getting by in everyday life", inadvertently reasserts the belief that the 'public' and 'private' are separate spheres and the state, police or employers have no right to infringe on an individual's 'private' realm (pg. 269). But in order to circumvent the perpetuation of gendered power relations embedded in this discourse, they argue that employers need to adopt a flexible mentality in terms of individuals engaging in boundary work. They argue that this "flexibility should enable boundaries such as those between work and home to be crossed without being compromised" (Wasoff and Cunningham-Burley 2005: 269).

Leave Options

Besides providing an efficient and confidential counselling service, survivors recommended that employers grant those experiencing abuse appropriate paid

leave. The issue of leave is addressed in section 4.5. of Coventry Council's workplace policy, stating: "the council will make every effort to assist and support an employee experiencing domestic violence and abuse". It also states that if employees require time off work due to abuse, then they will be eligible to apply for flexible working hours. According to the Council's Flexible Working policy, line managers/supervisors are encouraged to explore possible paid leave options, which include arranging for the employees to utilise any annual leave available during difficult times. Although using annual leave ostensibly seems like a feasible option, one has to ask whether this minimises the organisation's costs at the expense of the employee who is experiencing abuse. Exhausting one's yearly annual leave in order to address the issue of intimate abuse, for example leaving the relationship, which participants have illustrated as being emotionally, physically and financially testing, will probably impede the employee's overall well-being and productivity at work. Trade unions, such as UNISON, recognise the importance of annual leave for those individuals who have suffered traumatic or difficult experiences and therefore promote the option of 'Wellbeing Breaks' to their members. With Coventry City Council utilising employees' annual leave as a means to resolve the issue of time off work for those suffering abuse, I would argue that they have not taken into account the negative impact this could have on a person's overall well-being.

In stark contrast, Leeds City Council workplace policy states that "managers should consider favourably requests for reasonable time off with pay" (pg. 11). Furthermore, the Leeds policy specifically addresses the issue of economic abuse and how individuals can face economic hardship when leaving an abusive

relationship. In response to this particular form of abuse, Leeds Council will assist those individuals experiencing economic hardship by offering them financial advice and will direct employees to the Consumer Credit Counselling Service. However, the policy does not indicate what financial assistance the Council will provide in terms of advancing an employee's salary or providing emergency financial assistance in the form of a personal loan. Nevertheless, Leeds Council will arrange for the individual to be paid by alternative means if they disclose that their partner has access to their finances or is "exerting economic pressure upon them" (pg. 11). These provisions offered by Leeds City Council illustrate more holistic thinking in terms of support offered to those experiencing intimate abuse. Newcastle City Council also takes a more holistic and multi-dimensional approach in that their policy stipulates that not all individuals who disclose or seek assistance wish to leave the relationship. Therefore the Newcastle City Council tailors its response to an individual's needs rather than taking a 'one size fits all' approach.

Most of the policies recommended that, where possible, individuals disclosing abuse should be given the option of flexible working. A positive aspect of the flexible working policy is that it allows employees a level of flexibility regarding working hours, granting them the opportunity to: seek protection from the police; go to court; look for accommodation; arrange childcare; or visit a solicitor, etc., during normal working hours and therefore not arouse suspicion in their partner. However, in some organisations' policies do not stipulate whether employees will be paid during periods when they are seeking assistance, for example, when

utilising the counselling service provided by the organisation or when arranging legal matters.

Conclusion

Within this chapter I have documented the experiences and recommendations of the participants regarding workplace responses to intimate partner abuse. Recommendations ranged from a fundamental change in organisational culture to proposals for employers to provide adequate counselling services and appropriate leave options. Participants' experiences specifically highlighted the gender power dynamic operating within workplaces and how these can prevent women from seeking help or assistance. The issue of gender was particularly highlighted in participants' discussion relating to trade union representatives, thus illustrating the need for trade unions to take account of gender when appointing shop stewards. I then went on to discuss how women's organisations, in conjunction with trade unions, have brought 'women's issues' to the fore, particularly drawing attention to the fact that 'private' issues such as childcare and the domestic division of labour impact on women's engagement within the public sphere. And it is in highlighting this connection between the public and the private that the issue of intimate partner abuse was raised. As a result, many trade unions, with assistance and guidance from women's organisations, have developed guidelines for workplace policies and procedures. However, as the experiences of the women interviewed attest, more needs to be done in order to raise awareness of the fact that trade unions are actively addressing the issue of

intimate partner abuse as a workplace issue and that union members can approach their union representatives to discuss 'private' matters.

This chapter has also examined the impact of men's organisations on domestic violence policy. The findings suggest that men's organisations are having a visible influence on developing workplace policy and practices, and their presence at a national level is also apparent, with members of *Respect* presenting evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee on domestic violence in 2008. Furthermore the *White Ribbon Campaign* has successfully accessed governments at both local and European levels, and although Chris (White Ribbon) is sceptical about the material impact of these events, I would argue that they do have a symbolic impact although as Charles (2000) argues, measuring the impact of such events remain problematic.

In reviewing various organisations' domestic violence workplace policies, I paid particular attention to whether they incorporated the recommendations made by participants. Many participants wanted to see workplaces become more understanding and sensitive to the needs of those suffering abuse and to improve women's sense of self. However, with some organisations allocating no annual budget to fund training, promote the domestic violence workplace policy, or raise awareness of the issues relating to intimate abuse, it is unlikely that a fundamental change in organisational culture will occur. I also highlighted how adopting gender neutral language in a domestic violence workplace policy can be problematic, in that it assumes that men's and women's experiences of intimate abuse are the same. Without specifying how gender impacts on women's

experience of the workplace and the process of seeking help and assistance, the effectiveness of policies addressing women suffering from abuse will be diminished. Gender neutrality does not thoroughly convey the aspects associated with gender and intimate partner abuse or take into account the wider social inequalities facing women, such as unequal pay and childcare responsibilities, which make it incredibly difficult for women to leave a violent relationship. Nevertheless, I highlighted the difficulties associated with a specifically gendered policy, in that it could potentially marginalise individuals who do not fit the heterosexual stereotypical framework associated with intimate partner abuse.

Even though some policies were more gender focused, overall it was encouraging to see that so many local authorities had produced well developed workplace policies. However, as I have argued throughout this chapter, having a workplace policy is one thing, implementing it and de-stigmatising the issue of intimate partner abuse so that employees will take advantage of it, is another. A workplace policy is only one piece in a complex puzzle and therefore organisations must not get complacent. As noted by O'leary-Kelly et al. (2008), organisations need to continually review their policy and practices relating to intimate partner abuse, and there needs to be a fundamental commitment from senior management in order to facilitate effective change in organisational culture.

Chapter Eight:

Conclusions

Introduction

This thesis has explored the impact of intimate partner abuse on women's employment. Here, I provide a summary of my findings as they relate to the four research questions. Adopting a micro perspective on power has enabled me to address the first research question: what coping strategies do abused women employ in order to sustain their employment and do these differ depending on their occupational status, the gendered nature of the workplace and their experience of the workplace? This micro perspective has also allowed me to answer the second research question regarding the process of disclosure of abuse within the workplace, and how this is influenced by aspects such as occupational status, type of employment and the gendered nature of the workplace. Utilising a Foucauldian perspective on power has facilitated my answering the third research question: to what extent does women's employment empower them within their abusive relationship and, more importantly, does earning an income and assuming the role of breadwinner grant them 'economic independence'? Focusing on women's everyday experiences and negotiation of gendered power relations has enabled me to address the fourth research question: whether current trade union and employers' responses to intimate partner abuse are effectively addressing the needs of women suffering abuse or are simply 'token gestures'? These research questions were addressed within Chapters 4 to 7, which I will summarise in the next section. Before reviewing the findings, I briefly

summarise the context of the thesis and how it addresses an issue that is endemic within society.

