Violence and Abuse in Intimate Dating Relationships: a Study of Young People's Attitudes, Perceptions and Experiences

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ABSTRACT

Since the issue of dating violence emerged onto the research agenda in the 1980s, researchers have focused upon measuring the prevalence of physical violence occurring in young people's intimate relationships, using quantitative methods. Surveys, which have limited young people's reporting to stating whether or not they have perpetrated or sustained any of a fixed range of predetermined violent acts, have formed the dominant methodological approach. In the main, dating violence studies have focused on researching university students in the United States of America, and young people not attending American universities are an under-researched population in the dating violence literature. The dearth of qualitative approaches to past studies of dating violence has meant that young people's own accounts of their experiences, attitudes and perceptions of dating violence and abuse have been afforded minimal focus. Feminist theoretical approaches to dating violence research are now emerging, contributing a valuable gendered analysis of the issues.

Through qualitative interviews with forty five young people aged 16-21 (23 men and 22 women), recruited primarily from a Further Education college and an organisation working with young people not in education, employment or training, this thesis explores young people's attitudes, perceptions and experiences of violence and abuse in intimate dating relationships, through a feminist theoretical lens. The study is couched in a rich body of feminist empirical and theoretical literature, which conceptualises intimate partner violence as primarily an issue of men's violence against women, perpetrated with the rationale of maintaining power and control. The impact that

popular theoretical discourses of gender equality and female empowerment may have upon young people's capacity to acknowledge ongoing gender inequalities is also considered in this thesis.

The findings of the current research indicate that young people's dating relationships (and experiences of heterosexuality in general) reflect ongoing gender inequalities which are influenced to a great extent by patriarchal modes of power and control. The accounts of young men and women in this study established dating relationships as sites of imbalanced gender power, with many modes of men's power control, surveillance and monitoring of their girlfriends described as 'normal' and acceptable. There was a widespread perception among the participants that dating violence is an issue of 'mutual combat' where women are just as likely as men to be perpetrators, even though their experiences of dating violence largely reflected the pattern of female victims and male perpetrators. In regard to violence against women by men, many of the participants perceived men's violence to be understandable in the face of women's provocation, particularly in cases where women are perceived to be 'cheating'. For a significant minority of young people, intimate relationships are sites of violence and abuse, with women disproportionately the victims.

The findings from this study indicate a lack of awareness of the avenues of support that can be accessed by young people experiencing dating violence and abuse. The findings also highlight a requirement for direct educative strategies to challenge some young people's support for men's violence against women.

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This thesis explores violence and abuse in intimate dating relationships, focusing on young people's attitudes, perceptions and experiences. In this chapter the study's research aims, questions, and feminist theoretical grounding are introduced. It is the aim of this chapter to offer transparency on the study's origins, design and process; tracking the development of my initial research interest in violence against women, to the narrower focus of dating violence and abuse. Direction is also provided on the structure of the thesis, and on how this study contributes to the existing body of dating violence research; most notably through the employment of qualitative methods and a feminist theoretical perspective, in a research field dominated by positivist approaches. Some detail is offered on the researcher's background and the personal process of developing a feminist standpoint, as a young researcher in a social climate where gender equality and female empowerment are often taken for granted. It is hoped that this discussion assists in contextualising the perspective from which the study has been undertaken.

Research Priorities

As chapter two of this thesis establishes, much previous dating violence research has focused on measuring the scale of physical violence among populations of university students in the United States of America. Participants' responses have typically been

limited to stating whether or not they have experienced any of the physically violent acts listed on pre-determined inventories drawn up by survey researchers. This approach is restricted by the lack of focus upon young people's own perspectives and experiences. While feminist domestic violence researchers have made clear distinctions between men and women's experiences of intimate partner violence, establishing women as the primary victims and men the primary perpetrators (e.g. Dobash and Dobash, 1979, Mooney, 2000b), gendered analyses of dating violence and abuse have not been characteristic of past studies. Additionally, young people outside of American university populations have been largely omitted from the research focus.

These observations of the existing literature led to the development of three central research priorities for the conduct of the study. Firstly, in order to advance the focus of attention beyond American university populations, the decision was taken to conduct dating violence research with young men and women in Scotland, and to recruit the participants from a range of sites not limited to Higher Education. To this end, 45 young people aged 16-21 years old participated in the research (22 women and 23 men). The second priority was to maximise the extent to which young people's voices could be heard throughout all stages of the research process, by attempting to diminish hierarchies of power between the researcher and the participants, and by encouraging young people to report their attitudes, perceptions and experiences from their own frame of reference and in their own terms. Concurrent with this, this study avoided imposing rigid definitional criteria for violence, abuse and control upon the participants, and semi-structured qualitative interviews were selected to maximise the

participants opportunities to speak freely[1]. The third research priority was to operate with a gendered focus throughout, by highlighting the differences in young men and women's attitudes, experiences and perceptions of dating violence and abuse. The roots of this priority lie within the feminist theoretical perspective which underpins the study, discussed later in this chapter.

Research Aims

The central endeavour of this study is to explore young people's attitudes, perceptions and experiences of dating[2] violence and abuse. This broad rationale developed from close analysis of the existing dating violence literature; a process which identified the strengths and limitations of the scholarship so far, and the avenues requiring further research attention. From this analysis of the existing literature, three principal research aims for the study emerged:

i.   To explore the nature and social context of young people's dating relationships

ii. To garner young people's attitudes and perceptions of dating violence and abuse

iii. To explore young people's experiences of dating violence and abuse

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[1] In chapter five, these methodological considerations are explored within a detailed overview of this study's methodological approach.

[2] In line with much of the research literature, the current study has adopted the terms 'dating relationships' and 'dating violence'. It is worthy of note that use of the term 'dating' as a descriptor of young people's intimate relationships is not one that I myself used prior to undertaking this study, and was very rarely used by the participants. The terms most commonly used by the participants were; "going out with" or "seeing" someone, and I too used these terms in preference to speaking of 'dating' relationships when engaging with the participants during the interviews.

Over the following paragraphs, these aims are discussed and elaborated upon, and the research questions located within each of these three research aims are noted.

Exploring the Nature and Social Context of Dating Relationships

Feminist researchers Dobash et al. (1992) argue that researchers must explore the nature, construct and social context of intimate relationships, in order to understand the violence and abuse that can occur within them. Most previous dating violence studies have focused solely on the violent aspects of intimate dating relationships, with little analysis of the nature or construct of the relationships themselves. As such, dating violence research has tended to secure a minimal understanding of the contexts in which dating violence and abuse can occur. The current research has sought to advance this position by extending the focus to explore young people's perceptions and experiences of intimate dating relationships, and by listening to their accounts of what it *means* for them to be with (or without) an intimate dating partner. Allied with feminist analyses of how heterosexual relationships can act as sites of male power and control (Pence, 1987; Holland et al., 2004), this study has also sought to explore young people's perceptions and experiences of non-violent power and control in dating relationships. This research aim has developed from the work of contemporary feminist scholars (e.g. Chung, 2005, 2007; Holland et al., 2004; McRobbie, 2009) who have suggested that young people's views of how men and women *should* behave as partners in heterosexual relationships closely mirror traditional modes of gender performance (West and Zimmerman, 1987), where female compliance and male control are normative concepts.

With the aim of exploring the social context of intimate dating relationships, young people were asked about how and whether peer networks inter-relate with intimate relationships. For example, do they feel pressure from their peers to have an intimate partner? Do the opinions of one's friends and peers impact upon how the relationship is managed and how partners are treated? It is anticipated that by extending the focus beyond only the violent aspects of intimate dating relationships, an enhanced understanding of young people's experiences can be secured.

Attitudes and Perceptions

Garnering young people's attitudes, perceptions and awareness of the issue of intimate partner dating violence is a further focus of this study. Young people's own definitions and understandings of the issues of intimate partner violence have rarely been sought (e.g. Burman and Cartmel, 2006; Burton et al., 1998; McCarry, 2007) and in addressing this limitation, this study explores the participants' perceptions of what 'counts' as dating violence and abuse. Previous research suggests that young men and women are resistant to the notion that most intimate partner violence is perpetrated by men, against women, arguing instead that there is gender symmetry in dating violence perpetration (McCarry, 2007, Macnab, 2005). The current research seeks young people's opinions on dating violence as a gendered issue, with a specific focus on whether they perceive dating violence to be an issue of violence against women, or mutual combat, and what (if any) gendered differences the participants perceive in the nature and motivations for violence and abuse perpetrated by men versus that perpetrated by women.

A further research aim is to explore young people's perceptions of whether intimate partner violence is ever justifiable or acceptable. This builds on previous research undertaken by Burman and Cartmel (2006) and Burton et al. (1998), which found some young people to be supportive of men's violence against women in a range of circumstances, particularly where they deemed the victim to have 'provoked' her partner. Young people's views on *why* violence occurs in dating relationships are also considered, along with their perceptions of how victims of dating violence should respond, and what action (if any) should be taken against perpetrators.

Experiences

Although the participants were not recruited on the basis of any prior knowledge of their experiences, previous studies have confirmed dating violence to be a widespread issue, establishing prevalence rates in the range of thirty to fifty percent across various samples of young people (e.g. Bryant and Spencer, 2003; Hird, 2000; Straus, 2004). This highlighted the possibility that some of the young people who volunteered to participate may have experienced or witnessed dating violence and abuse. Young people's own accounts of their experiences of violence and abuse are largely absent from the dating violence research focus (e.g. Chung, 2005), as are gendered analyses of young people's experiences. In addressing these limitations, this study has sought to explore young men and women's experiences of dating violence and abuse- as perpetrators, victims, or witnesses of friends' and peers' experiences- through analysis of the participants' own narratives. Several key research questions are allied with this research aim: what is the nature of dating violence and abuse experienced or witnessed

by the participants? How do young people respond to dating violence and abuse in the aftermath? How do they feel, do they tell anyone? In the case of violence witnessed by the participants, the current research asks how and whether they intervened, or became involved. These research questions are explored with a gendered lens which seeks to identify any differences in young men and women's experiences.

A Feminist Approach

The decision to conduct the current research from a feminist perspective has had important implications for the design and conduct of this study. Commentary on these issues runs throughout this thesis, and particularly in chapter three, where relevant pools of feminist theoretical and methodological literature are explored. Nonetheless, it is pertinent to set out here, at this introductory stage, the key feminist theoretical principles underpinning the study.

Feminists have long noted, and celebrated the fact, that feminist research is not value neutral (Oakley, 1981), but concerned with different women's ways of knowing the realities of their own lives (Reinharz, 1992) and the various standpoints from which individual feminist researchers undertake their studies (Stanley and Wise, 1990). Consequently, feminist studies are different in approach to traditional 'scientific' modes of social enquiry which advocate making every attempt to remove the researcher's own values and theoretical standpoints from the research (Parr, 1998). Feminist scholarship seeks to promote social action (Bograd, 1990) towards transforming the sexist structures that maintain men's dominance over women (Cook and Fonow, 1990).

Feminist studies of intimate partner violence gained particular momentum in the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which sought to challenge the prevailing ideology of male entitlement (Dobash and Dobash, 1992) at a time when women continued to be disadvantaged in almost every aspect of social, political and private life. The women's movement enabled the rapid development of feminist scholarship, which highlighted the magnitude of violence against women and promoted the need for change. Feminist researchers have since built upon these foundations in seeking to advance women's interests and eradicate violence and abuse by men.

Radical feminist theoretical perspectives consider women's experiences of intimate partner violence by men to be a "result of the subordinate position women occupy in the social structure and one manifestation of a system of male dominance that has existed historically and across cultures" (Jasinski, 2001:12). The concept of 'patriarchy' is central to radical feminist theoretical explanations for intimate partner violence against women (Mullender, 1996; Walby, 1990). A patriarchal society is characterised by the fusion of "social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby, 1990:20), and feminists have located intimate partner violence against women as a continuation of patriarchal structures within the personal sphere (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; McMillan, 2007). Concurrent with this position, feminist researchers have found intimate partner violence to be an ongoing problem of mainly men's violence against women, enacted to maintain control and assert power (Pence, 1987). These tenets of feminist thinking on intimate partner violence are central to this study's theoretical basis.

Feminist theoretical perspectives on intimate partner violence are concentrated mainly within the domestic violence literature. Dating and domestic relationships are characterised by many practical differences: partners in dating relationships do not cohabit, as partners in 'domestic' relationships do. As a result, young women in dating relationships are less likely to be economically dependent on their partners[3]. Young people in dating relationships are also less likely to experience some of the 'ties' to partners that women in domestic relationships do, such as children, and their commitment to marriage (LaViolett and Barnett, 2000). Importantly, young people of the age group studied in the current research (16-21 years) are in the earliest stages of their intimate 'careers' and are without the experience and knowledge of their older counterparts (Jackson et al, 2000). Notwithstanding these differences in how dating and domestic relationships are constructed, managed and lived out, feminist scholars have identified domestic and dating violence and abuse to be theoretically very similar phenomena (Worcester, 2002), maintained by wider structural gendered inequalities, and perpetrated mainly by men, against women as a means of maintaining power and control.

The current research is also informed by Connell's (1995) theorising on masculinities. Connell's (1995) perspectives complement feminist perspectives on violence against women, by interrogating why some men choose to use violence and abuse against their partners, and what violent men can gain from doing so. Patriarchy is a key theoretical tenet of Connell's (1995) position, wherein he proposes that men's adherence to modes

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[3] The participants in the current research mainly reported living at home with parent/s, and some of the participants who were studying lived with flatmates or in halls of residence.

of 'hegemonic masculinity' maintain patriarchal ideals of male dominance and superiority. Connell's (1995) theorising of masculinities also considers men's confinement within patriarchal structures, and the costs to men who resist dominant modes of patriarchal masculine performance. I consider Connell's (1995) theorising, and some empirical studies that have employed his thesis of 'hegemonic masculinity' in some detail in chapter three, and note there the utility of this perspective in how men (and women) can be socialised in a "culture of male supremacy" (Connell, 1995: 83) where power and control over women is rendered normal and innocuous.

Feminist Definitions of Intimate Partner Violence

Feminist approaches to intimate partner violence have been central to disrupting the notion that violence and abuse can be defined according to a prescribed set of physically violent tactics (Dobash and Dobash, 2004). Feminist scholars Regan and Kelly (2001:7) reflect this approach of the current research, by postulating a wide ranging, gendered, approach to defining dating violence: *"violence against women in intimate relationships encompasses a range of negative behaviours: physical, emotional, sexual and financial. These forms of abuse are designed to hurt, intimidate, isolate and humiliate the victim"*. This approach differentiates the current study from many other dating violence studies, where fixed and narrow definitional criteria for violence tended to be employed. Building upon feminist analyses which position violence against women as a means of male power and control, this thesis also explores the nature and extent of controlling tactics, practices and normative assumptions in young people's dating relationships.

Feminist Approaches in Dating Violence Research

Although many feminist scholars agree that intimate heterosexual relationships can act as *"contexts that may promote, maintain, and even support men's use of physical force against women"* (Bograd, 1990:12), analysis of how and whether *dating* relationships act in this way has to date been a minimal focus of dating violence studies, and forms a key aspect of the current research. Indeed, analysis of the dating violence literature, and the feminist violence against women literature, confirms the virtual absence of feminist perspectives in dating violence research until very recently (e.g. Barter et al., 2009; Chung, 2005, 2007). Perceptions of men's entitlement to maintain power and control over women through violence and abuse have been found to be well established long before couples enter into cohabiting 'domestic' relationships (Hanmer, 2000), and young people's experiences of intimate relationships during adolescence can be a central foundation for later relationships (Próspero, 2006). Dating violence research is crucial to justifying the need for interventions to challenge the ideologies which perpetuate men's violence against women, at a stage when young people are very early in their careers as intimate partners.

The current research seeks to make an assessment of young people's exposure to, and replication of, patriarchal power and control, as well as the means and extent of young people's resistance of sexist practices and gendered power imbalances. In line with contemporary feminist thinking (e.g. McRobbie, 2009), the current research locates violence against women as a resistible phenomenon, which requires action on the part of young women, *and* men. Feminist scholars increasingly underscore the imperative of

working with men as partners in the challenge to gender inequality (Cavanagh and Lewis, 1996), and this study has included men in the research sample in an attempt to progress this priority. Accessing men's perspectives in the current research has enabled gendered differences in attitudes, perceptions and experiences to emerge.

The researcher's background and rationale

Feminist scholars (e.g. Hey, 1997; Letherby, 2000; Stanley, 1991; Wesley, 2006) argue that by offering an insight into their identity, and the rationale and motivations for their scholarship, researchers can provide the readers of their work with a valuable sense of context and clarity, enabling them to understand the standpoint from which the study has been undertaken. This stance stands in contrast to the traditional priority of concealing the researcher's presence within their studies, aligned with the values of researcher detachment, objectivity and neutrality (Oakley, 1981). Letherby (2000) notes how Weber (1949) was an early advocate of the practice of social scientists revealing their backgrounds and values, on the basis that these aspects can impact considerably on how individual researchers may approach their work and analyse their findings. With this in mind, the following paragraphs offer some detail on the researcher's personal biography which, it is hoped, may further contextualise how and why this study has been undertaken. This is by no means in lieu of a robust analysis of the theoretical and empirical literature, which is considered in detail throughout this thesis.

In October 2003, as a 21 year old social science undergraduate student at Glasgow University, I enrolled on a year long module entitled *Violence in the Family*. This

programme was coordinated and taught by the late Dr Kate Cavanagh; a brilliantly engaging teacher and feminist activist. My participation in this teaching undoubtedly provided the catalyst for this study, sparking my interest in, and curiosity about, the issues of gendered violence and intimate relationships. Kate's teaching was an education in the work of feminist scholars and activists, who had long sought to tackle the structural and relational gender inequalities which perpetuated women's subordinate position to men, and manifest in some women's experience of intimate partner violence and abuse. Kate and her colleagues (Cavanagh, 1978; Cavanagh et al., 2001; Dobash and Dobash, 1979) had worked for three decades, undertaking studies which forged crucial inroads into evidencing the nature and extent of violence against women, and challenged the patriarchal structures which perpetuate some men's abuse of their intimate partners. In her writing and teaching, it was made very clear, however, that much important work was yet to be done, since for some women, intimate relationships continue to act as sites of male privilege, violence, abuse and control. I completed the module with a heightened consciousness of the nature and effects of gendered power and inequalities, and a sound understanding of, and allegiance to, the feminist analyses of violence against women.

A central motivator for the current research arose not only from this raised consciousness of the need for further feminist scholarship on the issue of violence against women, but also from my close contact with other students on the *Violence in the Family* module. Discussing and debating the issues that emerged during the teaching was a fundamental aspect of the course. Working in small groups of almost

exclusively female students (it was interesting to see that most of the male students on the degree programme opted out of choosing this module), we spent several months considering our views on a wide variety of issues related to gendered violence; from whether we perceived intimate partner violence to be a problem of violence against women or mutual combat, to what we thought victims should do in response, and why some women stayed with men who abuse them. There was plenty to motivate these discussions; guest speakers from women's refuges, Childline, and violent men's programmes attended the sessions and provided valuable insights into the challenges and issues they faced in their work. The dialogue often continued outside of the classroom, when we went for lunch or coffees, or met to prepare presentations and assignments. These discussions were regularly underpinned by the assumption that the issues of male power, control, violence and abuse were confined to 'other' women's experiences. Our collective focus was almost entirely upon the characteristics of abused women, rather than violent men. A dominant perception of the young women with whom I studied was that women 'nowadays' have the strength and capability to resist and prevent men's violence, and as such, women who did experience ongoing abuse were ultimately responsible for their own fate. Indeed, some women were quite vociferous in their frustration with, and inability to understand, 'those' women who 'put up' with men's abuse, stressing that they themselves would never be 'chosen' by men who would abuse or dominate. There was an evident distain for female victims and a desire to state emphatically how they themselves were stronger and more resilient. There was also much scepticism over the legitimacy of viewing intimate partner

violence as an issue of violence against women, underpinned by the view that women could be, and often were, just as violent as men.

It is important to be clear that the young women's assumptions about victims of male violence were not borne out of ignorance of alternative viewpoints, but rather a conscious rejection of the feminist perspective on violence against women. We had become very familiar with the feminist discourses on intimate partner violence which located the responsibility for men's violence with the perpetrators and not the women they abuse, and evidenced the vulnerability of *all* women to men's attempts to dominate and control. Our teaching had established intimate partner violence as an issue of primarily men's violence against women, and we were also encouraged to consider the complexities of intimate relationships, such as children, family, finances, love and companionship, which invested some women in staying with violent men. Despite our access to this body of knowledge and scholarship, many young women on this course were not just ambivalent, but highly resistant to, feminist analyses of violence against women. It was this resistance, in the face of an overwhelming body of evidence which attests to women's ongoing experiences of victimisation by their male partners that made clear to me the requirement for further exploration of young people's attitudes, perceptions and experiences of intimate partner violence.

As an undergraduate student, I was still developing my own viewpoint on the issue of violence against women, but the young women's dominant perceptions I have explained above never rested easily with me, and felt unjust. Questioning my peers'

assumptions did, however, feel like going very much against the grain. While I perceived that some members of the group were more invested in holding women accountable for men's violence than others, there was certainly an apparent reluctance to voice a challenge. I tended to keep my disagreement with the tendency to blame victims and the perception of women and men as equally violent to myself, and said little of my view that intimate relationships were not always the sites of equality and female empowerment we assumed them to be. From my own frame of reference, young women I knew frequently privileged and prioritised their boyfriends' needs and preferences ahead of their own, and it was very clear that young men and women did not experience intimate dating relationships in the same way. On reflection, I would suggest that my reluctance to raise these points was brought about by a concern to avoid identifying myself as vulnerable or weak; a current or potential victim of abuse or inequality. It felt important to appear aligned with the model of strength and capability so valued by my peers, and identifying myself as someone who associated with the feminist paradigm felt quite incompatible with this. Indeed, this was a time when I felt somewhat conflicted in terms of my own standpoint in relation to feminist politics. I recognised that my experience as a young woman was markedly different to my mother's and grandmothers' in relation to my access to Higher Education, the prospect of well paid employment and the uncomplicated freedom to enjoy an early adulthood outside of childrearing and domesticity. I also enjoyed a warm intimate relationship with a man who celebrated and encouraged my academic progress and valued my opinions and choices. In these reflections it was easy to lose track of the ongoing relevance of feminism in my life and to see some of the earlier and more radical tenets

of feminism as out of touch with my own reality. But simultaneously, I could see that women and men did not occupy the same positions in wider society, and that regardless of any one woman's individual sense of freedom from 'old' constraints, women remain collectively subject to the pervasive threat of male violence and abuse. I knew that my own perceptions of the risks to my safety, and the safety of my female friends, were different to those for young men, and I also foresaw a time in my future where the balance of a satisfying family and professional life would be achieved less seamlessly than might be the case for men of my age. Importantly, I was engaged with a sound body of feminist empirical and theoretical literature which evidenced women's very real ongoing experiences of a range of tactics of violence, abuse, power and control.

My later reading of the post-feminist literature provided some valuable resonance with my experiences as an undergraduate student. Some feminist scholars have observed the disarticulation of feminist politics (Oakley, 1997; Stacey, 1986) and the inception of an anti-feminist backlash (Faludi, 1992); concepts which contextualised my own observations of young women's perceptions of feminism as a redundant movement with little relevance to their own lives. Angela McRobbie (2009) theorises very clearly young women's complex encounters with competing discourses of assumed gender equality and ongoing gender power imbalances in public and private life, and empirical evidence of this tension has developed with a focus on young women's experiences of male violence and abuse, suggesting that young women's certainties of living in an equal society leave little room for them to voice such experiences (Chung, 2005). These are important theoretical considerations which I elaborate upon in chapter three.

Thesis Structure

A vast base of empirical studies and theoretical literature underpins this study, and the subsequent two chapters of the thesis are dedicated to discussing and critiquing this material. Chapter two highlights the key strengths, limitations and findings of the existing body of dating violence research, and underscores the contribution that the current study will make; by extending the use of qualitative methods in dating violence research, and in accessing cohorts of participants who have been previously under-researched. Chapter two also provides an overview of the development of dating violence and abuse as an issue for public awareness and policy, and discusses the requirement for further action in the UK. Chapter three presents the literature which forms the feminist theoretical position of this study, and considers how dominant expectations of female empowerment, gender equality and the ongoing traditional expectations of gender performance impact on young people in their intimate dating relationships. A reflexive presentation of the methodological approach of this study is offered in Chapter four, with reference to the literature. Chapters five through seven present the research findings, under the three thematic headings that relate directly to the research aims set out earlier in this chapter, respectively: the nature and social context of young people's dating relationships; attitudes and perceptions of dating violence and abuse; and experiences of dating violence and abuse. Finally, Chapter eight assesses how the current research contributes to the dating violence literature and reflects on the study's progress in achieving the original research aims. The study's findings are contextualised within the existing theoretical, methodological and

empirical literature. The implications of the research findings are also discussed in chapter eight, and some possible avenues for future inquiry suggested.

Chapter Summary

The current study is of young people's attitudes, perceptions and experiences of dating violence and abuse. Undertaking qualitative research on these issues, with a sample of young people previously under-considered in the dating violence literature, are central research priorities. This chapter has provided an introductory outline of the feminist theoretical approach and research methods, which are discussed in detail in subsequent chapters of the thesis. The next chapter discusses the current body of dating violence literature, and contextualises this study within the existing scholarship, highlighting the contribution that this study seeks to make. A further aspect of the next chapter is an overview of public awareness, policy and practice in the field of dating violence.

CHAPTER TWO:

REVIEW OF THE DATING VIOLENCE LITERATURE, POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

Introduction

The current study's research aims, design and methodological approach have developed from close analysis of the existing literature. This chapter provides a detailed overview of the dating violence literature, highlighting the areas where further research is required, and establishing how the current study will contribute to extending the knowledge and understanding of young people's attitudes, perceptions and experiences of dating violence and abuse. The chapter concludes with an overview of dating violence policy and interventions, and an analysis of how public awareness of the issue of dating violence has developed.

As this chapter will ascertain, positivist theory and quantitative methods have dominated dating violence research since the earliest studies were undertaken in the 1980s. This approach has produced a potentially very limited view of young people's experiences of dating violence and abuse, establishing little understanding of their attitudes or perceptions of the issue. The very recent development of qualitative research techniques within dating violence research, advanced primarily by feminist researchers working in this field, has been valuable in enabling young people's voices to be heard. The emergence of feminist theoretical perspectives in dating violence research has also made visible the issues of gender and patriarchal power in

perpetuating dating relationships as sites of gendered inequality, reflective of the wider social systems and structures which continue to reinforce patriarchal ideals. Feminist perspectives in dating violence research have also secured an expansion of the traditionally narrow definitional focus of past dating violence studies, illuminating the wide range of violent and non-violent tactics of power and control some men use against their intimate partners.

In the United States of America, high profile cases of dating violence have been instrumental in raising public awareness, and establishing the need for legal, political and social action. Despite the United Kingdom's prominence in establishing violence against women as a human right's issue (Dobash and Dobash, 1979), awareness of dating violence remains less developed here than in the USA and Canada, reflecting the relative paucity of British dating violence research and policy. Much remains to be done to establish dating violence as a policy concern which merits research, intervention and support. Previous studies have established that young people in Scotland have a low awareness of available support for young people experiencing dating violence and abuse, with feminist agencies such as Women's Aid perceived as being for older women experiencing domestic violence (Macnab, 2005). This indicates that young women experiencing violence and abuse in their intimate relationships in Scotland (Burton et al. 1998, Macnab, 2005) may be without adequate help and support.

Development of Dating Violence onto the Research Agenda

Relative to over three decades of extensive domestic violence research, the study of dating violence is less developed (Hird, 2000) and a burgeoning area of research attention. Early studies (Makepeace, 1981) established dating violence as a social problem requiring attention, by reporting rates of dating violence similar to those already discovered by researchers studying marital violence (Cleveland et al., 2003; Perry and Fromuth, 2005). Recent meta-analysis of the dating violence literature has found that over fifty studies cite rates of dating violence higher than those for domestic violence (Straus, 2004). Prior to the development of dedicated dating violence research in the early 1980s, feminist researchers had suggested that violence against women was not limited to domestic relationships. Dobash and Dobash (1979) argued that since men's violence against women is a product of patriarchal society and not marriage itself, it was likely that some women would also experience men's violence in dating relationships, where some men would seek to assert power and control using violent means. However, despite the initial discussion of dating violence originating in the feminist literature, methods aligned with the feminist paradigm, such as unstructured and semi-structured interviews (Oakley, 1998) have been minimally employed in the dating violence literature to date (Barter, 2007; Chung, 2005), and feminist theoretical perspectives have underpinned few dating violence studies.[4] Instead, most dating violence researchers have focused on measuring the incidence and prevalence of dating violence via quantitative methods; predominantly 'closed question' questionnaires where the research participant responds to the researcher's questions from a fixed range

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[4] However, a recent emergence of feminist perspectives in the dating violence literature is evident, e.g. Chung 2005, 2007; Ismail et al. 2007; McCarry, 2007.

of possible answers. Gender has been a largely peripheral consideration. Acknowledging the limitations of the preoccupation with measuring incidence and prevalence of dating violence, quantitative dating violence researchers have recently considered that the "frequency of violence may be less important than the degree of terror the victim feels or her risk of personal injury" (Coker et al., 2000:226). This underscores the requirement for further work to broaden the focus towards exploration of the nature, impact and consequences of dating violence.

Definitions of Dating Violence Across the Literature

The studies investigating the scale and prevalence of violence in dating relationships have reached disparate conclusions. For example, Hird (2000) found that half of the young people in her study of 13-19 year olds had experienced dating violence, while Sugarman and Hotaling's (1989) meta-analysis found a mean prevalence rate for dating violence of thirty percent. Numerous other studies have generated results within this range of thirty to fifty percent (e.g. Bryant and Spencer, 2003; Straus, 2004; White and Koss, 1991), while still others have generated prevalence rates as low as 9% (Roscoe and Callahan, 1985). These variations in results across different studies may be explained by the lack of a consistent measurement technique in quantitative dating violence research, coupled with the employment of contradictory definitions of dating violence (Stets and Straus, 1989). The definitions different researchers use, and convey to the participants in their studies, impact greatly upon what participants are able to report. Analysis of recent dating violence studies reveals that contrasting definitions and perspectives continue to be adopted by researchers. For example, Coker et al.'s

(2000) study of dating violence in a sample of American high school students limits the abuse respondents are able to report, by omitting 'emotional abuse' and 'threats' from the definition of dating violence, and by excluding all reports of sexual abuse other than rape. Elsewhere, Glass et al. (2003) do recognise experiences of emotional violence, but only when accompanied by physical and/or sexual abuse. The use of such qualified, narrow, definitions of dating violence prevents respondents from reporting forms of abuse out-with the researcher's definition of dating violence. As a result, studies employing a narrow definition of violence may produce incomplete or distorted pictures of the participants' experiences. By contrast, and in common with much feminist domestic violence research, Lavoie et al.'s (2000) study demonstrates the benefit of adopting a broad definition of dating violence. Instead of confining 'what counts' as dating violence to a limited list of actions, Lavoie et al (2000) allowed respondents to define and report dating violence in their own terms. This method revealed that young people consider dating violence to encompass a wide range of physical, sexual and emotional abuses, with their experiences of violence extending far beyond the narrow scope implied in many other studies. This practice of enabling participants to report their opinions and experiences freely, without constraints imposed by the researcher, is reflected in the current research.

Research Populations

Most early dating violence studies have tended to confine research populations to young people attending American Universities (e.g.; Bogal-Allbritten and Allbritten, 1985; Makepeace, 1981; Matthews, 1984). This trend has continued, evident in more

recent studies such as those undertaken by; Amar and Alexy (2005); Forbes et al. (2005); Forke et al., 2008; Gover et al. (2008); Harrison and Abrishami (2004); Mahlstedt and Welsh (2005); Perry and Fromuth (2005), Rhatigan and Street (2005) and Roudsari et al. (2009), all of which have conducted dating violence research with University students. The tendency of dating violence research to concentrate on University students has marginalised young people not attending Universities from the focus of dating violence research. A small number of studies have included young people from arenas other than Universities, including drop in centres for teenagers (Lavoie et al., 2000), schools (Coker et al., 2000; Jackson et al., 2000; Regan and Kelly, 2001; Swart et al., 2002), youth accommodation services (Chung, 2005), Further Education colleges (Macnab, 2005), youth projects and public spaces (Burton et al., 1998) and health care settings (Rosen, 2004). The current research addresses the requirement for diversity in dating violence research populations by recruiting participants from a range of sites, and includes students in Further and Higher Education, as well as young people not enrolled in education or employment.

A commonality across almost all dating violence studies is the age bracket of research participants: most participants are young people aged under twenty five years old. Tolman et al. (2003) and Jackson et al. (2000) have noted that the preoccupation of dating violence research with University populations has occurred despite the fact that young people can and do experience dating violence much earlier than the age at which young people would begin university careers (typically age 18). Price et al. (2000) have found that young people are 'dating' and 'going out' with partners as early as age 11,

suggesting that school pupils may also experience intimate relationships, with the potential for abuse. It is important also to consider that for young people within the age range of early teens to mid twenties, the experience of 'dating' may vary dramatically. Consequently, dating cannot be viewed as a uniform phenomenon, despite the term being used as a general descriptor for individuals who are having, or are progressing towards, an intimate relationship (Department of Justice Canada, 2006). The question of what 'dating' means to young people of various ages has rarely been raised in the literature. As I myself did in preparing to interview the young people for the current research, Barter (2007) has questioned the suitability of the term 'dating' as a descriptor for young people's intimate relationships. This author suggests that young people in the UK are unlikely to use this term, and that use of the term 'dating' in research with young people may restrict analysis of the different types of intimate relationships that young men and women may encounter.

Methodological Approaches

Little research aligned to the qualitative and/or feminist paradigms has been undertaken in the dating violence field (Chung, 2005). Instead, quantitative research techniques, particularly the Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS), have been employed extensively as the dominant research method in most studies of dating violence (Sugarman and Hotaling, 1989). Developed by Straus (1979) as a tool for researching marital violence, CTS research has most commonly involved administering questionnaires to husbands and wives in intact relationships (DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 1998a), asking participants to provide self reports of violence they have either perpetrated or sustained by selecting

from a fixed range of violent actions identified in the scale. Respondents are also asked to report on their partner's use of violence using the same scale.

Dobash et al. (1992) note the use of the CTS method in numerous dating violence studies (e.g. Arias and Johnston, 1989; Arias, et al., 1987; Cate et al., 1982; Demaris, 1987; Lane and Gwartney-Gibbs, 1985; Laner and Thompson, 1982; Makepeace, 1986; Marshall and Rose, 1990; Rouse et al., 1988; Sigelman et al., 1984). This trend has continued, with more recent dating violence studies also utilising the CTS (e.g. Bryant and Spencer, 2003; Capaldi et al., 2001; Coker et al., 2000; Molidor and Tolman, 1998; O'Keefe and Treister, 1998; Perry and Fromuth, 2005; Swart et al. 2002). The CTS is a research *method*, underpinned by a positivistic theoretical approach to intimate partner violence. This theory views intimate partner violence as a phenomenon that can be broken down into pre-determined 'types' of violent actions for the purposes of quantitative measurement. The dominance of the CTS in dating violence research means that there is little theoretically informed literature that extends beyond mere measurement of dating violence, to provide deeper analysis of the nature and structure of young people's intimate relationships, and of *why* violence and abuse occurs in some dating relationships (Tolman et al., 2003).

The CTS and Findings of Gender Symmetry in Dating Violence Perpetration
Much CTS research has found both domestic violence, and dating violence (e.g. Arriaga and Foshee, 2004; Molidor and Tolman, 1998; Sugarman and Hotaling, 1989) to be perpetrated equally by men and women (Dobash et al., 1992). Other CTS studies

report that dating violence is perpetrated mainly by women (e.g. DuRant et al, 2007; Forke et al., 2008; Lichter and McCloskey, 2004; Stets and Straus, 1989). These findings deviate significantly from the plethora of historical and contemporary feminist research which has found that most victims of intimate partner violence are women, and most perpetrators are men (e.g. Adams, 1990; Dobash and Dobash, 1979, 2004; Stanko 2001). Dobash et al. (1992) argue that the CTS method has perpetuated a "myth of sexual symmetry" in marital violence by minimising the nature and extent of men's violence against women. However, while some domestic violence researchers have argued the CTS to be a flawed method for domestic violence research (e.g. DeKeseredy and Scwartz, 1998a; Dobash et al. 1992), there has been relatively little critique of the CTS, or the consistent findings of sexual symmetry and higher rates of female than male perpetrators, in the dating violence literature (Chung, 2005). This may be explained by the dearth of feminist approaches in dating violence research. Feminist analyses of dating violence are scarce, and instead, recent dating violence studies locate the issue as a problem with individual couples, with both partners complicit in and responsible for the violence. This is evidenced by the terminology used in many studies; for example, Bryant and Spencer (2003) speak of "participation in dating violence", and Perry and Fromuth (2005) refer to "violent couples", to categorise couples who have experienced dating violence, even where only one partner perpetrated the violence. This 'gender blind' terminology theorises violence as a product of interpersonal conflict, without exploring the reasons for the violence, or whether the perpetrator is a man or a woman (Dobash and Dobash, 2004; Tolman et al., 2003).

In the domestic violence literature, a more robust critique of CTS research exists. Dobash and Dobash (1992) have challenged the CTS on a number of fronts. Firstly, they note that the CTS includes only a narrow range of violent actions, impinging upon respondents' ability to accurately report the extent of their experiences, particularly where the abuse they have experienced is not included on the 'list' provided by the researcher. Secondly, the CTS lacks consideration of the *context* in which violence takes place, omitting analysis of the antecedents to, and aftermath of dating violence. In addition, these authors note that the CTS minimises the opportunity for research participants to contextualise their experiences of violence and abuse, and to explain their understanding of *why* the violence occurred. For example, feminist research suggests that much of women's violence to men is enacted in self defence (Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Hamberger and Potente, 1994; Saunders, 1986), but violence by women as a means of self defence has rarely been considered in the dating violence literature, as research participants have been precluded from explaining the intent of their violence towards their partner (Coker et al., 2000). Furthermore, Dobash and Dobash (1992) highlight that the CTS neglects inclusion of any form of sexual violence. Elsewhere, Dobash et al. (1992) cite Szinovacz (1983) who found that couples elicited very different accounts of the same violent episode when describing intimate partner violence using the CTS. There are statistically significant differences in men's and women's reporting of violence, with men's accounts of the frequency and severity of their violence being significantly less than women's (Dobash et al., 1998). These authors also highlight how men and women often attach different meanings to the same violent episode, with partners often disagreeing about *why* the violence happened, and

even *whether* the violence occurred at all. Cavanagh et al. (2001) and Bograd (1990) have found that men will often deny and/or minimise their use of violence, while Lejeune and Follette's (1994) study shows that violent men are less likely to accept responsibility for their own actions than violent women. These findings illuminate why much CTS research finds women to be the main perpetrators of dating violence; male respondents may be more likely to select responses from the CTS that inaccurately describe their actions, minimising the nature and extent of their violence and inaccurately rendering women as the primary perpetrators. Furthermore, Smith (1994) suggests that the potential for women to feel concerned about reprisals from the perpetrator, coupled with feelings of shame, embarrassment and worry that their experience of abuse may not match the researcher's definition may inhibit reporting and cause the extent of women's victimisation to be under-reported. Young women may also with-hold their experiences of men's violence and abuse, to demonstrate their ability to be a strong and capable 'manager' of the relationship[5] (Chung, 2005). This notion implies that young women feel that to experience violence from their male partner means they have managed the relationship unsuccessfully.

Dobash and Dobash (2004) note that even those researchers who believe intimate partner violence to be perpetrated mainly by women acknowledge that women are up to 10 times more likely to sustain serious injury than are men. The heightened severity of men's violence against women, relative to assaults *by* women is well documented (Bennett and Fineran, 1998; Flood and Fergus, 2008; Foshee, 1996; Hester, 2009), but

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[5] This consideration has roots in post-feminist analyses of the 'responsibilisation' of young women (Harris, 2003) to ensure their own freedom from men's violence and abuse, a theme which is explored in the subsequent chapter.

has been minimally considered in the dating violence literature (Arriaga and Foshee, 2004). The scant discussion of the severity and nature of men's violence vis-à-vis women's violence may be explained by the dominant positivist approach of the existing dating violence literature, where researchers (e.g. Straus, 1993) consider all intimate partner violence to be equally wrong, and hence afford minimal attention to the outcomes and severity of men's and women's violence (Nazroo, 1999). Once more, the requirement of qualitative research in this area is pertinent, to investigate how the impact and consequences of dating violence affect young men and women.

It is worthy of note that, in response to extensive criticism of the CTS, Straus et al. (1995) developed an amended version, the CTS2. While the CTS2 continues to require that respondents report violence they have either perpetrated or sustained from a fixed list of assaults, a wider range of physical and emotional abuses are included. There is also heightened scope within the CTS2 for respondents to indicate whether the violence resulted in physical injury, and to describe the extent of the injury, but still within a pre-determined range. The CTS2 has been further amended to include several measures of sexual assault. Notwithstanding these amendments, the CTS2 remains inadequate as a sole tool for dating violence research, and further qualitative studies to explore the contexts and circumstances in which young people experience dating violence are still required. Smith (1994:114) quoted in Hird (2000) concludes that "studies employing the CTS are flawed if they use the CTS as the sole measure of violence, without any attempt to explore the multidimensionality of the violence through other measures". DeKeseredy and Schwartz (1998a) identify the fundamental weakness of the CTS2 as

the continued conception of intimate partner violence as a product of mutual conflict, without identifying the importance of gender and patriarchal social structures in the study of intimate partner violence (Adams, 1990; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Ellis and Stuckless, 1996).

The critique of the CTS outlined in this chapter should not be interpreted as a rejection of quantitative techniques in dating violence research. Despite the numerous and varied criticisms of the CTS, quantitative methods have produced much useful information on intimate partner violence. In the past some feminist scholars have regarded quantitative techniques as incompatible with feminist inquiry, suggesting that quantitative methods minimise the scale of issues facing women (Martin, 1976). These notions held much validity in previous decades, at a time where feminist perspectives on marital violence were still developing and women's voices were rarely heard. However, Maynard (1994) warns against outright rejection of quantitative methods in feminist research, since they have unearthed the nature and extent of violence against women, and justified the demand for effective interventions. Lavoie el al., (2000) also note that quantitative surveys have allowed researchers to measure the scale of various forms of dating violence, report the prevalence of dating violence within various populations and identify risk factors for dating violence. On this basis, it is certainly possible to engage in feminist informed dating violence research underpinned by both qualitative and quantitative methods. Although large scale quantitative research is out-with the scope and scale of the current research, it is important to identify the requirement for

quantitative research to be undertaken on a national basis, to investigate the problem of dating violence in currently under-researched populations.

Mixed Method Research

Recent studies have employed the CTS method alongside other research techniques. For example, in Jackson et al.'s (2000) study of 373 high school students in the USA, the researchers used qualitative data gathered from focus group discussions where young people discussed dating violence, to develop a 50 item questionnaire. Elsewhere, Hird's (2000) study administered CTS questionnaires followed by qualitative interviews, with 245 female and 242 male school students aged 13-19 years. While the survey element of this study produced results which implied gender symmetry in dating violence, the subsequent qualitative interviews revealed that many reports of dating violence perpetrated by girls were examples of self defence, in response to violence from young men. The employment of the qualitative interviews was crucial to unearthing this information, and the findings of this study reinforce the requirement of qualitative techniques to contextualise the findings of survey research. Without the qualitative element of Hird's (2000) study, only a distorted and incomplete picture of the participants' experiences could be obtained.

Qualitative Studies

Qualitative studies are few in number, relative to the extensive body of quantitative dating violence research. However, notwithstanding the continued dominance of 'closed question' quantitative methods (such as the CTS) in dating violence research

(Lavoie et al, 2000), a gradual emergence of qualitative studies employing unstructured and semi-structured interviews (Bryman, 2001) is evident (e.g. Amar and Alexy, 2005; Barter et al., 2009; Few and Rosen, 2005; Hird, 2000; Lavoie et al, 2000; Tolman et al, 2003). These qualitative studies have contributed much to understanding the nature and consequences of dating violence, as well as revealing young people's attitudes about and perceptions of intimate partner violence (e.g. McCarry, 2007). Recent qualitative dating violence studies have also made valuable progress in hearing young people's explanations of what it means for them to have an intimate partner, laying the foundation for a body of research which enables a better understanding of the contexts in which young people experience intimate partner violence and abuse (e.g. Barter et al., 2009; Chung, 2005). This focus on the wider contexts and meanings of young people's intimate relationships is continued in the present study.

Explanations for Dating Violence

The feminist theoretical approach of the current study locates dating violence as an issue of violence against women (Dobash and Dobash, 2004; Chung, 2005, 2007), wherein some men perpetrate violence and abuse against their partners with a rationale of securing power and control. The burgeoning status of feminist perspectives in dating violence research means theories of patriarchy and male power and control are rarely taken into account. Instead, other explanations prevail, which focus on the traits and characteristics of victims and perpetrators (although usually victims). This tendency dovetails with the positivist, value neutral approach which has dominated the study of dating violence to date.

Intergenerational Theory

Intergenerational theory- the suggestion that young people exposed to intimate partner violence during childhood are more likely to experience violence in their own intimate relationships (Lichter and McCloskey, 2004)- is a prominent explanation for dating violence within the literature. Hotaling and Sugarman (1986), cited in Jasinksi, (2001) contend that experience of violence in childhood is a key risk factor for subsequent dating violence victimisation and perpetration. Studies examining potential 'risk factors' for dating violence have focused particular attention upon intergenerational theories of intimate partner violence; Arriaga and Foshee's (2004) meta-analysis catalogues several studies which report an association between childhood exposure to domestic violence and later experience of dating violence (Foshee et al, 1999; Gwartney-Gibbs et al, 1987; Sugarman et al, 1996; Riggs et al, 1990; Reitzel-Jaffee and Wolfe, 2001). More recent studies have also established this link (e.g. Gover et al, 2008) and Arriaga and Foshee's (2004) own research found that rates of dating violence increased by 50-60% in young people whose parents experienced intimate partner violence. According to statistics from the Teen Abuse Survey of Great Britain, 31% of girls hit by their boyfriends had also witnessed physical violence between their parents (NSPCC, 2005). However, other studies examining intergenerational connections have found no causal link (Mullender, 1996; Simons et al, 1998). Lichter and McCloskey's (2004) longitudinal study of 364 mother-child pairs found no link between childhood exposure to domestic violence and subsequent experience of dating violence, but did establish that possessing traditional attitudes about male and female gender roles

predicted dating violence perpetration, a finding that has been replicated elsewhere (Flood and Fergus, 2008; Foshee et al. 1999).

The literature identifies a number of limitations to the intergenerational theory of intimate partner violence perpetration. Firstly, violent perpetrators' have a responsibility for their own actions, and the choice not to perpetrate violence and abuse. Violence is by no means inevitable (Wilson, 1996), and intergenerational theories can minimise perpetrators' personal responsibility. Indeed, not all people experiencing abuse as children become perpetrators or victims of intimate partner violence as adults (Jasinski, 2001), and adults experiencing intimate partner violence may have had non-violent childhoods (Hague and Malos, 1998; Lichter and McCloskey, 2004). Stith et al. (2000) urge caution in accepting the findings of studies supporting the intergenerational transmission of violence, since they are often based on anecdotal evidence, with data gathered from unrepresentative samples of abused women and children (e.g. Kashani et al. 1987). Importantly, the intergenerational perspective takes minimal consideration of the role of gender in predicting the likelihood of young people experiencing violence and abuse in their dating relationships. Hague and Malos (1998:53) warn that intergenerational theory may conceal the widespread extent of violence against women, by marginalising victims and perpetrators as "violent families, not people like us".

Gagné et al.'s (2005) study of 917 young women aged 14 to 20 in five Canadian high schools, explored whether experience of various forms of violence in childhood (dating violence, parental violence, exposure to domestic violence, sexual abuse, sexual

harassment at school, community violence, exposure to peers experiencing dating violence) predicted dating violence victimisation. Findings from this study refute the intergenerational transmission of violence theory. There was no evidence of increased dating violence victimisation in young women exposed to domestic violence, community violence (observed in the school or neighbourhood) or sexual abuse. However, young women who had been victims of dating violence in the past *were* more likely to have been re-victimised in their current or most recent dating relationship, than girls with no past experience of dating violence. This trend only applied where the young woman remained with the same abusive partner, indicating that most men who perpetrate violence against their dating partner do so more than once. Experiencing violence from an ex-boyfriend did not increase the likelihood that the young woman's next partner would also be abusive, underscoring how violent men, and not victimised women, hold the locus of control over men's violence against women in dating relationships.

Victim Characteristics

There is an evident tendency for dating violence researchers to employ all female samples, in studies which aim to identify risk factors which make particular women more likely than others to be victims of men's violence and abuse (e.g. The Teen Abuse Survey Great Britain by the NSPCC, 2005; Few and Rosen, 2005; Gagné et al., 2005). Although it is crucial to undertake research with women, to ascertain their views and experiences of violence and abuse, the findings of studies researching women's characteristics to determine why men choose to abuse them (or not) must be

approached with caution. Suggesting that women with particular characteristics are more likely to be victims of male violence than others risks undermining male perpetrators' own responsibility for their violence.

The scarcity of feminist dating violence research means that studies which scrutinise victim characteristics to identify risk factors for dating violence, and go on to report findings which blame victims or minimise violence against women are minimally critiqued. Arriaga and Foshee's (2004) study is a case in point. These authors (2004:179) suggest that *"...girls may use friends as models.....in becoming a victim of violence. It remains plausible that girls' relationships become violent because they want to be like friends who have experienced dating violence"*. This implies that young women will adopt the presumed characteristics of abused women, in an orchestrated attempt to become victims themselves, perpetuating the misguided notion that abused women somehow desire or benefit from men's violence. These authors provide no evidence of how or why young women may do this, nor do they consider the agency of the male partner in perpetrating the abuse. There is a requirement for an increased focus on why violent men choose to abuse their partners, and for violence and abuse to be located into a theoretical context, where the impact of social forces of patriarchal power and control can be evaluated.

Young People's Experiences of, and Responses to, Dating Violence

The paucity of qualitative methods in dating violence research has limited the opportunities for young people to discuss their experiences of intimate partner violence

and abuse openly. Little is known about how young men and women respond to violence in their dating relationships, in terms of; who they tell, and whether they end the relationship. Feminist domestic violence researchers, and some pioneering dating violence studies using qualitative methods, have found men's and women's experiences of intimate partner violence to be very different: while men have reported women's violence against them to be laughable, a joke (Dobash and Dobash, 2004; Lavoie et al., 2000), women have reported a greater tendency than men to feel fearful of their partner, particularly when previous violence has occurred (Foshee, 1996; Worcester, 2002). These findings dovetail with studies which have established the lesser severity of women's violence towards men (Arriaga and Foshee, 2004; Johnson, 1995).

