

Domestic violence & abuse: Prevention, intervention and the politics of gender

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Abstract

This thesis foregrounds data from a survivor-led, qualitative study on domestic violence and abuse (DVA) prevention and intervention, set against the backdrop of UK austerity and the increasingly prominent political endorsement of a gender-neutral conceptualisation of DVA. The study charts how DVA prevention, victimhood and perpetration discourses might be productively reworked to shift the pervasive victim-blaming narratives patterning public understandings and intervention responses to DVA and violence against women (VAW). A key feature of this work entails expanding the scope of responsibility assigned to men for reducing DVA and men's violence towards women, including within the context of the family.

Using feminist, participatory based methods, the study elaborates a triangulated analysis of data from three participant groups: (i) women victim-survivors, (ii) women DVA practitioners, and (iii) 'engaged men' involved in efforts to address men's violence. With analysis critically organised through the lens of the diverse lived experiences of victim-survivors, policy and practice implications are discussed in relation to four sociological domains: women's lived experience of DVA; mothers and the family in which DVA is a feature; DVA, welfare reform and austerity; and men's participation in the field of DVA or VAW.

Analysis substantiates the imperative of earnestly listening to victim-survivors, and of recognising their experiences as a crucial component in the design of policy and sector responses to DVA. Accounts signal how typically gendered notions of 'authentic victimhood' are both routinely mobilised and fundamentally challenged, as victim-survivors engage in complex resistance work even in highly constrained and unsafe environments. Analysis also reveals the various ways in which welfare austerity exacerbates the harms associated with DVA, particularly for those living more marginal lives, closing down vital routes and opportunities for help-seeking and leave-seeking. The UK government's commitment to tackling DVA is therefore severely undermined in this context. An examination of mothers' experience of DVA further demonstrates how they are routinely failed by dominant (statutory) responses to DVA, cementing the urgent need for culture change and greater accountability and responsibility to be allocated to fathers who perpetrate DVA. Finally, data from across all three participant groups substantiates that men do and should have a role to play in addressing men's violence towards women, at various scales, while also foregrounding the complexities associated with this work.

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List of acronyms

BAME – Black, Asian and minority ethnic
CEDAW – Committee on the elimination of discrimination against women
CPS – Crown prosecution service
DA – Discourse analysis
DBS – Disclosure and barring service
DVA – Domestic violence and or abuse
DV – Domestic violence
DWP – Department for work and pensions
ESA – Employment and support allowance
FG – Focus group
GBTQ+ – Gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and ‘questioning’
IDVA – Independent domestic violence advocate
IRs – Interpretative repertoire(s)
LGBTQ+ – Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and ‘questioning’
LHA – Local housing allowance
MARAC – Multi-agency risk assessment conference
NHS – National Health Service
PAG – Participant advisory group
PG – Participant group
PG1 – Women with DVA experience / victim-survivor participant group
PG2 – Women practitioner participant group
PG2 – ‘Engaged men’ participant group
UC – Universal credit
VAW – Violence against women
VAWG – Violence against women and girls
WBG – Women’s Budget Group

Chapter 1: Introduction

But here I get to my point. What caused me most damage for longest in my life was not something that I could have reported to anyone. It would have been possible to explain an attack, a sexual assault, and show the bruises and marks, and people could have understood my trauma.

Yes, my husband did at times bruise or cut me very carefully and where it wouldn't show or pull out the stitches I had after the birth of our second child. But even that wasn't what really harmed me. He would tell me that I was 'unattractive, unintelligent and inarticulate', all totally untrue. I recognised that this was more to do with his insecurities than with mine, and with his difficult relationship with his mother, and I quietly accepted the put-downs and made allowances. After years of it, though, I felt so sorry for this man who was saddled with me as the mother of his children, and quite understood his need for clever, attractive women.

In the early days [...] I got involved with a group which pioneered the first refuges in our part of the country, and I think I thought that someone, perhaps even in my family, would make the link and recognise what I was suffering (by then I realised that I was, indeed, suffering). But no-one seemed to recognise that this big, strong, articulate (yes) woman could be so put down and abused. It was in refuges that I recognised how many of the women were abused by insecure men who must have resented their women's strength.