Context of the Thesis

Intimate partner abuse has been a focal point of feminist scholarship for over four decades. Even though research has established connections between intimate partner abuse and women's homelessness and economic stability (Charles 2000; Chung *et al.* 2000; Hague and Malos 1994), little research has examined the impact of abuse on women's employment, particularly within the UK. The research that has done so has identified that abuse can seriously impair women's productivity at work (Swanberg *et al.* 2006a), that the workplace can be the site of violence/abuse (Brownell and Roberts 2002; Lee 2005), and that the workplace can be a sanctuary from abuse (Rothman *et al.* 2007; Elger and Parker 2004).

US research has produced conflicting results relating to intimate partner abuse and its impact on women's ability to sustain or gain employment. Some commentators have argued that abuse prevents women from progressing within their careers, whilst others have suggested that it actually hinders their ability to obtain and/or sustain employment, thus leaving many women unemployed and relying on state welfare. However, as Franzway (2008) notes, "the significance of paid work in women's lives is largely underestimated, as [are] the lengths to which women are prepared to go to in order to remain in employment" (pg. 6). By adopting a nuanced perspective on power and focusing on the meanings that

survivors place on certain environments, individuals and objects, I have been able to demonstrate the various strategies that women employ in order to sustain their employment, and how these differ depending on their employment and occupational status. With international research predominantly focusing on the experiences of abused women employed within low status, unskilled, low-income positions, my findings make a considerable contribution to our understanding of how women in professional occupations sustain their employment, and the extent to which their income empowers them within their relationships. My research sample of 29 female participants consisted mainly of women in professional or skilled occupations, with four employed in unskilled positions. Since previous research has concentrated on women occupying unskilled positions of employment (for example Lloyd 1997; Tolman and Wang 2005) these findings give us a unique insight into middle-class women's experiences of intimate partner abuse and the coping strategies they establish in order to sustain their employment. In the next section I will highlight the major findings of the thesis and how these answer the research questions.

Review of Research Findings

In Chapter 4 I documented how many of the women interviewed used coping strategies in order to minimise the impact of abuse on their employment. Most participants constructed a conceptual boundary between their experiential realms at home and work, in effect compartmentalising their lives. The division was demarcated by participants placing symbolic meaning on objects, such as workplace uniforms and geographical environments. Not only did these markers

signify an experiential realm, but they also helped participants to construct a positive sense of self. Some women indicated that their workplace selves were more 'authentic', whilst others experienced some ambiguity regarding this notion of 'true' self. Engaging in boundary work enabled survivors to minimise the impact of abuse on their employment. However, because the conceptual boundary between home and work is permeable, this coping strategy, along with positive constructions of self within the workplace, is easily disrupted and undermined.

The strategy of boundary work was not a success for all survivors. This was especially evident for Judith, who was self-employed and ran her business from home, and for those women who predominantly occupied low status, low income positions of employment. The four women in unskilled occupations commented that there was an imbalance of gendered power relations within the workplace which resembled their private lives. Essentially these women found it difficult to differentiate between their home and workplace environments in this regard; hence, the construction of a positive sense of self within the workplace was problematic. The experiences of these four women employed in unskilled positions suggest that the extent to which employment provides an improved sense of self is affected by occupational status. The small sample, however, means that it is difficult to draw conclusions about the relationship between unskilled employment and the ability of survivors to maintain an improved sense of self. Nevertheless, the research findings suggest that occupational status, and workplace environments in which unskilled labour is performed, have an impact on whether survivors gain a positive sense of self. Conversely, the findings

suggest that, for women occupying professional and/or managerial positions, paid work provides the opportunity to construct a positive sense of self.

While constructing this positive sense of self, survivors immersed themselves within their organisational roles and, in doing so, embraced certain aspects of masculine organisational culture, namely the separation of the public and private. This was particularly noticeable for those women in managerial positions engaging with the discourse of 'professionalism', which demands that they compartmentalise their public and private lives in order to maintain authority within the workplace and demonstrate commitment to the organisation. Paradoxically, women within high status positions felt compelled to adhere to these organisational scripts regarding the separation of the public and private, but they also indicated that they provided them with an improved sense of self, and empowered them within the workplace. Furthermore, women within managerial positions indicated that they felt they had more autonomy in terms of managing their workload. They benefited from more flexibility, which those within lower status unskilled positions were denied because their productivity was heavily monitored. This flexibility in managing their workload enabled them to conceal and manage their situation more effectively. Essentially, women within professional or skilled positions were able to engage in certain performances which prevented work colleagues from seeing 'back stage' (Goffman 1990a).

The findings in Chapter 4 raise fundamental questions with regard to gendered power relations operating in the workplace and how occupational status has a bearing on which coping strategies women use and their ability to sustain their

employment. Furthermore, when participants indicate that the workplace provides them with an 'authentic' sense of self, this raises questions relating to 'emotional labour' and whether individuals who immerse themselves within organisational roles experience what Hochschild (2003) terms 'psychological distress'. My findings suggest that, although participants did not experience 'psychological distress' because their organisational roles provided them with a source of empowerment and a means to construct positive identities, they also contained elements that were constraining. This is particularly evident for those occupying managerial positions, in that they felt inhibited or even prohibited from seeking help or assistance, because any display of inappropriate (feminine) emotion (Hearn 1993) or the inability to separate the private and public could jeopardise their authority within the workplace. Therefore, although managerial and professional roles grant a level of autonomy and enable survivors to construct positive senses of self, they also include elements that are constraining. These findings reiterate Halford and Leonard's (2006) argument relating to gendered power relations operating within the workplace, that while women gain power from engaging with masculine discourses operating within organisations, in doing so they inadvertently perpetuate the 'gender regime'.

Women in unskilled positions of employment, in contrast, experienced no marked improvement in their sense of self within the workplace. This suggests that not all types of employment or workplaces grant women access to subject positions which allow them to construct an improved sense of self. Survivors employed in unskilled positions have limited access to symbolic or other forms of capital and therefore cannot locate themselves in subject positions that grant

them power within organisations. Furthermore, the workplace environments in which the unskilled survivors were employed tended to be hierarchically gendered, with the women having little or no access to positional power. This is not to say that those working environments in which women in professional and managerial positions were employed were not gendered, but rather they occupied different and higher status positions which gave them access to positional power. Indeed the experiences of those survivors working within factory settings suggest that their female co-workers adopted certain characteristics that resembled attributes associated with forms of 'working-class masculinity'. As noted by Pollert (1981), women working in masculinised environments adopt certain practices such as sexual banter for many reasons, one of which is to resist the gendered power relations operating within the workplace. This resulted in the workplace being experienced as a hostile environment thereby resembling the power dynamics operating within their abusive relationships. Workplaces that offer survivors an escape from overt expressions of power, therefore, seem to facilitate the coping mechanism of boundary work. Also, positions that grant survivors more positional power within organisations enables them to construct a more positive sense of self, which, paradoxically, empowers but also constrains them.

These findings relating to the coping strategies of women, particularly those occupying high status, high income positions of employment, offer a substantial contribution to our understanding of the impact of intimate partner abuse on women's employment. They illustrate the importance of work to women experiencing abuse, showing that it often enables them to develop an improved

sense of self. It therefore contributes to the body of literature which proposes that employment provides abused women with more than just the means to access economic resources. More importantly, these findings further our theoretical understanding of how women negotiate gendered power relations within workplace environments, and how, by adopting certain subject positions, they resist certain power relations while also inadvertently perpetuating masculine discourses operating within organisations. It is evident that women within different social positions, particularly in relation to class, have to negotiate specific gendered power relations operating within the workplace, with those working in unskilled positions having little access to symbolic and economic resources. This not only prevents them from establishing boundaries and developing a positive sense of self identity, but it also makes it problematic financially for them to leave the relationship. Overall, the findings suggest that although all women are disadvantaged by gendered power relations operating within organisations, some are more disempowered than others.