Responses to Dating Violence

Men's and women's responses to *domestic* violence have been investigated by Cavanagh (2003). This author reports the numerous and varied strategies employed by abused women in response to their partner's violence. Reported responses ranged from employment of strategies aimed at avoiding (what they saw as) the catalyst for violence, verbal and physical retaliation, speaking to others about their experiences, leaving, and attempting to leave. Not all of the techniques employed by the respondents involved directly challenging the violence. Many women developed sophisticated strategies to prevent abuse from occurring, such as being overtly warm and affectionate. Women also reported that their responses changed over time. Such a detailed analysis of young people's responses to dating violence has yet to be conducted. Instead, it has been concluded that "people involved in dating violence

respond in predictable ways to violent episodes" (Sugarman and Hotaling, 1989:13), with little or no analysis of what these responses are, nor distinction between the victims' and perpetrators' responses, or analysis of how young men's responses differ from those of young women. Elsewhere, it has been suggested that young people are flippant about their experiences of dating violence, not considering violence to be a sufficient reason to leave the relationship (Carlson, 1996). Conclusions, which view 'people involved in dating violence' as a generic group assume no diversity in how young people respond to violence, and this requires exploration. Analysis of how other young people respond to their friends' and peers' experiences of dating violence is also required, and is considered in the current study.

Recent qualitative research shows that not all women experiencing dating violence choose to leave the relationship (Few and Rosen, 2005). Few and Rosen (2005) interviewed 28 women with a mean age of 22 years, to determine the reasons why some young women remained with abusive dating partners. In common with the focus on identifying victim-related 'risk factors' for violence, the primary focus of this study was to identify the women's 'vulnerabilities'; individual factors which deterred or delayed the women's exit from their violent relationships. Although some of the women had left the violent relationship at the time of research participation, they were able to reflect upon the reasons for remaining with their partner beyond the first violent episode. Respondents in this study reported that abuse from dating partners increased incrementally in severity, starting with relatively minor examples of controlling behaviour before progressing to severe psychological and physical abuse. Minimising

their own experience of violence was one rationale by which the young women maintained their relationship. This involved comparing their own experience to what they perceived as other women's more severe levels of victimisation[6], or attempting to convince themselves that the frequency and severity of the violence was less than it actually was. Few and Rosen's (2005) study underscores the complexity of abused women's experiences, as the participants recalled the relationship's positive aspects, and good times, finding it impossible to disregard these positive aspects when considering terminating the relationship. Life-stage stress is a further and previously unconsidered reason that Few and Rosen's (2005) participants cited for maintaining the relationship, where the women felt pressure to be part of an intimate relationship because of their age. Even though most women in Few and Rosen's (2005) study were in their early twenties, many worried that they would never find another partner if they ended the current relationship.

There is also much to suggest that some female victims may choose to remain with a violent partner since they perceive an escalation of danger to their safety if they were to leave. In Anderson et al.'s (2003) study, 21% of women returned when their abusers told them that if they did not return, he would kill them. There is also evidence to suggest that some men continue to abuse their partners after the relationship is over (LaViolette and Barnett, 2000; Lavoie et al., 2000) with some women who had left the violent partner suffering *more* attacks than those who remained in the relationship (Frisch and Mackenzie, 1991). Women's responses to men's violence and their

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[6] This resonates with Kelly's (1987) continuum of violence, where women place their own experience in relation to their perceptions of various other acts of violence and abuse. Kelly (1987) used this theoretical tool in studying men's sexual violence against women.

decisions to remain with, or leave, the partner are not always made in isolation, but can be inextricably related to their partners' behaviour and the very real risk of ongoing threat.

A key aspect of the current study is to explore how 'other' young people respond to dating violence, where they witness its occurrence among friends and peers. This research aim builds upon Regan and Kelly's (2001) survey of 302 young women (58%) and men (42%) aged thirteen to nineteen. Sixty-five percent of young men and women reported having had friends disclose experiences of dating violence to them. The ways in which these young people responded to these disclosures were varied, and differed between young men and women. While similar rates of young men and women (67% and 65% respectively) reported responding by listening, supporting and reassuring, young women were much more likely to offer advice (31%) compared with only 21% of young men. These figures relate to how young people actually responded to real life disclosures, rather than what they envisaged they would do in a fictitious scenario.

Consequences of Dating Violence

Studies of female victims of intimate partner violence have evidenced a range of physical and emotional consequences to their health and wellbeing (Thomas et al., 2008). A growing body of literature has examined the consequences of dating violence in terms of health, injury and trauma. Much of this research has been conducted from a health care professional perspective (e.g. Amar and Alexy, 2005; Coker et al. 2000; Glass et al., 2003). This literature has highlighted the diverse and wide ranging health

issues arising as a consequence of violence, and the resultant requirement for appropriate responses from health care providers. For victims, consequences of dating violence include "psychological, behavioural and physical health problems, including lowered self-esteem, eating disorders, substance abuse, risky sexual behaviours, and thoughts of suicide" (Taylor and Sorenson, 2004: 469). Banyard and Cross (2008) found that victims of dating violence experienced more mental health concerns than non victims. In Silverman et al.'s (2001) study of high school students, girls experiencing dating violence were up to six times more likely to become pregnant than non-victimised girls in the same sample. The reported physical consequences of violence for young men and women are concurrent with the evidence that women experience greater severity of intimate partner violence than men; women are more likely than men to sustain physical injuries (Arriaga and Foshee, 2004; Molidor and Tolman, 1998). Makepeace (1986) found that while 50% of young women victims of dating violence sustained injuries, only 19% of young male victims sustained injuries. The same study found that thirty percent of women described their experience of violence as emotionally traumatic, double the figure of young men who reported emotional traumas.

Young People's Attitudes

With most dating violence studies focusing on measuring the scope and scale of violence experienced by young people, much less attention has been paid to exploring young peoples' attitudes and perceptions of the issue, although recent studies have made progress in this regard. Burton et al.'s (1998) survey and focus group study of

young people aged 14-21 identified a widespread pre-occupation with victim behaviour in explaining intimate partner violence. The survey of 547 young people found two thirds of young women and just one third of young men were intolerant of violence against women in all circumstances. Younger participants were most likely to accept and justify men's violence against women, in a range of circumstances. A quarter of young men, and 12% of young women, believed that hitting a female partner was justified if she has 'slept with' someone else. Ten percent of young men believed that hitting a woman was a reasonable response to her being 'disrespectful'. Burton et al.'s (1998:17) study also identified "alarmingly high" proportions of young people, particularly young men, who believe women provoke men's violence and abuse. Perceived provocations included 'pushing' men too far, flirting, and nagging.

Concurrent with the findings of Bryant and Spencer's (2003) research, Burton et al. (1998) found that young men were more likely than young women to blame victims by justifying men's violence against women. Similar findings emerged from the Teen Abuse Survey of Great Britain (2005), a survey conducted by Sugar magazine on behalf of the National Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). Two thousand girls aged thirteen to nineteen were surveyed by telephone, representing the largest study of teenagers and domestic abuse ever conducted in this country (NSPCC, 2005).[7] The publication of this study attracted much media attention, and represents a

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[7] The dissemination of this study's findings has been limited. No written report detailing the research findings and methodology has been made publicly available, and so analysis of the methods and findings is problematic. Telephone enquiries to the agency who conducted the research, the NSPCC, and the publisher of Sugar magazine yielded basic information about how the data was collected, such as the telephone survey. It could not be ascertained whether the participants were called by the researchers, or made the calls themselves in response to an advertised appeal.

valuable and welcome advance in raising awareness of the issue of dating violence in the UK. This study highlighted how some young women believed violence against women could be justified in various circumstances; 43% of young women surveyed felt that it was acceptable for a boyfriend to be aggressive towards his partner, and six percent believed it was acceptable for boys to hit their girlfriends. Forty percent of respondents said that they would consider maintaining the relationship with their boyfriend if he hit them. These findings indicate the need for future qualitative research to further investigate some young women's apparent justification and acceptance of men's violence in intimate relationships, to determine how and why this opinion is formed, and whether this view is also prevalent in a sample of young men

As well as justifications for violence, young people have also been shown to be ambivalent on the issue. Twenty five per cent of young men and 19% of young women in Swart et al.'s (2002) study believed physical aggression to be a normal part of an intimate relationship. Earlier studies have produced concerning findings; Henton et al. (1983) found that young people cited violence as an activity which actually *improved* their dating relationships. Elsewhere, research has found that young women do *not* perceive violence in their dating relationship to be upsetting or detrimental (e.g., Flynn, 1987; Henton et al, 1983). These findings are incongruous, especially in the context of what is known of the severity of some instances of dating violence, and the reports in the feminist literature of the significant fear and distress women feel in response to violence by male partners (Cavanagh, 2003; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Walby and

Allen, 2004). These findings point to the imperative of further research to contextualise and challenge these notions.

Perceptions of Why Dating Violence Occurs

A small number of studies report young people's own views about the reasons for dating violence. Lavoie et al. (2000) investigated young people's explanations for dating violence, reporting findings under three headings; individual factors, couple factors and social factors. Respondents who accounted for dating violence through individual factors explained how jealousy, the influence of alcohol/drugs, and a desire to assume power and control over the victim could motivate dating violence. Young people citing "couple factors" explained dating violence as the consequence of the couple being incapable of communicating with each other without violence, suggesting that both partners must be complicit in the violence. Social factors included the presence of peer influence and pornography, as reasons for dating violence. These findings elucidate the range of explanations young people posit for dating violence- few of which uphold the accountability and choice of the violent perpetrator.

Exploring young people's views on intimate partner violence as a gendered issue requires further interrogation in future studies, and is a key theme explored with the participants in this study. Young women in Macnab's (2005) study perceived that most intimate partner violence was perpetrated by *women*, despite almost all examples of intimate partner violence witnessed or experienced by them being perpetrated by *men*. Young men also reported numerous episodes of men's violence to women, but in

contrast to the views of the female participants, mostly believed *men* to be the primary perpetrators of dating violence, in line with what they had experienced and witnessed. This implies an apparent discrepancy between what the young women knew, and what they were prepared to report. This discrepancy was also highlighted by McCarry (2007), who found that young men and women were resistant to the idea of intimate partner violence as an issue of violence against women. McCarry (2007) suggests that this resistance may be explained by the potential for young women to feel disempowered by acknowledging that men are able to perpetrate violence to a greater degree than women. Indeed, for young women, conceding that they have been or potentially could be a victim of men's violence may be detrimental to their image amongst their peers as strong and capable. Marginalising victimised women by describing them as weak and incapable of withstanding abuse, allowed some female respondents in McCarry's (2007) study to present themselves as capable and strong; by differentiating themselves from 'other' women who suffered abuse, they stressed that they were not like these women, since they were not the targets of men's violence. However, demonstrating further the complexity of their views about abused women, and despite their reported condemnation of women experiencing violence from men, young women in McCarry's (2007) study provided considerable support to other young women experiencing violence from men.

Perceptions of Blame

In their examination of how university students attribute blame for domestic violence, Bryant and Spencer (2003) used Petretic-Jackson et al.'s (1994) Domestic Violence

Blame Scale (DVBS) and the Conflict Tactics Scale. The study employed a research sample of 346 American university students (male n=129, female n=216) with a mean age of twenty two years. Respondents completed questionnaires using a Likert scale, answering twenty three questions about victims and perpetrators involved in domestic violence scenarios. Findings from Bryant and Spencer's (2003) research demonstrated that male respondents were more likely to blame female victims for domestic violence, agreeing that women provoke violence by not trying hard enough to please their partners, deserve men's violence, and exaggerate the emotional and physical consequences of violence. Male respondents who reported having perpetrated violence in their dating relationships were particularly likely to blame victims. Participants who reported a prior history of violence in their family were more likely to blame domestic violence on societal influences such as media depictions of sex and violence and social acceptance for men's abuse of their female partners. Bryant and Spencer's (2003) study is limited by the fact that the DVBS only tests respondents' attitudes about blame for physical violence. As in other studies, the absence of qualitative research techniques prevented respondents from explaining *why* they attributed blame the way that they did.

Peer Influence

The literature examining the influence of friends and peers on attitudes and experiences of dating violence is newly formed (Arriaga and Foshee, 2004), and more research is required to explore the role of the peer group in young people's experiences of dating violence. This is a central focus of the current study. The imperative for research on peer influence is particularly important since young people spend much social time

together with their peers, indicating a likelihood that peers may witness dating violence and be instrumental in responding, intervening, or offering support. Indeed, Gagné et al. (2005:1166) suggest that "the peer group may become a more proximal influence than the family during adolescence", a time where young people may spend increasing amounts of time with friends, away from their families. At this time peers can exert considerable influence in developing young people's values, gender norms and acceptable behaviours, including ideas about appropriate behaviours within intimate relationships (Capaldi, et al. 2001). Arriaga and Foshee's (2004) study of 280 girls and 246 boys from fourteen American high schools measured the influence of parents and peers in fostering acceptable standards of behaviour in young people's intimate relationships, finding that friends exerted more influence than parents.

Young people's close proximity to their peer groups implies a strong likelihood that friends and peers will know about, and even witness their friends' experiences of dating violence and abuse. In Macnab's (2005) study of Scottish college students, some participants reported having witnessed their male peers' abuse of their girlfriends, and despite feeling uncomfortable about what was going on, felt unable to intervene due to fear for their own safety. Similarly, participants in Regan and Kelly's (2001) study described feeling helpless where their friends experienced dating violence. Regan and Kelly (2001) also found that young people with friends who experienced dating violence as perpetrators or victims were found to have an increased likelihood of experiencing dating violence themselves, a finding replicated in Swart et al.'s (2002) research.

Harrison and Abrishami (2004) found that in cases of repeat violence against a victim, young people will blame victims they don't know more than they will blame victims within their peer group. The same study found that in-group bias acts to diminish the guilt of perpetrators, when the perpetrators are members of the peer group. The current study attempts to progress what is currently a very limited understanding of the social context in which dating relationships are located. Exploring the connection of dating couples to wider networks of friends and peers is central to this.

Dating Violence and Abuse: Awareness, Prevention, Interventions and Support

The second wave feminist movement developed a powerful resistance against gendered inequalities, and fought to enable women's emancipation from patriarchal control, towards a social, political and legal climate which prioritised women's right to live free from violence and abuse. The USA, Canada, and the United Kingdom have been at the forefront of establishing violence against women as a human rights issue, enabling the development of a broad spectrum of criminal justice policies, research, and measures of support for women (Stark, 2007). Although feminists have historically included unmarried and non-cohabiting intimate relationships in their consideration of women's experiences of intimate partner violence (Dobash and Dobash, 1979), domestic abuse has been a much more prominent research priority, and an issue to which policy and awareness raising initiatives have been dedicated. Dating violence has only recently been established as a distinct issue requiring a dedicated focus.

The Development of Public Awareness

A variety of dating violence awareness, prevention, support and advisory initiatives have emerged in recent years. The USA and Canada have afforded significant attention to addressing the issue, with school based prevention programmes operating nationwide since the mid-1980s (RESOLVE, 2006). In the USA, policy, legal and advocacy measures have responded to (and furthered) public awareness of the issue of dating violence. High profile cases where young women have been murdered by their dating partners have been central to the enactment of legal protocol in a number of US States. Following the fatal stabbing of Ortralla Mosley in 2003, and fatal shooting of Jennifer Ann Crecente in 2007 in Texas, where male dating partners were the assailants in both cases, all schools became required to define dating violence in their school safety codes. The murder of Lindsay Ann Burke by her ex-boyfriend in Long Island, New York, prompted the requirement on school districts to teach children in the 7th to 12th grades (age 12 to 18) about dating violence (Olson, *New York Times*, 2009). The massacre of fourteen young women studying Engineering at the University of Montreal, Canada on December 6th 1989, was significant in raising public consciousness of men's violence against women (Edemarian, 2006). In ordering male students out of the classroom, and exclaiming his hatred of 'feminists' before opening fire, Marc Lepine's intent on killing women, and only women, was made clear (Eglin and Hester, 2003). Although this tragedy was not a 'dating violence' crime, it had the effect of heightening public awareness of men's violence against *young* women in Canada, igniting debates on the issue and underscoring the need for continued research

and activism.[8] The Canadian Parliament appointed December 6th as an annual National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women (Ontario Women's Directorate, 2008). The Montreal Massacre had a significant effect on the development of awareness of young women's exposure to violence and abuse.

Dating violence has been recognised as a distinct legal issue by the American Bar Association, who disseminated guidance to attorneys on securing legal protection for victims through the Violence Against Women Act of 2005[9]. Since 2006, the US Senate have recognised the first week of February as 'National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Week' (American Bar Association, 2009). Commercial enterprise has been central to generating much public attention to the issue of dating violence: major women's wear firm Liz Claiborne Inc is the founding sponsor of the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline, a 24 hour nationwide service offering confidential support and advice to young people experiencing violence and abuse, since 2007. The Helpline is complemented by a 'Live-Chat' facility, where young people can communicate online with trained advisors, and a website (www.loveisrespect.org) which offers comprehensive advice on issues such as the nature of dating violence (including physical, sexual and emotional abuse), safety planning, and guidance on supporting a friend experiencing violence from their partner. Public Service Announcements where celebrities discuss their own experiences of dating violence have also been used to publicise the Helpline on social networking sites My Space,

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[8] As a direct result of the Montreal Massacre, the Canadian government established a national panel on violence against women, and three University centres dedicated to research were established (Edemariam, 2006).
[9] Previous versions of this legislation did not protect victims of dating violence, but only those married to, living with, or who had children with their partner (Fulcher, 2006).

YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. These developments have been significant in furthering public awareness of violence in dating relationships as a separate (but related and just as serious) issue to domestic abuse.

High Profile Cases of Dating Violence

The assault upon pop star Rihanna by her boyfriend Chris Brown (also a famous musician) in the USA during February 2009 attracted intense media attention, worldwide. Police photographs of Rihanna's facial injuries showed extensive swelling, bruising and cuts sustained in the attack. Brown was charged with, and pled guilty to, felony assault and was convicted in June 2009 (McCartney, *The Independent*, 2009). The Brown/Rihanna case engendered considerable public and media debate over the scale, causes and consequences of dating violence, and on how victims should respond, especially when Rihanna briefly reconciled with Brown after the attack. Oprah Winfrey dedicated a March 2009 episode of her TV show to the issue of teen dating violence, and newspapers, magazines and web resources have since carried numerous features and campaigns, highlighting young women's awareness of the issue, and identifying avenues of support.

Scholarly interest in the case of Rihanna and Chris Brown has highlighted the potential for the considerable public awareness of the case to act as a catalyst for new measures aimed at prevention and awareness (Hopson, 2009). Research undertaken in the wake of the case capitalised on young people's fresh awareness of the issue, using the case of Rihanna and Chris Brown as a real life example on which to garner their perceptions.

The Boston Public Health Commission surveyed 200 young men and women aged twelve to nineteen years, all of whom had heard about the incident. More than half (52%) of the young people perceived both Brown and Rihanna to be mutually responsible for the violence, with 46% of participants considering Rihanna to be wholly responsible (Boston Public Health Commission, 2009). There was a widespread perception that in reporting the attack to the police, and proceeding with legal action, Rihanna had wilfully damaged Brown's career. These views mirror the findings of the studies identified earlier in this chapter, which underscore young people's tendency to blame victims for their experiences of violence and abuse (e.g. Bryant and Spencer, 2003; Burton et al, 1998), and make clear that raising public awareness of dating violence is not enough; further work must be done to challenge the idea that victims are to blame for their own victimisation.

The Brown/Rihanna case also gave impetus to fresh initiatives aimed at engaging with young people on issues of violence and abuse. In December 2009, the music channel MTV launched the campaign 'A Thin Line' aimed at highlighting the issue of 'digital dating abuse', which followed research undertaken by MTV and the Associated Press (MTV Associated Press Digital Abuse Study, 2009). Almost a quarter of the 1,247 young people surveyed (aged 18-24 years, 50% female, 50% male) reported that their partner used some form of digital means (mobile phone or online social networking sites) to check up on them repeatedly throughout the day, placing them under regular surveillance and monitoring. This involved continual phone calls and text messages, having their mobile phone, email accounts or social networking pages hacked into, or

being pressured to provide their passwords. Although the report is largely gender blind and provides little distinction between the responses of young men and women, the 'Thin Line' initiative has potential to make an important contribution to broadening the focus of attention beyond only physical dating abuse, by underscoring the range of means through which intimate relationships can act as sites of power and control.

Prevention, Support and Interventions

The lack of feminist perspectives in dating violence research is reflected in interventions aimed at challenging dating violence; the issue has invariably been conceptualised as a problem of 'youth' violence, rather than a gendered issue of violence against women. In the USA, public policy responses to dating violence have emerged, with the National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC), a federally funded body, locating dating violence prevention as a central branch of their campaign to reduce the extent of youth violence. Furthermore, in recognition of the FBI's finding that attacks by men are the most common health problem for American women (Velte, 1998; cited in Klein, 2006) the US Department of Health and Human Services have operated a series of initiatives for the years 2000-2010, which target girls from age twelve, educating them about the risk of assault from intimate partners (Klein, 2006). The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have also funded the development and extensive implementation of the 'Safe Dates' dating violence prevention programme. Developed by a team of American dating violence researchers, the Safe Dates programme shares the same positivist, gender neutral approach as the majority of American dating violence research and is currently the most extensively researched

dating violence programme in the USA. The programme works mainly with young people in schools and *"shows how to seek and give help for victims.....defining caring relationships, dating abuse, why people abuse, how to help friends and overcoming gender stereotypes"* (Joyce, 2003:6). Young people participating in the programme take part in a play depicting a dating violence scenario, and attend a series of sessions where activities include discussions, role play, games and decision making exercises (Joyce, 2003). The results from a longitudinal evaluation of the programme report positive outcomes, with adolescents who have participated in the Safe Dates programme reporting less dating violence perpetration and less physical victimisation than young people in the control group, at four follow up periods subsequent to their participation (Foshee et al. 2005). It should be noted however, that the creators of the Safe Dates programme have conducted much of the evaluation work of the programme themselves (Foshee et al. 2005), and so the fundamental theoretical assumptions underpinning the programme have not been critiqued. Feminist commentators might argue that dating violence prevention programmes such as Safe Dates are limited by the gender blind approach to dating violence, as young people are not informed of the research evidence documenting the severity of men's violence relative to violence from women. Nonetheless, Safe Dates is a key vehicle with which American schools can elect to inform their young people about the unacceptability of dating violence, and the ways in which support can be sought.

The significant body of dating violence research undertaken with populations of American University students has prompted many Universities in the USA to form

dedicated mechanisms to prevent dating violence and support victims. Support includes assisting victims with making complaints to the police, taking account of disruption to academic work, medical treatment and counselling. A number of Universities in the USA have on-campus police officers with specialist training in dealing with cases of dating violence.

Canada has also developed a wealth of measures aimed at challenging violence against young women, from the 1990s and beyond, with a particular focus on violence occurring in young people's dating relationships. The Department of Justice Canada has acted upon the results of the 1993 Canadian National Survey (CNS) and the 1993 Violence Against Women Survey (VAWS). Both surveys confirmed that dating violence is a major issue among Canadian school students, University students, and the adult population. In response to these findings, the Department of Justice Canada has formed an official legal response, highlighting various Criminal Code Provisions by which dating violence should be prosecuted in court. In determining their response to dating violence, the Department of Justice Canada have been cautious in their acceptance of research claiming gender symmetry in dating violence perpetration (Department of Justice Canada, 2006), taking account of the greater severity of men's violence against women, and women's use of violence to men in self defence (DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 1998b). Viewing dating violence from a feminist perspective which conceives of the issue as a problem of violence against women, a number of dating violence prevention programmes funded by the Canadian government are now in operation, including 'Making Waves' (a peer based healthy relationships

project), 'The Online Healthy Relationships Project', and 'Deterring Dating Violence',
a presentation and activity guide for use in High Schools.

Dating Violence Awareness and Interventions in the United Kingdom

The UK's response to dating violence has been far less comprehensive than that of the
USA and Canada. However, much valuable work has been done by charitable
organisations including the Zero Tolerance Charitable Trust, who piloted the 'Respect'
campaign in two secondary schools, two primary schools and seven youth groups in
Glasgow and Edinburgh during 2001, with funding from the Scottish Executive[10]
(Scottish Executive, 2002). Although the Respect programme was not specifically an
anti-dating violence initiative, the programme had the rationale of "promoting
relationships based upon equality and respect" (Scottish Executive, 2002:6), with a
particular focus on addressing the issue of violence against women by male partners.
This gendered focus is very encouraging, and McCarry (2007) notes how this approach
distinguishes the political ideology of Scottish state mandated research and policy to
that of the rest of the UK where a gender-neutral 'intra-family' violence approach is
taken. 'Respect' was delivered through eight weeks of group discussions and practical
sessions with young people where activities included poster making, a graffiti wall, and
role play. Zero Tolerance staff carried out training sessions with school guidance staff,
youth workers and teachers, who subsequently conducted the programme with young
people in their organisation. A key strength of 'Respect' was that it allowed young
people to discuss issues important to them, within a framework that introduced them to

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[10] Since the Scotland Act (1998), Scotland has had a devolved government and the political and legal
system is separate from the rest of the United Kingdom. The Scottish National Party administration
which took charge in 2007, replaced the term 'Scottish Executive' with 'Scottish Government'.

the issue of gendered violence at a level appropriate to their age and understanding. There were variations in the delivery of the programme to primary and secondary pupils. Young people were involved in the preparation, delivery and evaluation of the programme, which contributed to the high level of engagement and enthusiasm with which young people viewed the programme: ninety one percent of participants interviewed said that they enjoyed taking part. More than eighty percent of young people felt that they had learned more about respecting other people, and eighty percent of the older participants believed they had learned more about violence and abuse (Scottish Executive, 2002). This level of engagement in the programme is highly encouraging, particularly since young people have reported enjoying the programme, making them more likely to absorb the learning outcomes than if they felt coerced or reluctant.

The evaluation of the 'Respect' pilot (Scottish Executive, 2002) recommended a number of areas where the programme could be made more effective, largely in response to time constraints which in some instances made delivery of the programme in schools difficult. However, the rationale of the Respect programme was highly commended, and almost everyone involved in the development and delivery of the pilot felt that 'Respect' had been successful in promoting equality and respect in relationships, leading the evaluators to recommend extending the pilot programme. The evaluation also highlighted the need for further work with young people, highlighting the limits to what can be achieved from an eight week programme; some young people continued to display some views and attitudes that were of concern to the staff

delivering the programme. This demonstrates the need for more intensive work of a longer duration than a pilot project can provide. Since the evaluation of 'Respect', no funding has been made available to Zero Tolerance to allow an expansion of the programme (personal communication, March 2007). This is disappointing, given that 'Preventing Domestic Abuse: A National Strategy' (Scottish Executive, 2003) highlights the critical importance of primary prevention work with children and young people, as part of the country's long term strategy to promote change in attitudes and beliefs which perpetuate the issue of violence against women. The requirement to engage with young people on the specific issue of dating violence remains.

Dilemmas in Dating Violence Interventions and Prevention

Some researchers have identified some obstacles and complexities in preventing and challenging dating violence and abuse. Stein (1995) asserts that earlier interventions in sexual harassment at school are required if later dating violence, and even subsequent domestic violence, are to be prevented. She reports with concern how adults may ignore, and consequently permit boy's harassment of girls, leading young men and women to see violence against women as normal and socially acceptable, even in the presence of authority figures such as teachers. Allied with this issue, Peacock and Rothman (2001) suggest that adults may perpetuate the acceptability of young men's violence against women by telling boys and girls that kicking or hitting can be a sign of affection, missing valuable opportunities to challenge violence against young women. Adults may also conflate young men's violence against young women with school bullying, or youth violence; notions that conceal the issue of violence against women,

and ultimately hamper the success of initiatives that could tackle the real problem of gendered violence (Peacock and Rothman, 2001; Sousa, 1999). Tolman et al. (2003) found examples of this conflation in their study, where teachers would warn boys that they could get into trouble for harassing girls, but only if the girls in question chose to report what was happening. This placed the responsibility for reporting the harassment with the girls, as the teacher was not prepared to intervene without mandate from the harassed girl. Klein (2006) reinforces these findings by noting that sexual harassment is often missing from agendas designed to tackle bullying in schools. This may also have the effect of generating acceptance for this type of abuse, rendering sexual harassment as less serious than other forms of bullying.

Glass et al. (2003) note that a key dilemma in developing appropriate dating violence prevention programmes arises from adults' lack of awareness about the nature of young people's intimate relationships, and increasing understanding of these relationships is a priority in the current research. Glass et al. (2003) suggest that professionals must consult with young people to identify the most appropriate interventions to prevent dating violence. Many adults underestimate how invested young people can be in their dating relationships (Carlson, 2003), and are unaware of how to offer support when violence is disclosed. This lack of understanding of how meaningful intimate dating relationships can be for young people may also cause adults to oversimplify the process of leaving a violent partner.

There is clearly much progress to be made in enabling young people to disclose their experiences of dating violence to adults; fewer than five percent of dating violence victims in Koss' (1992) study reported their experience of abuse to their parent. Joyce (2003) highlights that disclosing dating violence to parents can be particularly problematic for young people, especially where the abuse has occurred when the parents were not aware that their child was dating, or where the relationship was not approved of. This factor underscores the need for accessible services where victims can be supported, without fearing judgement or blame.

A further dilemma may exist at institutional level, where achieving support for dating violence prevention/intervention programmes may prove difficult, given the tendency for schools to minimise, and fail to recognise, sexual harassment and violence against girls (Klein, 2006; Stein, 1995; Tolman, 2003). Klein (2006:161) suggests that, in the USA, institutions may have an "economic interest in not drawing attention to what might be perceived as unpleasant activities", and that this reason may obstruct the development of dedicated attempts to combat violence against women in schools and colleges. This may mean that compulsory mandated programmes are required to ensure that the issue is taken seriously by management. However, there is also research evidence documenting some educational establishments' strong commitment to operating anti-violence programmes. Tolman et al. (2003) found significant effort from school staff in challenging sexual harassment and dating violence, at the school where they conducted their research. Class-room activities sought to educate students of the unacceptability and illegality of relationship violence, and students took part in an

annual play depicting the story of a young woman who is abused and ultimately murdered by her boyfriend. However, there was concern both from the researchers and the school staff that the messages were 'lost' on many of the students, who would agree that dating violence was wrong, but then fail to understand that young men behaving in ways deemed annoying but innocuous (sexual harassment) contributed to the acceptability of men's dominance and abuse of their dating partners. Here, students continued to normalise sexual harassment of girls without realising how this was related to dating violence, and implied a perception of violence as being limited to non-sexual physical assaults.

A further predicament lies with some young men's resistance to anti violence messages, on the basis that they feel unfairly accused (Tolman et al., 2003). Worcester (2002) has also highlighted this problem, arguing that resources require to be designed specifically to educate young men. Designing a programme that young men will accept and engage with, while acknowledging that most dating violence *is* perpetrated by young men with severe consequences relative to violence by young women, is a complex task. One strategy in work with young men may be to educate them about the systems that perpetuate men's violence and control of their female partners, while also reinforcing the fact that violence is not inevitable but always a choice.

Young People's Perspectives on Support and Interventions

Young people's views about appropriate dating violence prevention and support have been sought in a small number of studies. Participants in Burton et al.'s (1998) study

said that they would welcome the development of special initiatives specifically for young people experiencing intimate partner violence. Young people in Macnab's (2005) study felt that there was insufficient support for young people experiencing dating violence. These participants suggested that a well publicised telephone support service, specifically for young people, would be the most appropriate, and approachable, means of support and advice for young people experiencing violence.

Reflecting the potential for different young people to experience violence and abuse in different ways, young people in Burton et al.'s (1998) study argued that a range of different initiatives are required to deal with young people's experiences of violence. Some young people welcomed the idea of school initiatives which discuss intimate partner violence openly, while others stressed that fears over breaches of confidentiality and poor relationships with teachers may prevent school pupils from disclosing their experiences. These considerations belie the need for confidential services delivered by impartial adults with knowledge of the issues facing young people experiencing intimate partner violence and abuse. Burton et al.'s (1998) participants also highlighted the need for anti-violence messages in the media, to challenge some young people's acceptance and justifications for violence against women.

Chapter Summary

Since dating violence emerged as an issue for social research in the early 1980s, quantitative methods have dominated- and continue to dominate- research on the issue. The rationale for most studies has been to measure the prevalence of intimate partner

violence among populations of American University students, using the Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS) (Straus, 1979), a method which has generated a very limited picture of dating violence. The finding of gender symmetry in dating violence perpetration is particularly controversial, and is refuted by much feminist domestic violence research. Although the CTS continues to underpin most dating violence research, a smaller body of qualitative literature has developed in recent years, illuminating young peoples' attitudes and experiences of dating violence.

A sizable majority of dating violence studies have focused their attention on measuring the incidence and prevalence of dating violence in populations of American University students. This research has been valuable in exposing the widespread nature of dating violence among students. However, young people not attending University have been largely excluded from the focus, as have young people in Scotland, where dating violence research has been undertaken only very recently (McCarry, 2007). The current study addresses these gaps by recruiting young people from educational and non-educational sites in Scotland.

The widespread use of closed question survey research has limited the reporting of young people's own perspectives and experiences of dating violence and abuse. The current study seeks to address this limitation by seeking young people's own accounts of their attitudes, perceptions and experiences using qualitative interviews. Questions remain around what young people actually *do* when they have experienced dating violence, and more knowledge of young people's views on the types of interventions

which young people feel could most effectively support them if they were to experience dating violence, is required. An important aspect of the current research is to explore young people's responses to dating violence, whether as victims, perpetrators, friends, and family members. Young people's perceptions of the issues of intimate partner violence and abuse may have a strong influence upon the ways in which they choose to respond to violence and abuse.

Concurrent with the burgeoning status of dating violence research in the United Kingdom, interventions and modes of support aimed specifically at young people experiencing intimate partner violence are yet to come to fruition in the UK. Recent years have seen a development of public awareness and media attention to the issue of dating violence, particularly in the USA and Canada, where high profile cases of dating violence and intimate partner homicide have advanced public awareness. Although existing policy, legislation and voluntary support services designed for women experiencing men's violence in Scotland do not preclude young women experiencing dating violence, previous studies have found little indication that young people perceive these services as being 'for them'. There is a need to engage further with young people to determine how best to support them, and to make them aware of how to access support should they require it.

Reviewing the existing dating violence literature suggests that feminist methodological and theoretical approaches are minimal in the field, and have the potential to add much value to advancing the current body of dating violence research. The subsequent

chapter anchors the current study within a wide pool of theoretical literature, with particular attention paid to establishing the study's contemporary feminist focus.

CHAPTER THREE:

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON GENDERED POWER AND CONTROL

Introduction

As the previous chapter established, there is currently a dearth of theoretically informed dating violence literature, and minimal theorising of *why* some young people's intimate relationships are sites of violence, abuse and imbalanced power and control. The principal aim of this chapter is to ground the current study within a body of literature which theorises the operation of gendered power and control within and outside of intimate relationships; a central tenet of this study's feminist focus. This literature will assist in locating the study's findings within a theoretical context later the thesis.

Feminist domestic violence researchers Dobash et al. (1992:83) have long advocated the importance of research which secures "theoretical visions" of intimate relationships, and of violence. These authors underscore the need for researchers to explore the nature, construct and social context of intimate relationships, and the wider climate of structural gender inequality, in order to understand intimate partner violence and abuse. In this chapter these priorities are addressed through reference to a range of literature united by the focus on the current and historic operation of gendered power and control. Particular attention is paid to theorising the means by which intimate relationships can act as sites where mechanisms of gendered power and control, including violence and abuse, operate to maintain male privilege.

As the chapter develops, the relevance of the theoretical literature to the current study's research focus is signposted. The chapter begins by setting out the study's feminist theoretical position and the progress of feminist thought and action from the women's suffrage movement of the early 20th century, to the second wave feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s where radical feminist scholars and activists established a causal link between women's subordinate position within patriarchal society, and their experiences of intimate partner violence and abuse by men (e.g. Brownmiller, 1975, Dobash and Dobash, 1979). The subsequent advent of the 'post-feminist' era is also discussed, along with the concern of some feminist observers that a "backlash" against feminist gains has been waged (Oakley, 1997) and a disarticulation of feminist politics is in evidence (McRobbie, 2009). From here, the chapter considers how individual people come to replicate dominant modes of patriarchal power and control within their intimate relationships, with reference to Foucault's writings. Feminist perspectives on men's violence and abuse of women as mechanisms of gendered power and control, and women's collective and individual resistance, are also set out.

The chapter then draws upon recent advances in the theoretical literature which have explored intimate relationships in the 'post-feminist' (McRobbie, 2004, 2007 and 2009) and 'post-traditional' (Giddens, 1992) era. McRobbie (2009) and Jamieson's (2002) work is especially central to this discussion, as both scholars have argued that perceptions of gender equality significantly overstate women's emancipation from male power and control, depicting intimate relationships as sites of democracy (e.g. Giddens, 1992) when in fact gendered hierarchies of power remain. The charge upon young

women to maintain the 'success' of their intimate relationships with men, means that they may understand their experiences of oppression and abuse to be individualised failures, reflecting Foucault's (1977, 1984) theories of governmentality and 'care of the self' where individual people are charged with the responsibility to ensure their own freedom and liberty. Analysis of these perspectives enables the chapter to suggest that young women may have much invested in concealing and reframing their experiences of gender inequality, including intimate partner violence, in the face of strong expectations of empowered women. Evidencing this, the chapter cites the theoretically informed empirical dating violence studies of Chung (2005, 2007), which highlight the impact of these divergent discourses upon young women, for whom resisting male power and control remains problematic.

Having established the situation of young people's intimate relationships within competing discourses of patriarchy and presumed gender equality, the latter paragraphs of this chapter focus on the theoretical literature on masculinities. Connell's (1995) theorising of 'hegemonic masculinities' complements the feminist analyses of patriarchy by explaining how young men can be socialised under normative codes of conduct, where male privilege, power and control are expected and considered to be normal. Empirical studies underpinned by Connell's (1995) theory have demonstrated the effect of young men's performance of hegemonic masculinities in maintaining acceptance for men's control over women, while also theorising the potential for young men to be confined by patriarchal masculine ideals. These considerations assist the current study's focus on the mechanisms by which some young men come to control

and dominate their intimate partners, while consultation of Hearn's (1998, 2004) work highlights the scope to resist and transform masculine performance towards models of non-violence and gender democracy.

Feminist Thought and Action

The feminist theoretical literature has been central to developing the current study's rationale, design, theoretical approach and research process. Although there is not, and never has been, a single 'feminist' position or standpoint (Cott, 1986) the concepts of patriarchy and social change are central tenets of much feminist thinking (Skinner et al., 2005), and these terms require clear elucidation. The subsequent paragraphs do this, and track the development of feminist thinking and action from the first wave feminist movement of the early 20th century, through the second wave of feminist action in the 1960s and 1970s, to the current 'post-feminist' era.

First Wave Feminism

Understanding the current situation of feminist thinking requires some analysis of the historical context. The first wave feminist movement occurred within a time where women's inferiority to men was deemed natural and inevitable (Firestone, 1972); a status reflected in women's lack of citizenship rights in the UK and USA until the early twentieth century [11]. The women's suffrage movement was highly significant to developing a first wave of feminism in the western world, which saw women mobilise

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[11] The Representation of the People Act 1918 afforded some women in the UK the right to vote; women did not access the same voting rights as men until the Act was amended in 1928. In the USA, the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was passed in 1920, enabling all citizens the right to vote.

to demand the same voting rights as men. Indeed, the 'suffragettes' [12] were representatives of the greatest political mobilisation of women prior to the 1960s.

Although the distinct 'branches' of feminist thinking would develop later in the second wave of feminism, first wave feminism was in itself a divided movement within which some championed for women's essential natural differences from men to be highlighted and celebrated, while others argued on the basis of women's 'sameness' with men, wherein women are equally capable and therefore entitled to equal opportunities with men in all aspects of social, political and civil life. These competing ideologies of 'sameness' and 'difference' underpinned the suffrage movement, where women's right to the vote was fought on both the grounds of their equal capacity and capability as men, and on the proviso that women's 'natural' morality and kindness could benefit the social and political order should women become full citizens. For different reasons, first wave feminists were united in striving to secure women's entry into the public domains of male privilege; education, work and the ballot box (Cott, 1986).

Raising consciousness of women's subordination within the private spheres of the family and in intimate relationships was largely out-with the scope of the first wave of feminism. Simone de Beauvoir's (1949) volume *The Second Sex* represented a landmark in the identification and theorising of women's subordination beyond the political sphere. De Beauvoir was central to the earliest feminist theorising on 'sex' and 'gender', distinguishing biologically determined sex categories from the socially and

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[12] The terms 'feminism' and 'feminists' were not used at this time, but have been applied retrospectively, e.g. 'the first wave feminist movement'.

politically constructed concept of gender: 'women are not born, but made'. A cornerstone of early feminist scholarship, De Beauvoir developed a language around women's sense of 'otherness' to the 'normal' male subject. De Beauvoir linked women's reproductive function with their oppression and lack of power relative to that held by men. According to de Beauvoir (1949:283), men's freedom from the constraints of reproduction enabled men to establish themselves as 'subjects' and women "the absolute Other, denying against all experience that she is a subject, a fellow human being" - the second sex[13]. Men, De Beauvoir argued, constructed a dogma of 'women's mystery' which supposed men incapable of understanding women and "condemned (men) to ignorance" (1949:285) of women's experiences. Women's relative lack of power to have their voices heard afforded men the liberty to develop a patriarchy[14] where women's experiences were devalued and rendered 'unknowable'. The outcome of this state of thinking was that all knowledge was produced from the male perspective, muting and marginalising women's knowledge and experiences. Subverting this situation was a key rationale of the second wave feminist movement.

The Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 1970s: Developing Feminist Perspectives

The woman's liberation movement (WLM) of the 1960s and 1970s is often referred to in the literature as the period of 'second wave' feminism; a stage in time which saw women, within and outside of academia, mobilise to take action against all aspects of

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[13] De Beauvoir's thesis underscores why the development of the contraceptive pill in the 1960s had such significance for the feminist movement, as this development was central to progressing women's control over their own reproductive capacity and lessening women's dependence on men (Firestone, 1972).
[14] I elaborate upon this term subsequently.

women's oppression, to raise consciousness of women's experiences, and to campaign for change (Dobash and Dobash, 1992). With the first wave of feminist action having established 'women' as a separate and subordinate social group, by the time of the WLM feminism was already "part of the political and social fabric" (Delmar, 1986:24). Nonetheless, feminist scholars such as Spender (1986:214) reflect that life in the 1960s remained a time where "the belief in the inferiority of women was (still) woven into the fabric of existence". Women's knowledge of matters outside of the home and child rearing held little value (Friedan, 1963). In academia, sociological research remained primarily the domain of male researchers researching the interests of men (Oakley, 1974), while feminist scholars continued to identify and challenge the "invisibility" of women in the research process (Roberts, 1981:7). Second wave feminist researchers took up the task of disrupting the prized benchmark of objectivity in social research, extending 'gender' as a sociological concept, arguing that because the 'personal is political', women's experiences and the realities of women's lives required to be taken seriously (McRobbie, 2000). For feminist scholars and activists alike, enacting social change to challenge the systems of male power which maintained women's subordinate position in social, political, economic, and family spheres, at a time when women's voices were rarely heard or valued, was a challenging agenda.

Amidst women's widespread mobilisation to challenge gender oppression and inequalities, analysis of *how* male power and oppression impacted upon *different* women in *different* ways gained momentum in the late 1970s and 1980s. Hitherto, the array of differences among women had been somewhat obscured by the tendency of

many feminist scholars and activists to focus mainly on white, middle class, heterosexual women (Letherby, 2003; Stanley and Wise, 1990). It was at this time that the universal category of 'woman' was interrogated, and the multiple realities of women's lives came into focus, while feminists made visible their own personal experiences and 'standpoints' in their scholarship (Stanley and Wise, 1990). Indeed, challenges to notions of uniformity in women's experiences of patriarchal control had gained particular momentum by the early 1980s (e.g. hooks, 1982; Rich, 1980; Stanley and Wise, 1983), when feminists continued to investigate the influence of factors such as age, race, sexual orientation and social class upon the nature and extent of women's oppression.

By the mid 1980s, commentators such as Delmar (1986:9) were reflecting that a "sclerosis of the (feminist) movement" had occurred throughout the 1960s and 1970s, a result of the different branches of feminist thought having become positioned against each other. Distinct branches of feminist thought had developed, underpinned by differing analyses of patriarchy and women's oppression. Marxist feminists, for example, located women's experiences of oppression with their relatively low positions in the capitalist marketplace, while liberal feminists focused minimally on patriarchy and the effect of sexist social structures, and more on how oppressive, sexist actions of individual people and institutions rendered some women subordinate (Walby, 1990). Socialist feminists such as Sheila Rowbotham (1983) postulated a 'dual-systems' approach to theorising different women's experiences of the fusion of patriarchy and capitalism. And, simultaneously, radical feminists adhered to often totalitarian

epistemologies, locating patriarchy as a system of domination impacting upon all women[15].

Simone de Beauvoir's (1949) earlier theorising was central to radical feminist perspectives: in the *Dialectic of Sex*, Shulamith Firestone (1972:11) built upon de Beauvoir's linkage of women's biology with their oppression, and advocated women's uptake of new advanced reproductive technologies which negated the need for heterosexual intercourse, as key to "the restoration to women of ownership of their own bodies". Also on this basis of gender difference, Susan Brownmiller's (1975) approach united *all* women as subjects of the threat and fear of sexual assault, posed by *all* men. Feminist writer Marilyn French escalated Brownmiller's perspective in her novel *The Women's Room*, proclaiming that "all men are rapists" (1977:433). Such extreme radical perspectives have been criticised as being biologically essentialist, and for failing to acknowledge most men's resistance of sexual violence against women, and many women's desire for heterosexual relationships with men. Indeed, I do not recognise all men as being rapists, and would suggest that such claims are unrepresentative of many women's relationships with men. These perspectives were vital, however, in highlighting how *all* men could benefit from women's subordination and male privilege, regardless of their individual action in upholding (or resisting) women's oppression. Connell (1995:79) theorises this notion as the "patriarchal dividend: the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women".

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[15] The radical feminist perspective was to become central to feminist scholarship on the issue of violence against women (e.g. Dobash and Dobash, 1979), as is established later in this chapter.

Radical feminist perspectives remain highly influential to current theoretical perspectives on violence against women. Brownmiller's (1975) identification of male violence against women as an exercise of power, not limited to the victim/perpetrator dyad, but with roots in wider structures of gender inequality, represented a major catalyst for feminist thinking, scholarship and action on intimate partner violence from the late 1970s, linking women's experiences of men's violence and abuse to systems of patriarchy.

Theorising Patriarchy

The 'naming' of patriarchy as the "…system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby, 1990:20) emerged from the second wave feminist movement (Connell, 1995)[16] and was especially central to radical feminist perspectives. Kate Millett's (1972) book *Sexual Politics* theorised patriarchy through rigorous critique of women's relative powerlessness within every structure of society, and highlighted gender as a political concept. Millett, like Germaine Greer (1971), interrogated the taken-for-granted nature of women's minority status, and men's superiority, calling upon women to overturn the patriarchy through abandonment of the 'feminine' roles and practices that maintained female subordination: passivity, tenderness and playing down one's intelligence.

From radical feminists' theoretical linkage of patriarchal oppression with violence against women, the 1970s saw a boom in feminist scholarship and activism focusing

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[16] The term patriarchy had previously been associated with the organisation of the male headed family/household.

directly on women's experiences of intimate partner violence. Male violence against women was established as a tenet of patriarchal power and control (Walby, 1990) where women's oppression by wider patriarchal societal structures was replicated in the confines of their relationships with men. Rebecca and Russell Dobash's (1979) book, *Violence Against Wives: A Case Against the Patriarchy* represented a landmark in such feminist theorising of intimate partner violence. This text remains seminal to feminist perspectives on intimate partner violence, and laid foundations for a rich body of literature which documented the range and nature of women's experiences of male violence.

The current study aligns with radical feminist perspectives which locate intimate partner violence as a gendered issue perpetuated by patriarchy (Dobash and Dobash, 1979). Radical feminists view intimate partner violence not as a problem with individual couples, but as a replication of wider structural gender inequalities (Bograd, 1990). Feminist researchers have identified men's violence against their female partners as orchestrated attempts to dominate and control (Adams, 1990; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Schechter, 1982; Yllö, 1993), and to maintain male authority (Dobash et al., 2000). The theoretical approach of this research also hypothesises that men's violence is a deliberate choice, and not inevitable (Price, 2005; Wilson, 1996).

Post-Feminism

In the literature, feminist scholarship and action from the mid 1980s onwards is often referred to as occurring within the period of 'third wave' or 'post' feminism. Like the

second wave of feminist thinking, third wave feminism has been characterised by much debate about and between feminist thinkers. A key tenet of this debate has arisen from the influence of post-structural theories, and in particular the postmodern strand of post-structuralism associated with French theorists such as Michel Foucault (Ramazanoğlu, with Holland, 2002), whereby the distinguishing of the political gender categories 'women' and 'men' as postulated by scholars such as de Beauvoir (1949), Brownmiller (1975) and Firestone (1972) has been called into question. Some tenets of postmodern thinking present a significant challenge to feminist perspectives which hold women's oppression by men and patriarchal systems as undeniable (Kelly et al. 1994). By contrast, postmodernism is anti-collectivist in nature, dismissing unity, totality, subjectivity and matters of fact: the focus is on plurality, individual thought and action and infinite epistemologies. Ann Oakley (2005:4) considers postmodern perspectives to have "weakened the political use of gender" that is so central to feminist inquiry. Bell and Klein (1996) and Dworkin (1983) are particularly resolute in their rejection of postmodern ideas, deeming postmodernism to be irreconcilable with radical feminism's firm certainties about women's historical and continual oppression by men, evidenced by decades of feminist scholarship and activism. Other feminists are minded differently; Baber and Murray (2001:24) argue that "the blending of postmodernism and feminism results in a richer, more layered analysis of social experiences and institutions that inform strategies for (feminist) action", and Ramazanoğlu, with Holland (1998:102) suggest that postmodernism can offer feminist scholars the freedom to think more broadly about a "shifting interplay of rules, truths, selves, localities, communities, histories, discourses, and ways of exercising power". The

fluidity of postmodern thinking provides scope for researchers to embrace certain facets of postmodernism along with their feminist values, while rejecting others (Baber and Murray, 2001). Butler's (1990) theorising of gender 'performance' is an aspect of postmodern thinking which I consider particularly useful to feminist analyses. Here, Butler asserts that the binary categories of gender (women/men) are constructed through the repeated and widespread adherence to traditional practices and models of femininity and masculinity. While the current study holds that women are collectively disadvantaged by patriarchal structures in a way that men are not, and therefore does not concur with Butler's (1990) advocacy of dismantling gender categories in sociological analysis, it is important to acknowledge Butler's (1990) perspective in underscoring how individual people's performance of normative gender roles can act to reinforce patriarchal ideals[17]. The notion of gender as a 'performed' concept, where individual men and women adhere to 'male' and 'female' roles which support male supremacy and female subordination, has support within feminism (e.g. Oakley, 1997) and is an aspect of postmodern thinking which I consider valuable, and complementary to the current study's feminist interest in how patriarchy is maintained.