Even after we parted, he could still remind me what a pathetic specimen of womanhood I was. I held down good jobs to keep my children and was an active member of my community. I never expected him to contribute to our household, partly because I thought he probably had other children he helped to support, and I didn't see that as my business.

To tell more here would be indulgent, as the point I am trying to make is that real pain and suffering is often hidden and insidious and can completely destroy self-respect and any feeling of self-worth. As I type here now in my seventies, I am choking back tears.

(Extract from *Historical Abuse* by Sylvia, PG1)

Background

The extract above was written by one of the fifty-five people who shared their stories with me as part of this study. Writing about her own experiences, Sylvia starkly captures the complex reality of living through and with domestic abuse and violence (DVA), rendering visible the indelible mark it often leaves in the lives of victim-survivors, long after the abuse has ended. We see in Sylvia's account, the ways in which structural gender relations and unequal power dynamics articulate with the perpetration of violence against women (VAW), along with the ways in which dominant discourses of DVA inform societal recognition and response to victim-survivors. These discourses contribute to the substantial challenges associated with the disclosure of abuse, as well as with help-seeking, made painfully apparent in this account. At the same time Sylvia's own resistance work and strategies for

the recuperation of a sense of self are also made visible in her writing. And while the account charts events, which took place some thirty years ago, the memories of her experience have remained with Sylvia as if the abuse occurred yesterday. Her account serves as a powerful reminder of how much work there is still to be done regarding DVA prevention and intervention. The barriers Sylvia encountered then, endure today and are still faced by many victim-survivors of DVA. Sylvia is just one of the thousands of women¹ who will experience DVA in her lifetime, and the gendered, patriarchal norms underpinning this reality remain firmly intact. The current paradigms governing approaches to DVA prevention seem unavailing, as statistical data continues to point to stubbornly high prevalence rates and a growing impunity among perpetrators of violence against women. It is for this reason I have pursued this research; coupled with an ardent personal motivation, which is driven by my own lived experience.

My return to academia came in 2015 after working in ‘frontline’ women’s and homelessness provision for a number of years. During this time, I became acutely aware of the challenges facing the DVA and women’s sectors. Difficulties not only presented by the socioeconomic context of austerity, but also those brought about due to the apparent intractability of a dominant discourse which continues to hold women solely responsible for the social problem of DVA and VAW, while the gendered discourses and structural conditions underpinning DVA are often neglected. Borne out of these dominant discourses, DVA has long been speciously constructed as a ‘women’s issue’ (Stanko, 1990), with women (victim-survivors) routinely tasked with preventing, reducing and intervening in DVA. The work of transforming this pervasive victim-blaming discourse consequently occupies an integral role in the improvement and diversification of prevention and (early) intervention efforts and is crucial to reducing prevalence rates of men’s violence towards women. Work on this study began approximately four years ago in late 2016. In the intervening time period, the contours of the political and gender landscape upon which this study has been conducted, have undergone a number of seismic shifts, entailing significant implications for DVA ‘frontline’ practice, research and activism. Indeed, this has been a work of many moving parts, with two key discursive settings – the political and the socio-cultural landscape – converging to form the ontological and epistemological plane upon which this study is situated. The following sections will bring into relief these political and gendered contexts.

Political landscape

The most recent UK domestic abuse statistics populated by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) indicate that 1.6 million women (aged 16 to 74), and 786 000 men (aged 16 to 74)² reported experiencing DVA during the year ending March 2019 (Office for National Statistics, 2019). Two women are killed per week on average by a current or former partner (Office for National Statistics, 2019). Prevalence rates have remained stable in recent years, while the gender split is also consistent

¹ The terms ‘woman/women’ and ‘man/men’ are used throughout to refer to both cisgender and transgender people.