The findings in Chapter 4 relating to survivors who place themselves within certain subject positions in the workplace informed the discussion in Chapter 5 regarding disclosure of abuse within the workplace. Chapter 5 addresses the second research question relating to the process of disclosure and whether it is influenced by occupational status or the gendered nature of the workplace. The findings suggest that disclosure of intimate partner abuse is not a simple act, but a complex cognitive and emotional process that an individual undertakes. Furthermore, the findings indicate that disclosure is influenced by a number of factors including survivor's occupational status and intimacy with work

colleagues. Gendered power dynamics operating within the workplace, however, seem to have a substantial impact on an individual's decision to disclose, with most survivors not wanting to discuss their situation with men. Also women occupying managerial or professional positions felt that they could not seek assistance because this would have undermined their authority within the workplace and could have disrupted their positive sense of self.

Most of the women interviewed did not disclose their situation. However, for some women, disclosure resulted in a positive outcome and therefore my findings reiterate those of Swanberg *et al.* (2006b) and Swanberg and Macke (2006), in that disclosure sometimes results in survivors' gaining emotional support from co-workers. It is evident that for some women disclosure is another coping mechanism, one that enlists the help of co-workers in order to improve their safety and sense of self within the workplace. This was predominantly the case for those survivors not in managerial or professional positions. My findings also demonstrate that not every incident of disclosure results in a positive response, with some women facing pressure from their co-workers to leave their partner. This response not only destabilises women's positive sense of self, but also undermines previous strategies that they have put in place by categorising them as passive, powerless 'victims'. Co-workers might also blame the individual for remaining with or returning to the abuser, so that the workplace environment became uncondusive to improving women's self esteem. Not having co-workers reconfirm their perceptions of events, or help them to develop alternative solutions or strategies to the problem, could lead abused women to either stay in the relationship, leave their employment, or both. Interestingly,

women occupying managerial or professional positions were less likely to disclose, but a few did after they had left the relationship. In some cases these women disclosed years after leaving, whilst others did so soon after. Managerial and professional women's reluctance to disclose further reiterates the constraints of these positions, even though they offer flexibility and positional power within organisations. These findings illustrate that women within different social locations face particular barriers to disclosure, with those in successful positions having to negotiate what Ptacek (1999) calls the 'class myth', which suggests that only women in low socio-economic positions experience abuse. This belief not only prevents women from seeking assistance from local services, but also hinders them from approaching their employer or work colleagues for help.

With many domestic violence workplace policies constructed on the premise that disclosure is necessary before they become effective, these findings suggest that employers need to seriously consider the factors that permit disclosure and, indeed, whether disclosure is always appropriate. Ultimately a fundamental change is required within organisational cultures, particularly in relation to gender and occupational roles, in order to facilitate disclosure within the workplace. I therefore agree with Wasoff and Cunningham-Burley's (2005) argument that employers need to respect the fact that women implement various coping strategies, one of which is boundary work, in order to operate and make sense of their everyday lives. Employers therefore need to create an environment that allows employees to discuss 'private' matters within the workplace, but in ways that will not disrupt their coping strategies. Specifically employers need to realise that the public and private are inseparable and that spill-over occurs in

either direction, and therefore policies and practices need to take into account the permeability of these realms. However, in order to construct effective domestic violence policies organisations need to address the underlying gendered assumptions operating within the workplace.

Gender Power Relations and Economic Empowerment

Adopting a Foucauldian perspective on power has particularly helped me to explore how women's employment impacts on the gendered power relations operating within abusive relationships; especially whether women's employment poses a threat to constructions of masculinity thereby increasing the level of abuse. Some have argued that women's employment can be perceived as a threat to culturally prescribed norms of the male provider role (McMillan and Gartner 1999; Anderson 1997). This argument suggests that women who succeed in their careers and attain higher symbolic and material capital challenge certain constructions of masculinity and therefore increase the risk of abuse. However, the findings in Chapter 6 suggest that these arguments are based on a one dimensional view of gendered power relations, which sees women's employment or an increase in their income as posing a threat to constructions of masculinity. Rather than fundamentally challenging abusers' constructions of masculinity, my findings suggest that the relationship between women's employment, income, and abuse is far more complex. Furthermore, my findings problematise the argument put forward by some scholars (Shepard and Pence 1988) that employment provides women with the means to gain 'economic independence'

which provides them the wherewithal to protect themselves against abuse by diminishing their reliance on men.

As my findings in Chapter 6 illustrate, even when women assume the role of breadwinner within their relationship this does not fundamentally challenge constructions of masculinity. Rather, abusers simply draw on other dominant forms of masculinity. For example, refusing to engage in childcare and classifying it as ‘women’s work’ maintains the unequal gendered power relations within the relationship. Other men retain a sense of power by either controlling the income of their partner or refusing to contribute financially towards the running of the household. My findings suggest a paradoxical relationship with regard to women’s employment challenging abusers’ constructions of masculinity and control. It seems as though employment can be both a means by which women can gain a sense of emotional empowerment and access to economic resources, and also a means by which a male abuser can control his partner.

By relinquishing financial responsibility or refusing to contribute financially to the running of the household, abusers effectively engaged in a form of economic abuse. Some participants commented that their partners encouraged them to work, refusing to allow them to take maternity leave because this would diminish their level of income. In these cases one might argue that encouraging their partners to work and allowing them to assume the role of breadwinner is simply another form of abuse, a strategy that results in the abused becoming economically entangled within the relationship. By encouraging their partners to

work abusers also ensure that they know where to locate their partners and can monitor them by harassing them via telephone or stalking them at work. However, my findings also suggest that, for abusers, there is a level of tension between encouraging their partner to work and disliking the level of freedom and ability to interact with other men that employment provides. As highlighted in Chapter 4, many participants believed that their partner's relentless telephone calls and stalking them at work were a means by which they could monitor them at work. But, as I have argued throughout this thesis, the workplace can be a place where women gain a sense of self and empowerment, and can also provide an escape from the abuse and an environment in which the abuser has limited control over them. Therefore, abusers adopting this form of economic abuse face a dilemma, in that, although encouraging their partners to work constitutes a form of control, it also provides them with access to social support networks and improves their sense of self, which can contribute towards their leaving the relationship. Therefore, the interference tactics that abusers employ and which participants try to minimise by engaging in boundary work or other strategies could represent abusers' lack of power and insecurity rather than simply being an exercise of power.

These findings have led me to question the arguments relating to 'economic independence'. First, these arguments assume that women can gain economic parity with men but, as my findings illustrate, women are still predominantly responsible for childcare either in terms of paying for childcare provision or providing the childcare. Moreover, women are still discriminated against in terms of pay. These issues therefore make the arguments relating to 'economic

independence' problematic. These arguments are predicated on a simplistic 'top down' model of power, which suggests that women's gaining access to economic resources will enable them to exercise more power within society. This argument has some validity; as Bradley (1999) indicates, women's access to economic and political resources is a vital component in gaining equality. Therefore, I am not arguing that gaining access to economic resources is not an important step for women towards equality. As the experiences of the women interviewed clearly illustrate, having the ability to support themselves and their children is fundamental to their leaving an abusive relationship. The point I am making is that adopting a more nuanced understanding of power enables us to appreciate that women who assume the role of breadwinner through having a high status, high income position of employment, or because their partner is unemployed, are not necessarily economically empowered within their relationship. Therefore, I would argue that the term 'economic independence' elides more than it elucidates and that it oversimplifies the complex gendered power relations that women have to negotiate within abusive relationships. Earning a salary is not sufficient to achieve economic or any other independence; as the experience of the women interviewed illustrate, it is more complicated than that. Rather, there are underlying assumptions regarding gender, power and domination that need to be challenged in order for women to gain any form of independence. Nevertheless, having access to economic resources is fundamentally important in women's ability to leave an abusive partner and to support her children.