Some feminist scholars have observed the 'un-doing' of second wave feminist progress in the post feminist era, noting deep concern with feminism's "discreditation as a political identity" (Oakley and Mitchell, 1997:2). Whereas second wave feminism focused upon evidencing and challenging women's subjugation and the sexist social and political structures which maintained male privilege, from the mid 1980s feminist

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[17] I return to this theme in the subsequent section, in examining Foucault's theories of disciplinary control and normalising judgement.

scholars including Judith Stacey (1986), Ann Oakley (1997) and Angela McRobbie (2009) have observed the disarticulation of gender politics and a 'backlash' against feminism, underpinned by the notions that "women are no longer discriminated against; that feminists exaggerated the extent of discrimination; that feminism is principally, and unhelpfully, a language of victimisation" (Oakley, 1997:33/4). Stacey's (1986) essay *Are Feminists Afraid to Leave Home?*, identified voices of dissent within the feminist movement itself, when scholars such as Germaine Greer (1984) and Betty Friedan (1981) (themselves key protagonists of the second wave feminist movement) reconsidered their earlier articulation of women's oppression and male supremacy, in view of their perception that feminism was damaging to the nuclear family, and undermining of women's wants and desires for motherhood and romantic love with men. Oakley (1997) further points to the 'woman blaming' thesis of the anti-feminist backlash, whereby women are held accountable for their experiences of subjugation, including sexual violence by men (e.g. Roiphe, 1994). Very recently, McRobbie (2009) has suggested that overstated discourses of gender equality in the 'post-feminist' era impact negatively upon young women by concealing ongoing oppression and rendering young women as responsible for their own experiences of subordination. These perspectives are central to the current study's theoretical foundations and I return to and elaborate upon them later in this chapter and throughout the thesis. Despite significant advances toward gender equality in both public and private life, some women continue to experience intimate heterosexual relationships as sites of male power and control (e.g. Chung, 2005; Holland et al, 2004). This fact establishes the ongoing necessity for feminist research and action.

Theorising the Mechanisms of Power and Control in Intimate Relationships: Foucault and Feminism

Grounding the current research within a theoretical analysis of gendered power is central to distinguishing this study from those which have focused only on measuring the nature and extent of the violent and abusive tactics occurring within some young people's dating relationships, without considering established links between intimate partner violence and imbalanced hierarchies of gendered power (Dobash and Dobash, 1979). The subsequent section considers how individual people's adherence to normalised gender expectations can cause dominant modes of patriarchal power to be replicated within some intimate relationships. Feminist analyses of the mechanisms of power and control employed by some men to maintain authority over their female partners are also considered here.

Theories of power are central to feminist research (Ramazanoğlu, with Holland 2002), and feminist theoretical perspectives on intimate partner violence (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Walby, 1990). Analysis of power in a theoretical context would be lacking without some consideration of Michel Foucault's perspectives, such is the centrality of his theorising in sociology. I will preface this discussion by noting that many feminist scholars consider Foucault's relationship with feminist thinking to be precarious (Edwards and Ribbens, 1998; Naples, 2003), most notably because his gender blind approach contrasts so sharply with the centrality of gendered analyses of power to feminist theories, and because Foucault's writings deal with only public discourses, with no analysis of the private sphere (Edwards and Ribbens, 1998). Like postmodern

theorists such as Lyotard (1979) and Butler (1990), Foucault rejects the 'grand narratives' that are fundamental to most other social theories, and in feminism's case: patriarchy. Foucault discounted the 'grouping' of people by gender or any other marker such as race or class, diverging sharply from radical feminists' location of patriarchy as an arrangement which collectively privileges men at women's expense. Nonetheless, *some* strands of Foucault's perspectives can usefully be employed as tools for theorising power in applied settings (Gutting, 2005), and have influenced contemporary feminist studies of how individual people come to replicate male dominated hierarchies of power.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977) locates individual people as subjects of 'disciplinary' power and control. In parallel with his analysis of prisoners' subjection to the governing gaze of the staff who observed them from the 'panopticon' at the hub of the prison, Foucault (1977) considered individual people to be subjects of continual regulation and judgement in their daily lives in society, with their thought and action under intense control within dominant social and political discourses. Through the process of 'normalising judgement', Foucault (1977) identified how individuals come to self-monitor their own behaviour in accordance with societal and institutional norms and expectations, and like the prisoners, would uphold these expectations even when not directly observed[18]. Sexuality was a salient example through which Foucault illustrated the power of normative expectations (1978): those who resist conformity

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[18] Betty Friedan (1963) was one of the earliest feminist scholars to theorise women's confinement by dominant expectations that women should feel a 'natural' desire to be homemakers and full-time child carers. Friedan called this expectation the 'feminine mystique', which acted to silence women's desires to take a different course in life, both within their own minds and in speaking out publicly.

with the dominant discourse of heterosexuality risk being labelled 'abnormal' or deviant. Foucault (1980) later developed this argument, through the theory of 'technologies of the self' which considered how individual people come to ratify and perform dominant modes of being, in the way that they think, behave and present themselves, to reflect dominant political and social discourses[19]. There are parallels here with Goffman's (1959) theory of 'impression management', whereby people regulate their public 'performance' in accordance with our perceptions of what is expected. The notion of 'technologies of the self', when applied to gender performance, dovetails with other theorists' ideas of how men and women have come to adhere to traditional expectations of their gender with the result of upholding patriarchal structures (e.g. West and Zimmerman, 1987). Furthermore, Foucault's (1977) theorising can also assist feminist analyses of how and why individual men and women may replicate (or come to resist) patriarchal norms within the private realm of their own intimate relationships. Other studies have identified how young people's performances of traditional gendered identities reproduce heterosexual dating relationships as sites of male privilege and authority, with young men and women acting as agents of patriarchal power at the micro level of intimate relationships. And so, heterosexual relationships are not naturally arenas of male power and female subordination, but are constructed as such (Baber and Murray, 2001) through men and women's performance of traditional gender norms. This repeated performance of gender norms in social interactions establishes a social structure that becomes 'taken for granted', and governs

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[19] These perspectives have been problematised in recent times by intimacy theorists such as Giddens (1992) and Beck and Beck-Gersnsheim, who argue that individual people are now free from traditional expectations of gender performance. See the later discussion in this chapter.

social meanings and expectations of how men and women should behave (West and Zimmerman, 1987).

A pivotal aspect of Foucault's theorising of power, is that power is not a 'thing' that any one person, or group of people, can hold. Individual people, states or institutions are not naturally powerful, but have traditionally been equipped with power by social and political structures. Feminist theorists have observed how the strategies violent men use to maintain power over their partners reflect those Foucault (1977) refers to as *premodern* strategies of power, whereby violence is used to reinforce the "asymmetrical relation of power between 'sovereign' and 'subject'" (Westlund, 1999:1050). Here, those furnished with more power by society and the state (men) are assisted in maintaining power (violence) over those with less lower on social and political hierarchies (women)[20]. The success of the feminist movement in challenging these structures and enabling women's emancipation have confirmed Foucault's argument that power is not inevitable, but can be resisted. Foucault (1977) located power to be multi-layered and contextually specific; for example, men located low on power hierarchies in the workplace and in their relationships with other men, may still exercise considerable power over women in other spheres of life (Gauntlett, 2008). In the case of intimate partner violence, a man could exercise power over his partner through violence and abuse, while being subjected to institutional power at work through redundancy, bullying etc.

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[20] Foucault does not, however, locate women as the 'subject' of this enforcement of power, nor interrogate the ways in which women experience the enforcement of male power.

While arguing that *all* women are exposed to degrees of male power, feminist scholars recognise that patriarchal power intersects differently in the lives of different men and women (Assiter, 1996; Hague and Malos, 1998; Rajah, 2007). Indeed, not all women experience patriarchal power in the form of violence and abuse from men, and not all men perpetrate violence and abuse against women. The fact that lesbian intimate relationships can also act as sites of imbalanced power (Perilla et al, 2003), where some women maintain power over their lesbian partners through violence and abuse (hooks, 2000), evidences how women can be instrumental in oppressing other women (Levy, 2006).

Rajah (2007) theorises on how, in the case of intimate partner violence, multiple modes of power can impact upon different women in different ways; for example, some abused ethnic minority women may choose not to report their partners' violence to the police, in resisting what they perceive to be a racist criminal justice system. This issue is likely to have less prominence for white women. Class and power may intersect, with the result that women of higher social classes have more power in the form of educational resources (Skeggs, 1997), which may act to support their exit from violent relationships. This may explain why poorer women experience disproportionately high levels of intimate partner violence (Raphael and Tolman, 1997; Tolman and Rosen, 2001; Worcester, 2002).[21]

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[21] Some feminist researchers warn that the findings of research which shows women of higher social classes experience less domestic violence than women of lower social class must be accepted with caution; it may be that more affluent women have the financial and practical means to leave increasingly controlling and abusive relationships before the onset of physical violence (Mooney, 2000b).

Oakley (1974:14) theorised that even where women occupied the traditional roles of wives, mothers and housewives- positions commonly "correlated with certain types of powerlessness"- the capacity for women to exert power over other members of the family and the community remained significant. Allied with this, Hey's (1997) study of girls' friendships evidenced how young women could assume power over other young women on the basis of race, appearance, and superior educational performance.

Feminist Perspectives: Intimate Partner Violence as a Means of Power and Control

The location of men's pursuit of *power* and *control* as the rationale for violence against women distinguishes feminist theories from other approaches to explaining intimate partner violence. Mullender (1996) and Hague and Malos (1998) argue that other theoretical perspectives on men's violence against women, such as those which conceive of intimate partner as a problem located within individual couples, related to psychological or physiological factors in victims and perpetrators, disregard the influence of wider gendered inequalities in perpetuating male violence within intimate relationships.

The focus on 'abnormal' characteristics in victims and perpetrators stemmed from the study of battered women's 'abnormalities' in the medical literature throughout the twentieth century (Westlund, 1999), which blamed the perceived 'deviant' characteristics of individual abused women for their own victimisation. Despite the achievements of the second wave feminist movement in relating violence and abuse of women to wider patriarchal structures, positivist approaches to explaining intimate

partner violence (and to social research in general) prevailed throughout the 1960s and 1970s, viewing intimate relationships in isolation from the social structures in which they were located (Mooney, 2000a). The 'problem' of violence was situated with individual couples, with minimal regard to the gendered imbalance of power which maintained men's right to control and dominate. As a consequence, men's responsibility for their own violence was minimised. Feminists have argued that theories of violence which ignore both the influence of dominant patriarchal social structures in enabling and maintaining male power in intimate relationships, and men's motivation to control and oppress, offer naïve and inadequate perspectives on intimate partner violence (Das Dasgupta, 1999).

A highly effective and widely consulted resource for conveying the feminist understanding of power and control in intimate relationships is the Power and Control Wheel (Pence, 1987).[22] The wheel was developed from research with two hundred women, who discussed their experiences of domestic abuse in focus groups. Their accounts formed an interpretative framework for understanding the tactics and motivations of violent men (Mederos, 1999). A commonality across the women's diverse experiences was a pattern of coercion in which the abusers establish power and control over their partners via a range of violent and non-violent strategies (Das Dasgupta, 1999), and these strategies are depicted on the wheel. Many adaptations of

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[22] The Power and Control Wheel was developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) in Duluth, Minnesota, a feminist agency working with the legal system to develop protocol in cases of domestic violence. The DAIP focuses upon perpetrator accountability and victim safety (Pence and McDonnell, 1999) and the 'Duluth Model' of co-ordinating responses to domestic violence through batterer programmes, support for abused women and children, and community awareness, has influenced the development of similar agencies worldwide (Hague and Malos, 1993).

the Power and Control wheel have been generated by feminists to depict the centrality of men's pursuit of power and control across different aspects of violence and abuse, by different men, and against different women (for example the Abuse in Later Life Wheel, Muslim Power and Control Wheel, Immigrant Power and Control Wheel, *National Center (sic) on Domestic and Sexual Violence*, 2009). Feminist agencies in the USA have developed the Dating Power and Control Wheel to depict young women's experiences of male power and control in dating relationships, (fig.1); this wheel illustrates the feminist theoretical perspective on dating violence underpinning the current research. Crucially, the Dating Violence Power and Control Wheel shows the diverse range of strategies of power and control operational in dating relationships, not all of which involve physical violence. However, as in the original Power and Control Wheel, the Dating wheel conveys how the *threat* of violence and abuse enables some men to coerce and control their partners.
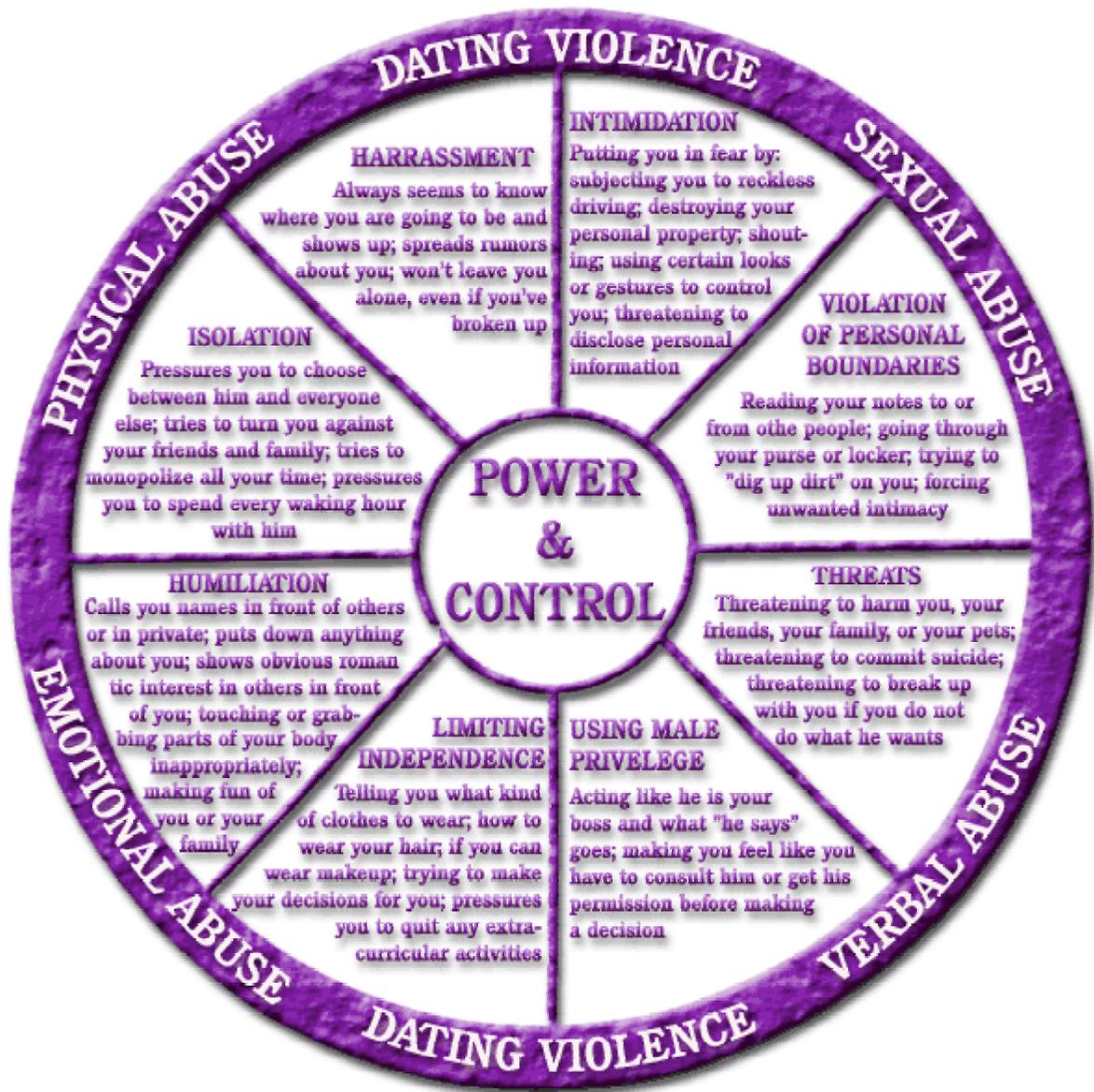
Fig 1: The Dating Violence Power and Control Wheel, produced by Turning Point Services, Alabama, USA.

Coercive Control

Evan Stark's (2007) theory of 'coercive control' is allied with the feminist analyses. Stark's (2007) perspective underscores the curtailment of women's liberty and

autonomy by men's tactics of coercion and control, as exemplified in the Dating Violence Power and Control Wheel above, demonstrating how abusive men can secure their female partner's compliance and subordination through non-violent tactics. Stark (2007:14) underscores the need to raise awareness of the nature and extent of men's coercive control of their partners, arguing that the increased awareness of physical and sexual violence against women may have rendered women's ongoing experiences of coercion and control as "muted by comparison". Liz Kelly's (1987) theory of a 'continuum of sexual violence' dovetails with Stark's (2007) perspective of coercive control, as both scholars locate male power and control of women partners on a range of possible experiences that may or may not include violence, but are united by the threat to women's freedom and wellbeing.

Not all men seek to maintain power and control over their partners, and of those who do, violence is not always the means of achieving this; women who experience high degrees of control by their male partners are not necessarily victims of physical or emotional abuse. As such, men's power and control may not always manifest in ways that young people consider to be obviously problematic. Discrete and seemingly innocuous modes of control may operate under the guise of young men controlling their girlfriends' interactions because they are 'caring' or 'protective', or because they love their girlfriend so much that they want her to spend all her time with them. This form of "paternalistic sexism" (Pratto and Walker, 2002:95) extends dominant societal modes of male power and protectionism (e.g. as police officers, soldiers, security guards) to

intimate relationships, where young men and women accept, normalise, and expect, men's right to protect 'their' women, by controlling their choices, movements etc.

The perspectives of Stark (2007) and Kelly (1987) warn against making the assumption that women's experiences of men's coercion and control will necessarily be experienced as less destructive than physical brutality. Stark (2007:171) links some men's control of their partners with women's progression in society, arguing that some men have up-scaled their use of coercive control of their partners to "offset the erosion of sex-based privilege in the face of women's rights….by installing patriarchal like controls in personal life". This strand of Starks's (2007) theory is complementary to the perspectives of feminists who stress that *all* women- including those who occupy powerful positions in public life- can be vulnerable to male control within their intimate heterosexual relationships (Mahoney et al., 2001).

Women's Resistance of Intimate Partner Violence, Power and Control

The means by which individual women respond to and resist male violence and control went largely unrecognised until the mobilisation of the feminist movement in the 1960s, when violence against women was challenged at a macro level. Hitherto, compelling theories of 'learned helplessness' (Walker, 1984) and 'battered women's syndrome' assumed that most abused women accepted their victim status, and remained with violent partners because they were powerless to resist or challenge their partner's violence, abuse and control. Pro-feminist scholars such as Hearn (1998:214) consider some historical feminist perspectives to have conceptualised violence against women as

"part of a one-way system of men's power that removes women's agency and resistance, and that may also remove men's agency and responsibility, as well as some other men's resistance." Addressing this, and while continuing to reveal and challenge women's ongoing experiences of oppression and control by men, feminist researchers of intimate partner violence have identified the means by which women resist and challenge men's violence and abuse, power and control.

The women's refuge movement and the development of feminist agencies supporting women experiencing intimate partner violence represented a major enactment of resistance to men's violence and abuse, at a time when many women living with violent partners had minimal access to support or refuge from abuse (Dobash and Dobash, 1992). The refuge movement was pioneered in the United Kingdom in 1974, when Erin Pizzey launched Chiswick Women's Aid, and attracted widespread public attention to the experiences of the women who fled abusive partners and sought refuge. Since then, the Women's Aid movement across the UK has continually developed and expanded, resisting and challenging men's violence against women and children through direct work with victims, awareness raising, preventative work, education and training (Women's Aid, 2010). Contemporary research has documented the numerous and varied strategies women use to directly resist and challenge violence and abuse from their male partners (Cavanagh, 2003; Dobash et al., 2000), evidencing the many practical and financial impediments which act as barriers to leaving (Anderson et al., 2003). In reporting the strategies of resistance employed by women who confront

men's violence, abuse and control, feminist scholars have shown that dominant modes of power *can* be resisted, and demonstrated the influence of *women's* power.

Intimate Relationships Transformed? Individualism, Equality, and the 'Pure' Relationship

The focus of the chapter now turns to the body of literature which theorises on the current status of gendered power hierarchies within intimate heterosexual relationships. This is pertinent to the current study's aim of understanding the nature and social context of young people's intimate relationships, and the operation of gendered power and control within them. The subsequent paragraphs elucidate the tensions existing within the literature, between feminist writers who continue to evidence and document the ongoing imbalance of power both within and outside of intimate relationships, and those theorists who have observed a dismantling of the 'past' models of intimacy which replicated external patterns of gender inequality.

In identifying and challenging women's position as a secondary 'other' to men (De Beauvoir, 1949), feminists have radically advanced female participation in employment, education, political and social spheres (Budgeon, 1998; Harris, 2003), as well as engendering a public intolerance of violence against women (Mullender, 1996), reflected in legal and policy initiatives. Today, in the 'post feminist' era, representations of young women are characterised by equality, empowerment, and success; nothing is off limits and women's choice, freedom to be their own agents, are celebrated. At some junctures, such as in Higher Education, women's participation has

even eclipsed that of men (Newman, 2009). With feminism's success in transforming women's position from subordination towards equal opportunity, a widespread view of gender equality has developed.

The shift from rigid social structures and life models, to a more liberal and individualised society has altered the social and political context of intimate relationships. Stuart Hall (2005:328) argues that the neo-liberal ideology of Thatcherism, and then New Labour, produced a climate of ever increasing social and economic individualism, which saw the "privatisation of social needs", with a focus on choice, freedom and personal responsibility. These tenets of individualism, argues Hall, have been embraced by the public, interpolated as 'common sense' and the ideal approach to organising personal life. Sociologists such as Anthony Giddens (1992), and Ulrich Beck and Elizabeth Beck-Gernshiem (2002), argue that social and economic individualism, gender equality, and the shift towards self determined life biographies have transformed intimate relationships in what is now a 'post-traditional' society. These authors note the decline of past models of heterosexual intimacy, usually formalised through marriage, which had the primary function of supporting the social, political and economic order under the 'male breadwinner' family model. Under this mode of intimacy, romantic love was a secondary focus, held in check by the expectation that one would have a single life partner. The shift from this, towards a more 'individualised society' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), has, it is argued, enabled individuals to create personalised brands of intimate relationships, concurrent with their own preferences and priorities (Mythen, 2005). Advances in reliable birth

control (Giddens, 1992), coupled with the dismantling of the class based social order (Beck and Beck-Gersnsheim, 2002) have revolutionised human sexuality's tie to maintaining social hierarchies and the demands of reproduction, to the pleasures of the self directed 'pure relationship' (Giddens, 1992).

Giddens' (1992) model of the 'pure' relationship reflects current popular discourses on intimacy, evident across self-help guides, magazines and soap operas, to government policy; all of which assume a social progression toward gender democracy (McRobbie, 2009). Giddens contends that 'pure relationships' are characteristic of late modernity, where both partners consciously and continuously construct bespoke relationships concurrent with their mutual desires. Emancipated from the demands of reproduction, Giddens explains that there is no expectation that these relationships will be heterosexual; they exist entirely for their own sake, not to acquiesce with external demands or expectations. Individuals are truly free to *be* individuals, and people have been emancipated from the expectation of long term heterosexual partnerships. Individuals have the power to construct whichever form of intimacy they choose, with the focus on self fulfilment, psychological union and emotional investment by both partners. In a departure from past assumptions of intimate partnerships lasting 'till death us do part', the pure relationship is "continued only in so far as it is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfactions for each individual to stay in it" (1992:58). This dovetails with Bauman's (2003) location of contemporary intimate relationships as fluid personal investments, which position individuals as consumers of love; free to pick, choose, and leave their partner(s) according to their needs and preferences (which

may change over time). For Giddens, the 'pure relationship' is entirely dependent on an equal balance of power and trust between both intimate partners, necessitating "wholesale democratising of the interpersonal domain in a manner fully compatible with democracy in the public sphere" (1992:2). Giddens' model of the 'pure relationship' as a site of romantic love, parity and emotional connection is deeply ingrained in the messages directed at young people in popular culture, where the desirability of finding one's 'soul mate' is imparted. The principles of equality and mutual respect align Giddens' model of intimacy with the frameworks of non-abusive, non-oppressive, power balanced relationships that feminist agencies promote (fig. 2).
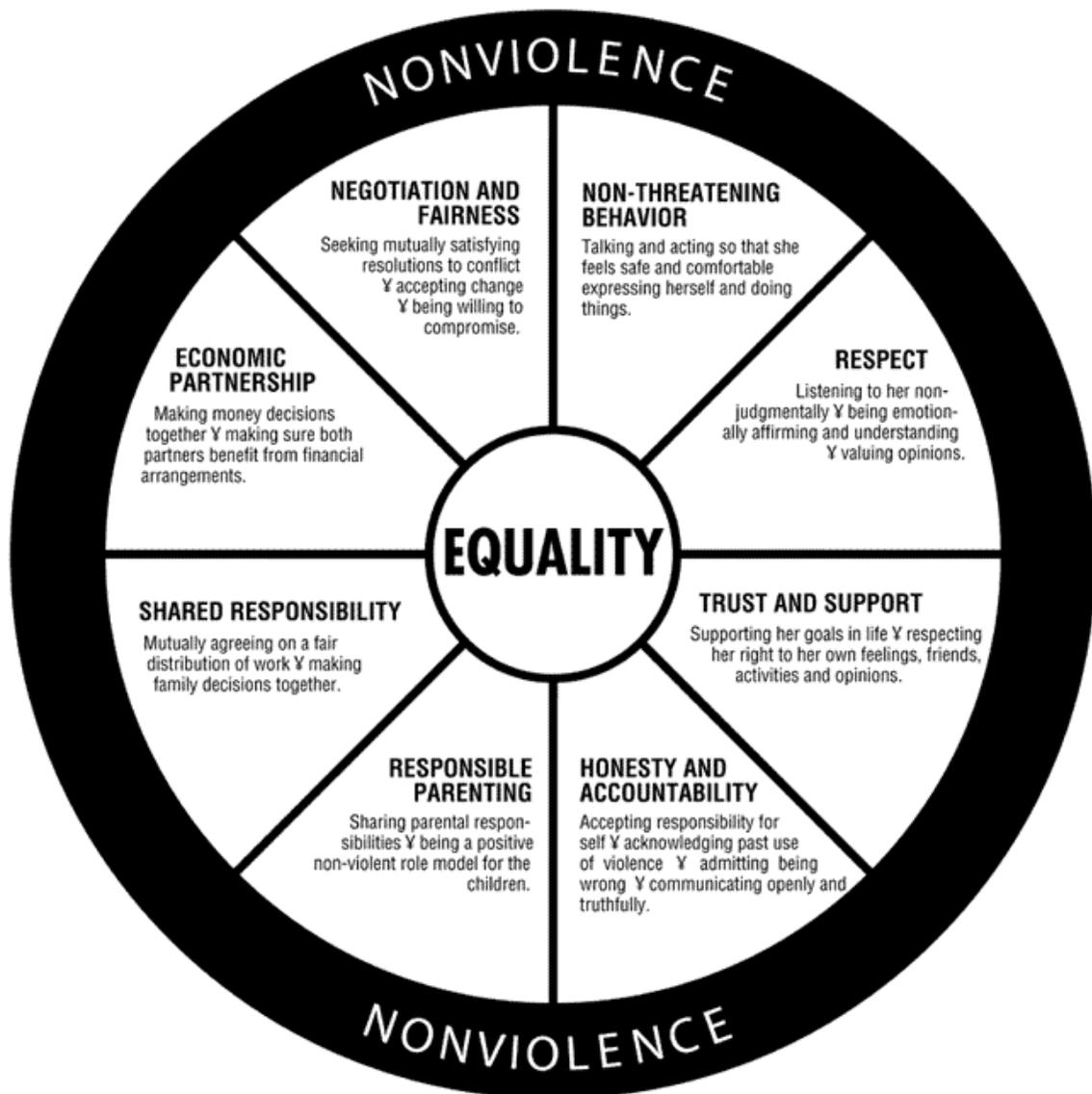
Fig 2: The Equality Wheel, developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, Duluth, USA, and used widely by feminist agencies working to challenge intimate partner violence.

Giddens' focus on equality reflects young people's expectations of 'normal' intimate relationships, where parity is expected (Sieg, 2007). Giddens identifies how young people's rationale for forming dating relationships has progressed from that of previous

generations, reflecting current social, political and economic individualism. Love, attraction and desire are dominant features of modern intimacy (Bauman, 2003) that characterise young people's experiences and perceptions of intimate partnerships to a much greater degree than concerns about economic dependence, reproduction and adherence to the social order. Today, young women embrace and expect economic individualism (Harris, 2003; Sharpe, 2001), and understand that their intimate partner of late teenage years may not be their partner for life; relationships are often called off if they are unfulfilling or incompatible with one's own life plans and preferences.

Giddens' emphasis on the power of individuals to resist structural forces of power, such as patriarchy, assumes that young people have a capacity to construct new models of intimacy that are emancipated from oppressive structures and expectations. Indeed, the principles of democracy, fairness and respect on which the 'pure' relationship hinges, make this model of intimacy a sound basis from which to educate young people on intimate relationships. However, there is much to suggest that Giddens' model has considerably overstated the degree of gender equality achieved to date (Harris, 2003; Jamieson, 1999; McRobbie, 2009), and is detached from the continuation of patriarchal power and control in and out of intimate relationships (Chung, 2005; Dobash et al, 1992; Mooney, 2000a). Jamieson (2002:138) offers a particularly cogent critique of Giddens' (1992) thesis, questioning the extent to which intimate relationships have been truly been democratised and arguing instead that "the overall picture is one of persistent inequalities". Jamieson's (2002:163) primary thesis is that while our understanding of ideal models of intimate relationships may now closely mirror

Gidden's (1992) pure relationship and associated "egalitarian ideals", the true picture of contemporary intimate relationships is more accurately characterised by ongoing expectations that men and women should occupy 'normal' gender roles; typically charging women with caring and domestic duties, and casting men as the ideal financial providers. Idealised models of heterosexual relationships and the nuclear family continue to secure social approval above other forms of intimacy. Jamieson (2002) also problematises Giddens' perspectives through consideration of the economic and material ties that may invest partners in maintaining relationships that do not bear the hallmarks of the deep emotional connection associated with the 'pure' relationship. Indeed, Giddens' analysis says little about how young people's capacities to secure their own individual preferences, choices and life plans are governed by their economic (Harris, 2003; Skeggs, 2001), ethnic (hooks, 2000), and educational (dis)advantage. Giddens' (1992) conception of the emancipation of intimate relationships from the 'old' confines of economic and reproductive expectations does not adequately take account of the other means by which intimate relationships continue to reproduce dominant modes of social power, including heterosexuality and patriarchy. Heterosexual performance remains linked with social success for both young men and young women (Connell, 1995) and the contemporary theoretical and empirical literature continues to evidence heterosexuality as influenced by patriarchy, maintained through young men and women's adherence to normative gender practices (Butler, 1990). While young women's reports of their aspirations and expectations of intimate relationships closely mirror Giddens' model of democracy (Sharpe, 2001; Sieg, 2007); their lived

experiences of heterosexual dating relationships, and of being single, prove that gender equality is yet to be secured (Budgeon, 1998; Sieg, 2007).

Young Women in the 'Guise of Equality'

Giddens (1992) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2002) theories of individualism rest upon the notion that individuals in the current era of 'late modernity' continually construct self identities, that are largely emancipated from the social structures which confined people of previous generations. McRobbie (2004, 2007, and 2009) identifies these perspectives on individualisation and gender equality as perpetuating a "post-feminist guise of equality" (2007:718) in the minds of young people, disguising past and current gender inequalities. This discourse of overstated equality:

> "…speak(s) directly to the post-feminist generation…..with only distant echoes to the feminist struggles that were required to produce the new found freedoms of young women in the West. There is no trace whatsoever of the battles fought, of the power struggles embarked upon, or the enduring equalities which still mark out relations between men and women. All of this is airbrushed out of existence." (McRobbie, 2009:19)

McRobbie (2009:47) argues that feminist perspectives have been positioned as unnecessary in the light of strong and overstated perceptions of women's liberation from patriarchy. Against the backdrop of perceived gender equality, many young women resist and are apathetic to feminist perspectives, considering them out of date,

anti-male (hooks, 2000), and serving the interests of only lesbian women (Aronson, 2003). Women's ongoing sub-status to men on hierarchies of power is overlooked, with worrying consequences. The rhetoric of equality has seen the "responsibilisation"[23] (Harris, 2003:9) of young women, who are held accountable for maintaining their own freedom and success. Other scholars have made similar arguments to McRobbie, noting how the dogma that women now share 'equal' opportunities with men (Sharpe, 2001), expects women to be stronger and more independent (Sieg, 2007) than women of previous generations. There is a powerful assumption that women who continue to experience gendered disadvantage have failed to capitalise upon the opportunities available to them, as free agents in the post feminist era (Gonick, 2006). This invests young women in concealing their experiences of gendered inequalities, including violence and abuse, as these may be considered individual failings. The charging of young women with the responsibility to ensure their liberty from oppressive structures, coupled with overstated perceptions of equality and liberation (Jamieson, 2002), may result in keeping inequalities hidden. This may be especially the case in the private realm of intimate heterosexual relationships, where the political and legal challenges to women's subordination in public life do not extend.

McRobbie (2007) further argues that the silencing of the feminist perspectives which ensured women's advancement and emancipation has enabled a gradual re-emergence of 'old' modes of sexism and inequality, which are now cast as harmless and even ironic in what is understood as the new context of equality. In the 'guise of gender

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[23] This concept has roots in Foucault's writings on 'governmentality' (1984), whereby the responsibility for the 'care of the self' was levied upon individuals in a manner which shifted the responsibility for the wellbeing of citizens from the state to individual people.

equality', feminist challenges to ongoing examples of sexism and women's oppression are less powerful and captivate young women's allegiance much less successfully than before. A salient example of this, McRobbie (2008) argues, is the mainstreaming of pornography and sexualised images of women, to which many young women are ambivalent, and others have embraced and come to view as symbolic of female power (Levy, 2006). Being seen to liaise with old symbols of objectification has become representative of female empowerment; pole-dancing is promoted as such (McRobbie, 2009), and women are actively encouraged to 'join in' with what feminism has fought to dismantle. Young women's acquiescence with (now considered harmless) pornography and objectification is ensured by the understanding that women who object to graphic sexualisation of women must be un-cool, "man hating lesbians" (McRobbie, 2008:228). There seems to be little room for young women who do not relate to radical feminist views to explore where they stand on this; it is not easy to object. Evidencing her argument, McRobbie (2008) identifies media icons such as the Pussycat Dolls (who had an international hit with *Don't Cha Wish Your Girlfriend Was Hot Like Me?*), female audiences in Burlesque clubs, and compliance with the requirement to be 'hot', as markers of women's support for the 'undoing' of feminist gains, and ambivalent conformity with male sexualised ideals. For young women, "nothing could be more *passé* than to criticise patriarchy" (McRobbie, 2008:230).

Allied with McRobbie's perspectives, Ariel Levy (2006) points to young women's participation in female 'Raunch Culture' (manifest in their choice of 'sexy' clothing,

and TV programmes such as *Girls Gone Wild*[24]*)*, as evidence of how some young women associate a highly sexualised appearance with female liberation and empowerment. Levy argues that there is an endemic issue of *concealed* objectification of young women, where women's highly sexualised appearances masquerade as empowerment, but really signify ongoing patriarchal control and surveillance of women's bodies.

There are many other examples in popular culture which cement McRobbie and Levy's observations. In her 2009 music video for the song *Paparazzi*, Lady Gaga dons a latex leotard, corsetry and fishnet tights as she poisons her boyfriend in revenge for him selling their intimate pictures to the paparazzi. She is portrayed as both highly sexualised and highly powerful. In social life, lap-dancing and pole-dancing lessons are listed among the menu of activities offered to women visiting major UK cities on pre-wedding 'hen weekends', with the lure of pleasing new husbands and improving women's confidence suggested as reasons to learn these skills (*"washing up won't keep him happy- this will!"*, GlasgowHenNight.com, 2009; *"lap and pole dancing will help with your fitness, build confidence and self esteem!"*, Travel Scotland, 2009). It is concerning to see young women return to the objectified roles from which the feminist movement fought to emancipate them, and important to consider how this impacts upon young women's ability to identify and challenge sexist objectification and control, within and outside of their intimate relationships with men. Coherent resistance becomes muted by strong popular acceptance of female objectification as harmless and

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[24]A long running American reality TV show where young women expose their breasts, unpaid, for waiting camera crews which show up to film willing (or persuaded) volunteers at college campus parties, and festivals etc.

even empowering, with worrying consequences for women's position in society (Levy, 2006). Although some young women actively resist the modes of objectification outlined thus far (Shalit, 2007), it would appear that for others, being considered 'hot' and 'sexy' by men is representative of power, success and progression, with the high costs of adherence to these standards upon women's freedom from male control being quite significantly overlooked. Evidencing the complexity of the discourses to which young women are exposed, Raby (2009:349) has observed the "fine line girls negotiate between what is acceptable, expected and attractive and what is seen to go too far". Indeed, this author found that young women could be stigmatised and ridiculed by their female peers where their conduct or clothing was deemed *too* revealing, on the 'wrong side' of sexy.

Dating Relationships: Located Among Competing Discourses of Individualism, Heterosexual Success and Gender Performance

Of particular relevance to the current study's focus on the social context of young people's intimate relationships and the operation of gendered power imbalances within them, Chung's (2005, 2007) studies represent important theoretical advances to dating violence research. This author's empirical studies of dating violence are located within contemporary feminist and post-structural theoretical discourses. Arguing that popular notions of gender equality collide with women's ongoing experiences of unequal power within and outside of intimate relationships, Chung (2005:445) locates dating relationships (and dating violence) amidst "competing and contradictory discourses of heterosexuality, romance, gender, individualism and equality", and argues that young

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women are under particular pressure to demonstrate both individualism and traditional femininity, a task that can be fraught with challenges where intimate relationships continue to be sites of gendered power imbalance.

Dominant notions of gender equality and liberation characterise young women as independent individuals, free from the 'old' constraints of male power and control that confined women of previous generations. This view reflects Giddens' (1992) theory of individual people's release from the traditional ties to family life and the economic order, and holds that young women need not necessarily have a male partner to fulfil any external social expectations, but are free to be single. In their intimate relationships with men, young women are considered to be well equipped to secure equality and maintain their rights. However, Chung (2005; 2007) and others (Banister et al. 2003; Ismail et al. 2007; Sandfield and Percy, 2003; Van Roosmalen, 2000) have found that young women remain exposed to persistent and intense social pressure to maintain a stable intimate relationship with a man. Despite the rhetoric that individuals need only form intimate partnerships based on the emotional connection of the 'pure' relationship (Giddens, 1992; Beck, 1992), for young women, being a partner in a heterosexual relationship continues to form the "backbone of cultural expectations" (Rajah, 2007:200) and is an important marker of successful heterosexual femininity and social status. Young women's acceptance by their peer group can be heavily dependent on having a boyfriend (Ismail, 2007; Van Roosmalen, 2000:208), and researchers have established links between young women's increased status and prestige among their female peer group, and the romantic interest they receive from men (Holland and

Eisenhart, 1990). "Couple culture" (Budgeon, 1998:302), remains deeply ingrained, and single women's status is regularly conceptualised negatively (Sandfield and Percy, 2003), reinforcing the ongoing dominance of a heterosexual patriarchy.

This pressure on young women to have a boyfriend reflects Butler's (1990) theory of the 'heterosexual matrix', where heterosexuality represents the benchmark of being 'normal' and socially successful. Heterosexual relationships have long been theorised as sites which perpetuate women's subjugation to male power (Rich, 1980), although more recent feminist analyses acknowledge that not all women and men experience heterosexual intimacy in this way. Butler (1990) and Rich's (1980) perspectives on heterosexuality have origins within Foucault's (1977) 'technologies of the self', wherein individual people run their lives alongside their awareness of the dominant expectations of 'normal' behaviour. Of course, resistance of the 'heterosexual matrix' is possible, and human sexualities do diverge from this normative code. But, heterosexual performance remains a measure of social success, which expects young people to "discipline themselves and their bodies into conventional masculinity and femininity" (Holland et al., 2004:177). While both young men and women are subject to the discourse of normative heterosexuality, young women's success is measured through the maintenance of an intimate relationship, while young men's success is measured through sexual activity, not necessarily with a stable intimate partner (Tolman et al., 2003). It is important to consider how the intense pressure on young women to be engaged within an intimate heterosexual relationship with a man may intersect with experiences of violence and abuse; in ending a relationship, young women take on

'single' status, which for some young women may be undesirable and a source of anxiety.

Ongoing imbalances of gendered power within young people's intimate relationships (Holland et al., 2004; Jamieson, 2002) mean some young women may struggle to combine an autonomous, individualised self, with the role of 'girlfriend' (Chung, 2005). Skeggs (1997) explains how young women must continually shift between embracement and rejection of femininity as they perform the various functions that are required of them; in seeking intimate relationships with men the performance of traditional femininity is expected and can be advantageous, but can be obstructive in women's working lives where women are expected to be the 'same' as men, in workplaces which remain structured by standards and regulations designed by and for men. Holland et al.'s (2004)[25] studies found that young men and women from diverse social, economic and cultural backgrounds were united by intense pressure to adhere to traditional (patriarchal) ideals of femininity and masculinity in their intimate heterosexual relationships. The authors explain how young people were socialised to accept masculine sexual preferences, standards and ideals as natural and inevitable, governing intimate relationships in a way that leaves little room for female agency. For young women, this meant being strongly compelled to adhere to 'feminine' ideals of sexual inexperience, compliance with male desires, and 'respectability' (Skeggs, 2006). This impeded their agency in negotiating sexual and reproductive safety, as for young women to open a dialogue about condoms, for example, is to shatter the illusion of

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[25] The Women Risk and AIDS Project (WRAP) and Men Risk and AIDS Project (MRAP) studies were undertaken in the 1980s and investigated impediments to safe sex, and specifically condom use, at a time of increasing panic about the spread of HIV and AIDS.

feminine naïveté. As a result, young men's choice not to use condoms often took precedence, with significant risk to sexual health and wellbeing. Young women's sexual preferences were rendered virtually invisible. Other studies have replicated these findings of the pressure on young women to maintain traditional femininity through sexual compliance and naïveté (Banister et al., 2003; Frith and Kitzinger, 1998). Holland et al. (2004) conclude that heterosexuality can serve as a function of masculine power, where young men and women reproduce male privilege through their intimate sexual practices. Young people who resist these discourses challenge the boundaries of normative heterosexuality, compromising their conformity with expected standards of masculinity and femininity.

Sexuality theorists such as Butler (1990) argue that sexist aspects of gender identity can be challenged and resisted; young people can subvert the sexist and oppressive aspects of traditional discourses of masculinity and femininity. However, recent studies document that there is much progress yet to be made in this regard, and there are ongoing "pressures for young women to be submissive and boys to be domineering……played out in the microcosmic world of dating relationships" (Ismail et al., 2007: 467). Normative 'boyfriend' and 'girlfriend' roles remain deeply immersed in traditional gender roles. Young women continue to be charged with the 'emotion work' within intimate heterosexual relationships (Frith and Kitzinger, 1998), reflecting traditional assumptions of women's 'natural' capacity to be nurturing, gentle, and understanding caretakers of relationships (Sandfield and Percy, 2003). This requires

women to privilege their partner's needs and feelings while subjugating their own.[26] Connell (1987) categorises these expectations of women as 'emphasised femininities', which maintain male domination by accommodating men's priorities above their own (Schippers, 2007). Contemporary young women experience the pressure to fulfil these feminine expectations, all while maintaining the image of an independent and strong woman. These divergent demands imply a distinct divide in expectations of young women's performance of femininity in public (strong, capable, and emancipated from male power and control), versus within their intimate relationships with men (accommodating of male desires, responsible for the emotional 'health' of the male partner and of the relationship). Essentially, young women know that they have the right to resist the demands on them to maintain male privilege, but securing this right may come at the cost to the performance of successful femininity.

Reframing Inequality: The Case of Violence and Control

As the earlier discussion in this chapter established, discourses of gender equality overstate women's freedom from male power and control, including violence and abuse, and charge women with the responsibility for challenging male power. The assumption that successfully independent women can resist male power and control invests young women in avoiding 'victim' status (Frith and Kitzinger, 1998). Empirical researchers committed to applying a theoretical grounding to their studies have evidenced this desire. Indeed, Chung (2005:450) identified that the young women in

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[26] Young women in Few and Rosen's (2005) study remained with violent male partners, taking on what the authors describe as a 'caretaker identity'. Women who adopted this role identified their men as being in need of their rescue, care and guidance, and saw themselves as the only suitable caretakers, maintaining the relationship on this basis.

her study of dating violence "did not want to be known as doormats who tolerated inequality in post second wave feminist times". This view belies young women's acceptance of the responsibility to prevent and 'deal' with male violence, with minimal regard to male responsibility. Elsewhere, participants in Ismail et al.'s (2007) study blamed themselves for men's violence against them, concealed their experiences of violence and abuse from those around them, and expressed guilt and shame where they maintained violent relationships. This internalisation of blame, shame and responsibility was felt despite the young women's familiarity and acquiescence with feminist discourses on the unacceptability of male violence against women, demonstrating how the discourses of individualism and female power can drown out feminist perspectives on perpetrators' responsibility for their violence and abuse. Crucially, Ismail (2007) found that young women's self blaming and resultant reluctance to acknowledge their experiences of violence and abuse left them isolated from support and intervention.

In Chung's (2005) study, young men and women adhered strongly to individualistic discourses of gender equality in intimate relationships, arguing that young people are free agents who are at liberty to control the balance of power in their intimate relationships easily. This view was postulated despite young women's experiences of dating relationships as sites of physical, sexual and emotional abuse including; rape, stalking, harassment, unwanted phone calls and home visits. This study unearthed a stark disparity in young women's *theoretical* view of gender equality, and their real life experiences. The real life experiences of violence and abuse were reframed and

concealed, highlighting an apparent pressure on young women to agree with the dominant social discourse of equality and female emancipation from male power and control, even when their personal experiences do not reflect this (Sieg, 2007). This desire to present their intimate relationships as sites of equality may mean that young women conceal or re-name their experiences of male power, violence and abuse in order to avoid victim status (Burton et al., 1998; Chung, 2005; Few and Rosen, 2005; Frith and Kitzinger, 1998). For some young women in Chung's (2005) research this meant interpreting their experiences of men's power and control as positive signs of love, intimacy and protection, and excusing undesirable aspects of their partner's behaviour on the basis that men are emotionally less competent than women. Some young women report their experiences of sexual coercion as harmless given that they are "sophisticated sexual negotiators" (Frith and Kitzinger, 1998:315) whose superior knowledge of men and relationships protects them from interpreting such events as violence and abuse. Re-framing men's violence and abuse in these ways enabled young women to conceal their exposure to male power, and crucially, avoid interrupting their performance of strength and independence. This renders male power and control invisible; isolating young women from support. To remain with a violent partner (or even to experience abuse from a man in the first place) represents significant deviance from the expected discourse of being a powerful woman.

Disclosure of violence and abuse may be impeded by expectations that young women should be able to resist and even prevent men's violence and abuse. Young women may internalise feelings of failure and shame in being oppressed, disadvantaged or

controlled by men. These considerations are vital to understanding why some young women may maintain a relationship with a violent partner, and highlight key barriers to resisting male power and control. Challenging the gendered imbalance of power in intimate heterosexual relationships is problematic, if young women are unable or unwilling to identify the presence of this power imbalance in intimate relationships. McRobbie (2004:726) argues that young women's resistance is limited by the need to not be "too powerful" in their interactions with men, as in doing so they would risk their appeal as potential partners, and ultimately their chance to become wives and mothers.

Identifying the social pressure on young women to demonstrate independence and agency assists in making sense of some young women's unsympathetic, victim blaming attitudes about woman abuse, especially where women are perceived to be 'putting up' with violence by maintaining the relationship (Macnab, 2005). Some young women can benefit from distinguishing themselves from 'victims', since to stress that they are different to the type of woman who experiences violence and abuse serves to strengthen their performance of being successful and strong individuals. Kitzinger's (1995:194) theory of "power feminism" develops the theoretical understanding of young women's resistance of victim status. A direct challenge to "victim feminism", power feminism asserts that individuals must take responsibility for one's own experiences. Like other feminist critiques of power, "power feminism" questions the idea that women in intimate relationships have no power, reflecting the change in women's role at home and in society in recent decades. However, Kitzinger (1995) highlights the potential for

power feminism (often referred to as 'girl power' in the media) to encourage women to reject and distance themselves from other women experiencing abuse. The influence of power feminism may also position women as responsible for protecting themselves from men's violence, diminishing violent men's responsibility and rendering violence against women as the victim's responsibility. Indoctrinated in discourses of individualism and equality, young people are taught to expect intimate relationships to be free from 'old' modes of gendered power and control, with young women charged with responsibility for ensuring this ideal (Harris, 2003).

Masculinities

The subsequent, and final, paragraphs of this chapter focus on the theoretical literature on 'masculinities'. The study of masculinities is central to understanding the normative modes by which young men are socialised, and how normalised masculine performance can uphold men's power and control over women in intimate relationships (Holland et al., 2004). As such, the theoretical material on masculinities is highly relevant to this study, which is concerned with understanding the manifestations of male power and control within young people's intimate relationships.

The study of masculinities developed particular momentum in the 1970s, when academics in some branches of 'men's studies' responded to the feminist movement by undertaking critical analysis of men's participation in sexist systems (Cree and Cavanagh, 1996; West, 2000). While this time was characterised by some men's heightened consciousness on feminist issues and adoption of pro-feminist perspectives,

a powerful anti-feminist backlash also developed, whereby some men resisted the rationale for feminist activism and women's progression in economic and professional life (West, 2000). Faludi (1992) refers to this as a tenet of the anti feminist 'backlash'; an undeclared war by men, against women, in a challenge to feminist gains.

Connell's (1995) theory of 'hegemonic masculinity' is a cornerstone of the theoretical literature on masculinities. This author (1995:77) locates hegemonic masculinity as:

"the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which is taken to guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women".