² These figures refer to data collected via the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). The age range for respondents eligible for the self-completion module on domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking was expanded in April 2017 from 16 – 59 years, to 16 – 74 years.

with previous years. DVA is just one form of a range of abuses women and girls experience daily. The public discourse regarding women's experience of abuse typically remains fixed upon victim-survivors rather than perpetrators. There has been limited recognition until more recently, that DVA is an issue which is not the sole prerogative of women to address. Upon commencing the study in 2016, the presiding Conservative government had just introduced its updated strategy to 'End Violence Against Women and Girls 2016 – 2020' (Home Office, 2016), outlining an approach which ostensibly coheres with this claim. Proposing a whole – community response to tackle DVA and VAWG, the strategy makes central the assertion that “tackling VAWG is everyone's business” (Home Office, 2016). In it, is the explicit endorsement of men and boys as an “integral part of approaches to prevention”, including as responsible ‘bystanders’³ to achieve; “a reduction in prevalence rates”, “raise awareness”, and “an increase in reporting” of incidents (Home Office, 2016).

This strategy seemed to signal the beginnings of a paradigmatic shift in the (government's) approach to VAWG prevention as it sought to cast the net of responsibility for the eradication of DVA more widely. The strategic position espoused in current government DVA policy has gained significant traction in recent years (Flood, 2015; Fenton et al., 2016), arguably because it provides for the assignation of a role to all social actors for addressing gendered violence and abuse, not only against women, but against any person regardless of gender, age, or sexuality. It does not, however, incorporate the specific engagement of fathers who perpetrate DVA, as a substantive component of prevention work (Pfitzner et al., 2017). This is despite advocating for a ‘whole family’ approach to DVA, under the guise of the ‘Troubled Families’ program (Home Office, 2016). This is arguably symptomatic of the dominant discourses patterning DVA in which women are typically responsabilised for DVA (Berns, 2001), including as mothers who are themselves experiencing DVA (Radford and Hester, 2006). It is, however, important to note that in March 2020, the government announced the reintroduction of the Domestic Abuse Bill into parliament (Home Office, 2020a), three years since it was first promised. When law, the Bill will create a statutory definition of domestic abuse and has real potential to transform the national response to DVA in the future, including by increasing the responsibility placed upon perpetrators⁴.

The aforementioned policy on the prevention of VAWG as well as the forthcoming new Domestic Abuse Bill, are located in the shadows of UK welfare reforms and austerity, which have shaped, and continue to shape, the current political and socio-cultural moment in complex, enduring and often pernicious ways. First introduced under the Conservative – Liberal Democrat coalition government of 2010, and extended by the successive Conservative government in 2015, politicians secured a mandate for welfare retrenchment, fiscal consolidation and the metaphorical collective ‘tightening of our belts’ on the basis that everyone had a part to play in the financial crisis of 2008 (Bhattacharyya, 2015; Cooper and Whyte, 2017; Edmiston, 2018). It was this ‘crisis’ that served as the primary

³ See Chapter 2

⁴ The Bill passed through the House of Commons in July 2020 and is currently awaiting the second reading in the House of Lords. These events transpired just a few weeks before the final submission of this thesis, therefore throughout this work I refer to the existing definition of DVA, outlined at the beginning of this chapter. The new Bill will have significant ramifications when eventually made law.

precursor to the subsequent reforms, precipitated by a major failure in global financial governance and regulation (G20, 2009; Walby, 2015). To provide an overview of the current state of affairs in relation to austerity as well as the sheer scale of its impact, the Women's Budget Group (WBG) has calculated that approximately £37 billion per year will have been withdrawn from the UK welfare system by this year (2020), due to the imposition of financial cuts and reforms implemented over the last ten years (Trinder et al., 2010). Data abounds which substantiates that women have shouldered the greatest burden of these measures, which have significantly reduced the services and benefits women typically use, as well as work in (Ginn, 2013; Karamessini and Rubery, 2013; Evans, 2015; Griffin, 2015; Elson, 2018; Wakefield, 2019). Certain groups of women – including BAME, migrant, asylum-seeking and disabled women – have felt the impact even more acutely (Hall et al., 2017; Bassel and Emejulu, 2018)⁵.