Some Theoretical Considerations

Combining a Foucauldian perspective of power, symbolic interactionism and critical masculinities studies, has allowed me to interpret my data in a distinctive way. It has allowed me to illustrate the nuanced and complex nature of gendered power relations operating within abusive relationships, and has allowed me to explore the interactional dynamics of disclosure and how these participants managed their experience of abuse by engaging in boundary work. Moreover, this approach has granted an important insight into how occupational status, gendered organisational environments and class have an impact on women's experience of intimate partner abuse. Although my theoretical eclecticism has facilitated an insightful contribution to the issues relating to intimate partner abuse and how it impacts on women's employment, it is not without complication. Each of these theoretical approaches has specific ontological foundations and therefore there is an unresolved underlying philosophical tension between them. For example, depending on how one interprets the works of Foucault, the very notion of agency can become problematic, which understandably has led some feminists and pro-feminists to question whether his work can facilitate women's political mobilisation and emancipation.

Indeed, the relationship between Foucault and feminism has been somewhat troublesome and contentious as Ramazanaglu's (1993) edited volume '*Up against Foucault*' clearly indicates. There has been a tendency by some feminists to place Foucault's work into a box labelled 'postmodernism' so that they could

dispense with it and decry it as nihilistic or relativist nonsense that cannot serve women's political ends. However, Butler (1992) suggests this move is in itself a "self-congratulatory ruse of power" (pg 5). Instead of simply dismissing the works of Foucault and other 'poststructuralists', Butler encourages feminists to utilise such theoretical positions so that they can analyse the pervasiveness of power and how power is ubiquitous and effects even the conceptual apparatus and the terms utilised by scholars, politicians and political activities.

The works of Foucault and other 'poststructuralist' thinkers are invaluable in terms of their conceptualisations of capillary power and I subscribe to the nuanced and labile perspective it encourages on power. Nevertheless, I have also felt the need to utilise structuralist frameworks, particularly Connell's (1992) hegemonic masculinities'. In dealing with a topic such as violence/abuse which has a tangible material consequence on women's everyday lives, one has to be careful not to lose sight of the everyday material reality and social locations that inhibit and prohibit women from expressing power. This is not to say that Foucault's conceptualisation of power somehow neglects materiality, on the contrary, Foucault was firmly aware of the material constraints that individuals face and that some individuals are dominated by other individuals and the state. However, in adopting a Foucauldian perspective there is a danger that one neglects structures of power. This is one of the reasons why I have drawn on structuralist understandings of masculinities in order to provide clarity to my argument and to understand and explain participants' experiences.

With regard to symbolic interactionism and its relationship with Foucault, again there are underlying ontological tensions. The phenomenological grounding of symbolic interactionism suggests that there is a conscious agent with an essential aspect of self, a perspective that is at odds with Foucault's perspective of the decentred and discursive construction of the self. As Castellani (1999) explains, for many symbolic interactionists power is created by the interaction between individuals, whereas for Foucault it is the interaction of power relations that creates the individual. However, Castellani (1999) goes on to argue that Foucault's ideas of power and symbolic interactionism do not have to be at variance, that Foucault's perspective can inform and strengthen a symbolic interactionist approach. Indeed, Foucault stated that power is not to be located in structures above society, but is imbricated within all social relationships. Therefore, I agree with Castellani's (1999) argument that symbolic interactionism allows us to investigate how power is exercised by individuals within everyday life, but in adopting this approach one should be mindful that symbolic interaction is not simply providing a micro analysis of macro power relations. Rather power relations are continuously negotiated and contested within interaction. With regard to feminism and symbolic interaction, as I highlighted within my literature review, Denzin (1993) argues that as long as one recognises that all social interactions are influenced by wider gender relations there is no reason why this approach cannot be seen as pro-feminist.

I therefore suggest that my theoretical eclecticism has allowed me to produce a unique insight into a difficult and sensitive topic, whereas if I had adopted an allegiance to one particular theoretical perspective I would not have been able to

produce such a nuanced perspective. My conceptual framework is problematic, but rather than perceiving this as a fundamental weakness in my thesis, I see this as producing scope for debate and further theoretical exploration.

Implications for Domestic Violence Workplace Policy and Practice

Within chapter 7 I addressed the fourth research question relating to current employers' and trade unions' responses to intimate partner abuse and whether domestic violence workplace policies were adequately addressing the needs of women experiencing abuse. Essentially, survivors recommended that employers foster a supportive and understanding environment which improves employees' self esteem. Participants' experiences indicated that masculine workplace environments were more hostile and unsupportive, whereas female dominated environments provided women with the opportunity to explore certain avenues and possible solutions to their situation, irrespective of whether they disclosed or not. These findings reiterate the need for employers to fundamentally change organisational cultures in terms of recognising that factors such as gender, sexuality, age and ethnicity have a massive bearing on how policies and practices are designed and experienced, but they also need to find out whether policies are actually used within an organisation. Essentially, my findings support Swanberg and Macke's (2006) argument that organisations need to take into account how gendered assumptions influence the implementation and effectiveness of policies that address intimate partner abuse.

In terms of specific policy recommendations, my findings indicate that the following should be implemented in order to facilitate change within organisations at both a 'local' and national level:

- A zero tolerance approach be adopted within the workplace

Organisations should adopt a zero tolerance approach against intimate partner abuse, sexual harassment, gender discrimination and bullying. But in order for a zero tolerance approach to be effective it has to be strictly enforced by every member of staff within an organisation and not simply left to 'management'. This is not to say that management should not set an example by enforcing and supporting a zero tolerance policy. As highlighted by one of the participants, managerial support of policy is crucial if there is going to be real change within an organisation. In order for such a policy to be effective there needs to be continual awareness raising, management training and workshops conducted within the workplace. Management training can be provided by outside organisations, such as Women's Aid, and trained managers or Human Resources staff can conduct regular workshops with employees on topics such as intimate partner abuse and sexual harassment. Trade unions could also conduct regular campaigns highlighting their organisation's zero tolerance policy and that employees experiencing abuse will be supported within the workplace. In order for a zero tolerance or a domestic violence workplace policy to be effective there needs to be continual monitoring of the policy. Therefore, an organisation should nominate an individual who will oversee the implementation, use and outcomes

of the zero tolerance and domestic abuse workplace policy. Essentially, the business case should be made in order to highlight the economic benefit of employing a zero tolerance policy. Employers need to be made aware that implementing a policy of this nature has the potential to drastically reduce cost in terms of reducing absenteeism and heightening productivity. A zero tolerance policy will also improve the overall wellbeing of employees within the workplace, thus improving morale and reducing staff turnover and recruitment costs.

With many local authorities and private sector organisations having developed workplace policies, it is possible for other employers to develop their policy from such existing policies, therefore minimising the cost. However, as my findings illustrate, workplace policies should not be developed, launched and then lay unused in a drawer, rather they need to be regularly promoted and their use monitored. Organisations should also promote the contact details of trade union representatives, HR professionals or other individuals who have been appointed to address the issue of abuse. Having a domestic violence policy is a progressive step, but it will simply be a ‘token gesture’ if it is not accompanied by real commitment from all levels of management.

- Regular promotion of domestic abuse as a workplace issue

Organisations need to demonstrate that they are serious about addressing these issues and that individuals suffering abuse will be supported and believed. In order to create this environment, organisations need to address the issue of abuse via poster campaigns, workshops and training days. In addition to placing posters

throughout the organisation, employers could also produce a pamphlet or card which is enclosed with employees' wage slips or post a notice on the organisation's intranet. These materials should include the contact details of agencies/services that specialise in intimate partner abuse, so that employees can contact them without disclosing within the workplace.