According to Connell (1995), the various behaviours, attitudes and ideologies which underpin 'hegemonic' masculinities may vary among groups of men in different communities and settings, but are united by their capacity to support patriarchal ideals of male power through control and subordination of women. Hegemonic, or normative, masculinities measure men's self worth and identity by their "capacity to dominate" (hooks, 2000:70). Power and control of women and less powerful groups is perpetuated and maintained by discourses of hegemonic masculinity that reward men for their adherence to these narratives of male power and authority (Reay, 2001). According to Connell (1995:83), the performance of hegemonic masculinity can take the form of violence against women, and gay men, "authorised by an ideology of supremacy".

The operation of Connell's (1995) theory of hegemonic masculinities in maintaining male power and control over young women has been widely evidenced in empirical studies. Renold (2003) found that boys as young as ten secured credence and acceptance from their peers, by objectifying women and using misogynistic language in peer discussions. Peer acceptance was also correlated with hegemonic masculinity in Tolman et al.'s (2003) study, where girls reported that boys gained respect and masculine status by publicly demeaning their girlfriends. Frosh et al.'s (2002) study of 11-14 year old school boys found that the boys who adhered most firmly to hegemonic ideals of masculinity[27], were considered the most popular and powerful by the participants. Hegemonic masculinity has also been identified as deeply influential in shaping young people's expectations of how partners behave in 'normal' heterosexual intimate relationships, in ways which support male power and control and female submission (Boeringer, 1999; Klein, 2006; Renold, 2003). Klein (2006) has identified how young men's socialisation in hegemonic masculinities at school creates a culture where boys' harassment of girls is normalised, expected and even encouraged, with teachers often failing to intervene and challenge boy's abuse on the grounds that this is normal male behaviour. Consequently, Klein (2006) found that where girls did report harassment to their teachers, their complaints were often trivialised. This support for the 'boys will be boys' view can lay the foundations for male control and dominance in later dating relationships. Klein (2006) argues that where coercive and abusive behaviours have gone unchallenged in the past, even when directly witnessed by adults in authority, young men may decide that they have the right to extend this behaviour to

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[27] Although, some characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity did not make boys popular, for example, being considered to be *too* tough, or physically threatening.

their dating relationship in a way which normalises male control and minimises responsibility for violence and abuse (McCarry, 2007).

Hegemonic Masculinity and Patriarchal Control

Empirical studies of male fraternities and sports teams have evidenced links between hegemonic masculine norms within groups, and increased acceptance of male power and control of women, and intimate partner violence. Forbes et al.'s (2005) study of male university students aged eighteen to twenty-two years found that participants in aggressive sports reported using more psychological, physical and sexual aggression in their dating relationships than non-players. Players of aggressive sports also inflicted more physical injury to their dating partners, and recorded higher measurements on scales of acceptance of violence, rape, and hostility towards women. As Forbes et al. (2005:449) note, the findings from this study add weight to previous concerns that aggressive sports provide "training grounds for sexism, misogyny, violence and homophobia" (e.g. Benedict, 1997, 1998; Messner and Stevens, 2002; Nelson, 1994). Malamuth (1998) suggests that young men engaging in aggressive sports may be exposed to negative male role models who encompass hegemonic masculine ideals, who indoctrinate young men in sexist, discriminatory attitudes about women, providing a catalyst for men's violence in dating relationships. Peer to peer support for violence against women was also identified in Capaldi et al.'s (2001:70) longitudinal analysis of young men. These authors found that adolescent men, who engaged in "hostile talk" about women with male peers, are more likely to display aggressive behaviours towards their female dating partners. Boeringer's (1999) study of 477 young men attending

American universities compared fraternity members with non-fraternity members, concluding that members were more likely to have attitudes that supported sexual violence towards women. Boeringer (1999) suggests that fraternity members' greater acceptance of sexual violence may be due to their increased exposure to conversations with other young men which desensitised their opposition to such violence; in having these conversations, violence against women became normalised and accepted as a hegemonic masculine standard. Young men reported being reluctant to challenge their peers' support for violence against women, since they feared being ostracised from the rest of the group, or being accused of not being a 'team player'.

Transforming Hegemonic Masculinity

Connell's (1995) initial writing on the concept of hegemonic masculinity has since been developed and updated by other scholars concerned to explore the means by which masculinity can be dissociated from asserting power and control over women (e.g. Hearn, 1998). hooks (2000) argues that young men can resist the imposition of a hegemonic masculine identity, reflecting what James Messerschmidt (2000:11) refers to as 'oppositional masculinities'; the performance of which "represent significant breaks from hegemonic masculinity and may actually threaten its dominance". In Messerschmidt's (2000:136) empirical study, performance of oppositional masculinities included young men's adoption of non-violent identities, and their choice to be in the "laid back" group of young men at school. Although most of the young men in Frosh et al.'s (2002) study demonstrated *some* aspects of hegemonic masculinity, few boys in this study felt that they personified an ideal model of hegemonic

masculinity, and many resisted it. Renold (2003) noted how some young men resisted sexist discourses (by publicly trusting their girlfriends, fostering equitable practices, respecting their partner's choices and decisions, and her right to be free from violence, abuse and control), but this resistance could come at a cost to 'masculine' status and consequently, jeopardise security within the peer group. As Messerschmidt (2000:136) concludes, resisting dominant forms of masculinity and performing modes of oppositional masculinities may require "self confidence rather than self doubt".

Disrupting the link between the performance of hegemonic modes of masculinity and male power and control is central to the feminist endeavour of dispelling women's oppression by patriarchy. Jeff Hearn (1998) has written of the need to transform the notion that 'normal' masculinity is associated with the men's power and control over women, locating many men's performance of masculinity with the ongoing pattern of intimate partner violence against women. Hearn (1998) argues that this requires a clear challenge to notions that men's dominance of women represents an inevitable and natural reflection of the social order, and a remodelling of masculine ideals based on non-violence and gender parity. Elsewhere, Hearn (2004:60) has suggested that the focus should now shift from examining the performance of hegemonic masculinity to analysis of "different ways of being men in relation to women, children and other men" and how men and women's consent to 'natural' male dominance and authority may be disrupted. Allied with this, feminists have also argued that this transformation can only take place by making visible the persistence of overstated views of gender equality (Holland et al., 2004; hooks, 2000; McRobbie, 2004; Sharpe, 2001).

Chapter Summary

This chapter has drawn on a wide range of literature to establish the theoretical basis for the current study, with a primary emphasis on theorising the mechanisms of patriarchal power and control operating within heterosexual intimate relationships. The past four decades of feminist research and activism have been particularly influential in transforming women's position in social, political, legal and personal spheres, securing full participation rights for young women in education and employment. Feminist scholars and activists have developed a public awareness and intolerance of violence against women, reflected in law and policy, by demonstrating a causal link between women's subordinate position in patriarchal social systems, and their experiences of male power, control, violence and abuse in the personal sphere of intimate relationships. More recently, in the 'post-feminist' era, powerful discourses of gender equality and economic and social individualism have developed, masking young women's ongoing experiences of patriarchal power and control within their intimate relationships with men. Young women find themselves located within competing discourses, where independence and liberation are expected, while also experiencing pressure to adhere to traditional modes of femininity so as to attract a male partner. The expectation that young women are now equipped to secure their own rights and to challenge inequality represents a significant obstacle to seeking support where violence and abuse occur.

The later chapters of this thesis return to the theoretical considerations outlined here, in locating the findings of the current study into a theoretical context. Having established

the current study's grounding within the feminist theoretical literature, the subsequent chapter offers a detailed overview of the current study's methodological approach, with reference to feminist methodological writings.

CHAPTER FOUR:

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Introduction

This methodology and methods chapter provides a detailed and reflexive report of the research process. A wide range of theoretical and methodological literature guided the methodological approach of this study, and feminist scholarship was of particular importance in formulating the choice of research methods and ethical stance. In this chapter, the means by which participants were accessed and recruited are explained, and a detailed overview of the fieldwork process is presented. Additionally, a considered discussion is put forward of the impact of the research endeavour on both the researcher and the researched. The chapter concludes with a detailed exposition of the data analysis process.

A 'Feminist' Methodological Approach

The wealth of feminist empirical, theoretical and methodological literature provides important guidance to feminist researchers, and has been crucial to the design and process of the current study. The central rationale of feminist research is to enact social change (Maynard, 1994) in order to challenge women's oppression by patriarchal systems and structures (Kelly et al., 1994): gendered inequality is a principle focus (Skinner et al., 2005). Ramazanoğlu, with Holland (2002:147) define 'feminist' research as projects which *".....are framed by feminist theory, and aim to produce*

knowledge that will be used for effective transformation of gendered injustice and subordination." Stanley and Wise (1993) construct feminist research as that which is undertaken *for* women, and contributes to the knowledge of women's experiences.

All feminist research hinges on an 'epistemological' framework, the particular lens through which individual scholars understand the reality of those they are researching (Stanley and Wise, 1993). Naples (2003) notes that for feminist researchers, the choice of methodological approach is deeply related to one's theoretical and epistemological stance, and different feminist researchers will tackle their studies from a variety of standpoints informed by their own backgrounds and lived experiences (Stanley and Wise, 1990). Feminist scholars are, however, united by their endeavour to break the silences attached to women's knowledge and world views; silences that have traditionally been maintained by women's subordinate status and men's franchise on the production of knowledge (De Beauvoir, 1949; Spender, 1986).

While there is no one 'feminist' approach to social research (Stanko, 1994), Oakley (1998:716) argues that, "to be a feminist social scientist one must have a certain allegiance to the qualitative paradigm", and to this end qualitative methods have been used extensively by feminist researchers, including those studying intimate partner violence and abuse (Cavanagh 2003; Dobash and Dobash 1979). Qualitative approaches reject the positivist ideal of a single truth or reality (Clarke, 2001), and have enabled feminists researchers to explore the "subjective experiences and meanings of those being researched" (Maynard, 1994:11). Qualitative techniques, where hearing the

participants' own perspectives takes prominence within the research agenda, have enabled women's varying and fluid experiences of patriarchal power and control to be taken into account, by maximising the scope for participants to speak in their own terms (Reinharz, 1992). Of the small number of feminist scholars, active in the dating violence field, many have undertaken their inquiries primarily with qualitative methods (e.g. Chung, 2005, 2007; Hird, 2000; Ismail et al. 2007; McCarry, 2007).

In the past, some feminist researchers have argued that quantitative techniques are incompatible with feminist inquiry (Bryman, 2001). Martin (1976) suggested that quantitative methods minimised the scale of issues facing women, a point which led Oakley and Oakley (1981) to argue that the collection and dissemination of much quantitative data is damaging to women's interests. Some feminist researchers remain concerned that much quantitative research continues to; minimise the scale of the problem of violence against women (Dobash and Dobash, 2004), conflate men's and women's violence with no gendered analysis (Dobash et al. 1992), and render women's attempts to resist male violence through self defence, verbal and physical retaliation as equivalent with men's abuse (Dutton, 1996). However, Maynard (1994) warns against outright rejection of quantitative methods in feminist research, since they have unearthed the nature and extent of violence against women, and justified the demand for effective interventions. 'Mixed method' research where both quantitative and qualitative methods are employed, has enabled feminist researchers to "cast their net as widely as possible" in the quest to understand women's complex experiences (Reinharz, 1992:213). Bryman (2001:286) has observed a "softening of attitude among

some feminist writers towards quantitative research in recent years", motivated by the success of quantitative methods in evidencing the extent of discrimination against women. More recently, feminist researchers have effectively combined quantitative and qualitative methods (Hird, 2000), measuring the scale of dating violence using survey research, before contextualising the survey results via qualitative interviews with a smaller number of participants. Although the current study is conducted solely through qualitative research techniques- reported later in this chapter- the value of quantitative techniques within feminist research is understood.

Feminist Research with Men

Feminist research is not limited to researching women; Cavanagh and Lewis (1996:87) argue that "feminists must include direct work with men as part of their agenda for change", and Stanley and Wise (1993) make a similar call. Some feminist researchers argue that researching men can enable researchers to determine the "extent and content of the deliberate strategies that men and male dominated institutions use to maintain their power" (Kelly et al. 1994:33). In other words, engagement with men is necessary if the tactics of power and control which some men use in their relationships with women are to be named and challenged. Dismantling the gendered power imbalances which perpetuate male violence against women can most effectively be achieved by raising *everyone's* consciousness of the issue. This has not been a priority of the dating violence literature in the past. The inclusion of young men in this study represents a

departure from focusing solely on women to explain men's violence against women in dating relationships[28].

The decision to include male participants was also informed by Connell's (1995) analysis of how patriarchal structures can serve to confine not only women, but men also, through expectations of 'normal' male behaviour, where control of women and less powerful men is central. I considered that young men's perspectives on dating relationships, violence and abuse may illuminate their experiences and perceptions of patriarchal expectations[29].

Feminist studies of intimate partner violence which have been conducted with men have tended to include only *violent* men, who are in the criminal justice system for violence against their partners (Cavanagh and Lewis, 1996; Harne, 2005; Wilson, 1996). By contrast, both the male and female participants in the current study were recruited as a s*elf selecting* sample. This meant that prior to engaging with each participant in the interview, I had no knowledge of any previous experience of dating relationships, or of violence.

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[28] Feminist domestic violence researchers have found that violent men often deny and minimise their violence, and will also blame their partner (Cavanagh et al., 2001).

[29] Studies by feminist researchers such as Price (2010) and Shortall (2002) have made clear the breadth of patriarchal structures in confining and oppressing men's identities within dominant expectations of 'masculine' behaviour, and for participants in Shortall's (2002) study, limiting career choices to those widely agreed to be 'men's work'.

Developing the Methodological Approach

Qualitative research methods are most conducive to achieving the current study's research aim of exploring young people's attitudes, perceptions and experiences of dating violence from their own perspectives, free from the confines of prescriptive pre-determined lists of responses. Having elected to pursue a qualitative approach, it was necessary to carefully consider the most appropriate qualitative method or combination of methods. Two potential ways to advance were considered: to undertake a combined focus group and interview study, or a study conducted solely via a larger number of qualitative interviews.

Choosing a Qualitative Approach

Within the small pool of qualitative dating violence studies, focus groups have been a popular mode of enquiry (e.g. Lavoie et al., 2000; Regan and Kelly, 2001), relative to qualitative interviews. The key benefit of the focus group in social research is that it allows data to be collected from larger numbers of respondents in a relatively short space of time, compared with the time taken to interview the same number of respondents individually. This feature was most appealing considering that the current project involves a lone researcher, and conducting and subsequently transcribing interviews with individual participants is significantly more time consuming than is the case for focus groups. Focus groups also have the value of providing an insight into how respondents interact, concur, and challenge each other in discussing the research topics (Gilbert, 2001). Dating violence studies undertaken using focus groups have enhanced the understanding of dating violence and abuse from young people's

perspectives, and have contextualised the findings of quantitative work by allowing respondents the opportunity to speak from their own frame of reference (e.g. Hird, 2000, McCarry, 2007). Regan and Kelly (2001) argue that same sex focus groups provide a forum in which young people can discuss their views openly and honestly.[30] However, this is not always the case in focus group research: Burton et al. (1998:33) found that some young women were hindered in what they were willing to say in the focus group, citing the example of a young woman who minimised her feelings about having her breast pinched and being forced to watch a pornographic movie, by a boy who was also present in the focus group. This stifled the young woman's opportunity to express her feelings about what had happened to her, as she was worried about how others would react. Participants may also limit their reporting based on their feelings of embarrassment, or because they are worried that their experience is too trivial to mention to the whole group. There is also a potential for victims and perpetrators to be present in the same group, with the possibility of a risk to the victim's subsequent safety should the perpetrator respond violently to disclosures being made. In considering the suitability of focus groups for the current study, I was also concerned that the focus group dynamic could impede the expression of the young people's genuine thoughts and experiences, and compromise this very central research priority. Furthermore, Regan and Kelly (2001:12) found that in some focus groups "considerable time (was) being spent 'showing off' to each other and the group facilitators: this took various forms including sexual bravado and joking and teasing of

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[30] Indeed, I have observed this for myself, while co-facilitating focus groups undertaken for my colleague's PhD current fieldwork. Here, focus groups have proven to be very supportive forums where young people can exchange their views, particularly when some or all of the participants are known to each other.

one another". Although these authors note that these exchanges were revealing in themselves and contextualised the young people's peer relations, this observation demonstrates the extent to which some focus group members can influence and limit what others will report, and derail the purpose of the focus group. It is certainly doubtful whether a young person would feel able to make a serious or sensitive point, or reveal their own experiences of violence and abuse in such an environment. Boeringer's (1999) analysis of some young men's reticence to voice disapproval of violence against women when other young men are present, further evidences the constraints imposed by group 'norms' upon honest reporting. In view of these considerations, individual interviews were deemed the most effective means of engaging with young people, and the method which could maximise young people's sense of security and comfort during their research involvement.

Sampling and Participation Criteria

As noted in the previous chapter, the vast majority of dating violence studies have researched primarily young men and women attending American Universities. The tendency to focus only on University students has generated a sample bias and, consequently, very little is known about how young people not involved in Higher Education experience dating violence. While not wishing to exclude *any* young people from research participation (I did go on to interview a number of University students) recruiting young men and women from a broader range of social and educational backgrounds was desirable. It was considered that recruiting research participants from educational organisations, and organisations working with young people not enrolled in

education, could provide an effective means of achieving a diverse research sample, extending the opportunity for participation to young people rarely considered in the dating violence literature. Participants were recruited from one Further Education (F.E) College, an organisation working with young people not in employment, education or training, and a small sample of University students.

The Participants' Social Class Backgrounds

The current study does not seek to compare the experiences or attitudes of young people according to their social class backgrounds, and there was no orchestrated attempt to measure social or economic demographics during the research exercise. It was important, however, to recognise the likelihood that the young people from the three sample groups could be from quite different social and economic backgrounds. Indeed, it would be naïve to ignore the secondary research evidence which suggests that young University students, F.E. College students, and young people who are categorised as NEET[31] (Not in Employment, Education or Training), are markedly different in terms of their access to resources and opportunities. Young people aged 16-18 who are NEET are more likely to experience future unemployment, low income, teenage motherhood, depression and poor physical health (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009). This group also more likely to experience measures of social and economic deprivation including financial exclusion and weak family support networks (Scottish Government, 2005). Thus, it was envisaged that the inclusion of

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[31] The term NEET is a term used by the UK government to categorise young people aged 16-24 years who are not in education, employment or training. The term appears in various policy contexts aimed at increasing young people's presence in these three arenas. In Scotland, some 11.9% (n=31,000) of all 16-19 year olds are NEET (The Scottish Government, 2009a).

young people of NEET status in this study would raise the likelihood of hearing the voices of young people from less privileged socio economic backgrounds than the has been the case in studies employing only university based samples, a prominent feature of the existing body of dating violence research[32]. It was on this basis that efforts were made to identify an organisation where young people of NEET status could be invited to participate.

Despite there being no questions on the interview schedule which related directly to social class (see later discussion in this chapter), the participants in this study alluded to their social and economic positions through discussion of their educational and employment aspirations, family backgrounds, housing, schooling and finances. These discussions revealed quite marked differences between the sample groups. It was noteworthy that reports of experiences such as territorialism (related to rivalry between neighbouring housing schemes), gang violence and knife crime were largely concentrated in the accounts of young people from the NEET sample. Concurrent with the research evidence noted above, it was also apparent that young people from the NEET sample were experiencing measures of deprivation that were less evident in the accounts of the other participants. Notably, young people from the NEET sample had clearly encountered barriers to accessing to the continuing education and employment secured by the other participants, all of whom had gained a place on a college or university course and some of whom were in part time paid work which provided a

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[32] Examination of the how and whether social and economic status interconnects with young people's experiences of dating violence and abuse is an newly emerging mode of enquiry within the dating violence literature, with researchers identifying young women from disadvantaged backgrounds to be particularly vulnerable to violence and abuse perpetrated by intimate male partners (Spriggs et al., 2009).

degree of financial independence and the social benefits of meeting new people and developing work skills. In the later findings chapters of this thesis, some noteworthy points of difference between the sample groups in terms of the young people's attitudes, perceptions and experiences of dating violence and abuse are highlighted.

The Age Range of the Participants

Prior to commencing the fieldwork, it was important to consider who would be invited to take part in the interviews, and to ensure that age range of the sample was determined with cognisance to the study's research aims. In my previous dating violence study (Macnab, 2005) young men and women aged between 16 and 25 years were eligible to participate. In retrospect, this age range was too wide: there was a significant disparity in the nature of the intimate relationships experienced by the young people at the top and bottom parameters of the age range, and an evident blurring of the boundaries between 'dating' and 'domestic' relationships across the sample. This had implications for the research focus: those participants in the upper age range, aged 23-25 tended to be in 'domestic' relationships whereby they cohabited with a partner and/or had children, while the participants aged under 21 were typically involved in 'dating' relationships where they did not live with their partner. With these age-related differences in mind, when designing the current study I deemed it important to secure a clear focus on *dating* relationships, distinguishing this study from others which have focused on domestic abuse. Accordingly, I narrowed the age range of the research participants for the current research to age 16-21 years, on the basis that the relationships experienced by those aged over 21 would likely be characterised

differently. Young people aged less than 16 years were ineligible to take part in the research as they were unable to provide informed consent independently of their parents/guardians, and were unlikely to be located in the recruitment sites.

Relationship Experience

There was no requirement for participants to have experienced a dating relationship, or to have experienced violence. Although the feminist focus of this study means that men's violence against their female dating partners is the primary focus, there was no preclusion of young men and women who identified themselves as being lesbian gay, bisexual or transgender [33]. The participants were not questioned on their sexual orientation, and none of the young men and women interviewed during the research identified themselves to me as being as being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT).[34]

Access and Recruitment

Young People Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)

It was considered good practice to recruit young people who were not undertaking employment or education from an organisation or voluntary group, rather than approaching them in the street or in public spaces. The latter approach was disregarded, after considering the potentially negative implications for the researcher's safety and the participants' sense of security, as well as practical problems such as finding private

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[33] Research on dating violence in gay and lesbian and bisexual relationships has been undertaken by Freedner et al. (2002).

[34] It was anticipated that some participants may be LGBT. My plan in interviewing young people who identified as LGBT was to follow the same interview process, encouraging the participants to speak from their own frame of reference about the issues they felt were important.

space to conduct the interviews. A key resource in identifying appropriate organisations to assist in the recruitment of young people who were NEET was the Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector's *Infobase* website, where some 1500 community and voluntary organisations in Glasgow are listed. A number of these organisations work specifically for young people who have experienced violence and abuse, and for women victims of abuse by men. These organisations were deliberately removed from the list of potential recruitment sites, as the rationale was to recruit a sample of young people who met the age criteria and educational status only, rather than a sample of young people identified as having experienced violence and abuse. All young people aged 16-21 were eligible to participate.

From the *Infobase* website, five organisations located in the Glasgow area were selected. All five organisations work primarily with young people aged 16-21 years, with all or a high proportion of their young people not in education. Contact was initially made by telephoning each organisation directly. Two of the organisations were not contactable by telephone despite several attempts and voicemail messages, and I concluded that either the organisation was no longer operating, or they were unable to accommodate my research request. A third organisation agreed to my request for access in principle over a series of telephone calls, but were then unresponsive to subsequent letters and telephone calls, meaning no research visits could be arranged. A similar scenario occurred with a fourth organisation, who agreed my access request over the telephone, but did not respond to my subsequent letter (sent at their request to formally approve the access request) nor a series of follow up telephone calls. Much later, it was

explained that the access request had been lost at a time of staffing changes. By that time, access had been successfully negotiated, and interviews underway, at a training organisation for unemployed young people in Glasgow city centre. The manager of the Glasgow office felt confident that I would be able to recruit a large number of young people from the organisation, and offered to approve as many research visits as were necessary to recruit young people for interviews. Consequently, no further attempts were made to pursue other organisations for young people not in education.

The training organisation receives cohorts of around 12 young people every two weeks. For the purposes of the current research, these young people are categorised as NEET, even though at the time of the fieldwork they had very recently begun training. Once access was secured, the main contact here was the Facilitator, who worked with the young people in their groups, preparing them for placements. The Facilitator was the person with whom convenient times for research visits were arranged. A total of twenty-two interviews were undertaken at the training organisation.

College Students

Having undertaken fieldwork in a Glasgow F.E college for a previous degree (Macnab, 2005), further access was successfully negotiated to recruit research volunteers for the current study. In the prior research experience there, I observed that the teaching staff's time was often very limited, and although they were willing to allow plenty of time to speak with their students about the research, inviting me into their classrooms and allowing the young people time out of class to take part in an interview, their time and

resources did not stretch to supporting the fieldwork beyond allowing me into the class to speak with groups of assembled students, while they often marked coursework or prepared teaching materials. This was perfectly acceptable to me, in re-negotiating access for the current study, I suggested following this same format of staff involvement.

There was a narrow window of time in which to interview the students at the college. Ethical approval was granted in late April 2007 and the college closed for the summer holidays in the first few days of June. This left just five weeks in which to identify teaching staff who would allow me access to their classes to introduce my research to their students; find students willing to be interviewed, and then plan mutually agreeable times to conduct the interviews with all students who had agreed. In May, many students were undertaking examinations and assessments, so it was often difficult for staff to find convenient times to allow me access to their class. I took the decision not to commence with further fieldwork with any other organisations at that time, as I considered it should be my priority to be available at short notice should opportunities for meeting with young people arise within the college. This decision provided sound; I would often receive a phone call or email in the evening from a member of the teaching staff, advising me of an opportunity to meet with students and interview any willing volunteers the following day. Notwithstanding the very short space of time available at the college, seventeen interviews were conducted there.

University Students

Although recruiting young people from non-University populations was a key priority, there was no desire to exclude any young people from research participation. Indeed, after securing access arrangements in the FE college and the NEET organisation, and anticipating that sufficient numbers of young people could be recruited from these sites, it was planned that University students would be sought for interviews. My teaching post at a local University (a different institution to that where this doctoral study is registered) provided the opportunity to introduce the research to students I had recently taught[35]. It was envisaged that interviews with University students could take place at the end of the Spring semester, after their examinations, and when my role as their tutor ended. I approached the course co-ordinator, who agreed to this, but asked that arrangements were not made with students until she had checked with her more senior colleagues. Several weeks later, with no agreement in place, the co-ordinator informed that it would be necessary for the access request to go before the University's ethics committee, a process that could take several weeks, or even months. This was despite ethical approval being granted at the researcher's own institution. This left insufficient time in which to interview the students, and intensive fieldwork was already underway in the other two research sites. Aware that no agreement had yet been made at the University, I continued to actively recruit young people within the FE College and NEET organisation. At this time, I was contacted by a student who I had tutored the previous year, seeking a reference for her planned study abroad. She asked how the research was progressing, and offered to take part in an interview. She suggested that

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[35] It was important to recruit only students who I no longer taught, to minimise any pressure to take part. It was important that no student felt that they would be treated unfavourably if they declined the invitation to be interviewed.

some of her friends may also be interested in participating, and offered to ask them to take part. This young woman subsequently provided a list of six email addresses, all of young women who had said they would be willing to be contacted to hear more about the research and possibly agree to an interview. This 'snowball' sampling method led to three of the six women agreeing to be interviewed. This technique was employed once more, when a member of the researcher's family informed some fellow undergraduate students of the current research. This yielded a further two research participants, who made email contact with the researcher. A total of six University students were interviewed. All interviews with University students took place in teaching rooms on the University campus.

Sample Proportions

Interviewing an approximately equal number of men (n=23) and women (n=22) has allowed for gendered comparisons to be made using the data. The numbers of participants recruited from each research site was less equal. Of the forty five participants[36], thirty nine were recruited from non-University populations, representing an important contribution to including this under-researched group of young people in the study of dating violence. The imbalance in the sample group sizes does mean, however, that caution must be taken in drawing comparisons between the accounts of University students, with those of young people from the NEET and FE College group. The unequal numbers of young people interviewed from each of the three groups poses minimal conflict with the research aims, which has not sought to compare young

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[36] A table detailing each participant's pseudonym, the sample group from which they were recruited, their age and relationship status, is included in Appendix VI at the back of this thesis.

people's attitudes or experiences. Nonetheless, it had been my intention to ensure roughly equal numbers of young people within each sample group. The fact that the sample groups are of unequal size attests to the limits of researchers' control in researching within external organisations, and also the fact that at some stage the decision must be taken to wind down the fieldwork to allow the project to move on.

Recruitment of Participants

The Group Discussion

Each research visit to the College and the training organisation began with me introducing myself and the research to the young people, assembled in their classroom groupings[37]. A group session was conducted with the young people on each research visit, where I spoke for a period of approximately 20 to 30 minutes, introducing the topic of dating violence, asking for the young people's opinions, allowing them to ask questions of me, and listening as they debated (unprompted by me) with their peers. This exercise was beneficial in capturing their interest in the topic, enabling me to demonstrate the nature of the questions that would be asked in the interviews. At the end of the group discussion, the young people were offered the opportunity to speak with me individually in an interview. The young people were informed that the interview would include questions about their own attitudes, perceptions and experiences of dating relationships and dating violence and abuse, but that they were free to decline to answer any question. It was stressed to the participants in the group

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[37] The only participants who did not take part in a group discussion were the University students. These students were recruited via 'snowball' sampling and a group discussion was not possible since they met me alone on the University campus.

discussion that taking part in an interview was their choice, that the content of the interview would be confidential[38], and that they could change their mind and withdraw from participation at any time with no negative consequences. It was also stressed that anyone aged between 16 and 21 was eligible to participate; there was no requirement to be in a dating relationship or to have experienced violence. It was important to emphasise the latter point, to minimise the potential for participants to be 'labelled' as victims or perpetrators of violence by their peers, based on their participation in an interview.

All young people present in the group sessions were issued with an information sheet which explained the nature of the study and listed the researcher's contact details at the University (see Appendix IV). A contacts sheet detailing a variety of support organisations was also distributed (see Appendix V). These sheets were given out during the group discussion, prior to asking whether any of the young people would like to volunteer for an interview. I suggested that some people may prefer to take some time to consider whether they wanted to take part, before contacting me directly, or they could volunteer or decline there and then. The names of the young people willing to be interviewed were noted, and interview times were then arranged. It was usually possible to interview all of the volunteers from each group on the same day. Where there was insufficient time for this, arrangements were made for the researcher to return

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[38] The participants were informed during the group session and before taking part in an interview that he only caveat to confidentiality was where the welfare of a child is in danger.

to the organisation to conduct the interview at an alternative mutually convenient time.[39] No young people contacted me subsequently to request an interview.

Gatekeepers

My prior experience of research fieldwork at the College revealed the potential influence of 'gatekeepers', who had previously offered to "apply some pressure" to the students in advance of my visits to their classroom, to avoid me having a "wasted journey" should no one agree to be interviewed. These statements reinforced the young people's vulnerability to coercion by more powerful adults, with the clear potential for their right to choose whether to take part in the research, to be compromised (Campbell and Dienemann, 2001). I remained mindful of this in approaching the fieldwork for the current study, and ensured that staff present in the recruitment sites were made aware of the requirement for young people being free to decide for themselves whether to be interviewed, and only after being fully briefed on the research and what their involvement would entail. It was also stressed that the staff should not worry about perceived wastages of the researcher's time, and that it was fully anticipated that some visits to the organisations to explain the research to the young people would result in no volunteers coming forward. All young people encountered during the recruitment exercise were also assured that participation in the research was entirely voluntary, and that no negative consequences accompanied declining to take part.

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[39] The permission of the staff within the recruitment sites was always sought prior to each interview. Research visits were scheduled around the students' work commitments, and busy times such as days leading up to examinations and coursework submissions were avoided.

In commencing the fieldwork at the NEET organisation, it was necessary to remind a member of staff about the voluntary nature of research participation, after I was presented with the names of two young people who would be 'good' people to speak to. It seemed that this staff member had knowledge of these young people's experiences of violence and abuse, and I consciously avoided entering into a dialogue about this and made no note of the names. Indeed, I am unsure as to whether or not these individuals were among those who volunteered to be interviewed. There were also occasions when well meaning questions by staff in both the NEET organisation and the college had to be dealt with carefully to maintain the confidentiality of the research participants. On a number of occasions, staff asked me probing questions after the participant and I had emerged from the interview room. I was able to respond to questions such as, *"How did you get on?"* and *"Did that go well?"* simply by replying *"Fine thank-you"*, and not engaging in further conversation about the interview or the participant. Other comments proved more difficult to deal with, such as, *"Did he tell you all that you wanted to hear?"*, *"I bet he was a really good person for you to speak to, about violence…"*, and *"Did that boy tell you about his dealings with the police?"* I perceived these comments to be attempts by some staff members to encourage me to discuss the content of the interview with them, by alluding to their own knowledge, or assumed knowledge, about the young person's experiences. Maintaining the confidentiality of the participants was the primary concern, so I always resisted these attempts to discuss the interviews by changing the subject. These were, however, uncomfortable situations as I was aware of the need to maintain a positive working relationship with the staff, and relied on their help in creating opportunities in which to speak to potential participants.

The Interviews

Forty five interviews were undertaken, between May 2007 and December 2007. A total of 22 young women and 23 young men were interviewed. Seventeen participants (seven women and ten men) were recruited from the college, and twenty-two participants (ten women and twelve men) were recruited during from the NEET organisation. Five young women and one young man attending university were also interviewed. The young people who participated in interviews were aged between 16 and 21. Interviews lasted between 30 and 75 minutes, although the average interview time was approximately one hour.

Only a minority of the participants who took part in this research were university students, and these participants were the group with whom finding a mutually convenient interview time and place was the most difficult; it often took several weeks (and in one instance several months) to schedule an interview. Young people in the NEET organisation and college were required to maintain regular hours, under the supervision of their organisation, which regulated where they would be and when they would be there. University students had greater freedom to control their own diaries. This was demonstrated in their need to select convenient interview times to fit around coursework requirements, paid employment, and time spent abroad. McRobbie (2000:134) has noted that "middle class career women are much more difficult to pin down for an interview than elderly cleaners and domestic servants", and this notion did indeed reflect the experience of the current research, where the young people in the NEET organisation and the college were accessed comparatively easily.

Ethical Considerations: Participant Wellbeing and Informed Consent

Operating with moral responsibility is a fundamental principle of feminist enquiry (Ramazanoğlu, with Holland, 2002). Prior to commencing the fieldwork, a detailed research proposal was required to be submitted to the Department of Applied Social Science Ethics Committee, and ethical approval was granted on the basis that a robust consideration of the ethical issues associated with the research had been undertaken[40]. Each interview was preceded by ensuring that the participant was aware of the nature of the research, and reminding them of their right to withdraw at any time. Participants were also informed that they could refrain from answering any of the questions, and of the limits of the confidentiality that could be offered[41]. During this preamble, I also encouraged the participants to ask any questions or make points any time they wanted to, stressing how they could valuably contribute to the research by adding new avenues of enquiry that I had not previously considered. It was not taken for granted that participants understood that their verbatim quotations may be included within the completed research report, so this practice, and the process of anonymising the participants' narratives through use of pseudonyms was explained at the start of each interview[42]. The participants' permission to tape record the discussion was also sought prior to commencing each interview.

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[40] The potential for harm to the researcher was minimised by conducting all interviews within the recruitment site premises. Details such as the home address and home telephone number of the researcher were not revealed.

[41] The participants were advised that confidentiality could not be maintained if they revealed that the welfare of a child was in danger.

[42] It was initially proposed that participants would be invited to select their own pseudonym at the start of the interview, however this practice was amended at the request of the ethics committee, and pseudonyms were allocated by the researcher during the transcription and analysis stage of the research.

It was recognised that the personal and potentially very sensitive topics to be covered in the current research required careful consideration of how the research experience may impact upon the participants, and thought was given as to how best to deal with scenarios where the participants displayed signs of becoming distressed or upset. Ensuring that the participants had a clear understanding of what the study was about in terms of the nature of the topics, in advance of the interviews, was vital to making sure that the young people were making informed choices in agreeing or declining to participate. Being clear that questions would be asked about both their attitudes *and* their experiences, and that all participants were free to decline any of the interviewer's questions without any explanation was also central to obtaining their fully informed consent.

I was keen to ensure that the participants felt fully confident of their anonymity in view of the sensitive nature of the topics that would be covered in the interviews. For this reason, and after much consideration, I chose not to ask the participants to sign a consent form or provide contact details[43]. Although obtaining signed consent forms would have provided me with a sense of security in knowing I had an 'official' record of the participants' consent, I considered that asking the young people to provide their full name and/or contact details on the consent form could potentially compromise their own faith in the anonymity of their participation. Upon reflection, this decision still feels to have been the best option, although it has meant that I have no means of re-contacting the participants with details of the research findings. Anticipating this, I closed each interview by reminding the participants that they were free to contact me at

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[43] I had the email addresses, and knew the first names and surnames of all six University students.

any stage in the future when I would be happy to discuss the research findings and/or send them a written summary.

Interview Schedule

Qualitative interviewing requires the researcher to be highly engaged with the participants' narratives; not all questions can be prepared in advance, and the interviewer must develop the capacity to ask new and unplanned questions as different issues emerge (Mason, 2006; May, 2001). The opportunity to respond to new issues and points of view arose regularly throughout the interviews. This was reassuring as it evidenced the fact that the participants' own perspectives were indeed emerging, and being followed up. In order to accommodate both the hearing of young people's own views and perspectives, and the need to ensure that the interviews addressed the current study's principal research aims and objectives (as set out in the first chapter of this thesis), it was necessary develop a research instrument that provided a flexible structure around which the interview narratives could be framed. A flexible interview schedule was produced in advance of the fieldwork, setting out the topics to be covered during the interviews. It was important that the schedule acted as an *aide memoire*, rather than a rigid list of questions to be asked of all participants in a prescribed order. The first section of the schedule contained general questions about dating relationships, designed to enable the collection of data on the contexts in which dating violence may occur, while questions related to the participant's own attitudes and experiences were listed later on. However, it was anticipated that this order would vary between interviews, as

the participants may pre-empt some questions, raise themes in a different order, or introduce themes not on the list.

The *aide memoire* was particularly useful in interviews with young people who did not initiate any avenues of discussion, or who seemed initially reluctant to say very much other in direct response to specific questions. My plan was to ask the more general questions about dating relationships and awareness of the issues of violence and abuse in the early stages of each interview, before moving on to asking the participants the more personal questions about their own perceptions and experiences. This approach seemed to work well, and in most interviews there was the sense that both the participant and the interviewer relaxed into the interview after the first few minutes.

My capacity to 'juggle' the order of the aide memoire in accordance with the participants' pre-empting of some topics, and introduction of other avenues of discussion, developed quickly over the course of the interviews. A valuable learning experience occurred in one of the very first interviews, with a young woman at the college. The participant disclosed that she was currently supporting her best friend, who was experiencing violence and abuse from her boyfriend. This disclosure came just seconds after the audio recorder had been switched on, and caught me somewhat off guard as I had not yet delivered the preamble to the interview, where I would reiterate the purpose of the study, and the participant's right to withdraw etc. This was overwhelming: I knew the questions I wanted to ask in relation to the situation the participant was describing, but my plan for getting the interview underway had been

altered. So, instead of engaging fully with this disclosure straight away (as I should have done), I allowed the participant to speak before moving on with the other themes on the interview schedule, then returned to the disclosure in the later stages of the interview. We ultimately spent the latter half of the interview discussing the participant's experience of supporting her friend, which was clearly important to her. Although in the end I felt that the priority of enabling the participant to report the issues of importance to her had been upheld, I knew that my earlier decision to delay this discussion had been misguided. My choice had created the potential risk of suggesting to the participant that her experience was less important than the questions I wanted to ask. Immediately after the interview I decided to implement a strategy of not diverting to other questions, in cases where participants made disclosures or reports early in the interview that they clearly wanted to speak about, but to instead fully engage with their reports. This strategy had cause to be employed in subsequent interviews, where various participants reported personal experiences of a variety of issues at the very earliest stages of the interviews.

Non-Hierarchical Research

Dismantling imbalanced hierarchies of power between the researcher and the researched is a central principle of much feminist scholarship. The feminist literature evidences the strategies employed by feminist researchers which are designed to minimise such hierarchies, for example; encouraging both the participant and the researcher contribute their views and experiences (Seibold, 2000), making visible the researcher's personal background (Letherby, 2000) and casting the participants as the

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experts on the topic being discussed (McCarry, 2005). Feminist researchers have been at the forefront of challenging the notion that interviewers should adopt an objective and measured approach (e.g. McMillan, 2007), recognising that the interviewer's personal investment in the research relationship is key to establishing and maintaining rapport (Maynard, 1994).

The dominance of quantitative methods in dating violence research has offered minimal opportunity for young people themselves to participate in setting the research agenda. Limiting participants to a prescribed list of questions (as has so often been the case in dating violence research) has curtailed valuable opportunities to hear young people's perspectives and new ideas that may not already have been considered, confining the data to what is already known (Bryman, 2001). In conducting the current study, this curtailment of young people's own perspectives was actively avoided. Emulating the approach of previous feminist research involving young people, time was taken at various junctures in each interview to ask the participants for ideas of what they themselves felt were important (Burman et al., 2001) or if they had suggestions of further avenues for the study to investigate. A number of participants put forward valuable perspectives which were added to the *aide memoire* and explored further in subsequent interviews. Fostering this notion of reciprocity brought about similar issues to those reported by other feminist researchers (e.g. Skeggs, 1997; Seibold, 2000), who have identified the restrictions upon feminist researchers' capacities to dismantle all of the barriers which exist between the researcher and the participants, and the limits to

the extent to which any research encounter can be genuinely non-hierarchical. There were a number of dilemmas in this regard, reported subsequently.

Challenges to the Non-Hierarchical Approach

At 24 years of age, I was only slightly older than many of the participants. I hoped that my being of similar age to the participants would minimise any embarrassment they may feel about revealing personal and sensitive details. Although I believe this was the case to some extent, as some participants explained that there are topics such as relationships and intimacy that they would feel uncomfortable speaking about with an 'older' person, it was quite clear throughout the recruitment and interview stages of the fieldwork that despite my best efforts, the research was not entirely 'non-hierarchical'. The feminist literature highlights how despite the most stringent efforts to ensure participants' voices are represented, complete removal of power differentials between researchers and participants is impossible (Mauthner and Doucet, 2000). Unavoidable power differentials exist which place young research participants in a less powerful position than the researcher herself (McCarry, 2005), and even feminist researchers committed to "minimising the gulf between the researcher and the researched" acknowledge that a degree of researcher objectivity is necessary in locating the participants' perspectives into a theoretical context (Taylor, 1993:19). In the current study the participants, quite naturally, made determinations about their role in the research endeavour and mine, and made decisions about how they would behave in accordance with this. The operation of power differentials was evidenced by instances where participants would swear during the interview, then immediately apologise or

seem worried that I was offended or angry. On other occasions, some participants took on a 'subordinate' role, waiting for questions to be asked before speaking. There was a clear hierarchy in place in interviews with participants who preferred to assume more distinct roles where I was cast as the questioner and them the respondent, although paradoxically I was not in control of the fact that these participants were casting me in the role of the more 'powerful' person in charge. Although I had made it clear to all participants that they were welcome to ask me questions or offer their own views on any issue they felt was relevant, there were some participants who would offer little beyond direct answers to my questions, appearing more comfortable to answer the questions rather than ask them. These interviews were not necessarily problematic, and although these young people were more passive than some of the others, they seemed comfortable and relaxed. I did not feel at any time that anyone was taking part reluctantly. Indeed, they had the right to participate in whichever way they felt most comfortable.

There were further challenges to the notion of a non-hierarchical approach during the fieldwork process. The substantive areas of dating violence and violence against women are *my* areas of interest, and not necessarily the participants'. Some young people may well have perceived me as someone with a greater level of knowledge of these issues than they had themselves, despite my best efforts to underscore the fact that the rationale for the research was to discuss *their* views and experiences, not to 'test' their knowledge. It is important to recognise that the very fact that the interviews took place at all was at my request. Furthermore, the preparation I had undertaken in

advance of the fieldwork equipped me with considerably more control over the agenda for the discussion.

The young people's interaction with their peers in the group discussions illuminated the variety of contrasting opinions on dating relationships and violence. My presentations in the group sessions highlighted some of the key questions to be addressed in the research, for example; whether young people believed dating violence was perpetrated mainly by men or by women, and their views on the reasons for this violence. It was important not to stifle the expression of participants' opinions by saying too much about my own beliefs (Parr, 1998). In particular, I felt it necessary to limit discussion of my own feminist standpoint, as I could not take it for granted that the participants' would understand that I am not 'anti-men' and I felt discussing my feminist position would inevitably conflict with their open and honest reporting[44].

A further power imbalance between the researcher and the participants exists in the period after the data collection, at the point of data analysis and report writing (Mauthner and Doucet, 2000). Here, the researcher has sole control over the analysis (Siebold, 2000), can interpret the views of the participant through whichever theoretical lens they choose, and has the ultimate "power of editorship" (Letherby, 2000:96). The researcher's personal perspectives in analysing the data and writing up the research

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[44] In reflecting upon my decision not to identify as a feminist, I recall perceiving a likelihood that publicly aligning myself with feminist perspectives would portray me as judgemental in the eyes of the participants, undermining the flow of their honest opinions. I also considered the potential for some participants to want to debate my own opinions, which was not the rationale of the interview. My concern that the young people would equate a feminist perspective with an anti-male stance, even if only alluding to the feminist perspective in acknowledging my awareness of the research evidence which established intimate partner violence as a problem of male violence against women, echoes the post-feminist theoretical concepts discussed in the previous chapter.

report may conflict with the participant's own points of view; in the current study, this situation arose in analysing the perspectives of participants who blamed women victims for men's violence, and in choosing to critique and problematise these perceptions.

Notwithstanding the issues discussed above, every attempt was made to ensure the research process was as non-hierarchical and reciprocal as possible. I encouraged the participants to ask questions of me (Oakley, 1981; Parr, 1998), while also offering details of my own relationship (Finch, 1984) and experiences as a young person. It was pleasing to have a number of participants who embraced the notion of reciprocal research to a great degree, by suggesting areas of inquiry that I had not previously considered. Some participants also asked me questions about my own relationship, my attitudes about violence, and my social life.

Gendered Differences in Researching Young Women and Young Men

In the course of the interviews, several female participants asked whether I thought their boyfriend's behaviour was acceptable, how I would 'handle' the situations they described, and whether I thought they were being sufficiently supportive of female friends who experienced dating violence, or too harsh or unsympathetic. A number of young women were interested in my 'job' as a research student, and commented that they would like to work in a job that let them 'help' people with their personal relationships. On the whole, I felt comfortable discussing these matters with these participants, and found the questions relating to my personal life to be motivated by healthy curiosity. The few occasions where I experienced questioning by research

participants to be more difficult, involved male participants. In the college, during the group discussions, some young men asked questions in front of assembled groups of young people. These included "Are you single?" and "Is that a ring on your finger?" followed by some hilarity from the other young people, apparently not because the questions were particularly funny, but because it was seen as daring to be asking these questions of me. There was another instance where I was not questioned directly, but my presence in the organisation was highlighted by one young man to the wider group of assembled young people in his gym class who hollered "Who's the bird?", again to the apparent amusement of the other young people. I chose to deal with these instances by appearing nonplussed, speaking over the hilarity, and getting on with the task of introducing my project to the young people and seeking volunteers for interviews. In truth, the way these statements were directed so publicly did make me feel uncomfortable; it may have been that this was intended. I did not feel though that these were attempts to humiliate or scare me, in the way that has characterised some other feminist researchers' experiences of researching men (Harne, 2005; McKee and O'Brien, 1983). Although these questions were directed at me very differently to the manner in which I asked questions of the participants, these feelings of discomfort did prevent any ambivalence about how it feels to be asked personal questions. Indeed, as the fieldwork progressed over several months and I became more practised in asking personal and highly sensitive questions, it could have been easy to become less mindful of the impact of the research upon each participant, for whom the interview was a new experience. I did, however, feel a growth in my confidence as the fieldwork went on, and worried less about how I might be received by an assembled group. In the latter

research visits, there was also a feeling of comfort from knowing that I had already collected a lot of data, and so a hostile response from one group of young people, or a blanket refusal to participate, did not indicate that the fieldwork exercise would be unsuccessful. Happily, these scenarios never materialised.

Practical Considerations

Finding appropriate accommodation for interviews was a key concern, particularly at the beginning of the fieldwork. The majority of the interviews which took place at the college were conducted in a private office in the 'Study Base', the department where students could access support on academic or personal issues. On the few occasions where this office could not be used, the interviews were conducted in the 'Women's Aid cupboard', a comfortable but tiny room used by the workers from the local branch of Women's Aid who are present in the college every Wednesday [45] . The accommodation was adequate, and most importantly, the rooms were sufficiently sound proofed to prevent the interview being overheard by people in neighbouring rooms. Interview accommodation was also provided at the NEET organisation, although there were more background noise issues there, given that the office is located in one of the busiest streets in Glasgow city centre. Most interviews there were conducted in a vacant office.

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[45] I had an opportunity to meet with one of the Women's Aid workers on one occasion. She informed me that most women who approach her at the college are mature students, but she is aware of the issue of dating violence. I suggested that I could direct young women who could benefit from support from Women's Aid to the local branch, or advise them of the availability of Women's Aid workers in the college each Wednesday.

There were a few occasions where the interview accommodation was inadequate. An issue arose as I interviewed a student at the University, in a room located in her work premises on campus. Around forty minutes into the interview the woman's mobile telephone rang. After speaking on her phone, the participant explained that the person calling was her colleague, located in the office next door to where the interview was taking place. The colleague could hear the participant's voice through the wall and wondered what she was doing. I was concerned to learn that we were being overheard, and suggested to the participant that we could move elsewhere, but she assured me that she was happy to continue, and that even though her colleague had recognised her voice, it was unlikely that she could hear what we were saying.

Becoming complicit?

A key dilemma arising in a number of interviews during the fieldwork was whether to challenge or question participants when they articulated views that I considered to be sexist or damaging to women. Ptacek (1990) highlights the delicate balance to be struck between maintaining a non judgemental stance which enables participants the freedom to articulate their genuine accounts without being constrained by the researcher's opinions, while also offering no reinforcement of, or compliance with, views which support men's right to abuse. A key example of this dilemma arose when some young men spoke about "carrying on" with girls, through "play" fighting. This was conveyed as a harmless, common and often flirtatious interaction that young men have with young women, which often involved delivering light punches. It appeared that the young men saw this as a positive and humorous interaction for both themselves and the

young woman. The view of this being 'harmless' challenged my own perception that this behaviour is unacceptable, particularly where the young men explained that the "carrying on" had ended up with the women involved being upset and in pain. Had I had the opportunity to speak with the young women with whom these young men had been "carrying on", I could have explored the women's own accounts, and established whether they experienced this activity in the same (positive) way as the young men, or whether this low level violence and aggression was frightening, painful, or unwelcome. Feminists have already demonstrated how men can articulate episodes of violence in terms that minimise violence (Harne, 2005; Wilson, 1996) and suggest that women are indifferent to violence. With this in mind, I could have directly challenged these young men and stressed to them that their behaviour was wrong and potentially more hurtful than they seemed to envisage. However, this course of action risks losing the participant's engagement. If the participant considered me to be judgemental or disapproving, they may have become impeded from putting forward a truthful account of their views. This would pose real implications to the research aim of exploring young people's *actual* attitudes and perceptions, rather than those which conform to their understanding of my own opinions. I took the decision that the paramount priority was to maintain an engagement with each participant which maximised the expression of their genuine points of view, however unpalatable these may be to my values as a feminist researcher. However, there were opportunities to direct a more subtle challenge to the participant's views by, for example, asking them to elaborate on a particular statement, or asking them to consider whether some other people may disagree with their point of view, and why.