- Access to safe spaces and counselling services

Participants particularly expressed the need for a private and confidential space in which they could disclose their situation and seek support and assistance. Depending upon the size of the organisation, this space could literally be a dedicated physical space within which participants could access information about domestic abuse organisations or agencies within the local area. Conversely, this space could simply be managers operating an open door policy, where employees could feel comfortable in discussing issues of a sensitive matter. Some participants indicated the back to work interview as a possible environment in which, if handled sensitively, employees could be asked about their wellbeing. Giving employees who are experiencing abuse the opportunity to disclose and seek advice without feeling ashamed or pressured to pursue a certain course of action is crucially important. If employees do not feel comfortable, or believe that disclosing abuse will have negative consequences, they will not seek assistance within the workplace. Managers also need to be reassured that it is not their responsibility to assist an employee suffering abuse in terms of offering them counselling etc. They need to be able to reassure the employee and refer them to other departments and agencies that have greater knowledge of the subject.

Overwhelmingly participants indicated counselling as something that employers should provide to those employees experiencing abuse. But as participants indicated, this service needs to be flexible in order to accommodate employees' specific circumstances. For example, some participants indicated how an external counselling service may be more appropriate. Counselling, like workplace policies, should be clearly and regularly promoted within the workplace if it is going to be successful. Finally, my findings reveal that flexible working hours or leave from the workplace can be extremely helpful for those experiencing abuse. Having the ability to arrange alternative accommodation, visit solicitors or attend counselling during working hours can help women to leave an abusive relationship. Those within professional occupations highlighted how paid leave facilitated their escape from the abuse, suggesting that employers should explore possible salary advances or loans in order to assist those experiencing abuse. Overall, the findings of my research highlight the importance of paid employment for women experiencing abuse, but also illustrate how problematic it is for women to negotiate gendered power relations within the workplace.

- Trade Union involvement

The findings in Chapter 7 have a practical implication in terms of informing trade unions' responses to the issue of intimate partner abuse as an employment issue. Participants' experiences suggest that although trade unions have been proactive in establishing the connections between women's employment issues and wider gender inequality, the message is not getting through to union members on the shop floor. The fact that many of the women interviewees

indicated that they were unaware that their trade union could assist them, or still believed that their situation was a ‘private’ and not a union matter, confirms Elger and Parker’s (2007) argument that trade unions are still failing to bridge the gulf between the public and the private. Therefore, more training and education is needed in order to raise the profile of trade union policies with regard to intimate partner abuse and how they can assist those employees suffering abuse, for example by supporting the employee when engaging with management. However, in order for trade unions to have a greater impact they need to appoint more women to the role of shop steward. Only by demonstrating their commitment to gender equality and diversity will they be able to encourage more women to come forward and disclose issues of intimate partner abuse, sexual harassment and discrimination.

- Conforming to the Gender Equality Bill

Within Chapter 7 I argued that although the Equality Bill (2009) provides a loose legal framework for organisations to address gender inequality, it does not specifically address the issue of intimate partner abuse. As a result, this raises questions about whether specific legislation is required in order to compel employers to address intimate partner abuse within the workplace. Nevertheless, organisations such as the Welsh Equality and Human Rights Commission are utilising this legislation in order to pressure public sector organisations into taking intimate partner abuse seriously and to develop and implement, in partnership with trade unions, an effective domestic abuse workplace policy. The Equality Bill (2009) has the potential to fundamentally challenge organisations to address aspects of gender, race and sexual discrimination, which could have an

overwhelming impact on organisational cultures or the “gender regimes” (Acker, 2006). As employers are compelled to promote equality within the workplace and assist those employees experiencing mental illness etc., this could persuade those women suffering abuse to seek assistance within the workplace.

Reflections on Research Methods

Utilising qualitative, in-depth, semi-structured interviewing, and allowing participants to choose the interview method, has enabled me to gain a closer insight into the real lived experiences of women suffering abuse and the meanings they attach to their work, particularly in relation to the construction of self within the workplace. Methodologically, this thesis also makes a valuable contribution to the debates regarding male researchers conducting research on/with women. Within the methodology chapter I strongly argued that men can conduct sensitive research with women so long as they understand that, although it is impossible to overcome the influence of gender power relations within the interview process, they try to diminish the imbalance of power by adopting a more considered approach. I would argue that allowing participants the ability to choose the interview method does diminish certain power relations, but it does not eradicate the issue of gender.

Being open and honest with participants are vital components of in-depth qualitative interviewing and are fundamental to a feminist methodology. They facilitate a rapport and help establish a level of trust and understanding thus allowing the researcher and interviewee to explore sensitive and emotionally

challenging subjects. However, on reflection, I question whether disclosing my experience of witnessing intimate partner abuse as a child, as I did in some of my interviews, produced a more egalitarian interview. Undoubtedly disclosing this aspect of my biography did allow me to favourably negotiate the 'politics of trust' with both gatekeepers and participants (Lee, 1993). It also developed a level of rapport, but it also influenced many of the participants, particularly those with children, to ask about my experiences and how they have affected me. Some participants commented that my experiences must have had a profound effect on my life due to the fact that I was conducting this research on the topic of intimate partner abuse.

During one interview a participant became very concerned about the emotional wellbeing of her own child after hearing how my experiences have had such a profound impact on my life. Following Oakley's (1988) mantra that there can be "no intimacy without reciprocity", I firmly believed that being open with participants would reduce the imbalance of power between the researcher and the interviewee (pg. 49). However, the level of consternation that this produced in the participants illustrates the inadvertent negative consequences of disclosing my biography within the interview process. With participants expressing a degree of empathy and wanting to discuss my experiences, the focus of the interview sometimes became an exploration of my experience rather than the participants'. Instead of making the interview process more egalitarian as a result of being open about my biography, it could be argued that the status quo, in terms of gender power relations, was maintained. Disclosing my biography inadvertently shifted the focus of the interview from participants' experiences of

abuse to that of a male researcher's experience of witnessing abuse as a child. When participants were being empathetic to my disclosure they were placing my, and their children's, wellbeing before their own. When they discussed my experiences, and the possible impact that their experience of abuse might have on their children's future mental wellbeing, their experiences were again marginalised. Thus, I would advise future male researchers considering adopting this approach to think carefully about how disclosing sensitive aspects of their biography can impact on the interview process. Women's experiences should remain the focus and not subsumed by the experiences of male researchers.

Finally, I have still yet to resolve the ethical issues relating to consent of my own family members with regard to disclosing my biography. It is difficult to come to a definitive answer to this dilemma of discussing aspects of one's biography that involve others who have not given their consent. What makes this issue more difficult for me is that the fact that I am still in contact with family members, and highlighting aspects of abuse could have serious consequences for these relationships. I would suggest that there is no universal answer to this ethical issue, rather each researcher has to evaluate whether it is necessary to disclose such personal details within their research and to consider the possible repercussions this might have on others.

Directions for Future Research

This thesis has furthered our understanding of the coping mechanisms that women employ in order to sustain their employment and survive the abuse.

Moreover, it has given us an insight into how women occupying differing positions of power at work – with different access to positional and other forms of power - have different, as well as similar, coping strategies. Within this thesis I have also highlighted how those women occupying positions of power within organisations are less likely to disclose their situation, because doing so could jeopardise their authority and professionalism within the workplace, and consequently could undermine their positive sense of self. These findings are extremely important in that they illustrate that access to resources and different types of positions in a hierarchically gendered workplace lead women to develop different coping strategies. Therefore, for some women disclosure is a positive coping strategy eliciting support from work colleagues and creating a more secure workplace environment, thus allowing survivors to escape the abuse emotionally and physically. Conversely, disclosure for some women can jeopardise their positive construction of self and threaten their overall integrity within the workplace. Essentially these findings reiterate the fact that women are not a unified category and that their experiences of intimate partner abuse and wider gendered power relations are shaped by their specific social location.

My findings also provided an insight into how women's employment affects the power relations within abusive relationships. They have illustrated that women assuming the role of breadwinner and earning an income may not fundamentally challenge the gendered power dynamics operating within an abusive relationship. Abusers will separate themselves from aspects which they consider to constitute 'women's work', a prime example being childcare. Others will simply adopt

other means by which they can ‘do masculinity’, namely utilising violence and forms of abuse, such as economic abuse.

I recognise, however, that the small number of participants and the fact that they were recruited through different channels (women’s refuges, public and private organisations), means that it is difficult to generalise from these research findings. Therefore, more research is needed in order to explore further the issues that I have raised within this thesis. An aspect that needs to be explored more thoroughly is the process of disclosure within the workplace and how the gendered environment affects a woman’s decision to disclose. I have argued that more ‘masculine’ workplaces are less conducive to disclosure and do not provide a supportive and understanding environment. Future research could specifically examine disclosure of abuse within two stereotypically gendered workplaces or industries, one being more masculine, the other feminine. Conducting a comparative analysis of disclosure within distinct workplace environments would give us a more thorough understanding of how gender in the workplace impacts, not only on disclosure, but on how certain types of employment, or more specifically workplace environments, provide those women experiencing abuse with an improved sense of self.

Another area that warrants further investigation is the relationship between women’s improved economic status and its impact on intimate partner abuse, particularly how it relates to forms of economic abuse and the tension that is apparent between abusers encouraging their partners in their career progression, but at the same time feeling threatened that their sense of control, possibly

already diminished, will be compromised by the reaffirming qualities that work provides abused women. Such research could also explore how intimate partner abuse impacts on those women who are self-employed. The fact that one of my women interviewees was self-employed and in business with her abusive partner, not only raises questions as to what coping mechanisms women employ in order to sustain their employment in these circumstances, but also how aspects of economic abuse impact on their ability to leave the relationship, particularly if they are in business with their abusive partner.

Overall, this thesis makes a contribution to knowledge both empirically and theoretically, in terms of furthering our understanding that women do not constitute a unified category and that their experiences of ‘gender regimes’, in the public and private spheres, are informed by their social location. My findings illustrate that some women have access to certain economic and symbolic resources, which lead to different coping strategies and ways of seeking assistance. More, importantly, this thesis documents how women who suffer abuse are not passive ‘victims’ of patriarchy, but rather active agents who strategise and resist men’s expressions of power. Finally, I hope the findings presented here contribute to our understanding of the importance of paid work for survivors of abuse and how employers and trade unions are in a vital position to combat and reduce intimate partner abuse through developing effective workplace policies and practices.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Details of Female Interviewees

This thesis draws heavily on data gathered from in-depth interviews conducted with women who had suffered or were still suffering from intimate partner abuse. This appendix provides brief details on the participants, however, because of the sensitive nature of the research, names have been anonymised (except where indicated). The method of interview and where, if the interview was conducted face-to-face, it took place is also included. These brief descriptions are intended to act as a reference and allow the reader to gain a sense of these women who kindly participated in this research.

Alexandra: Full-time social worker, but a qualified nurse. In her late 50s, white/British, with four children all of whom had left home. Cohabited with the abuser. Telephone interview.

Alison: Full-time social worker. In her mid 20s, white/British, with two children under the age of ten and living with her. Married to the abuser. Telephone interview.

Andrea: Part-time secretary within the NHS. In her mid 40s, white/British, with ten children, four from a previous relationship, all under the age of 16 at the time of the abuse. Cohabited with the abuser. Telephone interview.

Annie: Full-time administrator within a factory. In her mid 30s, white/British, with two children under the age of 16 who live with her. Cohabited with the abuser. Internet interview.

Bernadette: Full-time hairdresser. In her early 40s, British/Caribbean, with two children under the age of 18 who both live with her. Married to the abuser. Telephone interview.

Bridget: Full-time Midwife. In her early 40s, white/British, with two children under the age of 10 who both live with her. Married to the abuser. Interview conducted face-to-face at participant's workplace.

Catherine: Held two positions, full-time sales assistant and a part-time cleaner. In her early 40s, white/British, with two children under the age of 10. Cohabited with the abuser. Telephone interview.

Charlotte: Full-time psychiatric nurse manager within the NHS. In her late 30s, white/British, with four children all under 16 who all live with

her. Married to the abuser. Interview conducted in person at the university.

Clare: Full-time clinical administrator within the NHS. In her late 30s, white/British, one child and pregnant with another when she left the relationship. Married to abuser. Telephone Interview.

Fiona: Full-time bank clerk during the abuse, but since leaving the abuse
(Real Name) she has become the chief executive of the Corporate Alliance against Domestic Violence, an organisation that campaigns to raise awareness of intimate abuse within the business community within the UK. In her late 40s, white/British, no children and was married to the abuser. Telephone interview.

Jackie: Part-time dental nurse. In her early 30s, white/British, with three children, all under the age of ten and living with her. Married to the abuser. Telephone interview.

Jane: Full-time teacher within a special needs school. In her early 40s, white/Australian, with two children, one under the age of 16 the other over 18; the former still lives with her. Married to the abuser. Telephone interview.

Janis: Full-time personnel officer in a local authority. In her early 40s, white/British, with two children under the age of ten who both live with her. Married to the abuser. Telephone interview.

Jennifer: Full-time department retail manager within a national organisation. In her late 30s, white/British, with one child under the age of 16 who lives with her. Married to the abuser. Telephone interview.

Jessica: Full-time factory worker. In her late 40s, white/British, with two children who had left home. Married to the abuser. Telephone interview.

Joanne: Full-time warehouse operative for a national organisation. In her mid 40s, white/British, no children. Married to the abuser. Telephone interview.

Judith: Full-time self-employed and in business with her abusive husband within the catering industry. In her late 50s, white/British, with two children aged over 18 who no longer live with her. Interview conducted face-to-face at my family members' house.

Karen: Full-time nurse. In her late 30s, white/Hungarian, with one child who lives with her. Came to the UK before Hungary became an EU member, thus could not legally work and was dependent on the abuser. Married to the abuser. Telephone Interview.

- Laura:* Full-time social worker. In her later 30's, white/British, with (two or three) children, one under 18 the other two(one) over, the former still lives with her and the abuser. Interview conducted at participant's workplace.
- Louise:* Part-Time midwife within the NHS. In her late 40s, white/British, with one child over 18 who lives with her. Married to the abuser. Interview conducted face-to-face within participant's home.
- Margaret:* Full-time editorial assistant in a multinational organisation. In her early 50s, white/British, with two children under the age of 16 who live with her. Married to the abuser. Telephone interview.
- Maureen:* Full-time administrator within a car factory. In her early 40s, white/British, no children. Married to the abuser. Telephone interview.
- Rachael:* Full-time receptionist at a General Practice, In her mid 50s, white/British, with four children all above the age of 18 and no longer live with her. Married to the abuser. Telephone interview.
- Rebecca:* Full-time social worker. In her mid 30s, white/British, with two children under the age of 16 and living with her. Married to the abuser, then divorced but lived together for a period of time. Interview conducted face-to-face at the participant's place of work.
- Sarah:* Full-time health promotion specialist within the NHS. In her late 30s, white/British, no children. Cohabited with the abuser. Interview conducted face-to-face at the university.
- Shannon:* Fluctuated between full and part-time unskilled employment, usually factory work. In her late 40s, white/British, with one child who had left home. Married to the abuser. Internet interview.
- Stephanie:* Full-time administrator within a primary school. In her mid 40s, white/British, with two children aged over 18 and one still lives with her. Married to the abuser. Interview conducted face-to-face at the university.
- Susanne:* Full-time administrator within an engineering firm. In her late 20s, white/British, no children. Cohabited with abuser. Interview conducted face-to-face at the university.
- Toni:* Full-time nurse within the NHS. In her early 50s, white/British, with two children over 18 and no longer living with her. Married to abuser. Telephone Interview

Appendix 2

Men addressing Intimate Partner Abuse

Introduction

Due to the sensitive nature of the research, I was uncertain as to whether I would successfully recruit an adequate number of female survivors of intimate partner abuse. Therefore, my contingency plan was to explore the motivations of those male activists/employees within the domestic violence sector, both within the US and the UK. With little research investigating men's movements, or indeed establishing whether there is a men's movement within the UK, this research certainly forms an original contribution. Not only does it further our knowledge of the biographical influences that lead men to campaign/work to end violence against women, but also gives us an insight into their perspectives on the state of the men's movement within the UK.