Sustained Periods of Interviewing

There were occasions at the NEET organisation where a number of people would volunteer to be interviewed, but could only participate on that day, as they were going out on a work placement. On several occasions, this resulted in four or five interviews taking place on the same day. The first time this occurred four young people who had volunteered to be interviewed were sent through to the interview room one after another: as soon as one interview ended and the student returned to the classroom, another student would appear at the door ready to be interviewed. In reading the interview transcripts, this practice did not appear to generate any apparent negative effects during the interview, however the experience of interviewing for a sustained period of time was draining, offering me little opportunity to take stock of the content of one interview before moving onto another. Subsequently, I suggested to the Facilitator that the interviews be spread out over the day on future occasions, allowing an opportunity to take a break and make some notes between interviews. At the college, interviews with students were timetabled in advance, offering greater scope to limit the number of interviews undertaken on each visit, enabling some transcription, and analysis of the emerging themes at the end of the day. However, on the final visit to the college (on the last day of term before the summer break) six students, all young men, from the group session volunteered to be interviewed. The early closure of the college that day meant that there was insufficient time to conduct six separate interviews. One of the young men asked "Can we not do it in twos?" and I agreed to this, after explaining the implications this arrangement had for the confidentiality of the material discussed during the interviews. It was made clear that although the researcher would

uphold the agreed level of confidentiality, no such guarantees could be made on the behalf of the other participant. This was satisfactory to all six young men, and three 'paired' interviews were conducted.

Going "Off-Topic"

Enabling the participants to participate in setting the agenda for discussion meant that there were various occasions where topics were put forward for discussion that were unrelated to the research focus of intimate relationships and dating violence and abuse. Despite my clear explanation of the nature of the current research, some participants were keen to pursue other topics. Young men in particular stressed how the issues of territorialism (where leaving the demarcated boundaries of their street or housing scheme risked their being attacked by other young men) and gang fighting were of particular relevance to them. Some of these young men wanted to spend a lot of time discussing this and seemed enthusiastic to be 'educating' me on the realities of gang membership and living in areas where knife crime is a problem. The desire to focus on this spectre of violence, rather than 'my' issue of intimate partner violence, indicated that some young men felt that these male to male forms of violence carried more threat to them than the dating violence. Some young women also deviated from the research focus. One young woman had a young child, and spoke about the impact this had on her friendships with other women her age, none of whom had children. This woman found it difficult to relate to her friends who, she argued, were pre-occupied with "stupid stuff" like petty arguments with their boyfriends and going out to parties, now that she had the responsibility of caring for a child.

It was not the intention to have 'pseudo-reciprocal' research, where participants could speak from their own frame of reference so long as it suited *my* research question. Nonetheless, the need to allow participants the opportunity to discuss the issues important to them had to be balanced with the imperative of gathering data that had relation to, and could adequately address, the research questions. In earlier interviews, it was not easy to re-divert the participants who went "off topic" back onto the research question. There was the worry of making the participant feel dejected or not valued if their concerns were overlooked or if I turned the focus of the interview around too obviously. However, as the interviews progressed, I became more practised at affording credence to the issue they were discussing while also moving the discussion back onto the topic. For example, on a few occasions where the interview narrative had turned to gang fights, I was able to comment, "That sounds very serious, have you ever seen young men direct violence towards the girls?" This met the objective of maintaining relevance to the topic, while also demonstrating an interest in what the participant was saying.

Linkages Among the Participants

To my knowledge, none of the participants interviewed were involved in a dating relationship with any other interview participant, either at the time of the interview or in the past. I did consider the possibility that within the recruitment sites I visited, both partners of a dating relationship may be present, and both partners may volunteer for an interview. This would have raised key ethical dilemmas in terms of confidentiality, potentially bringing about a position where participants were asking me directly about

what their partner had reported during their interview. I was also prepared for the fact that linkages between interview participants may exist but not be apparent, or that I may only become aware of these during the course of the interview.

Interviewing young people who shared the same network of friends was a challenging aspect of the fieldwork which required particular diligence in maintaining privacy and confidentiality (Taylor, 1993). It was anticipated that there may be some links among the participants as they attended the same organisations. Seven of the young women recruited from the college explained in the group session that they had all become very close friends over the two years they had attended the college, and spent much of their free time socialising together. I reminded each of these participants that other people they knew had agreed to speak with me, and reiterated my commitment to maintaining confidentiality. This situation required careful management as there was a risk that the participants may ask about what the other women had said (Phoenix, 1994). This did indeed happen on a few occasions, where some of the young women would ask such questions as; "Did my friend tell you about what happened on Friday?" or "Did she tell you that she fell out with her boyfriend?" Here, it was necessary to respond to these questions by gently reminding the women that the content of any of the other interviews could not be discussed, but that they themselves were very welcome to disclose these events. There were actually very positive outcomes to this, as a number of the women seemed assured by this adherence to the agreement about confidentiality, evidencing the researcher's commitment to upholding the guarantee of confidentiality. The experience of interviewing young people from the same network of friends also

underscored the extent to which young peoples' experiences of intimate relationships are public knowledge, and the subject of much peer input and discussion.

After the Interviews

Impact on Researcher

Feminist research is increasingly associated with reflexivity, whereby the effects of the research endeavour upon the researcher are considered and written up (Burman et al., 2001; Letherby, 2000; Ramazanoğlu, with Holland 2002). This approach differentiates feminist inquiry from traditional, objective, methodological approaches which have "ignored (researchers') emotionality….as epistemologically irrelevant" (McMillan, 2007:167). Lee-Treweek and Linkogle (2000) highlight how the focus on researchers' welfare has traditionally been overlooked in the methodological literature or given only scant attention relative to the detailed consideration of the wellbeing of participants. I myself had largely overlooked the impact of the research exercise on my own emotional wellbeing until after the interview process had ended; such was the intensity of the experience and my preoccupation with managing the project as diligently as I could.

Researching a sensitive topic, as a lone researcher and over a prolonged period of time, has the potential to engender much stress and frustration. Feminist researchers have documented feelings of stress as a result of researching sensitive topics (Maynard, 1994) and the challenge of working alone (Taylor, 1993) and these feelings have been familiar to me as I have progressed through the current study. Indeed, Reinharz

(1992:36) contends that "feminism frequently adds coping with stress to the other challenges of interview research", as feminist researchers strive to develop an empathy with participants that can be emotionally taxing, while also exposing their own vulnerability through the sharing of their own views and experiences. Researching women's experiences of male power and oppression also forces feminist researchers into confronting their own vulnerability to such patriarchal forces, which can be painful (Wesely, 2006).

Over the course of the current study, listening to young people's accounts of violence and abuse involving themselves and others, and the inaction of some older adults and family members was particularly upsetting and frustrating. It was demoralising to hear of young people who were without help or support, while having such a limited capacity to offer help (Lee-Treweek, 2000), and although in leaving the research field I did not feel the same sense of having abandoned the participants as Letherby (2000), I did feel a desire to have done more. Prior to commencing the research I had anticipated some of these challenging emotions, and my supervisors encouraged me to consider and discuss these feelings with them on a regular basis. A source of unanticipated stress arose from the conflicted feelings evoked when hearing participants' disclosures, and knowing as they spoke that their accounts would prove useful for the purposes of the research. This scenario often generated conflicted feelings of guilt and relief, knowing that valuable and relevant information was being gathered and the study was achieving its objectives. This sensation resonates with the experience of McRobbie (2000:133)

who notes that the interview process can "feel like 'holidaying on other people's misery' ". This sentiment was quite familiar during and after the fieldwork exercise.

Undertaking the current study has sometimes been characterised by feelings of tension and of isolation. Beginning the fieldwork presented a welcome break from considerable time spent alone, reading, formulating the research questions and methodological approach, and preparing to undertake the interviews. It was invariably exciting and satisfying to engage with young people, who had *chosen* to be interviewed, and were keen to have their voices heard and to ask questions. In interviewing the NEET participants in particular, it occurred to me that for some of the young people, participating in an interview may represent a rare occasion where their views, opinions and experiences were sought, and where another person considered them to be an important source of knowledge and expertise. Unlike the college and university students, who held varying degrees of status as students of particular disciplines, the NEET young people had no formal marker of capability, expertise or learnedness. It was very satisfying to extend an opportunity to this particular group of participants to have their voices heard (and they *did* have important perspectives to offer), and to see participants from of the all sample groups enthusiastically contributing their insights.

Transcription

All of the interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. Each interview was downloaded onto the researcher's personal computer as soon after conducting the interview as possible, and the audio files stored and password protected. The data was

then deleted from the recorder. All interviews were successfully recorded, and there were no technical issues related to the recording or playback.

Approximately two thirds of the interviews were transcribed by the researcher, with the remaining proportion sent out to an external contractor for transcription.[46] Transcribing the majority of the interviews personally was a valuable opportunity to re-engage with the data after the interviews (May, 2001), and was central to assessing the major themes that spanned across the participants' accounts (Fielding and Thomas, 2001).

The vast majority of the participants had Glaswegian accents, as did the researcher. As such, there were very few occasions in the interviews where the participants' dialogue could not be understood and many instances where the researcher and participant shared mutual understandings of terms that may not be clear to people from out-with the area. Previous reports of research undertaken in Glasgow highlight the dilemma of staying true to the meaning and tone of the participants' accounts while also rendering their words and expressions intelligible to all readers (Taylor, 1993). In transcribing the interviews, and checking those transcribed externally for accuracy, I have attempted to secure a balance between these considerations, by changing only words and phrases that would not be widely understood. Explanatory translations are also located in brackets alongside some quotations.

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[46] One external transcriber was selected from a list of approved contractors provided by the Department of Applied Social Science. This person was required to sign written confirmation of their agreement to uphold complete confidentiality, by not discussing the content of the interviews with anyone other than the researcher.

In addition to allocating each participant with a pseudonym, anonymity has also been preserved through omitting the names of streets, areas, pubs, workplaces etc. reported by the participants, at the point of transcription.

The Analytical Framework

Data analysis was an integral aspect of the current study, requiring deep engagement with the original research aims and objectives, the feminist theoretical standpoint, and the emergent themes arising in the interviews. The process of data analysis was ongoing during the fieldwork and beyond, enabling the *aide memoire* to be updated with emerging themes as they were introduced by the participants. The subsequent paragraphs detail the analytical framework which guided the process of data analysis, with reference to the methodological literature.

Review of the literature confirms that there is no universal approach to qualitative data analysis (Bryman, 2001; Spencer et al., 2003). The process of data analysis is often directed by the researcher's epistemological perspective (Edwards and Ribbens, 1998) with the researcher's own values and theoretical position influencing both the generation and interpretation of the data to a great degree (Mason, 2002). As a feminist researcher, my approach to data analysis reflected Lister's (2003:56) concern to "do justice to (participants') accounts and, at the same time, engage in the theoretical and political debates in the field". This meant analysing the participants' accounts within a feminist theoretical framework, whilst also using the data to develop analytical categories from the language and concepts put forward by the young people

themselves. This latter priority is referred to as the 'grounded theory' approach to data analysis (Spencer et al., 2003), and this mode of analysis was blended with an inductive approach according to the study's feminist perspective.

As I have established earlier in this chapter, the interviews sought to actively engage with the participants to establish the issues that they felt were important. The participants' narratives enriched the transcripts with a range of issues, themes, and new perspectives beyond those considered by the researcher prior to the interviews. Employing a grounded theory approach to the analysis ensured that the young people's voices were heard through the data analysis process. At a practical level this involved close reading and re-reading of their narratives, and notation of the emerging themes (Lewins, 2001). From this process, thematic categories such as the need for young women to avoid being cast as the 'wrong kind of girl' through wearing particular clothing, the phenomena of 'carrying on' through flirtatious 'play' violence, and the notion of 'reciprocal' violence were established. Simultaneously, the study's feminist theoretical focus provided an epistemological lens through which to analyse the data (Letherby, 2003). This involved locating the participants' narratives within the context of feminist theoretical perspectives on the issues of intimate relationships, violence and abuse, and making observations of how the young people's attitudes, perceptions and experiences related to feminist thinking. The application of a gendered focus to data analysis made visible the imbalanced power and control in young people's intimate relationships which privileged male authority, and the operation of patriarchal expectations of how young people should behave within their intimate relationships.

Analysing the data presented some noteworthy challenges to the feminist priority of levelling the balance of power between researcher and participant, not entirely mitigated by the influence of the grounded theory approach to analysis. Most notably, the participants did not participate in the data analysis stage of the research and as a consequence they did not have the same level of control as the researcher in interpreting the dominant themes arising from the data. Furthermore, the choice to interpret the findings from a feminist standpoint was the researcher's, as was the selection of the particular excerpts to be reported as direct quotations in the thesis (Letherby, 2003). The researcher also had the power to choose which of the participants' perspectives would command particular focus (Lister, 2003) according to the research questions and theoretical approach, and the privilege of access to the entire dataset where conclusions about the 'big picture' of young people's intimate relationships could be made. Finally, the data analysis stage enabled the researcher to attach meaning to the participants' perceptions and experiences, according to the feminist analytical framework which the participants may or may not have aligned with. The issues highlighted above evidence some of the limitations to ensuring a wholly democratic research process.

During the interviews, many participants reported on 'other' young people's experiences of relationships, violence and abuse. The presence of these narratives within the transcripts represented a challenging aspect of the data analysis process, and careful consideration was given to how these 'second hand' narratives should be analysed and whether they should be reported. It was clear that the participants'

knowledge of other people's experiences of violence and abuse had a very powerful effect in shaping their attitudes and perceptions. Many instances of violence and abuse involving other young people had been directly witnessed by the participants, who were able to report their own responses, thoughts and perceptions of the events. The participants' clearly felt that these events were relevant to the interview discussion, and used these scenarios to illustrate their opinions. Given the centrality of young people's attitudes and perceptions to the current study's research focus, the decision was made to include these narratives in the data analysis and they are reported in the thesis where they attest to young people's attitudes and perceptions. In reporting personal experiences of dating violence and abuse in the later findings chapters, the episodes of violence and abuse experienced 'first hand' by the participants are distinguished from those where the participant was a witness to the abuse.

The NVIVO qualitative data analysis software programme was employed to facilitate the process of data analysis. NVIVO was an effective tool for grouping and comparing the participants' narratives, and for identifying areas of commonality across the transcripts. Each participant's transcript was uploaded to the programme and assigned a gender and research site (university, college, NEET) variable, enabling comparisons within the data to be noted. Exploring the differences in the young men's and the young women's accounts commanded a particular focus, and these differences are explored in detail in the remainder of the thesis.

Chapter Summary

The current study's methodological approach has sought to advance the body of qualitative dating violence research in a field dominated by positivist approaches and quantitative methods. Aligned with the feminist theoretical approach of this study, and in accordance with the feminist methodological literature, qualitative interviews have been selected as the most effective means of hearing young people's voices and their own perspectives on the issues of dating relationships, violence and abuse. Concurrent with the research priority of widening the focus of dating violence research beyond American university students, the participants in this study have been recruited from a range of sites not limited to higher education.

Feminist methodological perspectives have had much bearing upon the conduct of the fieldwork. The current study has sought to secure the feminist priorities of minimising power differentials between the researcher and the participants, while also operating with an ethical stance that seeks to ensure that no participants are negatively impacted as a result of taking part in the research.

The interviews undertaken in the current study have produced a rich body of young people's narratives. Having established the processes through which the data has been collected, the subsequent findings chapters present the young people's narratives with reference to the theoretical and empirical literature, and in the context of the study's feminist theoretical framework.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FINDINGS CHAPTERS

The three subsequent chapters present the research findings from the current study of young people's attitudes, perceptions and experiences of violence and abuse in intimate dating relationships, and relate these findings to the existing body of theoretical and empirical research. The research findings relate directly to the research aims set out in the introduction chapter of this thesis, and in the introductory paragraphs of each chapter I reiterate the key research aims and questions that the findings address. A chapter is dedicated to each broad thematic research aim, in the following order:

- The nature, construct and social context of young people's intimate relationships
- Young people's attitudes, awareness and perceptions of dating violence and abuse
- Young people's experiences of dating violence and abuse

As chapter four established, the participants in this study were actively encouraged to report additional points and perspectives that may not have already been considered by the researcher at the stage where the study was being designed and the research questions were determined. I note in the findings chapters the themes that were identified by the participants themselves.

There are some noteworthy points to be made by way of introduction to the findings chapters. Although the current research has attempted to recruit a diverse sample of

young people, comparing the experiences and attitudes of young people on the basis of the sites from which they were recruited is not a central rationale. For this reason, it was not necessary to ensure the recruitment of three equal sized research samples of FE college students, University students, and young people from the NEET organisation. Only a minority (n=6) of the participants in this study were University students, and the minority status of this group of participants is represented in the quotations presented across the subsequent chapters, relative to participants recruited from the other sites. Although questions designed to make determinations of the participants' social class background were not asked, some noteworthy areas of difference have emerged between the attitudes and perceptions of young people within the three sample groups, and these are highlighted throughout the findings chapters. For the purposes of clarity and information, the sites from which individual participants were recruited are detailed alongside their pseudonym before each quotation.

As the findings are presented, references are made to the existing theoretical and empirical studies, and areas of concurrence and divergence with the findings of other studies are highlighted. These points are drawn together in the final chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE:

RELATIONSHIPS

Introduction

Most previous dating violence studies have researched only the violent aspects of young peoples' intimate relationships, securing a minimal understanding of the relational contexts in which violence and abuse can occur. In view of this limitation, a principal aim of the current study is to explore the nature and social context of young people's intimate dating relationships, through a feminist theoretical lens which takes into account the ongoing gender inequalities within and outside of intimate heterosexual relationships (McRobbie, 2009; Sieg, 2007). This chapter reports the data which addresses this research aim, under a variety of thematic headings. Establishing how young men and women experience the positive and negative aspects of dating relationships (and of single life) and what these relationships *mean* to them, were central themes allied with this research aim. A further tenet of this research aim was exploring the interconnection of dating relationships with the wider network of friends and peers, by examining the influence of friends and peers upon how dating relationships are managed and how partners are treated.

This chapter confirms intimate relationships as central aspects of young people's lives; interlinked with their friendships, social status, and feelings of security and self worth. The data presented here indicate that for many young women, being a 'girlfriend' is a central tenet of feminine identity, linked to feeling secure within their peer group. For

many young men, male peers act as influential enforcers of hegemonic masculinity, where heterosexual activity and male dominance are expected and rewarded. Crucially, the findings presented in this chapter establish dating relationships as sites of gendered power imbalances, where expectations of young men and women reflect traditional patriarchal gender roles. Virtually every participant reported instances of young men's surveillance, monitoring and control of their girlfriends' behaviour, choices and reputation, experienced both in their own relationships and observed in others'. While some participants highlighted this as problematic and unjust, the data in this chapter also evidence widespread ambivalence, normalisation, and support of men's power and control of their partners.

Dating Relationships: Gendered Differences in Attitudes and Experiences

Of the 45 young people interviewed, 23 people reported being in an intimate relationship at the time of the interview, and most others reported past involvement in an intimate relationship. Participants reported remaining in dating relationships with the same partner for durations of several weeks to three years, diminishing some adults' perceptions- reported in Carlson's (2003) study- that teenagers' relationships may 'come and go' quickly, or are not taken seriously by the young people involved. Of the twenty three young people in a dating relationship at the time of the interview, the median duration was around one year.

The participants explained how young people's intimate relationships develop in stages, which begin with 'seeing' someone, before progressing to 'going out' with the person. The transition between these two stages was often associated with an expectation of monogamy- once the couple are 'going out,' they could no longer have relationships with other partners:

> *Morven: Do you have a girlfriend at the moment?*
>
> *Liam (College): Kinda (laughs). I'm seeing somebody. If you are seeing a lassie that just means you can still get off with other people- you shouldn't- but it's not cheating, like if you were going out with her.*

The passage of time was often described as becoming 'serious' about the relationship, and there was a notable contrast between the male and female participants' reports of this progression. While young women's accounts were dominated by positive notions of deepening love and commitment[47], young men's reports were couched in more negative terms of curtailed freedom and increased conflict:

> *Cherie (NEET): The two of us got more closer, like...each month. We see each other almost every day. We feel closer to each other than at the start.*

> *Christina (University): There is this stage it gets to, maybe 5 or 6 months in, when it feels settled and safe and it changes from being just a casual thing.*

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[47] Although young women reflected on intimate relationships in these positive terms, in a way that tended not to be replicated in young men's accounts, there were also instances where young women experienced intimate relationships as problematic. These are reported later in this chapter.

Ross (College): (As time goes on) you argue more, there's more arguments

Brian (College): It can get too serious. You're supposed to be young and just out there enjoying yourself, but relationships tie you down a wee bit too much.

Involvement in an intimate relationship was not a pre-requisite of research participation, and approximately half of the participants (n=22, 11 young men and 11 young women) described themselves as 'single'. Including young people without dating partners, and asking those with partners to reflect on times in the past when they were single, revealed gendered differences in young men and women's attitudes and experiences of single life. Young men's accounts focused on the advantages of single status, namely that they could enjoy the benefits of freedom, lack of constraints, and an active social life:

Lawrence (College): You can do anything you want and just be yourself. I have more time to myself and I spend more time with my friends.

Callum (NEET): When you are single you are free. I've never got anything on my mind about something I have to do with her, or having to see anyone. You're just basically single, and I prefer it.

Young women reported few positive aspects to single life and associated single women with unhappiness and introspection about perceived personal flaws and deficiencies which prevented them from finding a partner:

Suzanne (College): Because she is nearly eighteen she is feeling under a bit of pressure. She thinks it's her fault, like something she is doing wrong.

Leona (NEET): If a lassie was single, other lassies would be saying to her "how have you not got a boyfriend?" and she would be wondering what was wrong with her that they all had boyfriends and she didnae.

Christina (University): I have a lot of friends who really, really panic if they are not seeing someone and they start thinking "Oh God, this means I am unattractive, this means I am never going to be with anyone!"

Associated with these findings, young women's perspectives located being single as a source of worry, and something beyond their control. By contrast, young men tended to refer to 'choosing' and 'preferring' to be single, locating their relationship status as within their control:

Helena (University): Being single is the one thing you can't control and that's why some girls worry about it.

Barry (College): If I want a girlfriend I'll go out and get one.

The notion that some young women are concerned about the necessity to secure a dating partner, vis-à-vis the absence of such perspectives from young men, indicates a disproportionate pressure on young women to achieve a stable heterosexual intimate relationship. Young women's exposure to this pressure has emerged in previous studies (e.g. Banister et al. 2003; Ismail et al. 2007; Sandfield and Percy, 2003; Van Roosmalen, 2000), which have identified strong links between young women's perceived social success, and involvement in intimate relationships with men. Feeling desired, Skeggs (1997:111) argues, provides young women with a "validation of themselves" and insulates them from feeling inadequate and a misfit. It was striking how female participants in this study almost always articulated negative experiences of single life as impacting on 'other' women, or women in general, rather than acknowledging that they themselves were (or had been) unhappily single. This may reflect the widespread belief that young women are no longer subject to pressure to achieve traditional notions of heterosexual success through stable intimate relationships with men (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Giddens, 1992), and that successful, strong, independent young women should not need a male partner in order to feel fulfilled or socially accepted (Giddens, 1992). To acknowledge that they too may struggle with single life in the same way as some 'other' women, may compromise young women's success in performing the role of competent and independent young women, that is expected of them (Chung, 2005; McRobbie, 2009).

Negative perceptions of single life were reported by young women across all sectors of the dataset. While the sample size of this qualitative study is too small to draw comparisons between the groups of young people, it is noteworthy that the University women reflected on single life differently to some other female participants. While experiencing the same desire to have a boyfriend as the other young women in the sample, University women also reported some perspectives on being single that did not feature in the accounts from the female College and NEET participants:

Sadie (University): (A relationship) is not something you want to take on when you're an 18 year old girl trying to finish your A-Levels.

Helena (University): When you're at Uni this is your chance to be young, free and single, so I guess this should be a good time for me to be single. I have a friend who has just come out of a three year relationship and he says that there was only one year that he doesn't regret, and that's three years of his University life gone. That's an important chunk of time.

The expectation that University students should focus on studies and socialising may insulate University women from the same intensity of pressure to form an intimate partnership that is felt by other young women. In fact, the perspectives of the female University students quoted above align more with the male participants' perspectives on single life, than they do with the young women from the NEET and College samples. University women's status as students may afford them greater power to have

their single status accepted by those around them; acceptance that other young women may find inaccessible.

The Interconnectedness of Dating Relationships and the Peer Network

Young men and women across all sample groups were unified in establishing the peer network as being absolutely central to experiences of dating. Young people reported how dating partnerships regularly formed within groups of friends, or through introductions by other members of the peer network:

> *May (University): You always meet people through your friends' friends. You end up in a group and then you meet someone that way.*

The participants reported how couples spent much of their time together in the company of other young people, and shared mutual friends. As well as the time couples spent alone, the participants explained that dating couples would regularly spend considerable time together along with other young people at parties, school, on the street and in pubs and clubs. Dating relationships were described as publicly situated, with friends and peers acting as close observers of couples' formation, interactions and conflicts. The participants' extensive and detailed knowledge of their friends' and peers' dating relationships was reflected throughout the interview narratives, where almost all participants cited examples of other peoples' experiences in illustrating their responses to the questions. It was clear that discussing 'other peoples' relationships was a popular point of conversation within peer groups, particularly among groups of

young women, of whom many offered examples of occasions where they had examined and debated their friends' relationships together. While often providing a source of support with relationship concerns, this interconnectedness of peer groups and dating relationships could also prove intense for young people, as their friends and peers became embroiled in the operations of their relationships:

Ella (University): It was like I was in a relationship with everyone, everyone knew what was going on and it affected everyone.

May (University): It's not just your relationship, it's your whole life, because so many of your friendships are through that relationship.

The fusion of partners and peers had the potential to be especially problematic when dating relationships broke up, and both partners sought to maintain their place within the same group of friends. Continuing to see their ex-partner socially could prove awkward, causing tension within the group:

Liam (College): If you hang about with the same pals then you will be seeing each other all the time. It can be awkward sometimes, especially when you have just finished with her. There are silences and that.

Ella (University): My friends, Jack and Rhoda, they have split up after three years. Rhoda was our friend but he was our friend too, we were all in a big

group together. They were meant to come on holiday with us, both of them, but they split up so Rhoda came one week, and Jack came the other week. It was very awkward and it caused a big problem.

Here, the embedding of the dating relationship within the peer network extended the costs of breaking up the partnership beyond losing only the partner, with ongoing relationships with friends and peers also made problematic.

The Peer Network: Setting the Standards of Heterosexual Success

The Case of Young Women

As the theoretical chapter of this thesis established, notions that young people are now detached from traditional expectations of normalised heterosexual intimacy (Giddens, 1992) have been challenged by recent empirical studies. These studies have evidenced the ongoing demands upon young men and women to engender a public knowledge of their participation in heterosexual relationships (Rajah, 2007) in order to be socially accepted by their peers (Van Roosmalen, 2000). Participants in the current study made clear that the peer group could, and did, function as a regulatory source of pressure to participate in intimate relationships, with gendered differences in how young men and women experienced this. For young women, this pressure was reported as subtle but powerful, since having a boyfriend was linked to feeling fully included within their peer group. As the following young women explained, being single engendered feelings not only of being alone and unwanted, but also of being marginalised from the conversations and activities that young women with boyfriends participated in:

Cheryl (College): When we broke up….I missed having someone to cuddle, and not having to be the one who was on my own while all my friends had boyfriends.

Shelly (College): When I started college all the girls had a boyfriend. It was only me and Lynne that didn't. They were all talking about their boyfriends all the time and asking like, "Do you do this with your boyfriend, do you do that with your boyfriend…….oh, yeah, sorry- you don't have a boyfriend". And I was like that (sigh) "Right, Ok, thanks!" It wasn't nice.

Veronica (College): When you've got friends who've got boyfriends and you haven't, then you kind of feel left out.

Single women's reports of feeling 'left out' of the peer group dovetail with the findings of other studies (e.g. Ismail et al, 2007) which report the dominance of "couple culture" (Budgeon, 1998:302), "cultural exclusion" of single women (Skeggs, 1997:115) and a "culture of romance" (Holland and Eisenhart, 1990:51) in young women's peer relations. Although the current study found no reports of single women being deliberately excluded or interrogated in a hostile way, socialising with female peers served to remind single women that they were observers to- rather than participants in- discussions about boyfriends and relationships. This had the potential to compel young women to prove to their friends that they could find a partner: two young women

reported becoming intimate with men they were not attracted to, purely to satisfy pressure from their female peers:

Ella (University): I didn't know him that well and I didn't like him that much, but some of my friends were saying "Just go with him" because they knew I had never actually been out on a date with anyone. So, I did.

May (University): You think, "Right, I don't really care that much about him, but there's a guy, I'm going to kiss him". And you do feel better because your friends have seen you, and at least they've seen you kiss someone. You think about the fact that you can then say to your friends that it was recently, the last time something happened. It's OK then; I'm let off for another wee while.

These quotations make very clear the power of friends and peers in regulating young women's motivation to have (or be seeking) a boyfriend, reflecting findings elsewhere which highlighted the expectation that young women must actively "avoid boyfriend-lessness" (Van Roosmalen, 2000:207). Such perspectives contextualise the reports of young women, and a few young men, who explained that many young women they knew felt 'afraid' to be single, and were worried that losing their current partner could mean never finding anyone else:

Christina (University): I know a lot of girls who have stayed in relationships not because they are happy but because they don't want to be on their own and they don't know how to be on their own.

Cherie (NEET): I've got friends who, even if the boy's cheating a lot they still...they don't care, they put up with it just so people know they've got a boyfriend.

The notion that young women fear being without a boyfriend also emerged from Van Roosmalen's (2000) study of teenage women. It is important to consider how the pressure to have, and keep, a boyfriend may seriously compromise young women's ability to secure their rights within a fair, equal and fulfilling partnership. The above quotations also demonstrate the potential for young women's investment in adhering to normative models of female heterosexual success (through maintaining 'girlfriend' status), to take priority over their happiness and wellbeing. Previous research has already identified how the pressure to achieve a lasting intimate relationship led to some young women remaining with violent partners, tolerating abuse in preference to ending the relationship (Ismail et al. 2007). It is important to take seriously how the pressure to have an intimate partner, coupled with the earlier finding of the risk to ongoing peer relationships upon breaking up with a partner, may be pressing issues for young women who are contemplating ending the relationship. The potential for these factors to become added obstacles to exiting violent and abusive relationships is certainly worthy of consideration.

Young Men: Peer Pressure and Hegemonic Masculine Expectations

Although young men reported single life in much more positive terms than young women, and were not subject to the same degree of pressure to secure a stable intimate relationship, the reported demands on young men to prove that they are (hetero) sexually active were strong:

> *Brian (College): Basically guys have got a lot of pressure to have sex*

> *Cheryl (College): Guys are under pressure from their pals to go with girls and that. It's always been that way for guys.*

This apparent, intense, pressure on young men to prove to their male peers that they were having sex reflects a key strand of Connell's (1995) theory of hegemonic masculinity, where establishing heterosexuality is central to peer group acceptance among young men, and homosexuality carries the threat of derision or isolation from the peers (Forbes, 2005)[48]. Resisting this central measure of hegemonic masculine performance, by not engendering a public knowledge of sexual activity with women could incur important costs to young men, most notably having their heterosexuality called in to question:

> *Keith (College): That's what they would all be saying if you'd never been with a lassie; "You're gay". You would take some amount of slagging for that.*

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[48] The current study found no evidence of single young women's heterosexuality being called into question.

Cheryl (College): After a certain amount of time his pals would want to know how he didn't have a girlfriend or why he wasn't going about with any girls. They would probably be making snidey comments to him and saying he was gay.

Young men's reports established the male peer group as a vanguard for hegemonic masculinity; setting down expectations of sexual activity and heterosexual success, while also attempting to veto 'soft' aspects of relationships with women such as emotional attachment and friendship. Some young men experienced much resistance from male peers who perceived that they were becoming 'too serious' about one particular woman, spending too much time with her and not enough time with the boys:

Christopher (College): There's a lot of strain like if you're serious about a relationship and all your mates are like, "Come out" and all that and like always going on at you, "Why are you in a relationship that's that serious at your age?"

Grant (NEET): My pal, he doesn't come out with us any mair, now he's seeing his girlfriend. She keeps him in. Our pals say to him he's a pure numpty for letting her get away with that. And they aren't happy that they don't see him as much any more.

Young men such as Grant, quoted above, were sceptical of the idea that men may *elect* to spend time with their girlfriend in preference to spending time with their friends. Such a scenario was interpreted as evidence that the man must be asserting insufficient control over the woman and over the relationship, warranting the condemnation of his peers:

> *Grant (NEET): We're all telling him that he is under the thumb now, because he does everything with her, goes to the shops with her and everything, man. We just gie him a pure slagging. He's letting her be the pure boss of him.*

Male peers were central to setting down the expectation that young men should maintain full control of when and how often they see their girlfriends; again, key facets of the model of hegemonic masculinity. The notion that men should exert this control over the relationship left little room for perspectives which took women's choices and preferences into account. In fact, several young men identified the exercise of women's power within intimate relationships (particularly where this involved women securing their own preferences in their intimate relationships, such as planning a future) as potentially sinister attempts to 'trap' men into commitment, necessitating men's resistance:

> *Ricky (NEET): My pal's been going out with this girl for five year, but his big brother's like that to me, "You need tae have a word with him, because he's up at her house every single day, it's like he's pure fascinated with her. You need*

tae have a word with him 'cause he's just gonnae fall into the trap". He goes "It just ruins your life", when you're young as well, 'cause Mark's only seventeen and he goes, "He's just gonnae end up having a wean or something with her and he's gonna be stuck with her so have a word with him". I was like, "Aye, all right".

Callum (NEET): He's only about 20 or something and he's engaged already, man. That's maist of his life over.

It is striking that neither of the young men quoted above reported having considered that their male friends had themselves chosen to be in relationships with these women, and may not experience the progression of the partnerships in the same problematic vein. Instead, their assumption was that young men of their age should avoid being in committed relationships with young women, as such relationships could erode male control and allowed women to trap men into commitment.

Balancing Dating Relationships with Friendships

Notwithstanding the close proximity of the peer group to young people's experiences of dating, for some, the progression of a serious dating relationship was accompanied by the erosion of their friendships, as they spent more time with their partner and less with their friends. This issue appears more prominent for young women, a number of whom reported how their friendships with other women were relegated when they started a

relationship with their boyfriend[49]. This caused these friendships to become strained by the scarcity of time spent together, and was reported with some regret:

Emily (NEET): You know what it's like when you are in a relationship. Me and my pal were always doing things, but when a relationship starts to get serious you've got to start thinking about him as well. I wasn't seeing Patricia as much, and she was jealous and she wanted it to go back to being me and her again. I've not spoken to her since.

Suzanne (College): She went with her new boyfriend and he wanted to spend all his time with her, so I was getting pushed to the side, but I was doing the same thing to her with my boyfriend. We didn't have a fall out, it wasn't that she didn't like my boyfriend or I didn't like hers, but it was when my Mum said "You are going to end up a year down the line with no pals"....my Mum kind of forced me, well not forced me, she was like that "Phone her up". I hadn't spoken to her for six months or a year, and I was like that "What do I say?"

Vicky (College): A lot of the time, when we first started going out together, I kind of ditched my pals. I didn't ditch them completely but I probably would only see them at the weekend and when I saw them I was with him.

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[49] Although analysis of how many friends each participant socialised with at any one time was not a focus, the participants' accounts suggested that young women often spent time with one or two close friends, while young men spoke more regularly of spending time with their male friends in bigger groups.

By contrast, young men reported little difficulty in balancing intimate relationships with ongoing friendships and where they did report seeing less of their friends as a result of having a girlfriend, described this as a choice rather than a source of regret or disadvantage. Five young men explained how entering into relationships with their girlfriend had assisted them in quite deliberately scaling back their contact with young men with whom they had been involved in drinking, vandalism and disorder. They argued that having a girlfriend made them less inclined to 'hang about', drinking alcohol, taking drugs, or fighting. However, the young men interviewed in this study were clear in articulating their expectation that girlfriends must fit in around their preferred social life and arrangements with friends, and did not struggle to limit the time spent with their girlfriends to suit their own priorities:

> *Callum (NEET): It's good to have somebody for during the week, but I want to see my pals at the weekend- that's basically how it is.*

> *Eddie (NEET): I'd just see her once a week or something, I couldn't be bothered seeing her all the time.*

Unlike men's reports of being able to control the balance of maintaining friendships while also having an intimate relationship, young women largely accepted that intimate relationships with men would inevitably command paramount priority in their lives. As the following young women explained, their relationship with their boyfriend became their prime focus, with much else sacrificed:

Suzanne (College): For me, everything relates to Roddy.

Michelle (NEET): I moved up here from England to stay with him. Before I came up here there was loads of us; my two sisters- we had a good, good connection and everything- and then there was my mates Dena and Adele and everyone else. I can't even phone them now, because I don't have any of their numbers or anything.

Other empirical studies report similar perspectives to these, finding that young women's friendships take a secondary position once intimate relationships with men develop (Chung 2005, 2007), while young men have the agency to enjoy both intimate heterosexual relationships with minimal impact upon their friendships with other men. It is noteworthy that most of the young women who reported having become distanced from their friends reflected on this as an unfortunate but inevitable outcome of forming an intimate relationship. There was little consideration of whether it was possible for women to have the power to secure a different outcome, where both their intimate relationship and their friendships could be accommodated. This may indicate young peoples' continued exposure to idealised models of 'good girlfriends' which centre on young women's role in nurturing their male partners, and privileging his needs and wishes over their own (Schippers, 2007).

Alongside reporting the inevitability of decreased contact with friends as intimate relationships progress, young women also reported their experiences of losing touch

with female friends in circumstances which they believed were brought about by deliberate attempts by their friends' partner to isolate her and minimise her contact with friends:

> *May (University): My friend has been going out with this guy, he's very insecure and so he takes all his insecurities out on her, and he's like, "oh why are you going out with them? Why aren't you coming out with me? Don't you love me?" And then she feels guilty, and ends up seeing him more, staying in with him, instead of seeing her friends. She has lost touch with a lot of her friends because of him being like that.*

> *Cheryl (College): If we are saying to her "Come out tonight" she is like "Nah, I think I will just stay in" and we are all getting fed up with her, cause we are always inviting her out and she keeps saying no, just to keep him happy.*

In acquiescing with their boyfriends' demands to spend time with him in preference to seeing friends, young women face the prospect of antagonising and potentially losing their friends, who (as in Cheryl's case above) may become 'fed up' with young women who persistently reject their friends' invitations in order to keep their boyfriend happy. This is a difficult position for young women, particularly in view of the earlier reported findings which established the importance of having a boyfriend, ironically enough, in order to secure the acceptance of their peers.

The issue of male power and control in limiting friendships with other young women was particularly illuminated by four young women, whose boyfriends' jealousy and control made socialising with their friends difficult. In order to avoid confrontation and the potential for public embarrassment, these women chose to appease their boyfriends by not joining in with their friends' activities:

Vicky (College): When I'm single I probably go to the dancing more, because when you are with a boyfriend and you go to the dancing he will always be thinking and saying "Oh she is just away out to meet other boys" and it would cause problems. So when I was with him I couldn't really go to the dancing unless it was a birthday or something.

Barbara (College): My Mum and me went to the pub and he kept phoning me and the next thing he had came to the pub to get me. We never asked him to come. He just came, and I said to him "Why are you here?" and he said "I've come to take you home- we are going home". I said "No, me and my Mum are here, so, sorry- I am not going home". But I ended up just going away home with him. When he'd came in I was talking to a boy I went to school with, and he must have thought "she is cheating on me". I didn't want him to start an argument in the middle of the pub, so I just went home.

The interview narratives produced limited examples of young women's explicit resistance of men's attempts to over-ride their friendships and other interests. Just one

young woman discussed her deliberate attempt to ensure that her friendships were nurtured and not made to suffer because she had a boyfriend:

Christina (University): My relationships have been more of two separate individuals who happen to want to be with each other. I make sure that I have plenty of other interests and other friends. I quite like not needing to be with my boyfriend, I have options. I just consciously try and make it that I am doing a lot of cool stuff.

In citing the availability of 'options' and other 'cool stuff' that did not involve her boyfriend, Christina seemed to be accessing a degree of power and privilege in 'not needing' a boyfriend that many of the other women may not have secured so easily. Importantly, this young woman was well positioned to continue to have fulfilling relationships with her friends, and to resist the potential for these to be usurped by her intimate relationships. There are some parallels with Christina's perspective and that of Giddens' (1992) ideal of the 'pure relationship', in that Christina perceived her current and past intimate relationships as existing because of a connection with the other person, and wanting to be with that particular person rather than to be part of a couple to satisfy pressures and demands. It is important to note however that this perspective was a minority report, atypical of those reported across the interviews.

Young People's Desires, Expectations and Experiences of Dating Partners and Relationships

Asking young people about what they felt characterised good relationships, along with their hopes, expectations and desires in intimate relationships, was a central aspect of the interviews. Young women's reports of 'good' dating relationships, and the characteristics of relationships they associated with fulfilment and happiness, were dominated by notions of romantic love, support, security and the desire to be wanted:

Shelly (College): What I was looking for when I went into my relationship was somebody who would love me.

Sadie (University): You want stability, like having someone. Like another port in a storm.

Such desires for love, commitment and support from dating partners were reported by young women across all three sample groups. Some young women indicated that their intimate relationships had fulfilled these desires, and enhanced their lives:

Louise (NEET): I can tell him anything, I can trust him. If I am upset I can tell him about it, and he'll listen and no' tell anybody.

Young women's reports of their 'ideal' relationships, and ideal men, were deeply entrenched in the potential for relationships to positively enhance their feelings of

security and support. There was minimal focus on men's appearance or reputation, and none of the female participants reported men's relationship or sexual histories as being of significance to them in determining their suitability as desirable partners. This contrasted with many of the male participants' perspectives: having a girlfriend with a 'respectable' sexual history was central to the young men's accounts of the women who they felt represented suitable intimate partners. The participants' narratives located male peers as regulators of the suitability of other men's girlfriends, discouraging men from pursuing dating relationships with sexually experienced women, or women who through their choice of clothing were considered neither sufficiently feminine nor respectable. Young men expressed a clear preference for 'nice', sexually inexperienced women as girlfriends, rather than women known to have had many previous partners:

Callum (NEET): Nice lassies don't go around sleeping with everybody. They tend to only sleep with a guy once they've been seeing him for a while and only then will they carry it on to the next level.

Derek (College): (Going out with a sexually experienced woman) would be a waste of time, because if you are going to have somebody who you really like, and you are worrying about her cheating when she's up the town, what are you going to get out of it?

Gary (NEET): Guys know that if they go out with a lassie that hasn't been with a lot of guys there's no as much chance that she'll cheat on him, and he feels safer.

Here, young men linked women's sexual inexperience with enhanced feelings of security in the relationship, perceiving sexually inexperienced women as less likely to be unfaithful. Banister et al (2003) and Holland et al (2004) have reported similar findings to these, noting how such views confine and constrain young women's behaviour to that which is deemed appropriately feminine (sexual inexperience) in order to be considered by men as suitable partners for a committed relationship. Some young men argued that the young women who would agree to have sex on a first date were not the 'type' of women with whom they would want to pursue a dating relationship, or to have as a girlfriend. This, however, did not stop young men from pursuing sex with women on their first date. Rab explained how he had become certain that he did not want to have a relationship with a girl he knew as a direct result of her having (reluctantly) agreed to have sex with him on their first date:

Rab (College): We went back to her flat and it was the first date, and I was going to have sex with her the first night but she was like that "Are you sure you want to do this, I want to have a relationship if we do it tonight, I want to see each other (again)" and then she said "I don't want to do it tonight", but she ended up just doing it, and that kind of put me aff her. She was calling me (afterwards) and that, and I was just ignoring her.

It is interesting to note how, in reflecting on this encounter, and the reasons why he did not consider this young woman as a suitable girlfriend, Rab minimises the girl's reluctance and indecision about having sex, along with her expression of a desire to see him again and have him as her boyfriend. He re-frames the girl as calculated and sexually assertive, with the fact that's she was "after" sex, as the reason why he doesn't want to see her again:

> *Rab (College): I'd maybe have a bit more respect, if she had played hard to get, know what I mean. Normally its guys that's after the sex, man.*

Rab's explanation that he would have had "more respect" for the girl had she not slept with him, is consistent with his earlier explanation of how the fact that the woman slept with him so early in the relationship made him "go off" her. This fits with the dominant view of young men in this study, where young women who are sexually active are less worthy of respect.

In addition to the focus on young women's perceived sexual histories, the current study also found women's social habits and preferences to be central to men's determination of their suitability as 'feminine' girlfriends. Young women who chose not to socialise in pubs and clubs were deemed particularly suitable, since their preference for staying home minimised their opportunity to meet other men:

Rab (College): I wouldn't want her to go up the town and all that with her pals. If she wasn't into all that, that would suit me. If she didn't go out a lot, that would be good. The girls up the town and that, they just go out to get their skirt lifted.

Callum (NEET): If the lassie's got an ex-boyfriend and the ex-boyfriend comes in the dancing then obviously the two of them might go' wi' each other and it could easily spark up again, and that's how a lot of boys willnae let their bird go to the dancing. That's how men want to take control, I think, because they don't trust the wummin.

Derek (College): We're dead close, and there's trust. She doesn't like to go to the dancing and stuff, so I trust her. There's really something there. It's brilliant.

Considering these perspectives through a feminist theoretical lens, it can be argued that young men who purposely seek women who do not go 'out a lot' or to 'the dancing', are motivated by the perception that these women will be easier to control and less likely to evoke his jealousy through socialising in places where other young men are present. Derek, quoted above, highlights how the characteristics which make his girlfriend desirable (her preference not to go to the dancing) and indicate her trustworthiness in terms of her social and sexual conduct, are not values that he himself is prepared to take on. He sees these characteristics as positive attributes of a girlfriend,

quite removed from his own performance of masculinity, which is achieved through heterosexual activity (Connell, 1995). Evidencing this, Derek reports elsewhere in the interview that he recently had sex with another woman who he met at a party (to which he chose not to invite his girlfriend), and seems quite unperturbed about the potential for this to have any negative impact on his relationship with his girlfriend, since she will not find out. Despite this, he refers to their relationship as "brilliant" and having "trust", although clearly he confines these expectations of trust and monogamy to his girlfriend, and not himself. Indeed, as Derek concludes, for his girlfriend to replicate his own behaviour would be entirely unacceptable to him:

> *Derek (College): Cheating is the one thing that just makes your blood just go (sucks in breath) right up.....if my girlfriend was to do that, I mean, well I wouldnae hit her, but I'd be like that "Right, you're away, Cheerio". No doubt about it.*

The exercise of determining women's suitability as girlfriends saw young women's (presumed) sexual histories placed under close scrutiny; a scrutiny which young men were not subject to by women. Not only were young women who were thought to have too much sexual experience ruled out as suitable girlfriends, they also risked being the subject of gossip, or perceived to be likely carriers of sexually transmitted diseases:

> *Ross (College): No, no way would anyone want to have her as a girlfriend. I think they would be scared of catching something off her. There was a rumour*

that she had Chlamydia at one point. People say that she's on the Pill, but that's only for if you have been with somebody for a while. You can still catch diseases, especially fae a lassie like that.

Louise (NEET): My pal Lorraine, she goes out every night hersel', I don't know what she goes out for. Sometimes she doesnae come back and her Maw phones the police and all that. We think she is on the game or something, that's what we've heard.

In vilifying young women considered to have 'too much' sexual experience, young men's role in passing on sexually transmitted diseases was not considered, nor was any sense of responsibility or concern about the risk to women's safety and wellbeing. Much of the 'knowledge' about young women's sexual histories were based on an active network of gossip, speculation and hearsay which both young men and women contributed to:

Jacqui (NEET): Some girls are dirty, they get theirself a bad name and then other lassies call them sluts and just bitch about them all the time.

Ross (College): They say she's easy. You only need to spend ten minutes with her and you've got her (laughs). I was told she went away for three days and slept with seven guys. She's no' a proper girl.

Here, a powerful force is enacted by the wider network of young people in collectively maligning young women with sexual experience, with the capability to enact damaging consequences for young women. Indeed, Ross' view that the woman he is speaking about is not 'a proper girl' because of her perceived poor sexual conduct reduces her to a virtually sub human persona, not worthy of other young people's respect, or even the status of 'girl'. It is noteworthy that this participant never referred to the woman in question as having a name, and her vulnerability to being used by the men who consider her to be 'easy' was not discussed.

Double Standards: 'Normal' Male Heterosexuality vs. the 'Wrong Kind of Girl'

In contrast to the close scrutiny and denigration of women's sexual histories, the participants reported men's sexual experience to be expected, accepted as normal, and even celebrated. Reflecting the findings of previous studies, which identified how young men secure peer approval through known heterosexual activity (Forbes, 2005; Frosh, 2002), five participants in this study explained that young men with extensive sexual experience became known as 'legends' among other young men, and were much admired. This contrasted sharply with accounts of how sexually active young women risked being labelled terms such as 'slag' and 'slut', and were targets of gossip and insults. The stark disparity between such positive representations of male sexuality, and very negative conceptualisations of sexually active young women was not lost on many of the participants, who were acutely aware of the discrepancy:

Shelly (College): In my year at school there was this boy, he had been round nearly every girl in the whole year- except for me and a couple of my pals. Naebody talked about him or slagged him off. But see if a girl was to go round sleeping with everybody it would be "Oh, that stupid cow" or "She's a slut".

Suzanne (College): Guys get a shake of the hand, "Oh well done". At the school disco, it's like "How many lassies did you pull?" and the guys would say "Oh, I pulled that girl" and another guy would say "Oh, so did I" and she would end up with a bad reputation, but he wouldn't.

Dave (NEET): If a guy goes with two lassies at the one time everybody says he's brilliant, asking him about it and respecting him. But if a lassie goes with two guys, everyone is talking down about her and saying she is a slut and "she must be desperate". That's the way people see it.

Although aware of this gendered discrepancy the participants were quite ambivalent of the status quo, minimally challenging the embargo on women's access to the same sexual freedom as men. Instead, there was much to suggest that young men and women organised their intimate relationships according to a benchmark of male freedom and female confinement. While young men and their male peers assessed young women's perceived sexual histories to determine their 'suitability' as girlfriends, it was clear that they did not consider their own sexual activities to jeopardise future relationships with young women. To this end, young men could afford to be upfront about how they

themselves, and men they knew, sought purely sexual, detached, encounters with women:

> *Rab (College): It's mostly sex, that's what it comes down to at the end of the night…..you're stoatin' about, looking for a bit, know what I mean, to take home with you. That's the first thing I would say when I'm going out to the dancin', I'm daein' it to get some birds tonight. That's the first thing that comes into my mind.*

> *John (NEET): A lot of boys are only after sex, that's the thing. A lot of boys are only thinking about sex, not a relationship.*

It was striking to note the absence of similar perspectives to these from the young women in this study. The notion that young women may also seek sexual gratification from men did not emerge, reflecting compliance with expectations of women's adherence to traditional femininity through sexual naïveté, and commitment to building and nurturing intimate relationships rather than sexual encounters.

The reports by, and about, young men who sought purely sexual encounters featured much less of the assessment of women's sexual histories and reputations that preoccupied the process of choosing a girlfriend. In fact, while young men explained that young women who chose to wear revealing, sexy, clothing are unsuitable girlfriends, several young men described the women who wore these clothes to be

especially appealing partners for sexual encounters, as they felt that these women were purposely seeking sexual attention from men:

Lawrence (College): I have seen girls in short skirts and dresses and it attracts men's attention. They do it to attract a man's attention so that the man will have sex with them, obviously.

Liam (College): I love seeing lassies dressed like that, man! But no' if it was my girlfriend.

The prerequisites for being a girlfriend were clearly very different, and more stringent than those which qualified a woman as desirable for a purely sexual relationship. Chung (2007:1279) has theorised on why this may be the case, noting the "interdependence of identities" which accompanies being part of a known couple. With this in mind, young men's desire to have a girlfriend with a sound sexual reputation in the eyes of the wider network of peers may reflect the need to ensure that their own reputation among their peer group is preserved; he would be less likely to have to encounter suggestions that his girlfriend cannot be trusted and is likely to cheat on him. On the understanding that other people knew they did not intend to form an ongoing relationship with a sexually experienced woman, young men had little to lose (and perhaps some credence to gain) in sharing the details of their 'no strings' sexual exploits in their conversations with other young men, as in the following exchange during an interview with two male participants:

Derek (College): I went with a forty year old, nine weeks ago, it was at my mate's house and after it happened she went to the toilet and I went like that to my mate "I'll see you later mate, I need to jump out of your windae" (laughs).

Rab (College): (laughs) Aye, I've done it with a lassie in the toilets at a nightclub. She just pulled me into the toilet, know what I mean, it was her that dunnit to me! I was happy with that, man! I was out for a night out, so that was a result, you know. She was alright man, know what I mean, she was good looking. I was quite happy. Other times, when you get up in the morning and the drink's wearing off you look at her and she's a monster. I've sneaked out the door and that before (laughs), but it's just one of those things.

These young men seemed entertained and quite impressed, sharing a laugh at each others' stories. The fact that they managed to 'escape' unnoticed after having sex with women whom they had no intention of ever seeing again, was a source of humour. The decision to sneak away soon after sex shows these young men's awareness of the likelihood that the women anticipated more from the encounter (the potential for a future relationship) than the men were willing to pursue, as well as their attempt to avoid facing the women who may feel angry, misled or hurt. The probability that these women would feel such emotions was reinforced by the participants' reports of how women have experienced 'one night stands'. Contrasting sharply with Rab and Derek's light-hearted recounts, young women's experiences were associated with feeling taken advantage of, coerced, and regretful:

Ella (University): I just knew from the minute he started paying for things that it was putting me in a position where I felt he expected something from me. I did not want him back at my flat, but he just kept saying "Oh, come on, come on" and eventually I was like that "OK". And the next day when I didn't hear from him I was so angry. To think that it was in my flat, he has been in my flat. The next day I was just feeling really blank. Horrible, horrible, horrible.

Peter (University): My pal, Melanie, when she was younger, she had some one night stands, and she's told me she regrets them. She still gets called a slut and she'll never get away from that. People don't like her because of that and they talk about her.

The negative feelings and peer gossip which accompanied young women's sexual activity, coupled with the absence of such perspectives in representations of men's experiences of casual sex, indicate distinct differences in what young people consider to be acceptable demonstrations of male and female sexuality. The discussion and commentary on young peoples' sexual activities within peer networks functioned to cement individual young women's sexual reputations (for better or worse) and consequently determined their status as suitable or unsuitable partners for a dating relationship. There was evident potential for those young women determined to be too sexually experienced- the 'wrong kind of girl'- to become likely targets of men who sought purely sexual relationships:

Dave (NEET): All boys want off a lassie like that is a one night stand. You wouldn't want a lassie like that to be your girlfriend. Once people know that's what she's like they will be interested in her for a one night stand but nothing else. That's all they will want to use her for.

Brendan (NEET): If it gets put on a plate for you, you're not going to say no, man. But you wouldnae want someone like that for your girlfriend.

It is clear that young women's sexuality is subject to a very different regulatory code than that which applies to young men. The consequence to young women in being labelled the 'the wrong kind of girl' is to be deemed unworthy of the respect and emotional investment reserved for 'respectable' women, who are considered eligible for a dating relationship. The data presented thus far would suggest that in resisting established expectations of femininity and sexual inexperience, young women may compromise their opportunities to be deemed suitable dating partners. Given the earlier reported findings of the pressure on young women to secure an intimate dating relationship, it is easy to see why young women may remain invested in adhering to these established expectations which regulate their sexual conduct within the boundaries of conventional femininity.

Performing Femininity: Young Women's Efforts not to be Mistaken for the 'Wrong Kind of Girl'

Young women were not naïve to the fact that some young men sought purely sexual encounters and were not interested in an ongoing relationship. Female participants across the sample stressed the potential for women to be intentionally misled by men who would purposefully give the impression of being interested in pursuing a dating relationship, when in fact their only interest was in a one off sexual encounter. A number of young women were clear in stating the potential for women to be used by men for sex, and offered cautionary warnings about this:

> *Veronica (College): Guys tend to use girls a lot of the time, only wanting one thing at the end of the night. If they're out on the pull, they're wanting a shag, that's it, end of story. They're not looking for a meaningful relationship, they're just wanting their leg over.*

> *Jacqui (NEET): We get told about boys "They just want to pump you and dump you" and that. Some of them just want that, to say "I've had her, and her and her".*

Given the desirability of finding a man with whom to have a committed dating relationship, rather than someone who was only interested in a sexual encounter, young women sought to differentiate themselves from the 'wrong kind of girl'- someone who would be targeted by men for a purely sexual relationship, and was not seen to be

worthy of the respect and commitment reserved for 'girlfriends'. A key means of demonstrating their suitability as a girlfriend, and ensuring they were not mistaken for the 'wrong kind of girl' was to carefully manage their appearance and choice of clothes, with a particular emphasis on 'covering up':

> *Louise (NEET): It's best to be more covered up. You will still get chatted up but it will be because the boy likes you, and not because you look like you are up for it.*

> *Emily (NEET): See my boyfriend's cousin's bird, you want to see her, man, she goes about like a pure hoore. You'd think she was going out somewhere else, other than the dancing, if you see what I mean! (Laughs) She's wan of thae ones, know what I mean? No, no, no, I don't like that at all. Lassies think if they dress like that guys will like them, but the guys are only going to like them for what they can get basically. I couldnae go out like that. I mean I'll wear a skirt and all that, but it will be a longer skirt that I can wear black tights and black boots under.*

These women's reports reflect acquiescence with men's scrutiny of young women's clothes, and appearance, in judging their sexual morality and consequent suitability as girlfriends. Young women largely accepted this scrutiny as being 'just the way it is', and held themselves responsible for controlling their image accordingly. As such, where revealing clothes were ruled out, this was not as a reflection of their level of

comfort or lack of appeal to the woman wearing them, but on the basis of men's preferences and perceptions. Put simply, 'covering up' was linked with being taken seriously and minimising the potential to be targeted by men seeking only sex. Echoing the perspectives of young women in Skeggs (1997:100) study, in striving to secure an image of feminine respectability; "to look was to be", and "disavowal of the sexual is necessary" (1997:115). Young women's choice to mould themselves according to male defined models of feminine respectability reflects already established perspectives in the feminist literature relating to how some young women accept, adopt and comply with male perspectives on appropriately feminine girlfriends (even where this involves drowning out their own choices and preferences) in order to appeal as girlfriends (Holland et al., 2004). Some young women's choice to dress in accordance with men's preference for feminine, conservatively dressed girlfriends ('covering up'), shows them to be very much aware of the scrutiny they are under[50], and keen to secure a favourable impression among young men. Furthermore, in measuring other women against their own preference for 'covering up', young women were able to underscore how they themselves project an image of respectable femininity more successfully than other women, and will therefore be better positioned to secure a partner who values their worth as a person. The latter quotation, above, typified the reports of several female participants, who castigated women who wear revealing clothing as appearing like 'sluts' or 'hoors'[51].

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[50] Young women's awareness of the fact that their appearance is under male surveillance was established by Skeggs (1997), who found that some heterosexual women would socialise in gay bars and clubs to avoid being the subject of unwanted heterosexual male attention.

[51] It was frustrating to observe young women's adoption of these offensive notions, as using these terms enables, rather than disrupts, the practise of keeping young women's reputations and identities under male control.

Notwithstanding some young women's participation in the offensive labelling of women who did not dress according to patriarchal ideas of feminine respectability, there was some evidence of young women's resistance to notions that young women wear revealing clothing purely for male attention, or as a 'sign' to men that they were seeking sex:

> *Jacqui (NEET): I think that you should be able to wear what you want, but you need to watch yourself when you go out and know that if you dress too revealing boys will think you are an easy lassie even if you're not.*

While some young men reported that they interpreted young women's revealing clothing as signs that a woman is 'up for it' and actively seeking sex, female participants, clearly aware of such views among some young men, explained that it was important to counter these views through covering up. No young women in this study argued that young women who wore revealing clothing did so purely to seek sex, but most understood that men were likely to interpret women's appearance in such a way and so stressed the importance of being mindful of male perspectives on women's appearance and dress accordingly.

Cheating

Having established the context of young people's dating relationships and how these relationships are experienced by young men and women, it was pertinent to explore the participants' perspectives on why some dating relationships break up. While there were

some reports of relationships ending because of a mutual desire to move on or, in the case of students, as a result of academic pressures or moving to a new place, cheating was cited by over half (n=25) of the participants as being the most common reason for relationships coming to an end. While the participants offered examples of both men and women who had cheated on their dating partners, there was a dominant view that most cases are of men cheating on their girlfriends:

> *Ross (College): It's mostly guys that will cheat. You hear about people cheating on their girlfriend all the time.*

The variety of reported instances where men and women had cheated on their partners included the participants' own personal experiences, and those of their friends and peers. Emerging from these reports were evident, gendered, differences in how men and women responded to their partners' unfaithfulness. In most of the reported cases where young men had cheated on their girlfriends, young women had forgiven their boyfriend's actions and carried on with the relationship, or reconciled after a short break. This was even the case where the infidelity was in no doubt and had been admitted by the man, and in cases where he had cheated on her previously:

> *Vicky (College): He has cheated on her twice. And no even hid it, when she found out he admitted it and she still went back. She was seeing him the next night.*

By contrast, young men were known to be much less likely to forgive a girlfriend who had cheated, choosing instead to end the relationship immediately and permanently:

> *Christina (University): One of my friends, his girlfriend cheated on him and his gut reaction was "No, I can't do this, I can't be with her anymore because that's a completely different person to the one I thought I was dating" and he ended the relationship straight away because of that. I don't think there was any question about it, he wanted to end it as soon as he found out she had cheated on him.*

It is not surprising to hear that young men and women may respond differently to infidelity, in view of the earlier reported findings which established young men and women's very different experiences of the pressures and desires to have an intimate dating partner. For young women who are exposed to stronger pressures to be in a dating relationship, breaking up with a man who has been unfaithful may prove difficult and unappealing where they feel that the prospect of single life is problematic. Furthermore, given the operation of powerful expectations that women should be capable emotional caretakers of their intimate relationships with men (Letherby, 2000; Sanfield and Percy, 2003), young women may feel that it is their job to repair the damage of infidelity and to undertake work with their partner to prevent further unfaithfulness. Such considerations may overshadow the need for men to be responsible for their own actions, and engender a false sense of security for women, who ultimately do not control men's fidelity.

Young women's choice to continue an intimate relationship after discovering their partner's infidelity had the potential to engender tension between them and their female friends. Young women in this study reported being scornful and vocally disapproving of friends who decided to remain with a partner who had cheated, arguing that the woman was being naïve, too soft and 'putting up' with hurtful behaviour by staying. This point of view highlighted the potential for women to be torn between making themselves voluntarily single by breaking up with their unfaithful boyfriend, or remaining with him and losing the respect of their female friends. This scenario reflects Chung's (2005, 2007) perspective on how women must grapple with competing discourses of individuality and feminine heterosexual success. In the case of cheating partners, there is the expectation that young women should dump cheating boyfriends, demonstrating their individualistic strength and their capability to reject men who treat them badly. At odds with this expectation is young women's investment in maintaining the relationship, which provides the social benefits of "couple culture" (Budgeon, 1998:302). Remaining with the man may also appeal where a strong emotional bond has developed, which the woman may hope to repair. In view of this dilemma, and aware that their friends disapproved of their choice to remain with cheating boyfriends, it is understandable why some women would simply stop confiding any further details of their relationship to their friends:

> Shelly (College): She doesn't really talk to us about it any more, she has told us he cheated on her and she knew we thought she was daft taking him back. So now she doesn't talk to us about it any more.

Where friends' support is conditional upon women leaving cheating partners, or is perceived to be, choosing to remain with their partner may strain women's friendships, consequently engendering feelings of isolation and shame for staying in a relationship that is not approved of. In reinforcing the expectation that women should be strong resisters of bad treatment, young women act as the primary messengers of the 'individualistic' view that assumes women's ability to very easily dispense with men who let them down. This carried an unfortunate potential for well meaning advice to be unhelpful, and experienced as judgment and derision. It does appear that young women are striving to do the best for friends who they consider to be prone to being hurt or badly treated by their boyfriends. In pointing out the necessity for them to leave him, however it may be helpful for young women to reconsider the effect that responding in this way has on the friends for whom they care. Adding further complexity, there were several instances reported during this study where the same young women who had stressed the need to break up with the cheating partner went on to continue their friendship with the man, leaving the woman feeling betrayed and excluded.

Relationships as Sites of Power and Control

So far, this chapter has established how young peoples' experiences of dating relationships and heterosexual intimacy can be characterised by much pressure, particularly for young women whose reputations, sexual histories and appearance are under close scrutiny and judgement. In evidencing how heterosexual relationships can act as sites of male privilege, feminists have identified a wide range of (violent and non-violent) tactics, strategies and behaviours that some men use to maintain power and

control over their female partners. Coercion, surveillance, monitoring, restrictions, isolation from friends and family, and control of clothes and money are important tools that some men use to maintain power and control, and are "integral to the overall constellation of violence" (Dobash et al., 2000:17; Mooney, 2000b). Men who perpetrate violence and abuse against their partners usually use controlling behaviours as well (Flood and Fergus, 2008).

The interview narratives highlighted how the benefits and pleasures of intimate relationships are often intermixed with scrutiny and control. Throughout the interviews, tactics of men's non-violent power and control of women partners emerged as a prominent occurrence in dating relationships. The participants were asked to reflect on relationships where they felt a partner had been controlling or domineering, and whether they had experienced, or knew of, an intimate dating relationship where "someone is treated unfairly" or "where you don't agree with what's going on". These questions were crucial to connecting with young people's awareness and experiences of gendered power imbalances, and prompted a wide range of reports of control, surveillance and monitoring by virtually every participant. A principal manifestation of this power and control was jealousy and the desire to survey and monitor the partner's activities and contact with members of the opposite sex.

Allied with the earlier discussion of how men's male peers governed their choice of girlfriends, male peers were also reported to be central in normalising and encouraging men's control of their dating partners. Young men seen to hold insufficient control,

particularly where they were deemed to be 'allowing' their girlfriends to associate or converse with other men, risked being interrogated and challenged by other men:

Alexander (NEET): My pals were going like that "How is she always talking to that guy? I wouldn't put up with that" and I had to say to them "I don't know". I'm ending up looking like a pure daftie here.

In some reports, young women's movements were reported to her boyfriend by other men who had seen her out somewhere without him. In choosing to report young women's activities back to their boyfriends, male peers enforced a norm of male sexual proprietarianess (Wilson and Daly, 1996), which cemented the idea that young women should not be associating with men other than their boyfriend, and legitimised men's right to know who their girlfriend was with when they were not together:

Vicky (College): He will phone her up and say "Bobby told me that you have been seen up at his bit". Bobby is his pal. And she will say "I don't even know where Bobby stays!" And then he says "Aye well, somebody told me on the internet that you were seen out with loads of boys".

Suzanne (College): I feel as if I have to watch who I am talking to sometimes, in case I am seen by his pals and they say to my boyfriend "Oh, I seen her talking to so and so….."

It is interesting to note from these examples how young women can experience male power and control in their intimate dating relationships even where their partner himself is not actively seeking to control. Such is the expectation of male control and surveillance, that other men can uphold this system on the boyfriends' behalf. In the absence of resistance from the boyfriend, such as assuring his friend that he did not require to be updated on his girlfriend's movements, this norm of surveillance is free to flourish. While there was the potential for both young men and women to feel jealous or insecure, and to question their partner's movements and contact with other people, it was clear that young men had greater success than women in ensuring their partner's compliance, usually via persistent suggestions that she is cheating or planning to be unfaithful. There were various reports of young women who had altered their social lives and friendships in response to this interrogation, but an absence of reports of young men making such changes. Concerned to affirm their loyalty and faithfulness in the face of continued suggestions of romantic involvement with other men, some young women avoided contact with other men, or social contact with other people altogether:

> *Dave (NEET): My brother, he is always asking his girlfriend where she is going and who she is with, and it's got to the point that she says she can't be bothered to go out anymore with her pals or that, because he wants to ask her so many questions and phone and text her the whole time she is out. He's pure paranoid that she'll cheat whenever she is out.*

Barbara (College): I never go out. I never go anywhere that could make him jealous. I go to college and I go to work. I go to my Gran's. He thought I was cheating on him last week an' all. Even my Mum said "Billy, how can she be cheating on you? She is here with you every day and every night." We went on holiday to Spain for a week, but he ended up getting us flung out the hotel because he thought some guy fancied me so he punched him.

This desire to prevent contact with other young men, underpinned by the opinion that other men may seek to 'steal' their partner, was the most frequently reported rationale for men's control of their partners. To this end, ten participants reported instances where young men surveyed their girlfriends' text messages, social networking sites and private email accounts, with the specific intent of ensuring that contact was not being made with other men:

Cheryl (College): One of my friends is not allowed to go out with her friends and she is not allowed to text any other boys. He goes through her phone to make sure there aren't any other boys' numbers in her phone. And I'm thinking, "Come on, get a grip!" It's just stupid, and she is the stupid one for letting him do that. Guys will always try that sort of stuff and it's up to the lassie to stand up for herself and no' let him.

Alexis (NEET): He is always saying she is going to cheat on him. See on the MSN, he hacked into her address and took off all the boys on it.

These quotations belie the minimal resistance to young men's perceived entitlement to survey, monitor, and control their girlfriends. Cheryl, above, is very clear in expressing her frustration with 'stupid' women who fail to realise that men will inevitably attempt to usurp women's rights to privacy and control their relationships with other young people. Cheryl perceives it to be up to women to accept and then challenge this. Acceptance of men's jealousy and desire to control who their girlfriends spoke to, was reflected in some young people's view that such behaviour is normal:

> *Christopher (College): Every time she's talking to another guy it would be like, "Who's that?" A lot of guys are jealous. It's just pretty normal.*

> *Lawrence (College): I've seen a guy who was with his girlfriend and there was another guy eying her up so the guy went over and punched him. It's a man's jealousy. Its part of human nature, it's common.*

This normalisation and perceived inevitability of men's jealousy and possessiveness may seriously impede young women's ability to resist male power, and assert their own agency. It also presents an obstacle to young men who do not wish to dominate their girlfriends, and who do not wish to keep tabs on where she is and who she is with. In other words, young men who do respect their girlfriend's right to independence, freedom and privacy may be considered as not normal, not domineering enough, and thus not appropriately masculine (hooks, 2000). If the dominant view locates men's need to control and survey as normal, or even intrinsic, resistance may seem pointless.

Submitting to Control

While participants clearly located physical intimate partner violence as an unacceptable occurrence which would certainly motivate them to end their relationship[52], there was greater ambivalence about having a controlling or domineering partner. Seven female participants who vocally asserted that they would never tolerate or remain in a violent relationship, were evidently living with a high level of male power and control from their boyfriends. Leona, cited below, was strident in stressing that there were no circumstances in which she would remain with a violent partner, given that she is not a 'weak' woman, like some other women are:

> *Leona (NEET): See if my boyfriend hit me, I wouldn't care how much I loved him, I would be away. I would leave him- that would be me offskie. But some other women are dead weak.*

Despite this assertion, Leona seemed quite unperturbed in her reporting of the extent of her partner's control and dominance. As well as passing comment on Leona's 'immaturity' and using this aspect of her character as the reason why he would not allow her to accompany him outside, her boyfriend made decisions on their behalf that relegated her wishes, but fulfilled his own. This left Leona unable to secure her own preferences where they conflicted with her boyfriend's:

> *Leona (NEET): He's 20 and I'm still young (sixteen) and he says I have an immature side, and that's probably true. So I'm saying to him "You're going to*

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[52] Reported in the next chapter

your works night out?" and he says he was, but I wasn't to go. It's all right, I did want to go, but I know he wouldn't cheat on me or anything like that. Well, there's still a wee doubt in my mind, but he says I'll probably get over that when I get older. The other thing is he goes to the sunbeds, and I says to him "Can I come up the sunbeds with you?" and he always goes "No".

There is an apparent divergence between Leona's resolute stance in the fictitious scenario of a violent relationship, and her inability to secure her own preferences in the day to day real life with her boyfriend. It is difficult to share Leona's optimism about being able to resist and prevent violence and abuse, where resisting her partner's authority is so problematic. Jacqui, cited below, also argued that she would never tolerate violence, and goes further than Leona by differentiating herself from girls who allow their boyfriends too much control:

Jacqui: There are some girls who get told what to do all the time. If my boyfriend was no' happy with something, I would just say to him "well, I'm going to dae what I want". I always just dae what I want.

But in practice, Jacqui's desire to 'do what she wants' was not easily secured, as she privileges following her boyfriend's instructions above proceeding with her own choices. Jacqui explains that her boyfriend controls what she wears, in order to minimise the attention from other men that may result from wearing revealing clothing:

Jacqui (NEET): When I have a wee top on, he will say "take that aff, it makes

your breasts look big!"

Morven: Why does he say that?

Jacqui: Probably jealous in case other boys look at me.

Morven: And what do you do, do you get changed?

Jacqui: Aye, I change so that he stops moaning! Sometimes when he says that, I

look at myself and think "Aye, you look a wee bit...." So I will change my top.

Internalising her boyfriend's view of the clothes she should wear, Jacqui substitutes her own initial choice with that of her boyfriend, who she ultimately concludes has the better judgment. Given the strength of expectations that women should actively and successfully resist male power and control (McRobbie, 2009; Sieg, 2007), coupled with the view that women who continue to be subject to male power and control are failing to secure their own agency (Gonick, 2006), it is understandable why young women may not wish to advertise instances of their partner's dominance, or their own submission. In Jacqui's case it is probably easier, and certainly less of a challenge to her principles as a strong and capable woman, to argue that she had made a bad choice of clothes, rather than concede that she was submitting to her boyfriend's control. This strategy may also prompt young women to brand their partner's attempts to control them as innocuous and unthreatening, meaning that they need not consider themselves as weak, or risk being seen to be 'putting up' with unacceptable behaviour.

Perhaps aware of the expectation that young women can and should resist and challenge male dominance, young women sought to establish themselves as being unlike the 'weak' women who tolerate violence and abuse. This was difficult though, when they were reporting instances of their boyfriend's power and control which they had not directly resisted or challenged. One means of keeping their credibility and image of strength intact was to locate the problem as their over-reaction to their boyfriend's behaviour, rather than his attempts to control:

> *Barbara (College): I try not to bother because stupid things annoy me.*
>
> *Morven: What do you mean?*
>
> *Barbara: Like, he goes through my phone. I just found this out the other day. He has been checking my phone for months to see if anybody has text me. And he has been looking at sent messages, you can see what I have been texting. I didn't realise you could do that, and he has been doing that for months. I need to get a new SIM card now.*

The decision to replace the SIM card, rather than the boyfriend, underscores how Barbara felt unable to assert the necessary power to directly challenge her boyfriend by insisting that her phone and the messages it contained remain her private property. In replacing the SIM card, Barbara is enacting a quiet, non confrontational resistance, which reinstates her privacy without challenging her boyfriend's behaviour in the longer term.

Young women's reluctance to challenge their boyfriend's control surprised some participants, especially in cases of women who confidently and assertively secured their rights in their dealings with people other than their boyfriends:

Anna (NEET): She is a big loud lassie and she wouldn't take that off anyone else.

Peter (University): Some girls, who otherwise wouldn't put up with any nonsense, will take it off their boyfriends.

These perspectives suggest that young women may access gender equality, autonomy and power more easily in other realms of life, than is the case in their intimate relationships with men.

'Legitimate' Authority and Control

Not all modes of power and control in dating relationships reported during the interviews were immediately obvious as being coercive, problematic or undesirable. Some young men were insistent that their desire to control their girlfriend was not an act of coercion, but one of protection. The notion that men should protect their partners was underpinned by the belief that women require male power and protection to ensure their safety, since they are vulnerable to attack when out without their boyfriend:

Ricky (NEET): It's just that boys are trying to look after you, know what I mean. And there's nothing bad about that. But for some girls it might be a bit too much, but boys are only trying to help.

Callum (NEET): Obviously, if you start asking questions, she's no going to turn around and say "Oh, I was away out with my ex-boyfriend" and all that. Know what I mean. If boys are wanting to know where their girlfriends are all the time, it's mair that they are worried about their safety, it's for the lassie's own good. There's no safe place now, is there? You never know who is going to be walking about.

In the quotation above, it is interesting to see how Callum reframes his argument, initially making the point about boys wanting to control their girlfriends to prevent contact with other men, before arguing that the desire to monitor their girlfriend's whereabouts comes from concern for her safety and the fact that there is 'no safe place' for women. He may have perceived this to be a more justifiable point of concern.

A further point of legitimate control of women, argued some of the male participants, was to control their girlfriend's clothing and appearance. This dovetails with the desirability of having a girlfriend with a 'respectable' feminine appearance, reported earlier in this chapter. Underlying the perceived normalcy of controlling their girlfriend's appearance was a sense of entitlement to visual exclusivity in relation to their girlfriends' bodies:

Gary (NEET): A lot of boys get into an argument with their girlfriend, 'cos if the lassie is dressed in a wee skirt or that, all the other boys are gonny look at her. I've asked my girlfriend no' to wear skirts and aw that- and it's no just me-you don't want anybody else to see your girlfriend's body, like, her body's just for you to see, nobody else.

Morven: And what does your girlfriend say, has she said, "right okay, I'll wear something else…" or…?

Gary: Naw, she's just wears a skirt… but she'll put thick tights on.

Morven: That's a compromise?

Gary: Aye, that's all right, I don't mind that.

In affirming that it's not 'just me' who is seeking to keep their girlfriends' bodies out of other men's sight, this participant locates his choice to negotiate with his girlfriend on her clothing as normal and understandable, and an issue that is likely to be of concern to other young men. Other male participants did indeed replicate this practice, again with the reported rationale of minimising her exposure to other men's gaze:

Callum (NEET): You don't want your girlfriend wearing anything revealing 'cause you never know whose hands are gonny be aboot her, or whose eyes will be all over her.

Ross (College): I tell her to go and put some clothes on. I just don't like other people looking at her like she's a bit of meat.

Alexander (NEET): I would be angry if my girlfriend was dressed in wee clothes, because you know the way it is with the guys and you know that you yourself look at thae girls with the wee clothes on, so you know for a fact there's going to be guys eyeing up your girlfriend. And I wouldn't like that.

These perspectives belie a sense of ownership of their girlfriends which, these male participants believe, affords a legitimate right to style and display their partner in accordance with their own preferences and requirements. There was a sense throughout these quotes of protectionism; that this mode of control was for women's own good. In the latter quote, Alexander points out that, as a man, he has an insight into the male psyche that his girlfriend cannot access, and therefore he is better positioned to anticipate which clothes will result in her being 'eyed up' by other men. The implication here is that this superior, *male*, knowledge legitimises male control. This perspective was replicated in the accounts of ten other male participants, representing yet another mode of control to which only women were subject.

The sense of possession of female partners was also cited as a motivator for male to male aggression, as some men felt it necessary to defend their ownership of their girlfriend against the advances of other men, as explained to me in the following exchange during an interview with two young men:

Ross (College): I've started arguing wi' a guy who's been eyeing her up, before. I have had to say something to a couple of guys, like "stop eyeing up my bird".

Liam (College): See, that's his bird, he's got to say something. I mean if there is a guy chatting her up at the dancing, I mean, you need to say something. You're not just going to sit there and let another guy chat to your bird. You need to make him aware of the fact that she's your bird and she's taken.

In this and other similar reports of warding off other men's (perceived) advances towards their girlfriends, nothing is said of the young woman's preference or point of view, or whether she felt it necessary for her boyfriend to behave in this way. Instead, the necessity of ensuring other men know that their partner is *taken* by them is the primary objective.

Resistance

The relative ambivalence to the issue of power and control of intimate partners, versus young people's certainty about the unacceptability of violence and abuse[53] is striking, and it is worthwhile considering why this may be the case. Cavanagh et al. (2001) argue that resistance can only be enacted when the phenomena to be resisted is acknowledged as problematic. In the case of men's power and control, it should not be surprising to see that some young people tolerate and accommodate men's power and control where they do not consider this to be a legitimate problem or injustice, or where male superiority is 'just the way it is' and unable to be challenged. It is vital that young men and women understand power and control to be a problematic issue if there is hope of extending women's agency and parity of power in their intimate relationships.

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[53] The subsequent chapter of this thesis reports this issue in full.

Lack of resistance of men's power and control was not always due to ambivalence or acceptance of men's right to dominate. The limited examples of resistance to male power and control to emerge in the current research revealed the potential costs to women who do challenge controlling partners. In the case reported below, resisting a young man's authority by breaking the curfew he had imposed resulted in verbal abuse:

> *Derek (College): My cousin is fairly controlling of his girlfriend. If she's going to a party or something, or going up the town he's like "Right, you be back at this time" and, I've been out with him and he phones her every 20 minutes. He's like "Right, where are you, are you coming home, I miss you?" and if she's no back by say, this time, he's like "Oh, you fucking bitch" and "You just get to fuck".*

To sustain this type of aggressive verbal abuse from one's partner is likely to engender much hurt and fear, and it is easy to see why the young woman in this scenario would be reticent about challenging her partner's authority in the future. With this in mind, in cases where young women observed a friend to be subject to their partner's dominance and aggressive control, and where the costs of resisting were anticipated to be distressing or harmful, efforts were made to include the woman within the female peer group in a way that would minimise the chance of evoking the boyfriend's jealousy or aggression. One particular participant, Cherie, was aware that her friend's boyfriend could sometimes intimidate and frighten his partner, and did not like her going out without him in case other men were around. Cherie attempted to appease the boyfriend

by inviting her friend out to do only 'girly' things in order to prevent his jealousy, and so that he would allow her to join in:

> *Cherie (NEET): I'll say "Do you want to go out? We're having a girly day, going to the pictures or ice skating" or whatever, so he'll let her go. I make sure he knows that it will just be the lassies that's there.*

The potential for aggression or abuse made resisting male power and control a risky business. Even where women did not fear being harmed by their boyfriend, the risk that their boyfriend would end the relationship if his girlfriend challenged his right to control impeded some young women's resistance.

Chapter Summary

The rationale for this chapter has been to report and discuss young people's experiences of heterosexual intimacy, as an important precursor for understanding young peoples' attitudes and experiences of dating violence and abuse. This chapter has established how young people's experiences of heterosexuality, intimacy and dating relationships are subject to gendered differences which reflect wider structures of normative gender performance and patriarchal control. For young women, desirability as a potential girlfriend is strongly tied to the performance of feminine respectability, which requires young women to remain sexually inexperienced in order to be deemed suitable as a 'girlfriend'. Young men are subject to a hegemonic masculine standard, enforced by the male peer group, which perpetuates expectations of male power and control of women.

Young men are afforded considerably more freedom from the scrutiny of conduct and judgements levied on young women, and report feeling much less pressure to have an intimate dating partner than is the case for young women.

The data in this chapter has established young people's peer group as playing a pivotal role in their experiences of intimate relationships, with partners often found from within the peer group, and many couples spending much of their time together in the company of their friends. Establishing how dating relationships are publicly situated within the peer network provides an important context for the subsequent findings chapters which report young peoples' attitudes, perceptions and experiences of intimate partner violence. The close proximity of the peer group provides significant potential for young people to have witnessed, intervened in, or have knowledge of other young people's experiences of violence and abuse.

This chapter has evidenced widespread acceptance of male power and control, which some young men and women legitimise and render normal. This finding is also important to consider alongside those reported in the remaining two findings chapters; it is important to look at how this acceptance of male power and control interrelates with young peoples' attitudes and experiences of violence and abuse.

CHAPTER SIX:

DATING VIOLENCE AND ABUSE: YOUNG PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES, AWARENESS AND PERCEPTIONS

Introduction

Garnering young people's attitudes, awareness and perceptions of dating violence is a central aim of this study, and consequently formed a fundamental aspect of the interviews. Within this broad aim, the current study has sought to undertake a gendered analysis of young people's perceptions of intimate partner violence and abuse, assessing their views on whether the issue is one of men's violence against women, or one of 'mutual combat', or indeed an issue of male victims and female perpetrators. Young people's own understanding of 'what counts' as dating violence and abuse is also a focus, along with their perceptions of the reasons *why* violence and abuse may occur in some young people's dating relationships. The data in this chapter is reported in relation to these themes, and the chapter concludes by reporting young people's views on what should happen in the aftermath of dating violence and abuse, in terms of the actions that victims should take, and the action that should be taken against perpetrators.

The participants in this study were largely dismissive of the feminist perspective of intimate partner violence as an issue of men's violence against women, and stressed the potential for both men and women to perpetrate violence and abuse. This reflects dominant perceptions of gender equality and dismantlement of 'old' systems which

traditionally rendered women as the subjects of patriarchal power (McRobbie, 2009). As this chapter reveals, young people's views on dating violence and abuse are often complex and contradictory, particularly in relation to the gender of perpetrators and victims. It is worthy of note that most participants used both gendered and gender neutral language when speaking about their perceptions of intimate partner violence in hypothetical terms. This is reflected in the quotations cited in this chapter. Individual participants typically used gendered language inconsistently, for instance; speaking at one point in terms of 'people who hit their partners', then going on to talk about 'battered women' and 'violent men'. These inconsistencies reveal the complexity of young people's perceptions of violence against women, as they grapple with conflicting messages of gender equality and female empowerment, while also being aware of, and exposed to, men's violence and abuse of women.

Awareness of Intimate Partner Violence

An important starting point for the current research was obtaining a measure of the participants' awareness of intimate partner violence in general, and dating violence in particular. Of the 45 participants interviewed, forty three reported being aware that violence and abuse occurred in some intimate relationships. Only two participants, both men, said that they were unaware that violence and abuse could occur in an intimate relationship[54].

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[54]Despite having no prior awareness of the issue of intimate partner violence, either actual or theoretical, these participants were still able to report their perceptions and opinions, and their experiences of intimate relationships.

Young peoples' awareness of intimate partner violence had developed through various channels. Although the participants were not asked whether violence and abuse had occurred in their home, three young people from the college, and six people in the NEET group reported that their awareness of the issue came from their parent/s' or grandparent/s' experiences of intimate partner violence:

> *Cherie (NEET): My granny used to be in an abusive relationship. She told me about it so, like, I know not to put up with it 'cause she was married and he used to come home from the pub, and beat her up and she used to have to run to the Police station and everybody would see her – "There's Liz running to the Police station again".*

> *Louise (NEET): I have seen that since I was younger, all that arguing and my Ma and Da' fighting.*

Seventeen young people across the sample reported that media messages had been influential in developing their awareness of the issue:

> *Barry (College): I've seen it on the TV adverts and all that, about domestic abuse. And I've heard it on the news and read it in papers. It happens all the time doesn't it?*

Suzanne (College): I had heard of it, obviously it's in programmes you watch in the daytime and all that kind of stuff.

The participants' reports of having seen intimate partner violence depicted in TV dramas, chat shows and newspaper reports revealed these media channels to be influential in disseminating messages about violence and abuse. Some of the media representations described by the participants presented women as the perpetrators of violence against men, conflicting with what feminist researchers have found to represent the reality of most intimate partner violence (Dobash and Dobash, 2004):

Liam (College): I've been watching Tricia, and you should see the women on that. They're terrible, pure crazy women. Pure big tough women, and they control the relationship!

Jacqui (NEET): But women are violent an all, I just read that in the paper. A wummin hit a guy with a stiletto and she got charged on her wedding day.

Cheryl (College): You see it on TV as well, like Charlie and Tracy on Coronation Street.[55]

These depictions of intimate partner violence perpetrated by women were accepted quite uncritically by the participants who reported them, with little evidence of them

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[55] The Charlie and Tracy storyline on Coronation Street saw Tracy fatally injure her boyfriend Charlie by hitting him over the head with an ornamental statue, for which she was sent to prison for his murder.

having questioned whether these examples of women's violence against men accurately reflected the gender of perpetrators in 'real life'. These portrayals of violent, controlling women may be a strong influence in shaping young people's perceptions of violent women, reported later in this chapter.

Dating Violence and Abuse: Understandings and Definitions

It was important to make a distinction between young people's awareness of the issue of dating violence experienced by people of their own age group, and their knowledge of the wider problem of intimate partner violence, including domestic violence. Of the 43 participants aware of intimate partner violence prior to the interview, six said they viewed this type of violence as more likely to occur in domestic relationships involving people older then themselves:

> *Alexander (NEET): I think it mainly happens to married people. In my age group people are pure loved up and they get on. I think it's mainly a problem for older people.*

The tendency to locate intimate partner violence as an issue affecting 'older' or married people did not mean that the participants dismissed the idea of violence and abuse occurring in dating relationships. There was widespread agreement that dating violence is prevalent in young peoples' intimate relationships, with some participants suggesting that the private nature of intimate partner violence and abuse maintained a low level of awareness that did not reflect the scale of the problem:

Keith (College): I think it is a problem, definitely, with boyfriend and girlfriend relationships. I think it happens a lot more than people see.

Leona (NEET): It happens a lot but people do get embarrassed and don't let anybody know what's happening to them. People on the outside would think that it's perfect, their relationship.

This perception of dating violence as a 'hidden issue', concealed by shame and embarrassment, has arisen in previous research (Cavanagh, 2003; Fugate et al., 2005). Cavanagh (2003) suggests that cultural demands on women to ensure the 'health' and success of their intimate relationships with men may obstruct acknowledging negative aspects of the relationships, including violence and abuse, as they may be perceived to have 'failed' the relationship. This cultural expectation was identified in the current research, albeit to a limited degree:

Callum (NEET): Some women don't like to admit it sometimes, to admit that a guy has hit them. They just don't want to admit that they have failed in the relationship.

A further, central, aspect of the current research was hearing young people's perspectives on 'what counts' as violence and abuse. The literature review chapter of this thesis highlights the limitations of past studies which have confined young people's reports of violence and abuse to a narrow range of acts predetermined by the researcher.

Addressing this limitation, this study encouraged young people to articulate their own beliefs about which acts and behaviours comprise violence and abuse, taking care not to stifle their views by imposing the researcher's own definitions (Lavoie et al., 2000). Across all sample groups and genders, most initial responses to the question of 'what comes to mind when thinking about violence and abuse in a dating relationship?' depicted physical assaults:

George (College): It could be a partner hitting the other one.

Cherie (NEET): Like punching and kicking. Battering and that.

Although the participants' perceptions of intimate partner violence and abuse were deeply grounded in physical assaults, further discussion revealed that awareness was not limited to physical abuse, with all participants who were aware of intimate partner violence prior to the interview offering examples of other forms of non-physical abuse (although not always using the word abuse):

Jacqui (NEET): Shouting at them, you could make them go aff their heid. You could make them feel depressed probably, and not feel good about themselves.

Lawrence (College): You can get different kinds. You can get physical abuse, emotional abuse, all different kinds of abuse.

'Emotional' and 'verbal' were the most commonly cited forms of non-physical abuse reported, with many participants offering real and theoretical examples of verbal aggression and derogatory comments to illustrate their understanding. While recognising verbal and emotional abuse as negative aspects of some intimate relationships, there was a general perception of non-physical abuse being less serious; only five participants (4 female and 1 male) agreed that non-physical abuse could be of equal or greater gravity to physical abuse:

Suzanne (College): I think sometimes verbal can be worse because if someone is telling you that you are fat or ugly or whatever it can affect you more. Sometimes verbal can be even more hurtful than physical I think.

Matthew (NEET): Verbal, just putting people down all the time, like hitting their self-confidence….that can be more hassle than…just, like, hitting somebody.

It is worthy of note that four of these five participants were young women. The fact that only one young man reported emotional and verbal abuse to be potentially as harmful as physical violence indicates that non-physical violence may carry a threat to women that is not felt by young men. This notion is reinforced by the findings of feminist research, which established how women who have experienced non-physical violence from men often fear and anticipate an escalation towards physical violence, especially where physical violence against the woman has occurred in the past (Pence, 1987).

Sexual Abuse

The participants' awareness that intimate partner violence extends beyond physical abuse concurs with the findings of previous research in Scotland undertaken by McCarry (2007), who links this awareness to the effectiveness of government and local council initiatives which educate on multiple forms of intimate partner abuse. However, in the current study, there was little evidence of the participants' awareness of the fact that sexual abuse can be perpetrated by an intimate partner, with minimal discussion of the theoretical potential for this form of abuse to occur within intimate relationships, nor reporting of actual incidents of sexual abuse perpetrated by intimate partners. Despite most sexual violence against women being perpetrated by men known to them (Fisher et al, 2005; Stanko, 1994; Walby and Allen, 2004), only two participants (one young man and one young woman) identified the possibility of sexual abuse occurring in a dating relationship. The young woman predicted that most young people would not expect sexual abuse to take place within an intimate relationship:

> *Cheryl (College): A lot of people don't think that can happen in a relationship, but if the other person is not agreeing to it then I think it is sexual abuse. But people don't think about that happening, people think about getting attacked or raped when they are out or if they wander off by themselves, they are not thinking about a boyfriend doing that.*

The impact of low awareness of intimate partner sexual abuse was made clear in the reports of two young women who had observed the experiences of other women they knew, both of whom had disclosed being sexually assaulted by their boyfriends:

> *Alexis (NEET): My pal, she was with her boyfriend and he wouldnae stop when she told him to, and then they were arguing out on the street and she was like that, "You raped me" and he said "How could I rape you? I'm your boyfriend"*

> *Louise (NEET): She said that her boyfriend forced himself onto her. She said that to different people. I didn't say anything because I didn't know if she was telling the truth or no'. Most people were saying that she is probably lying.*

Uncertainty over whether sexual abuse could occur within intimate relationships resulted in these young women's experiences being called into question, and reflects the persistence of societal views that 'real rape' (Estrich, 1987) is perpetrated by a stranger (Kelly, 1990), and usually involves some degree of blame on the part of the victim (Weiss, 2009). Uncertainty about whether sexual assault could be perpetrated by an intimate partner has been identified previously in Burman et al.'s (2000) study, which also found young women to be reluctant to describe sexual coercion from men they knew as 'violence', and considerably more worried about the potential of a sexual assault by a stranger than from an intimate partner. In the current study, the participants' reports of the uncertainty which surrounds sexual abuse by an intimate partner reflects young people's struggle to accommodate both their understanding of

women's right to be free from violence and abuse, and the persistence of the notion that men are entitled to and should expect sexual compliance from their girlfriends. The young man who (Alexis reports) claimed it was not possible for him to have raped his girlfriend, precisely because she was *his* girlfriend, underscores how traditional patriarchal beliefs about men's right to sexual compliance, and ownership of their partners' bodies, remain active in some young people's intimate relationships. This dovetails with the perspectives reported in the previous chapter, wherein some young men considered themselves to be proprietors of their partner's bodies.

More than half (n=25) of the young people reported the view that men's violence against women is wrong. The most vehement of these views came from the young men:

Alexander (NEET): I felt disgusted when I saw the guy hitting the woman.

Ross (College): Men who are violent to women, that's disgusting man.

For young men, voicing disapproval of violence against women showed that they were aware of the cultural disapproval for this form of violence, and secured a positive projection of their moral standing and respectability (and that of their family):

Rab (College): That's the way you should be brought up, not to hit women, do you know what I mean? That's the way I've been brought up.

Brendan (NEET) The way you should be brought up is "don't hit women" and all that. That's the way I've been brought up by my Ma.

Concurrent with their disapproval of men's violence against women was the view, expressed by nine young men, that they themselves would never be physically violent to a partner, regardless of how much they felt they were being provoked:

Grant (NEET): I have heard of a couple of boys punching lassies and all that. I would never dae that.

Luke (NEET): None of my pals like hitting lassies, so that wouldn't happen with me or any boys I know.

This denouncement of men's entitlement to use physical violence against their partners, and some young men's certainty that they themselves would never use violence against women, is encouraging. It is important to note, though, that the unacceptability of violence that these young men are referring to is physical abuse of women; it seems progress is yet to be made in developing young men's disapproval for other forms of control and abuse. Furthermore, as the subsequent discussion in this chapter will establish, statements of the unacceptability of violence are often overshadowed by perspectives which excuse and minimise violence and abuse.

Perceptions of Gender in Dating Violence: Perpetrators and Victims

Exploring young people's views on the gendered nature of dating violence is an important aspect of the current research. Previous dating violence research has documented young people's resistance to feminist perspectives which view intimate partner violence as an issue of men's violence against women (McCarry, 2007), even where the instances of violence and abuse known to them involve female victims and male perpetrators (Macnab, 2005). During the interviews, all participants were asked whether they perceived dating violence to be perpetrated by mainly men or women, or if they considered women and men to perpetrate equally. Sixteen participants said that men were the main perpetrators, with just one (female, NEET) participant perceiving women to be the main perpetrators. Three participants were undecided. More than half (n=25) of the forty five participants reported dating violence to be perpetrated equally by young men and women:

Barry (College): I would say it's fifty-fifty because women are just the same as guys, they are no' much different. There's no more chance that a guy will hit a wummin than a wummin will hit a guy.

Suzanne (College): I think it can be both sided. I think anyone could have the capability to shout abuse at somebody or pick their fist up and hit somebody. I don't think it's more a man or more a woman, I think its both sides.

Related to this majority view of dating violence perpetration being gender symmetrical (Dobash and Dobash, 2004), was a perception that society incorrectly locates men as the main perpetrators of intimate partner violence, and vilifies men unnecessarily:

Callum (NEET): Women are always being told about the bad side of men.

May (University): Men are obviously always the ones we will kind of pick up on, but it happens both ways.

There was a strong feeling across the dataset that societal perspectives are out of touch with the fact that women are now just as likely to use violence as men. Despite being unable to cite any examples of men who had experienced violence from women but had chosen to conceal it, eleven participants argued that there was a 'hidden' problem of women's violence against men:

Callum (NEET): Some women dae actually beat guys up, maybe not with their hands but they could use weapons and all that. There's some guys who will be thinking "It's embarrassing getting battered aff a wummin, I don't want to say to anybody". People might laugh at them. That's probably how men don't want to say anything.

Dave (NEET): You get a lot of women who are violent an' all, violent to the men. I mean, I know you don't hear about it as much, the wummin hitting the guys, but it still happens.

As the data presented in the subsequent chapter will show, the participants' views on violent women are disconnected from the paucity of examples of women's violence against men reported by them, and the research which finds little evidence to suggest young women use violence to a great extent (Batchelor et al., 2001). This raises the question of *why* some young people feel so sure that women and men are equally likely to perpetrate violence and abuse against their partners, when their experiences of women's violence to men are so few. One possible explanation is that powerful messages of women being 'stronger', empowered, and more forthright than in the past, have led some young people to assume that men and women are now equally powerful, and equally violent (Sieg, 2007).[56] Supporting these theories, signs of gender equality, such as men taking on traditional female roles, and women engaging in the activities that were traditionally the domain of mainly men (drinking alcohol, taking drugs, getting into disputes), were presented as evidence of women having become increasingly violent to their male partners:

Alexander (NEET): They have got a wean and he is always pushing the pram, so you can tell that she well bosses him about, man. So, it (violence) can happen both ways.

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[56] There is also a tendency among some media outlets to overstate the issue of violent women as one of virtually epidemic proportions (Burman et al., 2001), which may feed some young people's perceptions of violent women.

Luke (NEET): Girls are more violent now than back then, because most lassies will drink and take drugs nowadays and that makes them more violent.

The perception that women have more power than before, and have rejected modes of traditional feminine passivity, have also lead young people to believe that where men's violence to women does occur, women are well placed to resist and respond:

Cheryl (College): Girls are more violent now than some people realise. I still think its more men hitting women, but it's definitely both of them. Women now don't take that like they used to.

Matthew (NEET): I think most women stand up for theirselves more nowadays than they would have, like, a few years ago.

Rab (College): Women are getting more of the rights and that, I mean, in the olden days it was alright for guys to hit the wimmin. But now women aren't scared and that.

In these quotations, the assumption that women have the power to actively and un-problematically resist men's violence is apparent. Obstacles to challenging men's violence and abuse, such as fear, and societal acceptance of men's right to abuse their partners are relegated to the 'olden days' when women were 'scared' and constrained. The ongoing demand on women to challenge men's power, control, violence and abuse,

and the difficulties encountered in doing this, are not always obvious to young people, for whom gender equality may be much overstated (McRobbie, 2004, 2007, 2009; Sharpe, 2001). Future educative interventions with young people must take into account their exposure to conflicting messages which obscure their understanding of the issue of violence against women. In being exposed to dominant notions of female empowerment, confidence, strength and easy resistance of oppression, young people may struggle to recognise that some women continue to experience abuse of male power and control- including violence- and that resistance is not always easily achieved. It is important that young people do not assume that young women's shift away from the traditional performance of femininity associated with women of previous generations (naïveté, passivity, innocence) means that women have secured the same access to autonomy and freedom as men.

Differentiating Perceptions of Men's and Women's Violence

A further aspect of the interviews was exploring the young people's perceptions of difference between intimate partner violence by men, and by women. Notwithstanding the majority view that men and women are equal perpetrators of intimate partner violence, there was widespread perception (cited by thirty one participants) of men's violence being more severe, and more likely to cause physical and emotional harm. This view concurs with the research evidence (e.g. Arriaga and Foshee, 2004; Bennett and Fineran, 1998), and was widely attributed by the participants, to men's greater physical strength:

Rab (College): Men are stronger and more powerful than women. It's just a fact, innit? Like, physically.