As more female participants came forward, my attention shifted from this contingency piece of research to the originally planned research. This resulted in certain potential avenues of investigation, such as attending more men's forums and conferences where men were campaigning, remaining unexplored. Furthermore, since the research on abused women's experiences of the workplace took precedence, I discontinued recruiting male research participants. As a result only nine interviews with men were conducted. Despite the size of the sample, the data gathered from these interviews was extremely rich, addressing aspects of masculinity and the personal and political difficulties these men continually negotiated within their activism/employment in a traditional 'feminist' area.

In what follows is a brief account of the process of recruiting male participants, in particular the challenges that I faced and how I overcame them. Following on from this, I discuss how 'doing gender' was evident within these interviews and how certain performances of masculinity influenced the power dynamics within the interview process. Finally, I provide a list of the organisations that participants are connected with.

Recruiting Male Participants

In many respects, gaining trust and credibility from men's organisations was similar to the process with women's organisations. Since I was a gendered 'insider', my sex/gender did not pose a significant problem, however, I still had to establish what Lee (1993) identifies as a level of trust. In recruiting male participants within the UK, I acquired a level of trust and credibility due to

attending conferences and being invited to specific events. However, it was at an Amnesty International event held in London that I met my gatekeepers, Mark (Respect) who is well respected within the domestic violence sector and Chris, the UK campaign co-ordinator for *White Ribbon*.

Both men enquired as to my interest in tackling abuse, but, upon hearing that I was a doctoral researcher, Chris became very sceptical of my interest. He drew attention to the fact that I was simply a 'student' and not a practitioner or campaigner within the field. Furthermore, he stated that he was continuously being harassed by 'students' for information relating to intimate partner abuse, to the extent that he simply refused to offer assistance. Thus being associated with an academic institution, or more specifically being 'placed' as a student by Chris was extremely unfavourable, and as Edwards (1993) notes, can be highly problematic. However, after explaining my interests and disclosing my biography, Chris was able to 'place' me in a more favourable position, which led him to offer his assistance.

These gatekeepers were invaluable when it came to recruiting other men working/campaigning within the sector. With so few men working within the domestic violence sector, most of the participants either knew each other very well or were acquainted. What was most striking about male participants was their concern regarding how the data gathered from their interviews would be used or represented. Even though I assured them that they would all be sent copies of the transcripts in order to make amendments or omit sections, some of them were still anxious that they would be misrepresented. Mark (Respect) explained that many men working within the sector feel as though they have to be extremely careful about what they say and to whom they say it. He continued by stating that due to the gender hierarchy within society, men's voices tend to be heard rather than women's and men working within the sector are aware of this and do not want their comments to be represented in a way that would perpetuate patriarchal relations. Also, Mark stated that it was extremely important that their comments regarding men's experience of abuse could not be misused by 'men's rights movements' in order to justify their claims that men also suffer inequality and oppression within society.

Interviewing Male Participants

Of the nine interviews, only one was conducted face-to-face, with the others being conducted via the telephone. Even though there was congruence within both the researcher and the researched being male, this did not diminish the impact of gender or indeed power within the interview. As I have discussed the issue of power within the interview process at length in Chapter 3, I am going to refrain from exploring, in detail, the aspects relating to gendered power relations within the interviews conducted with male participants. However, being a PhD student interviewing individuals who are in positions of authority within their own fields, does have a significant impact on the power relations within the interview process. Furthermore, interviewing men who had knowledge of feminist text (although not all male participants did) and, while they had an

understanding of the relationship between masculinity, violence and power, still performed certain forms of masculinity that are associated with power, I was surprised at how, on analysis of the interviews, certain performances of masculinity were adopted within these interviews. Even though I was conscious of my actions, tone of voice and the language I utilised within these interactions, on reflection, I too am guilty of performing certain forms of dominant masculinity within these interviews. The issues of age, gender, class, power and sexuality (with one participant indicating that he was homosexual) all had a bearing on power relations operating within these interviews.

Description of Male Interviewees

With the help of my gatekeepers, I approached over 20 men who worked within the domestic violence sector in the UK. A number of them failed to reply to my phone calls and emails, or simply refused to participate. Altogether, I recruited nine participants, seven from England, one from Scotland and one from the US. See Table 5 for breakdown of research sample. All UK respondents identified themselves as white British/Scottish and educated to degree level, with three participants holding postgraduate degrees; Juan identified himself as Mexican/American and held a postgraduate degree. Furthermore, eight out of the nine participants stated that they were heterosexual, with Darren indicating that he was homosexual. Finally, seven out of the nine participants did not want their identities to be disguised, indicating that in order to take a stand against abuse one should not have to adopt a pseudonym. Nevertheless, two participants were concerned about their privacy and requested that their identities be altered, therefore Darren and Damien are pseudonyms.

Table 5: Male Participants and their Organisations

Name/Type of Organisation	Number of Participants	Age	Marital Status
Respect	Neil	46	Partnered
	Mark	42	Partnered
Domestic violence Co-ordinators	Mark (Scotland) Anthony (<i>Standing Together</i>)	56	Married Married
White Ribbon UK	Chris	49	Partnered
Family Violence Prevention Fund (US)	Juan	39	Partnered
Perpetrator Programme Co-ordinator	Damian	26	Single
	Darren	39	Partnered
Domestic Violence Consultant/Activist	John	58	Married

Interestingly, the demographics of this small sample are similar to those found by Shiffman (1987), who conducted a survey at a pro-feminist men's conference in 1984. He found that the vast majority of those present were white, middle class, educated men, which he suggests raises important questions relating to power relations and how these intersect with race, class and sexual orientation. As the

discussion throughout this chapter illustrates, power relations are a major concern for men working within the sector, with all participants acknowledging their privileged positions within society.

A Background to Participants' Organisations

As one can see from Table 5 the male participants were affiliated to a variety of organisations operating within the domestic violence sector. Here is a brief description of the organisations and their approach to intimate partner abuse.

White Ribbon was originally founded in 2001 by a group of pro-feminist men, which included intellectuals, such as Michael Kaufman. These men were well versed in feminist literature and were committed to feminist principles. Since its conception in 2001, *White Ribbon* has gone global, with 47 countries having active campaigns

(White Ribbon <http://www.whiteribbon.ca/newsletters/wrcSpring08.html>).

It is predominantly an awareness raising campaign that works with educational institutions in order to challenge certain constructions of masculinity.

Respect has similar foundations and is guided by feminist principles in addressing male victims and perpetrators of intimate partner abuse. The organisation is predominantly concerned with lobbying the government, statutory and non-statutory agencies to influence policy development in relation to perpetrators of intimate abuse. It also operates an advice line for men and offers accreditation for domestic violence perpetrator programmes within the UK.

Domestic Violence Co-ordinators are responsible for co-ordinating the actions of various local community agencies addressing intimate partner abuse within a specific locale. Co-ordinators are specifically interested in assisting women who are fleeing abusive situations, through the help of a multi-agency response team, including the police, social services, women's organisations and other government and non-government organisations. Most importantly, co-ordinators, generally, do not work directly with those who have suffered abuse.

Standing Together offers support to domestic violence partnerships and multi-agency response to domestic violence. Furthermore, it influences national and local policy and practice. Both Mark (Scotland) and Anthony (Standing Together) were previously employed in the police force and it was through having firsthand experience of intimate partner abuse within this role that they became co-ordinators.

Perpetrator Programme Co-ordinators run programmes that address men's violent/abusive behaviour within a pro-feminist framework. Workshops are always conducted with both male and female co-ordinators in order to address the gendered power relations that would occur if it were a male only scenario. This is particularly the case for those programmes that are accredited by *Respect*. At the time of interview, one of the co-ordinators was awaiting accreditation by

Respect. As well as working with heterosexual abusers, Darren also worked with gay men and lesbian perpetrators of abuse within a feminist framework.

Family Violence Prevention Fund is an organisation that has a number of male employees and is one of the major forces within the domestic violence sector in the US. It contributed to developing the Violence against Women Act, which was passed by the US congress in 1994. Recently it developed a campaign entitled *Founding Fathers*, which encourages men to raise awareness of intimate partner abuse within the workplace. The organisation is guided by feminist understandings of violence against women and like most of the organisations mentioned above, does not have direct contact with those suffering abuse.

Finally, John Bishop, along with his wife, acts as a consultant for non-government and private sector organisations on all aspects of intimate partner abuse. John's background is in the police force, where he won a Fulbright Scholarship to explore US police responses to intimate abuse. Since leaving the police and meeting his wife, who has been a committed activist for over 25 years, John has dedicated his time to raising awareness amongst men about violence against women. Both John and his wife place their approach within a feminist framework, highlighting gender inequality as the cause of intimate abuse.

Appendix 3

Participant Consent Form

Title of Project:

The Impact of Intimate Partner Abuse on Survivors' Experience of the Workplace

Name of Researcher:

David M Beecham

Participant Identification Number for this project:

Please initial box

2. I confirm that I have been informed and understand the nature of the research project dated [] and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. (Contact David Beecham Tel: 3147 Email D.M.Beecham@warwick.ac.uk) ☐
2. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis. I give permission for the researcher and their supervisors to have access to my anonymised responses. ☐
4. I agree to take part in the above research project. ☐

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix 4

Interview Schedule

Introduction Speech

‘Thank you for agreeing to participate in this important and much needed piece of research. The aim of this research is to document how intimate partner abuse affects survivors’ experiences of the workplace.

The information disclosed within this interview will be handled with the strictest confidence and will only be viewed by members of the research team. Furthermore, to preserve your anonymity certain identifiable characteristics shall be altered. Although, I will endeavour to represent the information supplied in the interview accurately I cannot control how other parties may use the research findings.

You are under no obligation to answer all of the questions and you terminate the interview and withdraw from the research at any time. Before we commence, can I ask that you read, sign and date the consent form.’

Do you have any questions before we start the interview?

Section One: Personal Background

“Before we start talking about your experiences, I would like to ask you a few questions regarding your background”

Your age?

Age at time of the abuse?

Occupation at the time of the abuse?

Employment history: length of time in employment, full/part time?

Ethnicity?

Education level at the time of the abuse: GCSE’s, ‘A’ levels, Diploma, Degree, Postgraduate?

Children at time of the abuse?

Age; sex; full time education: primary, secondary, college, university?

Did they live with you both at this time?

Who do they live with now?

Pets: (There is a link between IPA and animal abuse, with abusers hurting their partner’s pets in order to emotionally abuse them)

Nature of relationship with abuser: married, cohabiting, dating?

Age of the abuser at time of the abuse?

Occupation of the abuser?

Employment status of the abuser: self-employed, employed, unemployed?

Section Two: Household Composition

Number of adults in the house?

Household tenure: local authority rented, housing association, other rented?

Owner occupied: Mortgage, rental purchase, owned outright?

Whose name was the rental or mortgage agreement?

Type of accommodation: detached house, semi-detached, flat?

Chief economic supporter?

“Thank you. I now would like to ask you about your workplace experiences and to what affect did IPA have on your employment”

Section Three: Employment

I will then ask the participant to tell me about their employment, however, depending on their responses there will be a number of prompt questions which I will ask.

1. Please could you tell about your experiences within this relationship with the abuser?
2. How did this make you feel?
3. Did you feel/Do you feel that your abuse has affected your employment?
Prompt questions: did it affect your self-confidence, self-esteem within the workplace; were you absent, late or unable to perform your work duties; did your partner ever prevent you from going to work; threaten to abuse the children or your pets.
4. Please could you tell me what your workplace is like?
Prompt questions: What was/is your work duties; the ratio of male to female employees; was/is there a healthy feeling of camaraderie within the workplace, was it closed or open plan office etc?
5. Has that the abuse affected your relationship with your work colleagues?
Prompt questions: did your partner ever come to your workplace and threaten or assault you or your work colleagues; contact you or your co-workers at work via telephone, email or other means; was domestic violence ever discussed amongst workers; did co-workers offer emotional or other means of support?
6. Have/Did you disclose your situation to your co-workers?
Prompt questions: what was their reaction; what made you reveal it to them; why didn't you reveal it?
 - Did you contact you union rep about your situation?

7. Has/Did your line manager or supervisor become aware of your situation?
 Prompt questions: did you approach them, if not why not; did they approach you; what was their reaction; did they offer support?
 - Can you describe to me how it makes you feel when one of your co-workers or managers are confrontational or if you have to deal with confrontational members of the public?
8. How did/does going to work make you feel?
 Prompt questions: did you look forward or dread going to work; did work make you feel better about yourself, for example, boost your self-confidence/self-worth.
9. Was/Is domestic abuse considered a workplace issue?
 Prompt questions: was it ever discussed by line managers/supervisors.

Section four: Employment and its effects on the dynamics of the relationship

1. What was your partner's attitude to you being employed?
 Prompt questions: did your partner encourage you to work; did he dislike the fact that you worked?
2. How did your experiences at work make you feel within your relationship?
 Prompt questions: did positive or negative experiences within your workplace make you feel better or worse within your relationship; did employment empower you emotionally within your relationship; if working gave you satisfaction and boosted your self-work how did this affect your relationship; did your workplace experiences give you the confidence to leave the relationship?

Section five: Survivors' recommendations for Domestic Violence Workplace Policy

1. What support would you like to see employers offer survivors of abuse?
 Prompt questions: how could employers help; do you think it's appropriate for employers to take a pro-active approach and ask those they suspect of being abused; what do you think employers should offer in terms of security, financial and emotional support; do you think it should be compulsory for employers to have a domestic violence policy.
2. What would you like to see employers do with regard to perpetrators of domestic violence within their organisations?
 Prompt questions: should perpetrators be approached by employers; should they face disciplinary action, if so what kind; should employers guide them in the direction of perpetrator programmes
3. How do you think the issue of domestic violence can be tackled within the workplace?

Prompt questions: workshop days; posters against violence against women; manager training days etc

Section six: Methodological and Ethical Issues

At the end of the interview I will ask the participant if there is anything more that they would like to say.

I will also inquire as to their experience of being interviewed by a male researcher, whether they were apprehensive or comfortable about discussion personal issues with a man.

I will then inform the participant that a transcription of interview shall be sent to them for their approval and to allow them to make any comments or alterations.

Appendix 5

Poster and Media Campaign to Recruit Female Research Participants

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