Veronica (College): When it comes to violence, if it's a guy and a girl the most likelihood is the guy's going to win 'cause he's probably bigger, stronger and has more of a chance of overpowering the woman in most situations.

Reinforcing the view that violence by women is less severe, the reports of young men in this study matched those by male participants in previous feminist studies (Das Dasgupta, 1999; Dobash and Dobash, 2004; Lavoie et al. 2000; Molidor and Tolman, 1998), in locating women's violence as innocuous, unthreatening and feeble:

Rab (College): If a wummin hit me, I would just laugh at her, do you know what I mean, it wouldn't bother me.

Eddie (NEET): I was in my bird's house and…a few of my pals were in, and 'cause they fell into her Christmas tree, she ran over and was trying to hit me and I just started laughing at her. It was pure feeble.
Morven: Was she laughing?
Eddie: No, she was greetin'

Gary (NEET): If a lassie hit me I'd just laugh her face, because at the end of the day, a lassie isnae gonny be able to do much damage to a guy, it's pathetic.

The minimal threat attached to violence by women, stands in stark contrast to the "climate of terror" feminist researchers have found to characterise men's violence against women (Lavoie, 2000:14). This same contrast emerged in the current research, as participants reflected on the likely impact of men's violence against women, and the significant fear felt by the victims, which could force them to stay with violent men in an attempt to minimise further violence and abuse:

Eddie (NEET): She's scared. If a guy was battering a woman, the woman might be scared to leave him or else he'll just try and follow her.

Leona (NEET): Women will be scared in case the next time he does even worse. Cause they do say, "if you leave I will do this and that" and threaten them. I have heard of people doing that. So, obviously they are scared.

These quotes demonstrate that young people *do* understand that the fear and threat associated with violence is felt most acutely by women (Worcester, 2002). As the interviews progressed and the participants explored their perceptions of difference between men's and women's use of intimate partner violence, it was interesting to note how some participants changed or qualified their view on gender symmetry in dating violence perpetration. Some participants who had argued that men and women were equal in perpetrating violence against their partners went on to reframe their opinion, after discussing their perceptions of men's violence against women being more severe and frightening than women's violence to men:

Callum (NEET): I think there is probably a higher percentage of men beating wummin, when I says 50/50 earlier, I meant that wummin can still be violent too.

Ricky (NEET): Actually, no, you know how I was saying that girls can be violent? I don't really think.....it's no actually really with the person they are going out with, now I think about it.

It is important to note that these reconsiderations were reported unprompted; the participants were never asked by the researcher to revisit their initial view on the gender of perpetrators. The fact that these participants themselves reasserted their view to more accurately reflect their knowledge of the gendered differences in the severity and threat of intimate partner violence is an important finding, and underscores the benefit of enabling young people to take the time to reflect on what they actually know and have seen. This period of reflection, as in the examples above, allowed them to clarify the differences between their perception of violent women, and the scarcity of examples of women's violence to men that they actually knew of[57]. This proves how young people themselves can be powerful in challenging their own misconceptions given the opportunity to explore how their perceptions correlate with their knowledge of gendered violence and abuse.

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[57] See the subsequent chapter.

Views on Why Dating Violence Occurs

The interviews explored the young people's attitudes about why violence and abuse occur in some dating relationships. The influence of alcohol, intergenerational learning of violence and abuse, and perceived provocation by victims were central themes, with minimal emphasis placed on the responsibility of perpetrators. Views allied with feminist analyses of men's violence and abuse being motivated by the desire to maintain power and control over their partners, were largely absent from the reports.

Alcohol

Alcohol was cited as a primary cause of dating violence by two thirds of the research sample (n=30). Notions of alcohol being a mitigating factor in violence, negating or minimising perpetrators' responsibility for their actions, were central to many of these participants' accounts:

> *Barry (College): It messes with your heid. It turns you into a different person.*

> *Cheryl (College): Drink brings out your anger and stops you having control over what you do.*

> *Alexis (NEET): It's 'cause they are drunk and all that. The vodka makes them violent.*

Support for the idea that the choice to use violence is often beyond the control of violent perpetrators dovetails with the reasons (including alcohol) violent men themselves cite as being responsible for their actions (Cavanagh et al., 2001; Jukes, 1999). While feminists acknowledge that alcohol has dis-inhibiting effects, and is a contextual factor present in around a third of all cases of intimate partner violence (Mirrlees-Black, 1999; Ptacek, 1990), alcohol represents a key means by which perpetrators can diminish their own responsibility for the violence and abuse they perpetrate (Dobash et al., 2000). Violent perpetrators have been found to continue their abuse even after they stop drinking, leading researchers to locate the ongoing gendered power imbalances in violent intimate relationships as the motivating factor for abuse (Taylor, 2005). Nonetheless, the participants' acceptance of the view that alcohol erodes violent perpetrators' choice over their own behaviour, rendering them "different" people to when they are sober, minimises perpetrators' choice and responsibility. Just two participants identified this, arguing that people can still make choices about their behaviour when under the influence of alcohol:

Lawrence (College): Alcohol gets used as an excuse, men say it's the drink talking or it's the bottle that caused it but its not. Men just do it because they want to do it, because they are vicious and violent.

Gary (NEET): You're no obviously going to start hitting people because they've pushed you that far, because you can still think for yourself, even if you are drunk.

The reporting of alcohol as a reason for intimate partner violence by two thirds of the research sample highlights a clear need for educative messages to challenge the misconception that violence against women is an inevitable effect of men's consumption of alcohol. Raising awareness of how not everyone who drinks alcohol goes on to abuse their partners, how inebriated men often abuse only their partners and no-one else, and how alcohol can be used as an excuse, is central to this.

Victim Blaming

Twenty eight participants articulated a variety of means by which victims could instigate or provoke violence. Previous studies have highlighted how some young people accept and justify violence against women, especially in instances where they consider the victim to have provoked the perpetrator by flirting, nagging or cheating (Burman and Cartmel, 2006; Burton et al., 1998). In the interviews, it was often when discussing their perceptions of how victims provoked violence that the gender neutral language used by the participants declined, and young people began to cite examples of how *women* could provoke violence by *men*. This reflected the fact that most instances of violence and abuse known to the participants (reported in the next chapter) were of men's violence against women. A major theme across the accounts of how violence could be provoked was the idea that some women would deliberately 'push' their partners towards violence, to test how they would react:

John (NEET): Probably there's birds out there that do push guys too far and that's probably how they do it an' all, to see how he is going to react, to see if he will hit them. There is lassies that would do that.

Ross (College): If she starts saying something that she knows is going to get to you, you can get that angry that you just turn round and lash out and no' even think about it.

'Lashing out' was proffered as the inevitable, unavoidable, response to what these participants considered to be some women's purposeful testing of men's tolerance. Other participants took this idea further by claiming that some women actively sought a violent response, and actually wanted their partners to assault them:

Callum (NEET): I have sat at parties and there will be a lassie trying to shout in her boyfriend's face. One lassie, she has instigated it so many times. He's never hit her, but if he had or he does one day, she will have brought it all on herself. Everyone is sitting there watching this and saying "See if he hits her, she will have asked for it". I wouldn't blame him if he snapped because she is picking at him, egging him on, wanting him to do it. That's the way it was, it was as if she was actually wanting him to snap.

Leona (NEET): I think there's people that just keep nagging and picking and picking until the guy loses it, just so she can go "Oh my God, he did this and

that to me" and get all the attention. Some of them like people saying about them "Oh, look what he did, he did that to her last night" so she will be the topic of conversation all the time.

The perception that some victims choose to be victimised, and can benefit from their victim status by way of attention from other young people is deeply concerning, and unsupported by the data. In positioning men as having no choice over whether or not they perpetrate violence against women, some participants located the responsibility for preventing violence against women with victims. Parallels with these perceptions are reported in the literature, which confirms some young people's continued subscription to 'rape myths' which perceive female victims of sexual assault to have invited their own victimisation through their behaviour and clothing, while discounting male perpetrators' accountability (Amnesty International, 2005; Whatley, 1996). The inevitability of men's violence against women, in the face of what many participants considered to be intense provocation, is illustrated in the language used by the participants in the quotations above, such as 'snap' and 'losing it'. Terms including 'wind him up', 'egg him on' and 'she knows what buttons to press' were reported frequently across the dataset, underscoring the extent to which victims were seen to be instrumental in bringing about men's violence. Similar to the perception of women and men being equally violent, the belief that women orchestrate men's violence, and can prevent their own victimisation, further evidences the operation of compelling societal perceptions of women's increased independence, strength, and emancipation from male power and control (Sieg, 2007). These discourses may have led young people to believe

that nothing happens to a woman that is beyond her control, with men's violence and abuse being no exception. In citing women's behaviour as the rationale for men's abuse, there is an evident expectation that if women would only behave differently, violence and abuse would cease:

Cheryl (College): She says that he hugs her in front of her friends one minute and the next he's calling her a cow. I actually think he does that because she is too clingy with him. Constantly, always phoning and texting him all the time and he gets annoyed with it. She doesn't think she is doing anything wrong.

The characteristics the young people are suggesting that women adopt in order to prevent violence and abuse- to remain quiet, not 'pushing', or nagging- are concurrent with traditional norms of femininity where women submit to male control, privileging their partner's preferences and choices over their own. Women's passivity and compliance are presented as central to preventing men's 'inevitable' violent response to being challenged by a woman.

The view that men's violence is brought about by women's perceived deviance from men's expectations was further evident in the reports of twelve participants, who believed women's flirting and cheating with other men (or being perceived to be doing these things) would be likely provocations for men's violence against women:

Alexander (NEET): If she has went with another boy or if she is drunk, and the boyfriend is asking what's going on and she wont tell him, then that could push him to a point where he loses it.

Louise (NEET): He battered her because she was meant to be cheating on him or something, that's what he had been told.

The prominence of cheating and flirting (or suspected cheating and flirting) as reported rationale for men's violence against women is undoubtedly associated with the notions of men's ownership of their partners discussed in the previous chapter. In the cases cited above, men's violence is used as a tactic of control, to cement their ownership of their partner.

Concurrent with views that intimate partner violence is a genderless issue, and that women can be blameworthy for men's perpetration of violence against them, was the label of 'violent couples'. This was an odd term, given that some of the relationships labelled with in this way were characterised by violence perpetrated by only one partner. Nonetheless, the following participants deemed these couples as being 'just as bad as each other':

Vicky (College): The both of them are as bad as each other to be honest- they are both obsessed with each other and protective and controlling and jealous. He found a text from another boy in her phone and he went off his head. It

happened a few times, there have been arguments and he has hit her. He strangled her and he hit her head off the kitchen unit……but they really are just as bad as each other.

Lawrence (College): They're just as bad as each other. I think it's the way he treats her, they shout at each other all the time.

The tendency for participants to blame victims or to hold them as equally accountable for violence with the perpetrators has been evidenced in previous studies over the past decade (Burton et al, 1998; Regan and Kelly, 2001). The replication of these findings here would indicate that there is still progress to be made in reinforcing the notion of perpetrator responsibility in the minds of young people. Schissel (2000) warns that communities where victims are blamed for men's violence can perpetuate patriarchal privilege, offering women no protection. This would indicate an unfortunate potential for young people to be denied much needed support and reassurance from their peers, where other young people deem victims as responsible for the violence or abuse they have sustained. This reinforces the need to support young people in developing empathy for victims, and a stance which holds perpetrators accountable.

Intergenerational Theory

Given the prominence of the 'intergenerational transmission' theory for dating violence within the literature (Chung, 2005), it was pertinent to explore the participants' views on this explanation for dating violence. In contrast to the earlier minimising of

perpetrator responsibility by blaming victims for provoking men's violence, participants were much more resistant to the idea that violence is 'learned' from the family and stressed that this explanation could be used as a tactic for masking perpetrators' culpability:

> *Leona (NEET): I think people actually blame it on that. They say "Oh, I'm like this because I seen violence when I was younger" and I think well how's that? If you seen your Ma going through that from your Da' why would you put your girlfriend through the same thing? I think it's a kinda scapegoat thing, to get out of what you have done, to try to blame it on that.*

One reason for this resistance of the intergenerational theory could be that they had witnessed violence in the home themselves and refuted the idea that this predisposed them to violence[58]. Twelve participants did agree that witnessing violence in the home in childhood could predict later experience of intimate partner violence as adults, although most of these participants stressed that this prior experience of violence did not erode the choice of violent individuals entirely. An interesting perspective on the intergenerational thesis came from Cheryl, who determined that the extent to which the mother had resisted and challenged the violence from her partner would shape the messages the children took on about the unacceptability of violence against women:

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[58] As stated earlier in this chapter, nine young people reported having witnessed violence in their family, but the number of participants experiencing this may have been higher, as this question did not feature on the interview schedule. Some participants may not have volunteered this information.

Cheryl (College): If the Mum has let the Dad get away with it, the child will just think that's the way of life.

This view signifies a trend in the young people's perceptions of women having the power and control to predict violence, and to educate younger women on how to resist violence. In the account above, there is no analysis of the hypothetical violent man's behaviour, or his responsibility for setting an example of the unacceptability of violence against women. Instead, Cheryl locates the responsibility for challenging men's violence with the mother, who in letting the man get away with it has failed to educate the children on the unacceptability of violence against women.

"It couldn't happen to me"

In discussing dating violence and abuse, there was a widespread assumption among female participants that men's violence and abuse was perpetrated against 'other' women, who were less able to resist and prevent violence than themselves. Other women were more likely to be 'chosen' by violent and controlling men, it was argued, because they are weak and unlikely to resist their partner's attempts to control and dominate:

Lauren (College): Men like that would choose someone who is quiet and won't answer back.

Cheryl (College): I don't really think it would happen to me, I am not a girl that

guys think they can mess about.

Michelle (NEET): Me and most of my friends are not the sort of girls who would find themselves with a violent boyfriend.

These quotations demonstrate clearly that young women perceive a strong causal link between their own strong, capable and assertive character, and the fact that they themselves had never been victims of violence and abuse. This perception disregards the fact that violent men, and not abused women, control the occurrence of violence and abuse in intimate relationships and feeds into the notion that a particular 'type' of woman experiences male violence and abuse. Where young women did acknowledge that they could be vulnerable to men's violence or abuse, they focused firmly on how they would leave the relationship immediately after the onset of violence or abuse, not staying around like some other women might:

Vicky (College): I would never let a guy treat me like that. See once he had done it, I would say "Right, that's enough". But a second time? No way.

Suzanne (College): She is seeing a psychologist because her head is so messed up with all the things he was saying to her- she's still with him! I just wouldnae put up with anything like that, at all.

A further strand to the young women's view on why violence, abuse and harassment were was perpetrated against 'other women' and not themselves, emerged as they discussed cases where women were sexually assaulted by men they did not know, or who they had recently met. This line of discussion moved away from the focus on intimate partner violence to an assumption of 'stranger danger', belying an inaccurate perception that most sexual assaults are perpetrated by men unknown to their victims (Walby and Allen, 2004). Here, some participants stressed that such assaults were likely to have occurred because the young women involved would have been dressed in revealing clothes, and because the victims could have been 'leading him on':

Ella (University): Honestly, I know I might sound horrible, but I think most girls bring it on themselves, hassle from guys and stuff. If a girl gets attacked or something, it's because she has been showing too much of herself off. I mean, I know there's genuine cases when the girl has just genuinely been walking past a guy and he has attacked her. But most girls in Glasgow enjoy attention from guys. They want to go out and attract it. So they will put on the shortest skirt they can find and then they will go out and get angry with guys who are whistling at them! And I'm thinking, "don't lie, you are liking that attention or else you wouldn't have worn that". Like my friend, the other night, she has got the longest legs ever, she is absolutely gorgeous, and she had tiny wee shorts on. And this guy walked by and whistled and went "Oh, hats off to your legs" and she was all flustered and I said "Eh, no! You're the one that's got your legs

out, what do you expect?" I do think genuinely girls are very bad at leading

guys on and then they are like "Oh, get off me, what are you doing?"

Ella's judgement that women who experience sexual assault have inevitably been 'showing too much' and have virtually invited the attacker to assault them is incredibly misinformed. It is frustrating to see young women take on this view, which resonates with the historical excuses perpetrators of sexual assaults have used to blame their victims for 'leading them on' and rendering themselves devoid of responsibility. The persistence of such views, particularly where they are taken on by young women, has particular consequences for young women who do experience sexual assault, who may be impeded in reporting their experience where they anticipate their friends will be unsupportive or seek to blame them.

Allied with Ella's view, above, which locates women who experience sexual assault as having provoked their own victimisation; other female participants argued that they themselves were shielded from the threat of sexual assault that some other women were exposed to, because they took care to project their respectability through their choice of clothing:

> *Vicky (College): I just wear nice dresses or something so it's not as bad. If somebody is going to get attacked or raped or whatever, they are going to choose the one that's got the skimpy wee outfit on, obviously.*

This theme emerged in the previous chapter, where a respectable feminine appearance was linked with respect from men and young women's superiority over 'other' women. The notion that women's choice of clothing could both prevent and provoke abuse represented another means by which young women's characteristics were located as the catalysts for men's violence. These views dovetailed with those expressed by young men, a number of whom were surprised that young women chose to dress in revealing clothes given the 'obvious' threat to their safety, and must surely be seeking male attention:

Barry (College): What does a lassie expect when she is showing most of her body aff? They are wanting the attention. The guys are wanting something-that's how most of the women that dress like that get took away and all that, they get attacked.

Alexander (NEET): That's how there are so many lassies getting raped, because of what they are dressed like and how they are looking. They are easy targets.

The most striking aspect of the various accounts how women can both provoke and prevent their own victimisation, is virtual absence of any discussion of men's role in perpetrating violence and abuse. While the participants stressed that violence against women is wrong (reported earlier in this chapter), there was minimal consideration of the fact that this form of violence is not inevitable, and could be halted if men ceased to control and dominate their female partners in this way. In challenging young people's

perceptions which blame women for men's violence, it is vital to underscore men's responsibility for their own actions, and the power men have to resist expectations of male authority over women.

'Carrying On'

Am important perspective on how intimate partner violence could be normalised and rendered innocuous was introduced by one young man during an interview conducted mid-way through the fieldwork exercise. This participant explained that some couples engaged in what he called 'carrying on', and located this as a harmless and entertaining form of physical aggression that some young couples participated in:

John (NEET): I mean, obviously there's people carry on wi' their bird, but obviously that's just a laugh, they don't actually hurt them.

Morven: What's that, carrying on?

John: Carrying on, it's like when the lassie and the boy are having a laugh and just slapping each other and all that. People do it all the time, it's just having a carry on, man, it's a good laugh and the lassie enjoys it. But I don't know someone who actually beats up their bird, man. It's just a carry on wi' yer bird. Just wee hitting.

Morven: Is it both people who are hitting?

John (NEET): Aye, I used to do it wi' my bird all the time.

Being unaware of this theme prior to this particular interview, there were no questions about this on the *aide memoir*. After a second participant raised the issue of 'carrying on' with young women, the topic was raised by the researcher in a number of the subsequent interviews. Six further participants, all from the NEET sample[59] (five young men and one young woman), reported being aware of this happening:

Alexander (NEET): You just get a wee laugh with that, and that's what the lassies are after. It's just wee soft punches.

Matthew (NEET): It's like your pushing her and then you're grabbing her and the girl's go like that "Let us go" and all that, "Let us go". Usually the lassie or the boy, if they like each other then they start that, just a wee bit of physical contact.

Brendan (NEET): If you're wi' a lassie, you can be carrying on and just hitting her wee wans (gestures small punches) and that. There's no point just sitting there and just talking and that, you need to get a laugh and a carry on and that. Just wee jabs, man. Some boys hit them really hard though man…the lassie will be laughing and that, but it's when they start greetin' that's when you know it's too hard.

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[59] Despite all of the participants who described 'carry on' violence coming from the NEET group, caution must be taken in making the inference that these views were more likely to come from them, since the stage in the fieldwork meant that most of the college interviews had been completed, with the remainder being conducted with young people from the NEET group.

The reports of this apparently common activity were quite unanticipated; there is little in the literature to document this occurrence among young people.[60] It is worthy of note that only one young woman reported being aware of 'carrying on', suggesting that this activity may be motivated more often by young men, potentially related to the playground games of 'chases' and 'boys against the girls/ girls against the boys' that had the potential to be accompanied by low level violence and aggression. While there seems to be a qualitative difference in both intent and consequence between 'carrying on', and physical abuse which is designed to control and intimidate, the boundaries for where 'carrying on' ends and dating violence begins are somewhat blurry. This is evidenced clearly by the last quote, where the young man explains that the carry on stops only when the girl starts to cry in pain.

Views on What Victims of Violence Should Do

All participants were asked what they believed victims of dating violence and abuse should do about their situation. It is worthy of note that in responding to this question, virtually all participants took on gendered language which depicted male perpetrators and female victims. There was an evident perception of a risk to women from men's violence that was not replicated for men experiencing violence from women, accurately reflecting the more severe nature of men's violence relative to that perpetrated by women (Dobash and Dobash, 2004; Few and Rosen, 2005). This perception did, however, clash with the participants' earlier reported view of gender symmetry in the perpetration of intimate partner violence.

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[60] Shortly prior to submission of this thesis, Barter et al.'s (2009) study reported how some young men minimise their own violence as "messing around".

In Scotland, for more than a decade, state funded media campaigns have emphasised the unacceptability of intimate partner violence and encouraged victims to seek support (The Scottish Government, 2009b). It was foreseen that participants may have some awareness of these messages, and would emphasise the necessity for victims of intimate partner violence to access support and leave the relationship. Indeed, the participants in this study, male and female, stressed vociferously the need for victims of dating violence and abuse to terminate the relationship immediately after the first incident. Many anticipated that they would strongly advise a friend to follow this course of action:

> *Lawrence (College): I would say to her "you have to get away from that animal, get away from him, just get out of it".*

> *Sadie (University): To me the only answer seems to be that she leaves him. Other than that there's not much other advice you can give.*

Most participants depicted leaving violent or abusive partners as a straightforward process, and it was clear that few young people were familiar with the challenges and obstacles which impede many victims' exit from violent and abusive relationships (Cavanagh, 2003; LaViolette and Barnett, 2000). This is quite understandable where young people have no personal experience of the issue. The participants were aware that some women remained with men who abused them, and were evidently frustrated by this. It was a common perception that these women *chose* to remain with violent

men, when they could easily leave. The assumption here was that in electing to remain with violent men, these women were deluded, love-struck and unable to see that staying in the relationship kept them at risk of further violence:

John (NEET): Lassies would be daft to stay with someone who is just going to batter them all the time. I would just say "You're pure daft, man", that's what I would say. It's 'cause they say they love the guy isn't it, but he is hitting them, man, it doesn't make sense. Some lassies are that stupid.

Grant (NEET): They must love them, but I canny understand why anyone would stay with someone who was violent to them. They are kidding themselves on that it's going to get better.

These perceptions, coupled with the strong feelings about the necessity for women to leave violent men, had the potential to limit the participants' ability and willingness to offer support and understanding to victims. The proximity of the peer group to young people's intimate relationships render friends and peers as central modes of support and disclosure for victims of violence and abuse, but many participants stressed that their support would be conditional upon the victim leaving the violent partner:

Leona (NEET): If she wouldn't leave, I think you could keep being friends, but I don't think you would be as interested in hearing about her relationship problems. You wouldnae want to hear it because you know she isn't willing to

do anything about it. You could obviously still be pals, but she would just have

to keep her problems to herself.

A further concern arises from the question of the messages young people are likely to give to victims in the wake of violence and abuse, given the propensity for young people to seek to distribute blame for violence and abuse between victim and perpetrator, especially where prior violence and abuse have occurred and the victim has chosen to stay with the perpetrator:

Vicky (College): But now she is kinda bringing it on herself and anything that happens is her own fault. Well, it's not her own fault really, but if she keeps running back to him….he wouldn't be able to do it to her if she never kept going back.

Alexis (NEET): I've said to her and everybody's said to her to get rid of him, but she never listens. She canny say we never warned her. She just says to us that we've to keep oot of it. So now when she is telling us about something he has done to her we just don't really pay much attention.

There was a degree of derision and a 'hell-mend you' attitude to women who remained with violent men, both in real life and theoretical cases. Where these perceptions were reported, it seemed logical to share with the participants the reasons, reported in the literature, women victims of intimate partner violence have reported as central to their

decision not to leave violent partners straight away. Leaving is not always straightforward (Cavanagh, 2003), and can be complicated by the fact that 'violent relationships' rarely become such as a result of one discrete episode of violence that transforms the relationship from 'nonviolent' to 'violent' in an instant. Instead, violence and abuse often develops in intensity over a sustained period of time (Few and Rosen, 2005). Also, some abusive men shower their partners with remorse, kindness and love, and promise never to repeat their abusive behaviour ever again (Cavanagh et al., 2001; Hanmer, 2000; Wilson, 1996), keeping some women optimistic that the relationship can become a place where they feel safe. Crucially, women can be impeded from leaving violent relationships by the threat of further and/or more severe violence, and women's continued victimisation even after leaving their violent partners has been documented (Lees, 2000; Walby and Allen, 2004). Thus, leaving a violent partner is less cut and dried than young people may anticipate. In discussing these obstacles to leaving, it was interesting to note some young people's reconsiderations of the experience of abused women, particularly upon learning that leaving a violent partner does not always cause the violence and abuse to cease. This underscores the potential for young people to benefit from educative measures to quash misguided views about intimate partner violence.

Perceptions of External Support and Interventions for Victims

Feminist agencies such as Scottish Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland, as well as the Scottish Domestic Abuse Helpline, operate to support all women regardless of their age or background. There is no requirement for women accessing support from these

agencies to be in a cohabiting relationship with their partner. Additionally, Childline offers support to children and young people experiencing any problem of concern to them, including abuse (Childline, 2009). The current research explored which (if any) agencies and sources of support the participants would consider approaching if they or a friend were experiencing intimate partner violence. Most participants cited Women's Aid and Childline as possible sources of support, but as in previous research (Regan and Kelly, 2001), did not perceive these agencies as being 'for them':

> *Cheryl (College): I've heard of, like, Women's Aid and all that but I think that's for older people. I wouldn't imagine people of my age going to that.*
> *Morven: Why not?*
> *Cheryl: I don't think it reaches out to younger people.*

> *Suzanne (College): I don't know of any support, the only one I have ever heard of is Childline but that's for younger people.*

There were no reports of the participants or young people known to them having contacted any of these agencies to seek support, despite the many known and personal experiences of violence and abuse being reported to the interviewer. Nonetheless, twenty-seven participants across all sample groups argued that there was a need for a dedicated dating violence support service for young people. Views on the best mode of delivery were mixed and ranged from drop in centres to phone lines and text message

services. A common theme across the accounts was the need for anonymous and confidential support:

> *Lauren (College): There should be somewhere well known that you could go to talk to someone and there should be a phone line as well. But if it was in the college that would be a problem because people could see you going in to talk to them and they would know why. They would be asking you about it and they would realise something's wrong.*

> *Veronica (College): They need a confidential line where they don't have to tell anyone their name they can phone when they feel they're ready.*

The desire for confidentiality underscores young people's understandable reluctance to publicise their experiences of violence and abuse, challenging the perception reported earlier that some young women would want to draw attention to the fact they have been victimised.

Despite understanding physical dating violence to be a criminal offence, few young people felt that police involvement would be helpful. A range of reasons were reported for this. Firstly, the participants had little faith that involving the police would prevent further violence. Also, the participants' perceived a strong likelihood of victims 'dropping' the charges, and believed police action to be dependent on the presence of visible physical injuries:

Lauren (College): If you had cuts and bruises you could go to the police, but if you didn't have any marks you couldn't really prove it because your partner would probably say that he never did anything.

Even where cases of intimate partner violence had been known to enter the criminal justice system, knowledge of these cases had provided the participants with little optimism of the matter being dealt with satisfactorily:

Luke (NEET): I was at court once and there was a guy in for domestic and he got three months or something and one of my pals was in for assault and he went to jail for a year. So it's a big difference to the sentence you get. I don't think the courts take domestics as bad. They could end up getting away with it, or just sit in jail for a while. If you take it into your own hands, you can get them back properly, for hitting whoever it was in your family.

Christopher (College): There was a time the police had been called and the guy had been lifted and been put in over the weekend. But then when he came out they were back together again, so it's like…what's the point? I think it made it worse really.

Low confidence in the criminal justice system's ability to secure a satisfactory outcome whereby the perpetrator was punished severely, meant that this participant advocated dealing with violence against women without involving the police.

What should happen to violent perpetrators?

In exploring the participants' beliefs about how perpetrators of intimate partner violence and abuse should be dealt with, a number of young men offered strong views on the need for punishment of violent men, by violent men. What was striking about these comments was the idea that the abuse of male power, manifest in violence against women, required to be matched by other powerful men through violence in revenge:

Brendan (NEET): See people that hit their women, when they get the jail and go up to the court, they should get sentenced, to sort themselves oot and that. Send them to a camp or something for all the sick people that hit their missus and you should shout at them "Do you hit your missus?" and give them a do-in'. One big do-in' that makes up for it. Let all the guys gie him a tanking. Let him know what its like.

Callum (NEET): See, obviously, what usually happens is the lassie's guy pals and brothers or whoever will go round and batter him, and tell him to leave her alone. A lot of wummin will get her family involved. And if the guy has been pure nasty to her, they will pure super batter him and make him stay away. If he is being nasty to her, he should expect the consequences that some guys are going to come round and gie him it back. If he can hit a lassie he should expect to get hit back, by somebody bigger. They need to take the consequences.

These advocacies for male power as a solution to violence against women are evidence of the power of a male hegemonic standard which sees women's power, and women's ability to resist male power, as inadequate in the face of men's violence. They may also reflect some young people's lack of confidence in the power and efficacy of formal modes of criminal justice, including the police, to deal with perpetrators and offer protection to victims (Pona, 2008).

Chapter Summary

This chapter identifies young people's tendency to explain intimate partner violence in ways which minimise the responsibility of violent perpetrators. The participants views are focused heavily on the characteristics and behaviours of abused women with minimal consideration of why men abuse. Despite the majority of participants arguing that intimate partner violence is perpetrated equally by men and women, their views on why violence occurs locate victimised women as being to blame for men's violence. As the next chapter of this thesis shows, the examples of violence and abuse that the participants knew of or had experienced directly were heavily dominated by men's violence to women, and contradicts the perception of violence being perpetrated equally by men and women. The subsequent, and final, findings chapter reports on young peoples' experiences of dating violence and abuse.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

DATING VIOLENCE AND ABUSE: YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES

Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings on young people's experiences of dating violence and abuse. Findings reported in the previous chapters of this thesis establish young people's dating relationships as operating within close proximity to their peer groups, with couples spending much time together along with other young people. Reflecting this, the participants' experiences of dating violence and abuse reported in the interviews were not limited to events within their own relationships, but also focused heavily on occasions where they had witnessed and responded to dating violence and abuse occurring among their friends and peers. These accounts illuminated how friends and peers can be instrumental in intervening directly in physically violent episodes, and in providing support and advice in the aftermath. As the discussion in this chapter will establish, this support is most likely to be forthcoming in cases of physical abuse. Peer support can be compromised where young women choose to remain in relationships with violent men. A significant minority of participants identified themselves as having experienced violence and abuse within their own intimate relationships, and the nature and impact of these experiences are also reported here.

As chapter four of this thesis explained, the participants in this study were not recruited on the basis of any prior knowledge of their past experiences; age was the only pre-requisite for research participation. It was anticipated though that some of the young people may have experienced dating violence or abuse, and in informing the participants about the nature of the study, I explained that I would ask if any of the themes of dating violence and abuse were issues they had encountered in their own experiences, although they were free not to speak about this if they did not want to. In the interviews, some participants pre-empted the questions about personal experiences of dating violence and abuse, reporting their own experiences of these issues early in the interviews. In the remaining cases, the participants were asked to consider whether any of the themes covered in the interview reflected their own experiences, and whether they considered themselves to have experienced dating violence and abuse directly, or had witnessed its occurrence. Mindful of the priority to avoid imposing definitions of violence and abuse, the participants were not asked to confirm whether their experiences concurred with any particular acts determined by the researcher.

The accounts presented throughout this chapter evidence distinct gendered differences in men's and women's experiences of intimate partner violence. Concurrent with previous research (Bennett and Fineran, 1998; Flood and Fergus, 2008; Foshee, 1996; Mooney, 2000b) the instances of violence and abuse reported here establish men's violence as being of greater severity than that perpetrated by women, and carried out with an intent to assert power and control that is not evident in examples of women's

violence. Gendered differences also permeate young people's responses to violence and abuse, and these are also reported in this chapter.

This chapter focuses on violence and abuse experienced directly, or witnessed by, the participants. It must be stressed though how central 'other people's' experiences of dating violence and abuse were to the participants' narratives: these were clearly prominent in their minds. A plethora of other examples of intimate partner violence by men were volunteered continually throughout the interviews, that the young people were aware of, but had not witnessed directly. These are not reported in detail here.

Experiences of Violence and Abuse

Although quantitative measurement of dating violence across the sample was not a central aspect of this study, it was logical to obtain a measure of the proportion of participants with personal experience of dating violence. Since the young people in this study were not confined to a set definition of violence and abuse, nor compelled to report their experiences, there may have been events which some participants would report as violence and abuse that were not considered in the same way by others. Victims of intimate partner violence and abuse do not always consider their experiences as such, even where their reported experiences clearly indicate their victimisation to the researcher (Kelly, 1990). Nonetheless, all participants were asked to reflect on experiences from their own current or past dating relationships, which *they* would consider to be violent or abusive. Seven participants identified themselves as having personal experience of dating violence or abuse, and all cited physical violence as the

form of abuse they had experienced. Four cases were of men's violence against women; all of which were reported by female victims. Three cases of women's violence to men were reported, by two male victims and one female perpetrator. No young men reported perpetrating violence or abuse against women. These findings must be accepted at face value, but can be contextualised within those of previous feminist inquiries, which have found women to be more forthcoming in acknowledging their use of violence against their partners (Dobash et al., 1998), relative to men, who often deny and minimise their violence (Cavanagh et al., 2001; Jukes, 1999; Ptacek, 1990). As Miller and Meloy (2006:92) point out, women's greater preparedness to admit their use of violence may "backfire" by perpetuating a misguided notion that women are equally violent with men in intimate relationships. Of physical dating violence known to, or witnessed by, the participants in this study (typically involving their friends, siblings and peers), men were almost three times more often the perpetrators: twenty-three cases of men's violence to women, and eight cases of women's violence to men, were reported. The participants' reports of intimate partner violence and abuse evidenced clear gendered differences which are explored subsequently.

Gendered Differences in the Nature of Dating Violence and Abuse

Four decades of research has established intimate partner violence as a gendered issue of primarily male violence against women, and demonstrated quantitative and qualitative differences in violence by men and women (Dobash and Dobash, 1979, 2004; Saunders, 1990; Walby and Allen, 2004). Despite the fact that most young people interviewed in the current study perceived gender symmetry in the perpetration

of intimate partner violence, the examples of violence and abuse reported by them reveal distinct differences in the nature, severity and consequences of violence and abuse perpetrated by women versus that perpetrated by men. The participants' examples also highlighted divergent motivations for men's and women's violence. The subsequent sections explore these themes with reference to the data and the existing literature.

Severity and Consequences

The participants' experiences of witnessing dating violence and abuse occurring among their friends and peers, along with their first hand experiences from their own relationships, clearly established men's violence and abuse to be of greater severity to that perpetrated by women. This reflects the findings of previous studies which have also established men's violence against women to be more severe than women's violence to men (Bennett and Fineran, 1998; Flood and Fergus, 2008; Foshee, 1996; Mooney, 2000b; Saunders, 1990). The heightened severity of men's violence was borne out in the consequences to female victims, who experienced a range of physical and emotional impacts of dating violence and abuse:

> *Tracey (NEET): When I was about 14, I had a boyfriend. He gave me two black eyes, he hit me with a pole.*

Vicky (College): She hits back but she cries and cries and cries. She gets quite depressed a lot of the time. She will phone me and say she has had really bad dreams, a nightmare.

In the cases of men's violence to women experienced directly, or known to the participants, female victims sustained a variety of serious physical injuries including; broken bones, black eyes, cuts, bruises, concussion, and miscarriage. Emotional impacts included; depression, overdose, night terrors, agoraphobia, and drug and alcohol dependency. In contrast, there was only one reported health consequence sustained by a young man (bruising on the chest), reported by the perpetrator herself. These findings are consistent with those of previous research, which documents the greater harm to the health and well-being of female victims of intimate partner violence, relative to that experienced by male victims (Barter et al., 2009; Dobash and Dobash, 2004).

Motivations

Although the literature shows men to be the primary perpetrators of intimate partner violence (Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Walby and Allen, 2004) contemporary feminist scholars acknowledge that some women do perpetrate violence against their partners (Dobash and Dobash, 2004; Hird, 2000), and the current study found some evidence of this. With the aim of understanding the circumstances which motivated dating violence and abuse to occur in young people's relationships, the participants were asked about the context, antecedents and aftermath of the violent episodes they reported. This

process exposed clear, gendered, differences in the motivations for abuse perpetrated by young men and young women. A key antecedent to the reported instances of violence by young women was being subjected to young men's offensive and sexual comments:

Brendan (NEET): They (girls) will be having a laugh with ye, but as soon as you say something, a joke about their Ma, like everybody does, they just start going mental, hitting you with their handbags! I think it's their hormones, if it's that time of the month or that (laughs). They're all like that aren't they? Nae offence.

Rab (College): We were in a nightclub, and I was a bit drunk, I was having a bit of a laugh and I was like that to her "That's some pair of (breasts) you've got on you" and she just went and slapped me. I had this pint in my hand and I'm sorry to say, but I poured it over her and then she just started like she was going to attack me and all that (laughing) and I was like that "Oh no, man!" She slapped me, know what I mean (laughs).

Allied with young men's perception (reported in the previous chapter) that violence by young women is weak and unthreatening, there was little to suggest that the young men who had been victims of women's violence had felt threatened or worried by the experience. There was also no indication that the women's use of violence secured power and control over the male victims. Instead, young men's accounts of being on the receiving end of women's violence (such as those reported above) framed the

experience as amusing, unthreatening, and evidence of women's tendency to be irrational, hormonal, overly sensitive, and unable to take a 'joke'. While young women must take responsibility for their use of violence, and should use other means of responding to offensive or sexist remarks, these instances of female violence were clearly motivated by antagonism and annoyance, rather than an attempt to assert control. This rationale for violence was markedly different to the pursuit of power and female compliance which was so evident across the participants' reports of men's violence against women. In the current study, physical violence against women was motivated by some young men's desire to force their partner to comply with their demands, and to quash young women's attempts to resist male authority:

Cherie (NEET): Because she was out with her friend and she was having a drink, he didn't like it. He was like that, "Where do you think you're going?" And she went, "Kevin, I don't want to argue with you" but he started pushing her and that and he got the bottle off her and hit her on the head with it. I was like that, this shouldnae be happening, but we couldn't dae anything in case he turned round and started on us.

In responding violently to perceived challenges to their authority, violent men could secure their partner's compliance, at that moment and in the future, and make clear the expectation that women should accommodate their male partner's preferences and expectations above their own.

Ownership

A particularly prominent aspect of control associated with the examples of men's violence articulated in the interviews, was the desire to limit and monitor their girlfriends' contact with other men:

> *Rab (College): The lot of us were at the dancing, and she was like showing herself aff and all that, trying to impress this other guy. I seen it myself. And he was just like that, "I'm no having this" and they had an argument and that, and he just went back and just floored her, man.*

> *Vicky (College): He found a text from another boy in her phone and he went off his head. It happened a few times, where there have been arguments and he hit her. He strangled her and he hit her head off the kitchen unit.*

Here, the desire to control is fed by young men's perceived ownership of their partner, and supposed right to countermand her contact with other men. Physical violence is used as an enforcing strategy to cement male authority, and limit women's future resistance of the embargo on male contact. Allied with some men's preoccupation with the potential for their partner to cheat, flirt, or be pursued by another man, reported earlier in this thesis, female infidelity (both suspected and confirmed) was central to the instances of men's violence reported in this study:

Barry (College): My pal went to hit his bird, and I pulled him back. Sometimes lassies know what to do to get a guy really angry and then when he loses it, the lassie acts all innocent. He was saying that she was cheating on him and all that and she kept saying that she wasn't.

In the account above, Barry both identifies the young woman's suspected infidelity as the cause of her boyfriend's aggression, and attributes some of the blame for the young man 'losing it' with the victim. This rationale for men's violence reinforces findings of previous feminist research which has established men's sexual jealousy and possessiveness as a common precursor for their violence and abuse (Dobash et al., 2000; Wilson and Daly, 1996). Neither sexual jealousy, nor a desire to maintain power and control over young men, featured in the accounts of women's violence reported in the current study. It was quite evident from the reports of the participants in this study that young men and women used violence and abuse for very different reasons. Feminist researchers locate violence against women high on a continuum of patriarchal power and control (Hague and Malos, 1998; Pence, 1987), consistently evidencing men's pursuit of authority and control as key motivators for their violence against female partners (Dobash et al., 2000; Hanmer, 2000). Men's violence and abuse can serve to maintain male authority far beyond the duration of the physical violence, as women learn that their resistance of their partner's control and authority can come at the cost of further violence (Pence, 1987). Men's violence can keep women victims under long term control, as they actively avoid antagonising their partner through

replicating behaviour that (the perpetrator claims) provoked violence in the past (Cavanagh, 2003).

Victims' Responses to Dating Violence and Abuse

Few previous studies have explored how young people respond to instances of dating violence and abuse, in their capacities as victims, perpetrators or witnesses (e.g. Harrison and Abrishami, 2004; Regan and Kelly, 2001). As a result, little is known about what young people do, think or feel when violence and abuse occur. The current research sought to advance the understanding of this issue by asking young people about the responses to violence and abuse by the young people involved, and the feelings which accompanied these experiences.

None of the participants who reported having been victims of dating violence were in relationships with the perpetrator at the time of the interviews. Two of the four young women who identified themselves as victims of intimate partner violence stated that they had chosen to end the relationship as a direct result of the violence and abuse. There were various reports of young people known to the participants who chose to remain with violent and abusive partners. Participants who had experienced dating violence and abuse personally, or witnessed its occurrence in other young people's intimate relationships, contributed valuable insights into the responses of victims, and these are reported subsequently.

Complex and Mixed Emotions

Feminist scholars highlight the potential for women experiencing men's violence and abuse to feel great confusion and mixed emotions: the person with whom they may have shared much love and affection, and had hoped to spend a future, is the same person who is purposefully causing them considerable pain and distress (Cavanagh, 2003). Intimate relationships are complex and multi faceted, and violence and abuse can represent a negative aspect of a relationship which has, or did have, many other positive and satisfying qualities (Cavanagh, 2003: Mahoney et al., 2001), and long periods of time which were not characterised by abuse (Kelly, 1990) during which deep love and emotional bonds may have developed. It was not surprising then to find that some victims reflected on their partners' violence and abuse within the broader context the 'whole' of the relationship, which may also be characterised by happy and fulfilling aspects:

Vicky (College): There's been times when he has been hitting her, he will say she looks fat, he will call her ugly. She has always got loads of wee bruises everywhere. He doesn't want her to go out at the weekends, even if it's just a girls' night. He's so controlling. But she doesn't want to lose him, because she says there's times when he will be dead nice. He used to be dead nice to her at the start and I think that's how she fell in love with him. He was there for her. Things like, he will run her a bath and put the candles on, so he can be nice.

Tracey (NEET): He was really nice. We used to go to the pictures and that and
he had a dug so we used to go up to the park up there and take the dug and that
out. It was nice. It was all right, and then.....(he was physically violent)....but I
don't blame it on all him, because it was me too. It was because we were drunk.

Locating violence and abuse alongside other positive aspects of the relationship does not mean to say that the victims do not experience the abuse as problematic, but rather underscores the complexity of intimate relationships: they are not necessarily all bad, or all good. Tracey's account of the aspects of the relationship with her ex-partner (reported above) which she enjoyed and remembered fondly, contrast sharply with the episode of physical violence which she reports as being entirely uncharacteristic of her partner's behaviour until that day. With this in mind, it is understandable why victims such as Tracey may struggle to accept that the violence has been a deliberate choice on the part of the perpetrator, and instead seek out other explanations for their partner's violence (alcohol, blaming one's self), as a means of making sense of what has occurred.[61]

Where intimate relationships have been previously happy and fulfilling, and the couple have spent much time together nurturing trust and security, the first instance of men's violence can be shocking and difficult to accept, as this behaviour contradicts that which has been observed over a long period of time. In Christina's case, the shock, disbelief, and feelings of being "really scared" when her partner grabbed her and

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[61] Ultimately, this participant decided to end the relationship, as she felt at risk of further violence and was under much pressure to do so from her friends.

physically dragged her out of a nightclub seemed hard to make sense of, especially when he reverted to behaving 'normally'. This return to the positive and caring behaviour usually characteristic of her boyfriend caused this participant to later discount and reframe the way she felt at the time of the assault, explaining that she had overreacted and really needn't have felt fearful. Observing the events through this lens enabled Christina to minimise the intent and impact of the violence:

> *Christina (University): I once had a boyfriend who dragged me out of a club, really grabbed me, and was quite aggressive. It really scared me at the time. But I don't think he meant to, and I totally over-reacted, I was saying "Oh my God, I can't believe you did that". But it wasn't an extreme level. People saw it and were really shocked, but It really wasn't as bad as anyone thought it was, you know. I really did over-react.*

Christina has the benefit of hindsight in reflecting on how the violence did not reach an "extreme level": at the time of the assault she could not have predicted the outcome or extent of her partner's aggressive actions, which would explain why the experience was so frightening. Retrospective minimising of the effects and impact of one's victimisation can represent a coping strategy where feelings of fear, vulnerability and alarm at the potential for serious harm, can be controlled and contained (Kelly, 1990). Such minimisation also shields young women from having to acknowledge that their intimate relationships have been characterised by an unequal balance of power and control, and that their capacity to resist has been limited. To admit this may

compromise their demonstration of active resistance of male power and control, as is expected by dominant discourses of equality and female power (McRobbie, 2009). Young women's investment in minimising their experiences of male violence and abuse are understandable, but contribute little to challenging perpetrators' abuse of power, or to preventing further instances of violence.

Dilemmas of Disclosure

Previous studies have reported that not all victims of intimate partner violence and abuse respond by disclosing their experiences to other people (Cavanagh, 2003; Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001; Fugate et al., 2005). The fact that many of the instances of violence and abuse reported in this study occurred in front of other young people establishes how victims are often unable to control other people's knowledge of their experiences. There were, however, other instances of violence and abuse that were not witnessed directly by anyone else. In these scenarios, victims could choose whether, and to whom, they disclosed their experience. The participants' reports of disclosing violence and abuse experienced personally, and of being a party to whom a disclosure is made, illuminate the complexities of acknowledging personal experience of intimate partner violence and abuse to others. The participants' accounts also highlight why victims of dating violence and abuse may choose not to disclose or discuss their experiences.

Barbara's experience highlights why some young women may choose not to tell their friends about their partner's treatment of them. This participant, cited below, explained

that her boyfriend had become increasingly jealous, controlling and verbally abusive over the course of their two and a half year long relationship. This behaviour had occurred in front of her friends on several occasions, causing Barbara to feel embarrassed, and her friends to stress to Barbara their disapproval of the way he treated her. This participant reported being reluctant to discuss with her friends the extent of her boyfriend's verbal abuse and control, perceiving that such a discussion would lead to her being further interrogated as to why she 'put up with' his behaviour, particularly as she had no plans to leave him. This reluctance invested Barbara in avoiding social occasions where her friends and her boyfriend would come into contact, progressing to a more recent avoidance of discussion about the relationship or the boyfriend at all:

> *Barbara (College): My pals, they never really see him now. I don't speak about him that much when I am with them any more.*
> *Morven: Would they be saying that the way he treats you isn't right?*
> *Barbara: Aye, they would, and they have said that before. It would probably start me thinking- why the hell am I putting up with him and all this rubbish? So I don't really talk about it.*

As Barbara's quotation further highlights, entering into a dialogue about the abuse would require her to ask difficult questions of herself, including her rationale for remaining in the relationship, and there is an apparent reluctance to do this. To acknowledge that she herself feels that she is "putting up" with mistreatment is clearly a challenge to the expectation that young women should be equipped to secure proper

and fair treatment by their partners (McRobbie, 2009). Furthermore, to acknowledge that the prospect of single life is undesirable or daunting may also be problematic as this would involve disrupting the expectation that young women should feel happily single and comfortable with the prospect of not having a boyfriend (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Giddens, 1992).

Women's reluctance to acknowledge their experiences of men's violence and abuse to other people has been identified in recent survey research, where more than half of female victims of intimate partner violence reported feeling too embarrassed or ashamed to tell their friends or family of their experience (YouGov, 2004). As in Barbara's case, reluctance to disclose may be particularly acute where young women do not wish to leave the violent perpetrator, and seek to avoid being known as a victim who is 'putting up' with violence and abuse. Young women in the current study who reported being the party to whom female friends had made disclosures of abuse, explained how their decision to voice their view on the unacceptability of the man's behaviour and the necessity for their friend to leave the partner, had limited future dialogue, particularly where the victim chose to remain with the partner against the friend's advice:

> *Helena (University): He's manipulative; he says he'll hurt himself if she goes out with us without him. He really shouts at her and doesn't like her speaking to anyone. Once she said to us that she felt trapped, but she never said it again. I think she realised at that point that she shouldn't really tell things like that to*

us, because she knows that we don't like how she is going back to him all the time, and it has caused a lot of frustrations between her and us. She's stopped talking to us about it completely.

Shelly (College): She knew we thought she was daft taking him back. So now she doesn't talk to us about it any more. I think she's embarrassed, she was hoping we'd say the way he's getting on is normal, but we didnae say that, we told her to walk. So now she refuses to get into a conversation about it.

Given the prominence of the discourses of gender equality within intimate relationships and expectations of women's capacity to resist male violence and abuse reported earlier in this thesis, it is not surprising that young women expect their friends to respond to violence and abuse by leaving immediately after the first violent episode, or that they may lose patience where this course of action is not taken. This has real implications for young women's access to support from their friends. It is easy to see why young women experiencing abuse may be very reluctant to disclose their experiences to their friends, particularly if they feel unable or unwilling to leave their partner at that moment in time and anticipate that this decision will be met with vocal disapproval. In the context of the earlier reported perceptions that abused women are weak, and are consequently 'chosen' by violent men, identifying oneself as a victim can incur costs to young women's standing within their peer groups. It is disappointing to see that young women have cause to doubt the support of their friends and do not see their female peers as accessible sources of help and support in the aftermath of violence and abuse.

Perpetrators' Responses to Dating Violence and Abuse

The fact that only one (female) participant reported perpetrating violence against a dating partner limits the extent to which the current research can explore perpetrators' responses to dating violence from their own perspective[62]. However, the accounts of participants who had witnessed violence and abuse occurring among their friends and peers, or had been approached by a friend who was experiencing dating violence, provided some degree of detail on how perpetrators responded in the aftermath. The accounts of male participants were particularly revealing, as some of these young men had been subject to their male friends' attempts to get them 'on side' by offering explanations and excuses for their behaviour. This evidenced the desire of some violent men to justify and minimise their responsibility for their use of violence, and to seek approval of their actions from their male peers:

> *Derek (College): We were all out in the pub watching the Rangers and Celtic game and Rangers got beat. He went pure mental and he was even hitting his girlfriend. And after that I talked to him and he said "Look, mate, it's the Old Firm[63]" and I mean Rangers and Celtic are the biggest teams in Scotland, so it is a big deal, I do know that. But you don't take it that far do you? But he's pure brand new with me. We're good mates and stuff and I think alcohol must have had a big part.*

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[62] For information; the young woman who acknowledged hitting her boyfriend, on his chest, explained that she felt unhappy and guilty about her behaviour, and often brought up the event in conversation with her boyfriend. Her assault on her boyfriend immediately followed her own experience of being sexually assaulted at a party, by one of her boyfriend's friends. This experience had left the young woman extremely distressed. She had chosen not to tell her boyfriend about this.

[63] Collective term for Glasgow's two main football clubs, Rangers and Celtic

While it does not appear that Derek fully condones his friend's attack on his girlfriend, the perpetrator has clearly had some success in securing Derek's endorsement of how external factors (football and alcohol) could mitigate his responsibility for the violence. In discussing episodes of dating violence known to them, it was common for male participants to adopt the violent perpetrators' explanations in relaying the scenario to the interviewer:

> *Luke (NEET): He says if he was sober he'd never have done it, and I think that's right enough. Plus, if she had been sober, she wouldnae have nipped the other guy and he wouldnae have came after them with a machete.*

Such accounts commonly portrayed violence against women as unfortunate, yet understandable in the face of adverse circumstances, provocation, or where personal control has been usurped by alcohol. In the absence of competing viewpoints, and on the basis that the violent men in these scenarios enjoy the loyalty and support of their male peers, there seems little to challenge these perpetrators' minimised accounts.

The Responses of Friends and Peers

The close proximity of dating relationships to the peer network meant that most participants had indirect experiences of dating violence and abuse. These experiences included; listening to their friends' disclosures of dating violence and abuse, witnessing dating violence and abuse, or intervening in a violent episode. The subsequent paragraphs illuminate young people's responses to their friends' and peers' experiences

of dating violence, offering detail on how they felt and acted. These accounts evidence the complexities of offering support and intervening to challenge violence and abuse.

The Power of the 'Halo' Effect: Minimising Perpetrator Accountability, and Blaming Victims

As reported earlier, young people's dating relationships and peer networks are interconnected. Regan and Kelly (2001) have highlighted how this close association of dating and peer relationships can be problematic in instances where the perpetrator and victim of dating violence share friends in common. In such scenarios, these authors found, friends and peers can feel conflicted where they are friends with both the victim and the perpetrator in the same circle of peers and feel loyal to both parties. Related to this, some young people in the current study described their struggle to accept that men they knew and were friendly with could be capable of abuse against women who were also their friends. As the following participant explained, it was hard to believe her female friend's report of being verbally abused and threatened by her partner, since this behaviour was so contrary to the 'side' of the man that she had come to know:

> *Helena (University): She will say that he has been sending her horrible and threatening text messages, saying she is a bitch and really nasty stuff like that. When she tells us that we're like "What? William? No Way!" because he just doesn't come over as that kind of guy. He must properly have two sides to him.*

Allied with this, it was clear that some participants perceived men capable of violence against women as 'other' men, rather than personal friends and known (and liked) members of the peer group. This perception was evident even where participants had witnessed directly their male friends' high level of aggression and verbal abuse directed at their girlfriends. In the quotations below, Gary and Ricky responded to their male friends' aggressive verbal abuse by assuring themselves that the behaviour would never progress to physical violence. These certainties were based purely on the fact that the perpetrators were *their* friends, and people who they knew well:

Gary (NEET): But see thinking about it, I don't think he would ever actually have touched her, even though he was pure in her face and shouting at her, because you know your pals and I just know he wouldnae hit a lassie.

Ricky (NEET): He swears at her, he lets everything oot on her. Like, just "Fuck you, ya bitch" and that and it's quite shocking, but, as well.
Morven: That sounds really aggressive.
Ricky: Aye, definitely. But he wouldnae hit her or nothing, I know he wouldn't hit her. He does gie her it tight though.

These perceptions indicate the operation of a 'halo effect' (Nisbett and Wilson, 1977; Thorndike, 1920); whereby the true nature, intent and impact of perpetrators' violent or abusive behaviour are overshadowed by the participant's fondness for, and previous positive impressions of, the perpetrator. It may be the case that stereotypical images of

the 'type' of men who use physical violence against their partners obscure young people's acceptance that their friends' behaviour *is* abusive and experienced as very threatening by the victims. However, some participants were supportive of violent perpetrators even where their abuse did progress to physical assaults, where, as in previous research by Harrison and Abrishami (2004), young people's theoretical intolerance for violence against women was usurped by their loyalty to the perpetrator, with female victims deemed responsible for, or deserving of, the violence:

> *Eddie (NEET): I've seen my pal push his bird down on the ground, and she cut all her hand.*
>
> *Morven: Some people say seeing a boy hit a girl makes them feel very uncomfortable, did you feel that way?*
>
> *Eddie (NEET): No. I think she deserved it. She'd been annoying him.*

Where young women's own friends supported the perpetrator's abusive behaviour, there was great potential for victims to be left without support. Veronica, whose brother is in a relationship with her friend, explained how she considered her brother's verbal abuse of his partner to be quite acceptable in view of the fact that the young woman has 'disrespected' a member of their family. Indeed, after witnessing her brother's verbal abuse of his girlfriend, Veronica herself felt it necessary to cement her brother's perspective by delivering some threats of her own:

Veronica (College): He was shouting at her to shut the fuck up and don't ever, ever mention our brother again in an argument.

Morven: Do you think she was scared of him?

Veronica: Oh aye, definitely, sometimes she will be absolutely petrified by him and every time they fight she generally ends up crying, but I told her straight, if she ever mentioned anything like that about my family again I'll have her an all! I won't have anybody say anything like that about my family. He's my blood at the end of the day.

Although aware that the young woman appeared upset and frightened, any concern Veronica might have felt for her friend seemed overshadowed by her desire to support her brother's 'defence' of their family. Veronica does not report feeling concerned by her brother's aggression and verbal attack on his girlfriend, nor the evident fear that this arouses in her. Veronica's situation represents a particularly clear example of the complexities of young people's intimate relationships, in scenarios where both partners share friends and peers- or, as in this case, have relatives who are also members of their peer group. There were two other similar cases reported in the current study, where perpetrators' family members justified violence and abuse and blamed the victim. Veronica's case also highlights the power women can have over other women, by colluding with the abuse of male power. This is a similar position to that highlighted in the domestic violence literature (e.g. Hanmer, 2000) where members of the perpetrator's family can participate in a form of re-victimisation of abused women, out of a sense of loyalty to the perpetrator. Challenging this tendency is a complex

endeavour, particularly where family members themselves feel overpowered or intimidated by the perpetrator. Some men enjoy a position in family hierarchies which reflects structural gender hierarchies where male perspectives are privileged, and men's entitlement to control and dominate their partners' is protected (Hanmer, 2000). This may represent a particular obstacle to family members in challenging men's violence against their partners.

When Victims Won't Leave

Expectedly, participants in this study did not advocate victims of dating violence and abuse continuing relationships with perpetrators. There was a clear view among the participants that victims must extricate themselves from violent and abusive partners, and like young people in Chung's (2007) study, there was minimal consideration of how or why this may be problematic. Given this perception of the ease with which victims of intimate partner violence can exit their relationships, some participants reported feeling incredibly perturbed where their friends remained with violent partners, against their advice. This intense frustration towards women who remained with violent and abusive men saw some participants struggle to remain supportive of friends and peers who chose not to leave, considering these women to be deliberately and needlessly placing themselves in a dangerous situation, when they could very easily leave. Young women who had listened to their friends' disclosures of violence and abuse, and who had stressed the imperative of leaving the relationship, explained how their friend's decision not to leave the partner had tested their friendship to considerable limits, to the point that they did not feel they could continue to provide support:

Simone (NEET): He always used to come 'aer and all that, and he'd slap her and that. And 'cos I was her pal I stuck up for her. That's what me and her were arguing about, she was saying he wisnae all that bad, and I said to her "Aye, just wait till one day and he takes it out on you again when he is in a bad mood, and see how you feel and when you ask me for my help I'll tell you to take a run and jump".

Alexis (NEET): We used to always take her side against him but now we don't hardly even say anything to her because she never listens to us when we say she should dump him. So now when she is telling us about something he has done to her we just don't really pay much attention.

It is understandable that young people, having 'stuck up' for their friends by directly challenging their partner's abuse, may feel let down and unappreciated where their friend chooses to keep the intimate relationship intact. It is also undoubtedly demoralising to repeatedly support young women in the aftermath of dating violence and abuse, while perceiving them to be ambivalent to their situation very soon after. These feelings of frustration were frequently articulated during the course of the interviews, particularly by young women:

Vicky (College): It's difficult when she is constantly crying and I just keep saying to her "well why do you keep going back then?" And she will say "I love him and I'm feeling sorry for him". I can tell she isn't going to leave him, I know she isn't. I don't really know what else to do. She just won't. So because I

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am getting annoyed, she doesn't really tell me- sometimes she hides it from me

now. It's making me so mad, but I can't just leave her.

Vicky's quotation, above, provides some insight into how the stress and anxiety associated with men's violence and abuse can be felt not only by victims, but by other young women who provide support and someone to talk to. Vicky's comment that she 'doesn't know what else to do' underscores the feelings of helplessness and frustration and worry that may be felt when supporting friends who remain in violent relationships. This indicates a requirement for support, not only for young women experiencing men's violence and abuse directly, but for the friends and peers that victims turn to for support and counsel.

Challenging Violence and Abuse

Notwithstanding some participants' perceptions that violence against women could be understandable in the face of 'provocation' by the victim (reported earlier in this thesis and by Burton et al., 1998) and the evident degree of support for violence and abuse in some cases where the perpetrator was known to them, there was a strong sense across the participants' accounts that men who *physically* abuse their partners should be challenged. Indeed, sixteen participants who had witnessed physical dating violence involving their friends and peers reported that they or other young people present had physically intervened, or verbally challenged the abuse, at the time of the incident. Interventions were not limited to cases involving young people known to the participants; there were also seven reported cases where the participants and their

friends and peers had intervened in physical assaults by men upon women in the street or in public spaces such as bars and clubs.

Previous research by Regan and Kelly (2001) found that most young people do not challenge dating violence and abuse that occurs in front of them: just a quarter of their participants had felt able to challenge dating violence and abuse that they had witnessed, and where interventions did occur, these were usually in response to physical violence. Concurrently, some female victims of intimate partner violence in Hanmer's (2000) study reported that friends and peers had witnessed their experience of violence and abuse but had walked away saying that they could not get involved. In the current study, participants also reported instances of physical violence that had been witnessed by young people, but not challenged. As the participants explained, the perceived risk to personal safety associated with challenging physical violence presented a significant obstacle to young people's intervention in these episodes. There was deemed to be a high potential for the violent perpetrator to turn on those who might intervene. The effect of this was that violence against women could go unchallenged, despite young people's disapproval for what was going on:

> *Alexander (NEET): I seen it a few weeks ago, up my bit where I hang about and that, and there's a boy with his girlfriend and he was hitting her and that in the street. No one does anything, man. Nothing. They're too scared in case the boyfriend does something to them, or says that you're interfering with their personal stuff. You don't know what you are stepping in to.*

Barry (NEET): There's people you could intervene with and you could end up lying in hospital in Intensive Care, or lying in a big field somewhere, because you have been trying to help a girl out.

The data on why young people choose not to intervene in instances of violence against women reflect gendered differences: no-one said that they were frightened to intervene in a case of women's violence against men. Instead, the fear that some bystanders felt was of male perpetrators. In acknowledging that they had been too frightened to intervene, young people highlight for themselves the difficulty and fear associated with challenging and resisting violent men's abuse. This is an important finding to consider in future interventions and educative initiatives; young people who are flippant of young women's experiences or frustrated that women do not appear to do more to resist and challenge their violent partners may benefit from reflecting on how they themselves feel at the prospect of challenging. Young people's fear of violent men also establishes how the power and control that violent men seek to exert over their female partners can extend to others. Some participants highlighted how in using violence against their partner, violent men could establish themselves as powerful in the eyes of their peer group, by ensuring other people knew of their abuse:

Matthew (NEET): I think it's really just to…try and show everybody "I'm in control of this relationship and I don't do what she says, she does what I say, I'm the man in here and what I say goes" and all that.
Anna (NEET): He was banging her heid off the ground.

Morven: What do you think he was trying to achieve?

Anna: Just to look good to other men, cause it makes them frightened of him.

This symbolised the operation of an extreme form of hegemonic masculinity assured through violence against women, whereby men acquired power by exerting power over less powerful groups (Connell, 1995; hooks, 2000). Of concern here is the apparent confidence among perpetrators, who seem to hold sufficient command over the peer group, that their behaviour will go unchallenged. This underscores the necessity for dating violence interventions that target both victims, and perpetrators. Potter et al. (2009) underscore the imperative for 'bystanders' to challenge all forms of violence against women directly, in order to diminish perpetrators' perceptions that their behaviour is acceptable to their peers, and this is certainly an ideal situation. However, there are clear and practical obstacles to young peoples intervention in dating violence, which underscore the necessity of formalised means of support and assistance, as well as messages targeted at young people which disrupt the association of violence against women with the performance of masculinity.

Verbal Abuse and Non-Violent Control: Private Business?

The nature of the abuse witnessed by young people had much bearing on the likelihood of other people stepping in or vocalising disapproval for what was going on. As in Regan and Kelly's (2001) study, there was a dominant perception among participants in this study that instances of non-physical abuse, control or coercion are 'private' matters which are none of their business and not to be challenged. This was not to say that the participants endorsed or approved of this treatment:

Dave (NEET): It happens a lot if you are out with your pals and they are arguing with their girlfriends and that. Some of them take things a bit too far with the stuff they say to their girlfriends and that, and you can tell the lassie's scared, and then you feel like maybe you should step in and tell him to calm doon, but at the end of the day it's none of your business and he'll just tell you to stay out of it.

Emily (NEET): If you jump into it you're going to get moaned at for butting into business that's not yours, know what I mean. But if you don't jump into it you're going to get "What did you no stick up for me for?" It's a catch 22- you canny dae nothing. You just need to sit back.

McGee (2000:79) considers how it may be difficult for people to understand the experience of women experiencing non violent power and control, in the absence of the visible markers of physical abuse. There may be a tendency to minimise power and control against the context of 'at least he doesn't hit her', rendering non-violent abuse as a less serious matter (Stark, 2007) which does not warrant external intervention.

Chapter Summary

In line with the findings of feminist studies of intimate partner violence, the participants' reports of intimate partner dating violence in the current research establish clear gender differences in young people's experiences of dating violence and abuse, both quantitatively and qualitatively. There is an evident pursuit of power and control

underpinning men's violence against their partners which is not evident in the reported cases of violence by women.

Dominant expectations of female empowerment clearly impact on young people's perspectives on intimate partner violence and abuse. There was an evident view among some participants that young women who remained with violent or abusive partners forfeited their right to help and support from their friends. The interrelationship of dating relationships and the peer network had complex effects where dating violence and abuse occurred. The fact that victims and perpetrators may belong to the same circle of friends and peers raised the potential for divided loyalties and conflict within the wider network of young people, with some young people minimising the effects of young men's violence against their girlfriends where the man is known to them. These findings illuminate the context victims of intimate partner dating violence face when considering whether to disclose their experiences to other young people. Many participants had intervened directly in episodes of men's violence against their girlfriends, but such intervention was limited to physical abuse, with non-physical acts often located as 'private' business where intervention is inappropriate.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter concludes the thesis, which has presented the study of young people's attitudes, perceptions and experiences of violence and abuse in intimate dating relationships. The chapter begins by reflecting back on the study's research aims and objectives, and the process of identifying these from analysis of the existing empirical and theoretical literature. The development of the theoretical approach and the methodological process are also reviewed. The research findings are then discussed within the context of the existing theoretical and empirical literature. The chapter concludes by suggesting avenues for policy, practice and future research enquiry, and offering some closing remarks on the research experience.

The Current Research

Aims and Priorities

The current study has sought to explore young people's attitudes, perceptions and experiences of intimate partner violence, within a feminist theoretical framework. Developing this research focus involved close analysis of the existing body of dating violence literature, a process which identified the paucity of feminist theory and methods within the existing scholarship. A focal point of most dating violence studies has been the use of quantitative survey research to measure the prevalence of physical dating violence among populations of American university students. This approach has

secured a minimal understanding of young people's attitudes, perceptions, and experiences, providing little context of the intimate relationships in which dating violence and abuse may occur. Although recent studies have employed qualitative and mixed method approaches to explore young people's own definitions and understandings of intimate partner violence (e.g. Burman and Cartmel, 2006; Burton et al., 1998; McCarry, 2007), such analysis has been uncharacteristic of the dating violence literature, where qualitative approaches remain secondary to the dominance of survey research. From these observations of the existing dating violence literature, key research priorities for the conduct of this study were developed. These were, firstly; to undertake dating violence research with a diverse sample of young people in Scotland-not limited to university students- in order to extend the focus of attention beyond young people attending American universities. A second priority was to select a methodological approach that enabled young people's voices to be heard, free from researcher controlled definitions of violence and abuse, or limitations upon reporting. Qualitative interviews were selected as the research method most conducive to this research priority, and were employed with a particular focus on encouraging young people to volunteer avenues of enquiry that they deemed to be important, and to report from their own frame of reference. A further, central, research priority was to operate with a gendered focus through all stages of the study, by adopting a feminist theoretical position. This reflected the researcher's personal commitment to feminist analyses of intimate partner violence, as outlined in the introductory chapter of this thesis, and was central to the study's capacity to make visible the potential differences in the male and female participants' accounts and experiences, a focus that remains scarce in the

existing dating violence research. This gendered focus required the study to be grounded in the extensive feminist theoretical and methodological literature.

The study's three principal research aims also developed from review of the existing dating violence literature. The first of these research aims was to explore the nature and social context of young people's intimate relationships. In addressing this aim, the current study aimed to explore young men and women's perspectives and experiences of the nature of dating relationships, through questions about their perceptions of the positive and negative aspects of dating relationships and of single life, and the existence of pressure to have a dating partner. Also allied with this research aim was consideration of the extent to which modes of non-violent power and control characterise young people's intimate dating relationships.

 The study's second research aim developed from the evident requirement for qualitative research to explore young people's attitudes and perceptions of dating violence and abuse. A number of research questions were developed in relation to this aim: which criteria do young people use to define 'what counts' as dating violence and abuse? Do they perceive dating violence and abuse to be 'gendered' issues of men's violence against women, of mutual violence between men and women, or indeed issues of women's violence against male partners? What are young people's thoughts on why violence and abuse occur in some dating relationships? Are there circumstances where young people perceive intimate partner violence and abuse to be acceptable or understandable? This latter question builds upon the findings of previous studies which

have evidenced young people's support for violence against women in a range of circumstances (Burman and Cartmel, 2006; Burton et al., 1998). Young people's attitudes on how victims should respond to their experiences of violence and abuse, and their perceptions of the appropriate consequences for violent perpetrators were also sought.

The final research aim was to explore the participants' experiences of dating violence and abuse. Although the research sample was not composed of young people previously identified as having prior experience of dating violence and abuse, the widespread prevalence of these issues established by previous studies suggested a strong likelihood that some victims, perpetrators or witnesses of dating violence and abuse would be present in the sample. With this in mind, the study sought to establish; the nature of dating violence and abuse experienced by the participants as victims, perpetrators and witnesses, and their responses to dating violence and abuse in terms of their thoughts and actions in the aftermath.

Theory and Methods

Chapter three of this thesis established the study's theoretical grounding within the feminist literature. There, the centrality of the second wave feminist movement to the current body of feminist scholarship was set out. Second wave radical feminist scholarship established a causal link between women's subordinate status in patriarchal society, and their experiences of male power, control, violence and abuse in their intimate relationships (Dobash and Dobash, 1979). From this foundation, a rich body of

feminist scholarship developed, evidencing the nature and extent of violence against women (e.g. Cavanagh, 2003; Mooney, 2000b; Pence 1987) and establishing the requirement for policy and interventions (Maynard, 1994). It is within this radical feminist theory of violence against women that the current research is situated, along with complementary perspectives such as Connell's (1995) theory of 'hegemonic masculinity', which locates young men as subject to powerful expectations of 'normal' male behaviour which are underpinned by patriarchal ideals of male supremacy and control of women. The study's theoretical perspective has also drawn upon strands of post-modern thinking, such as Foucault's (1977) concepts of 'disciplinary power' and 'technologies of the self' which theorise on how individual people are socialised to use their own initiative to maintain dominant social structures through their thought and action. Through a feminist theoretical lens, these concepts assist in theorising how individual people and social institutions can serve to maintain patriarchy through adherence to normative modes of male privilege.

'Post-feminist' debates have interrogated the concepts of 'gender' and 'patriarchy', and sociological theorists such as Giddens (1992) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) have argued that the current 'post-traditional' age is one of equality, empowerment and freedom from the 'old' constraints of the past. Feminist scholars such as McRobbie (2009) have critiqued these perspectives on the basis that they overstate the progress made towards gender equality, and fail to take account of the ongoing links between social acceptance and success, and adherence to the normative discourse of heterosexuality (Butler, 1990). McRobbie (2007, 2009) and Harris (2003) have also

observed a disarticulation of feminist politics, which carries the potential for young women to be disadvantaged by the silencing of feminist voices of resistance to women's ongoing oppression, and held responsible for their own disadvantage.

The data gathered from forty five qualitative interviews with young men and women represents the study's most crucial foundation. Interviewing approximately equal numbers of young men and women recruited from one further education college, an organisation working with young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and a small number of University students recruited through snowball sampling, resulted in a rich body of narratives. Feminist methodological considerations provided the grounding for a methodological approach which prioritised: the hearing of participants own voices and perspectives, reflexive ethical consideration for the wellbeing of the researcher and the researched, and the minimising of hierarchies of power in the research exchange.

Research Findings

Chapters five, six and seven of the thesis presented the study's research findings, across the three thematic headings of: relationships, attitudes and perceptions, and experiences of dating violence and abuse, and related the findings to the existing empirical and theoretical literature. The subsequent paragraphs offer a broader discussion and analysis of the findings, in relation to the theoretical concepts outlined earlier in the thesis.

Dating Relationships: Sites of Imbalanced Gender Power and Competing Discourses

of Equality and Heterosexual Success

The findings of the current study have illuminated the nature, and social context, of young people's intimate dating relationships. Idealised notions which locate the current generation of young people as being free from the past modes of compulsory heterosexuality, who instead enjoy 'pure' relationships with 'soul mates' (Giddens, 1992) find little reinforcement in the data presented in this study. While this study has heard young people's accounts of the pleasures and positive aspects of having a boyfriend or girlfriend, it is very clear that young people continue to feel intense pressure to be within an intimate relationship, concurrent with the findings of earlier studies by Banister et al. (2003), Ismail et al. (2007), Sandfield and Percy (2003) and Van Roosmalen (2000). Young people are indeed constrained by peer pressure and the desire to fit in, and this pressure is levied particularly upon young women. Young women's status as 'girlfriends' is a central tenet to their place within their peer group, and it is important for researchers and practitioners to understand the potential for this to act as a central barrier to young women's exit from relationships with men who mistreat them. Young women's desire to have a boyfriend also has important implications for the extent to which young women can secure their rights and agency in their intimate relationships with men; if they fear losing their partner they may choose to put up with treatment that compromises their happiness and wellbeing.

The reports of young men and women in this study suggest a widespread issue of non violent power and control to be operational in young people's intimate heterosexual

relationships. This control is disproportionately directed by young men upon their women partners, with a clear link to men's desire to ensure their girlfriends' fidelity and loyalty. While feminists locate men's power and control of women on the same continuum of patriarchal oppression as violence and abuse (Stark, 2007; Kelly, 1987), there is little to suggest that young people share this understanding, or have had the opportunity to become familiar with this perspective. Instead, men's rights to control and survey their girlfriends are generally accepted quite uncritically, and as very separate issues from physical violence and abuse. These findings are particularly concerning when viewed in the context of the research evidence which links imbalances of power and control to violence and abuse of women, and identifies non-violent tactics of power and control as common precursors for physical violence against women (Cavanagh, 2003). In other words, young women may be ill prepared to see the warning signs in boyfriends whose controlling behaviour may escalate into violence and abuse.

The findings of widespread non-violent power and control in dating relationships evidence the operation of Connell's (1995) theory of 'hegemonic masculinity', such was the assumption that boyfriends' power and control of their girlfriends was a normal aspect of heterosexual male behaviour and an acceptable practise within dating relationships. Foucault's (1977) consideration of how individual people can uphold dominant discourses and understanding of the 'accepted' way to behave finds support here, in view of young people's reproduction of the 'rules' of intimate relationships, where the gender norms as they know them are performed .

The pressure on young men to conform to a hegemonic standard of male power and control of women partners runs alongside their awareness that physical violence against women is socially unacceptable. The issues of non violent control and physical violence are clearly conceptualised very differently. Young men in this study voiced strong views on the need for punitive action by men, against men who are violent to women. Again, the conceptualisation of 'normal' masculinity is evident here in the assumption that the abuse of male power evident in violence against women can only be adequately challenged by men.

The Participants' Conflicting Attitudes and Experiences

This study has identified discrepancies in many young people's perceptions and experiences of violence and abuse. Dating violence and abuse were widely reported to be non-gendered issues where women and men can be equally violent. Simultaneously though, the episodes of intimate partner violence involving and known to the participants in this study usually involved male perpetrators and female victims. Young people's adherence to the view of gendered symmetry is quite at odds with their exposure to an array of examples of men's violence and abuse. There are some theoretical considerations to be made by way of context to this discrepancy in attitudes and experiences.

Young women are not angels, and contemporary feminist perspectives do not presume women to be helpless bystanders to patriarchal power and control (Cavanagh, 2003; Chung, 2005, 2007; McRobbie, 2009). Many women no longer 'do' gender in the ways

that have been traditionally associated with femininity; such as passivity, compliance and not answering back. There is intense media and cultural interest in women who are deviant, criminal, and aggressive. Contemporary young women are vocal, and actively engage in the realms to which they were previously denied entry. None of these traits locate women as perpetrators of violence against their male partners, nor render young women impervious to men's dominance, control, violence and abuse, but it is possible that these dominant perceptions of young women contribute to young people's resistance of intimate partner violence as a violence against women issue, and some young people in the current study alluded to this.

Young people are unlikely to respond positively to messages about the unacceptability of violence against women, when women are portrayed in a way that they do not recognise. Given that young people do challenge the notion that intimate partner violence is an issue of primarily men's violence against women, perceiving gender symmetry in perpetration (Macnab, 2005; McCarry, 2007), there is much value to be sought in developing new avenues of support, intervention, and educative initiatives on the issue of dating violence and abuse that focus directly upon the issues of gender and wider structures of patriarchal power which keep women vulnerable to violence and abuse by men (Brownmiller, 1975). The considerable, gendered, differences in the severity of men's and women's intimate partner violence are important points to stress in future interventions with young people, in view of the dominant perception of gender symmetry.

Six of the participants reported having experienced dating violence directly as a perpetrator or victim. It is important to be aware that this is likely to be a very conservative measure, given what has been reported as the undesirability of victim status, plus the desire not to acknowledge one's self as a perpetrator. Accommodating the need to present a strong and resilient impression to friends and peers, while dealing with the physical and emotional toll of violence and abuse, is undoubtedly emotionally taxing. Young women in this study identified the fear of looking 'weak' or 'daft' as reasons why they chose not to reveal concerns about their partners' behaviour to their friends. This had evident implications for the disclosure of experiences of intimate partner violence and abuse, as it was well known that friends and peers could be critical of the young woman's 'putting up' with unacceptable treatment by their boyfriends. These perceptions dovetail with Harris (2003), McRobbie (2007) and Chung's (2005) suggestion that young women are bound by the pressure to demonstrate their strength and competence as modern young women in the post feminist era (Chung, 2005; McRobbie, 2007). This pressure may curtail young women's capacity to identify and report their experiences of men's violence and abuse, or even unfair treatment.

Broader Implications of the Findings

While young men and women were united in reporting that young people are free from external pressures to have intimate partners, reflecting popular conceptions of freedom and choice (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Giddens, 1992), their accounts of the pressure to demonstrate successful heterosexuality (Rich, 1980; Tolman et al. 2003) contradict this, revealing men and women to be subject to differing gendered

expectations of heterosexual success, which made demonstrating their ability to have an intimate partner important.

There is little to suggest that young men and women share equal access to the sexual liberty and freedom as Giddens (1992) suggests; young men are actively encouraged to pursue sexual relationships, not necessarily with women whom they will have a committed 'dating' relationship. Young women's sexuality is much more confined by the threat of insults and vilification, such as being labelled a 'slag' or a 'slut'. Young women with sexual experience were seen by some young men as inappropriate girlfriends, with the perception that they cannot be trusted. Young women's awareness of this perception has much potential to locate women as subjects of a powerful mode of regulatory control (Foucault, 1977), with the price of resistance being called these derogatory terms, and being marginalised as a worthy partner for an intimate relationship.

Recommendations

The study's findings enable some recommendations to be made for future policy and practice. The perspectives of the young people who participated in this study provide an important basis for the development of support and interventions for young people experiencing dating violence. The current study has identified a range of areas where developing young people's understanding of the issue of intimate partner violence could prove beneficial to themselves, their friends and peers.

The findings from this study indicate that some young people experience violence and abuse in their dating relationships, with young women the primary victims. Young women in this study who reported being the victims of physical abuse were no longer in intimate relationships with the perpetrators. While it is encouraging to know that these women were no longer exposed to the intense threat of violence from these men, it was concerning to that none of the women had accessed any support or counsel in which to recover from their experiences of abuse. Recent research shows that women's emotional wellbeing continues to be negatively impacted even when the relationship with the violent perpetrator has been terminated (Bell et al, 2009), making the requirement for support in the wake of men's violence and abuse an imperative. Young women's choices not to seek support beyond what was offered by some friends and peers, coupled with minimal awareness of which avenues of help and support are available to young people experiencing violence and abuse, underscore the need for the development and promotion of appropriate support and interventions. To this end, quantitative survey research could valuably assist in establishing the scope and scale of the issue of dating violence in Scotland, and assess young people's requirement of interventions and support.

There is also an evident need to deliver educative measures to young people, with the aim of enhancing their understanding of intimate partner violence as an unacceptable occurrence that *is* within perpetrators' control, regardless of perceived provocations by victims. Future educative measures for young people on the issue of intimate partner violence could valuably challenge young people's frustration with female victims of

abuse, and work to shift the focus onto the actions and behaviours of those who abuse. The current study has evidenced young women's reticence to acknowledge their struggles with male power against the backdrop of empowerment and female strength and power, both theoretically and in 'real life'. It is concerning to note how young women's awareness of expectations of female strength, power, agency and resistance invest them in glossing over other women's struggles with ongoing instances of patriarchal power, including violence and abuse. This causes them to identify such women as unworthy of their help and support, and fuels perceptions that women are not doing enough to help themselves. It also closes their minds to the obstacles to resisting male power, including violence. These perceptions keep women silent, and point to the imperative for future initiatives to disrupt the link between being a victim of male violence and being considered weak and a failure in the eyes of other young women.

Strengths, Limitations and Logical Next Steps for Dating Violence Research

The current study extends the current body of dating violence research, by including an under-represented group of young people (non-University students), in Scotland, where very little work on the issue of intimate partner dating violence has been undertaken. This study has also made progress in developing the understanding of young people's intimate relationships and exploring the extent to which these relationships reflect ongoing gender inequalities and systems of male privilege, even where violence and abuse are not occurring. The employment of qualitative methods has been crucial to this.

Engaging with young men *and* young women has also enabled comparison of men's and women's views and experiences of relationships and violence. Young men's participation has enabled the articulation of their expectations of intimate relationships and of their girlfriend, their views on the appropriate roles for girlfriends and boyfriends, their strategies for managing conflict, and their experiences of dating and of violence. This in turn has revealed much about the context in which young women experience dating relationships, and their experiences of control and violence by the men they date.

This study has been able to contribute very little about perpetrators' accounts of and responses to violence from their own point of view- feminist research with men is a priority area within contemporary scholarship and interviewing self identifying perpetrators is fraught with challenges. I feel that there is an important role for pro-feminist male researchers and practitioners in the field of dating violence research, who could make important contributions to working with men as has been the case in the domestic violence research (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Hearn, 1998; Jukes, 1999; Ptacek, 1990)

Future research could valuably interrogate whether and how young people's social and economic backgrounds influence their experiences of violence and abuse. The current study has been limited in this regard, as quantitative demographic data was not collected, making meaningful comparison of the participants' perceptions and experiences on the basis of social class beyond the scope of the study. My impression

in conducting the fieldwork was that there were degrees of differences in attitudes and experiences on the basis of background that require further exploration, most notably in how young women from varying social and economic backgrounds are positioned in their capacity to resist the pressure to have intimate relationships.

Concluding Reflections

Feminist researchers studying violence and abuse have previously reported the dilemma arising where participants recount events which are clear examples of violence or abuse in the minds of feminist researchers, but are not considered such by the participants. Batchelor et al. (2001) note that young women in their study reported experiences which the researchers clearly labelled as abuse, but were not considered in this way by the women themselves. Parr (1998) has also highlighted how issues she deemed to be oppressive of young women were not experienced or reported in this way by her participants. As a researcher aligned with feminist principles of empowerment and the imperative for women to be free from male power and control, a troubling aspect of the research experience was listening to young women's accounts of being ambivalent towards men's control, and highly critical of other women who experienced male violence and abuse, at the expense of any focus on the men who abuse. This brought about conflicted feelings of frustration and disappointment that the young women are not more tuned in to how being the subject of male power and control could disadvantage them, while also striving to remain mindful of the young women's right to their own interpretations of men's behaviour and to manage their relationships whichever way they choose. This is a dilemma which I feel warrants further exploration

and debate, both among the feminist research community and with young women themselves.

Undertaking the current study has been a rewarding, exciting and very challenging endeavour. It is hoped that the current study can achieve some measure of progress in advancing the knowledge of the issue of dating violence and abuse in Scotland, and perhaps motivate further research and policy interest on these issues.

APPENDICES

I. Letter Requesting Access to Further Education College

II. Letter Requesting Access at Organisation for Young People in NEET Category

III. Aide Memoire

IV. Information for Participants

V. List of Useful Contacts for Participants

VI. Participant Details

Appendix I: Letter to Further Education College

Department Applied Social Science

University of Stirling, FK9 4LA.

Email: morven.macnab@stir.ac.uk

26 April 2007

College name and address removed to preserve anonymity

Dear *(Director of Student Services)*,

Re: Proposed Fieldwork at College for Doctoral Study on Young People and Intimate Partner Violence

Many thanks for speaking on the phone with me today. I am happy to provide some further information about my proposed research at the college.

As you know, in April 2005 I was fortunate enough to have been granted permission to conduct interviews with young people at your college on the subject of 'dating' violence. This was a fantastic experience, and I was able to speak with approximately 19 young men and women. The data I obtained from these participants enabled me to complete my M.Sc. thesis.

I am now undertaking a PhD study that continues my work on young people and violence. I would be delighted to have the opportunity to return to the college to undertake further interviews with students. I would propose to interview 20 young people. In my last study at the college, I spoke with students in their class groups with their lecturer's permission, and was able to speak with the groups for approximately 20-30 minutes each, to introduce myself and the research. This enabled the students to ask me questions and offer insights about the subject before choosing whether they wished to be interviewed. This was a great way to 'break the ice' and allow the students to understand the research topic. Students who agreed to be interviewed then met with me at a later time, always with their lecturer's permission and always on the college premises. I would suggest that this approach be replicated in the current research if you were agreeable.

The University of Stirling's Department of Applied Social Science Ethics Committee have awarded their approval after rigorous examination of my research proposal. I would be happy to forward confirmation of their approval if requited.

If there are any other aspects of the research that you would like to hear more about, please do get in touch. I have listed my supervisor's contact details below, should you wish to get in touch with her.

Best Wishes,

Morven Macnab

Supervisor:

Dr. Margaret Malloch

Colin Bell Building,

University of Stirling,

Stirling, FK9 4LA.

Telephone: 01786 467723

Email: margaret.malloch@stir.ac.uk

Appendix II: Letter to Organisation for Young People in NEET Category

Department of Applied Social Science

University of Stirling

Stirling, FK9 4LA

Email: morven.macnab@stir.ac.uk

Monday, 14 May 2007

Recipient's name address removed to preserve anonymity

Dear *(Manager's name)*,

Thank you for taking the time to speak to me on the phone last week regarding my upcoming visit to the office of your training organisation in Glasgow. I am pleased to confirm the details of my visit in this letter.

I am a PhD student from the University of Stirling. I live in Glasgow, and am undertaking a research project to find out about young people's attitudes and experiences of violence in boyfriend/girlfriend dating relationships.

I am really pleased to have been given the chance to come along to *(the organisation)* to speak to young people about my research. I plan to conduct a short session of about 20-30 minutes where I can introduce the research topic and have a group discussion with the young people. I have conducted this session with college students previously, and it's proved a useful way to allow the young people to engage with the topic before deciding whether or not they would like to take part in an interview. I am very grateful to you for offering to make accommodation available for this.

I am interested in speaking with any young men and women aged over 16. There is no requirement that they identify themselves as having experienced violence in order to participate, and I will make it clear to them that agreeing to take part in an interview is not an indication to me or anyone else that they have direct experience of violence. The young people are entirely at liberty to decide not to take part. I have full ethical approval from the University, and have a letter confirming this which I shall bring with me on the 16th. I have also detailed the name and contact details of my supervisor at the University at the bottom of this letter.

I look forward to seeing you on Wednesday 16th May.

Best Wishes,

Morven Macnab

Supervisor:

Dr. Margaret Malloch

Colin Bell Building,

University of Stirling,

Stirling, FK9 4LA.

Telephone: 01786 467723

Email: margaret.malloch@stir.ac.uk

Appendix III: Aide Memoire

Notes

- Based on a notional 1 hour of interview time

- The interviews are semi-structured and flexible; participants may pre-empt the questions, or raise points for discussion that do not appear on the schedule, and I will encourage them to do so. I may ask further questions related to the information they have discussed. Remember, participants interviewed early in the fieldwork process may highlight pertinent avenues of inquiry that do not appear on the initial interview schedule, and so the schedule may evolve over time. For example "*some young people have mentioned that alcohol is to blame for dating violence, what do you think*?"

- Not all questions will appear in all interviews, dependent on the experiences of the participant, for example; if participant has already stated that they have no direct experience of violence, it will not be appropriate/necessary to ask this question.

- Attitudinal questions and questions about intimate relationships in general, rather than questions related to violence and abuse will be asked early in the interview, with questions about the participant's own direct experiences following later. This is to give participants a chance to get used to me, the subject matter and the interview process.

- If it seems that the participant does not understand the question, a vignette scenario will be offered to them to illustrate the question, making it easier for them to understand my meaning.

- All interviews are preceded by reminding the participant of their right to withdraw at any time, their right to confidentiality and the fact that they should inform me if they do not want to answer a particular question. I will also inform the participants that the interview will be tape recorded. Prior to the interview, the research process will have been fully explained to the participant during the group session in their organisation. They will also have been provided with an information sheet and a contacts sheet.

General Questions- these come first to so participant is used to the subject matter before any questions directly about them and their relationships

- In the group activity *(introductory discussion with young people at the recruitment site)*, we spoke about dating violence, where young people may be in relationships where violence and abuse occur. Had you heard about this problem before now? *This is an ice breaker question*

- What sorts of things would you consider to be violence or abuse? *It is important to ascertain what young people feel 'counts'. If they do not mention particular forms of abuse, I will mention them and ask them to think about whether they would consider them to be abusive or violent.*

Dating Relationships

I will let the participant know that following questions are not about violence, but about dating relationships themselves. I will inform them that I am trying to get a good understanding of what it is like for young people to be in a relationship with a boyfriend or a girlfriend.

- Where people of your age are in dating relationships is there an expectation that they should only have one boyfriend/girlfriend at a time? *This question can enable me to understand how 'serious' dating relationships are to young people and whether exclusivity is expected.*

- As time goes on do you think dating relationships tend to change or become more 'serious'? If so, in which ways can this happen?

- Do you think that young men and women want or expect different things from their dating relationships? If so, what might some of the differences be? *This question can help me to consider the differences in how men and women view their dating relationships.*

- Is there pressure upon young people to have a boyfriend or girlfriend? What forms can this pressure take, and who does the pressure come from?

- Have you ever been in a relationship that you would describe as a dating relationship, or going out with someone? *The respondent may well have mentioned this already, in which case this question will be omitted.*

- What would you say are some of the good aspects of about going out with someone, having a boyfriend/girlfriend? Are there any negative aspects?

- What difference did that relationship make to your life- did you do different things, go different places, meet new people, feel differently?

- From your own experience, or experience of people you know, why a dating relationship might come to an end?

Dating Violence: Attitudes and Experiences

By the time I arrive at this set of questions, the interview will be well underway, and the respondent may already have answered the questions. I may decide to ask these questions earlier in the interview, if they are of relevance to the current discussion.

- Not all dating relationships are violent- why do you think some people are violent to their dating partners? Do alcohol/drugs have a role?

- Do you think people who use violence do so deliberately? What do they hope to achieve?

- Can violence ever be the victim's fault? Who is to blame/responsible?

- Can there ever be times where violence is acceptable, or justified? Is it possible that someone can provoke violence from their dating partner?

- Not everyone agrees about whether it is women or men that carry out most violence in dating relationships- what do you think? *Understanding young people's views on whether men or women are the perpetrators of intimate partner violence is a key element of the research. Their response to this question can be compared against their reports of violence and abuse, if any. This can allow me to investigate whether their attitudes match with their experiences.*

- Without telling me any names, can you think of anyone you know who has had a violent or abusive partner- the violence doesn't need to have been physical, it could have been emotional or sexual. Was the victim a man or woman? Did it happen in front of others? One off or repeated? How did other people respond? Did the relationship end? What do people think of the victim/perp?

- What would you do if your friend would not leave a violent partner?

- Have you ever witnessed dating violence? How did you feel? What did you do?

- Thinking from your own experience, can you think of a time when you have felt frightened, hurt, or controlled by someone you have been going out with? Have any of your friends felt this way?

- What did you/your friends do in response to the violence? (*Self-defence, try to calm the perpetrator down, end the relationship etc*.)

- Can you think of some reasons that explain why a young person might stay in a violent dating relationship?

Possible Closing Question

- Are you aware of any support for young people experiencing violence? Have you or anyone else you know ever accessed this service?

APPENDIX IV: Research Information Sheet for Participants

My name is Morven Macnab, and I am a postgraduate student at the University of Stirling. As I have explained in my talk at your college/university/organisation (*note: will be amended as appropriate*) today, I am undertaking a project on young people's experiences and attitudes about violence in their dating relationships. I have prepared this information sheet to tell you more about me and my research, to help you decide whether you would be willing to speak to me in a confidential interview.

About the study

The aim of my study is to understand whether and how young people experience dating violence, and to hear your views on violence in intimate relationships. This can be a sensitive area to research, as the topic is a very personal one. In the interviews, I would like to find out more about your thoughts and experiences. I will ask you about your own experiences of being in a dating relationship, your knowledge of dating violence, what you think causes this type of violence, and what you believe young people experiencing violence should do.

Do I have to take part?

No. You are under no obligation to be interviewed.

Who will interview me?

All interviews will be with Morven.

Who can take part?

All young people aged 16-21 are welcome to take part in an interview. You do not need to have experienced violence or be involved in a dating relationship.

Can young people who are lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender, take part?

Yes. Although I am particularly interested in researching men's violence against women in heterosexual relationships, I would be glad to speak to any young people in the age range of 16-21 about their experiences and attitudes.

Do I have to answer all the questions?

No. I have a list of topics that I am interested in discussing with young people, some relating to personal relationships. If I ask a question that you do not want to answer, you do not need to do so. You can let me know and we will move on to speak about something else.

Can I ask questions?

Absolutely, I would be more than happy answer questions about myself and the research topic, and you can suggest topics that you feel are relevant to young people and dating violence.

Where will the interview take place?

All interviews will take place in your college/university/organisation, in a private room.

<u>What if I change my mind?</u>

If you agree to be interviewed today, I will take a note of your name and meet you again at a time convenient for you. You can change your mind at any time, and you do not have to explain your reasons. If you decide during the interview that you would like to withdraw from the research, please let me know and we will stop the interview straight away.

<u>Will you tell other people what I said?</u>

No. All interviews are confidential, and I will not discuss the content of the interview with **anyone**. The only time that I would ever disclose anything that is said in an interview is where someone revealed that the welfare of a child is in danger. In this instance I would have to contact the police, as this is a child protection issue. If you agree to take part in an interview, I will remind you of this before we start.

Sometimes after the interviews, when researchers write their reports, they include quotes from the interviews. These reports are often read by other people. To make sure that you cannot be identified, I will allocate you with a 'pseudonym' at the start of the interview- a made up name that I will call you in my report, in the event that I quote something you have said. My report will not include details of where you are from, or the name of your organisation.

If you agree, I will audio record the interview so that I have a record of what we said, and so that I can concentrate properly on what you say during the interview, without having to write it all down.

Can you offer me help and support?

I would be more than happy to direct anyone to support organisations. Everyone who takes part in an interview with me is provided with a contacts sheet which contains the details of a variety of organisations where you can access some support and guidance. If you feel you require support from an organisation not detailed on the list, please contact me and I will do my best to locate appropriate support for you.

Please be aware that I am a researcher and can not provide counselling. If you do feel that you require help I will direct you to some expert advice.

What if I have questions afterwards?

If you have any questions after our interview, I would be more than happy to answer them. You can write to, telephone or email me: Morven Macnab, 3S27, Colin Bell Building, University of Stirling, FK9 4LA. Tel. 01786-466-312, Email: morven.macnab@stir.ac.uk

The quickest way to contact me is by email.

APPENDIX V: List of Useful Contacts for Participants

This is a list of organisations that can provide support for young people. If you require help for an issue not covered by the organisations below, please contact me and I will do my best to direct you towards appropriate support. I can be contacted at: 3S27, Colin Bell Building, University of Stirling, FK9 4LA, telephone 01786 466 312, email: morven.macnab@stir.ac.uk

ABUSE

Scottish Women's Aid

Website: www.scottishwomensaid.co.uk

Information about domestic abuse, violence against women, your rights, support services and accommodation.

Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership

Website: www.gvawp.org.uk

There is a useful section on this site specifically for young people.

Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0800 027 1234

Broken Rainbow

Website: www.broken-rainbow.org.uk

Helpline: 08452 60 44 60 Mon to Fri 9am−1pm & 2pm−5pm (Staffed by LGBT people).

Support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people experiencing domestic violence.

Childline

Website: www.childline.org.uk

Helpline: 0800 11 11

Free helpline for children and young people, call about any problem.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

Glasgow City Council Addiction Services

Advice and support for people experiencing a range of drug and alcohol issues. Provided by the council's Social Work Services department, there are nine teams located across the Glasgow area. Call the Centre addiction team for information and details of your local support service on 0141 420 5500.

Turning Point Scotland

Drugs, homelessness, criminal justice and mental health services, located at the Glasgow Drug Crisis Centre, 123 West Street, G5 8BA.

Website: www.turningpointscotland.com

Telephone: 0141 420 6969

Know the Score

Helpline: 0800 587 5879

Website: www.knowthescore.info

Information and advice on drugs in Scotland.

EATING DISORDERS

The Eating Disorders Association www.edauk.com

Helpline: 0845 634 1414

Information and help on all aspects of eating disorders, including Anorexia Nervosa,

Bulimia Nervosa, binge eating disorder and related eating disorders.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Your GP can offer support on feelings of stress, depression and anxiety, or self

harming.

Breathing Space

Website: www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk

Helpline: 0800 83 85 87 (open 6pm-2am)

This organisation can help if you are feeling depressed, anxious, suicidal, stressed or

lonely. Experienced advisors will listen and provide information and advice

POLICE

Strathclyde Police

Telephone: 0141 532 2000 (in an emergency always dial 999)

RAPE AND SEXUAL ABUSE

Rape Crisis Scotland

Telephone: 0141 552 3200 (Glasgow office)

Website: www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk – contains a great deal of information about rape and sexual assault, the law, and support for survivors

Free and confidential support is available, call the Glasgow office for information.

SEXUAL HEALTH AND PREGNANCY

The Sandyford Initiative, 2-6 Sandyford Place, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, G3 7NB.

Telephone: 0141 221 8130. Website: www.sandyford.org

The Sandyford Initiative provide sexual and reproductive health services for women, men and young people in Glasgow, as well as counselling, information and a range of specialist services including contraceptives. You can access their drop in services, or make an appointment.

APPENDIX VI: Participant Details

Pseudonym	Sample Group	Gender	Age	In a relationship?
Barbara	College	Female	17	Yes
Barry	College	Male	17	Yes
Brian	College	Male	20	No
Christopher	College	Male	19	No
Cheryl	College	Female	18	No
Derek	College	Male	21	Yes
George	College	Male	16	No
Keith	College	Male	18	Yes
Lauren	College	Female	17	Yes
Lawrence	College	Male	18	No
Liam	College	Male	18	Yes
Rab	College	Male	20	No
Ross	College	Male	19	Yes
Shelly	College	Female	17	Yes
Suzanne	College	Female	18	Yes
Veronica	College	Female	17	No
Vicky	College	Female	17	No
Alexander	NEET	Male	16	No
Alexis	NEET	Female	16	Yes
Anna	NEET	Female	16	No
Brendan	NEET	Male	16	Yes
Callum	NEET	Male	17	No
Cherie	NEET	Female	16	Yes
Dave	NEET	Male	16	Yes
Eddie	NEET	Male	17	No
Emily	NEET	Female	16	Yes
Gary	NEET	Male	16	Yes
Grant	NEET	Male	17	No
Jacqui	NEET	Female	16	No
Jamie	NEET	Male	16	No
John	NEET	Male	16	No
Leona	NEET	Female	16	Yes
Louise	NEET	Female	16	Yes
Luke	NEET	Male	17	Yes
Matthew	NEET	Male	17	Yes
Michelle	NEET	Female	17	Yes
Ricky	NEET	Male	17	No
Simone	NEET	Female	16	No
Tracey	NEET	Female	16	No
Christina	University	Female	21	Yes
Ella	University	Female	19	No

Helena	University	Female	20	No
May	University	Female	20	No
Peter	University	Male	18	No
Sadie	University	Female	21	No

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