The United Nations Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights reported that UK welfare reforms have perpetuated the gendered aspects of poverty, with the impact upon women far greater than on men (Alston, 2019). Moreover, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (UN CEDAW) recommended early in 2019 that the Government assess the impact of public spending and welfare reforms on women's rights and act accordingly to reduce and resolve the negative impacts (Trinder et al., 2013). Taken together, these corroborate the extent to which policies implemented under the guise of austerity and welfare reform are severely at odds with the government's End VAWG strategy (Home Office, 2016). Indeed, while the strategy appears to acknowledge the scale of the problem, adequate funds and resources for vital intervention and prevention work are simply not allocated (Towers and Walby, 2012), and continue to be withdrawn (Robson, 2016; Howard, 2019). Deep cuts to DVA funding and the withdrawal of vital service provision have occurred within the context of a comprehensive catalogue of austerity measures instigated across the welfare, health and social care sectors. As research evidence substantiates, this has produced far reaching ramifications for both victim-survivors as well as practitioners (Towers and Walby, 2012; Evans, 2015; Women's Budget Group, 2015a; b; Evans, 2016; Durbin et al., 2017; Povey, 2017; 2017; Hall, 2018), while a recent WBG report documents that "[s]ocial security systems across the UK fail survivors of violence and abuse when they need help most" (Howard, 2019, p. 2).

Welfare austerity has contributed not only to the systematic dismantling of the systems set up to support victim-survivors of DVA but has also impacted upon victim-survivors' capacity to resource a viable exit from the abuse (if this is an outcome they wish to pursue)⁶ (Robson, 2016). Leaving an abusive partner typically entails a process which is itself reliant upon the presence and adequacy of the requisite institutional and social structures to effect a successful departure, as well as for post-separation recovery (Baker, 1997; Bennett et al., 1999; Goodkind et al., 2004; Moe, 2007; Murray, 2008; Zapor et al., 2015; Howard, 2016). As these structures have been gradually eroded in recent years, the difficulties associated with attempting to diversify or improve prevention and intervention approaches crystallise, and the severity of the situation facing DVA victim-survivors as well as

⁵ See Chapter 3

⁶ See Chapter 6

practitioners is made starkly apparent. In the following section I will examine the second major contextual consideration underpinning this study; the sociocultural landscape.

Socio-cultural landscape of gender and feminism

Feminist theory is understood here as never fully distinct from feminism as a social movement, because as Butler (2004b) has argued, feminist theory would have no content, if it were not for the movement, while the movement, in all its iterations, is inevitably involved in the act of theory. The phrase ‘me too’ is now arguably embedded in everyday (English speaking) vernacular as a signifier of men’s (sexual) violence towards women. Its ubiquity is perhaps a strong indicator of how the contours of the feminist movement and gender landscape have undergone a notable transformation, even during the relatively short lifespan of this four year study. Indeed, with the study in its nascent stages, I began to explore how the paradigms of DVA prevention and intervention which routinely responsabilise victim-survivors could be reworked in the current socio-cultural climate; this included musings on what the participation of men might look like in practice, particularly within the frame proposed in the government policy referred to earlier.

It was during this time period in late 2017, after I had completed the first stage of the project, that we saw the *re-emergence* of African American civil rights activist Tarana Burke’s ‘me too’ movement, initiated in 2006. Demonstrating how the parameters within which discourses of gender, domestic and sexual violence were perhaps shifting, the ascendance of this social media movement substantiated not only the ongoing challenges cis⁷ and trans⁸ women face, but also the challenges against which they were seeking to mobilise⁹. The prevalence and “everydayness” of VAW (Kelly and Westmarland, 2016) had again been brought into sharp relief in the public imaginary, as prominent, well-resourced ‘celebrity’ women spoke out under the guise of the social media hashtag ‘me too’. Their disclosures prompted a renewed focus upon the widespread perpetration of (sexual) VAW, with social media functioning as a mechanism for the recapitulation of VAW as a social problem to be acknowledged among the general public (Cabral and Acacio, 2016).

Ostensibly the ‘me too’ campaign gained such significant traction because of the high-profiles (privileged, white, cisgender, heteronormative presentation) of the women who spoke out. But it also seemed to facilitate a broader public articulation of narratives of the sexism and misogyny women experience everyday across a range of settings. Indeed, for many victim-survivors, it is only when their

⁷ ‘Cis’ or ‘cisgender’ refers to people for whom the gender designated at birth matches their felt gender identity. ‘Cis’ does the same work as the term ‘heterosexual’ does in so far as it describes the majority group (Hines, 2013; Vincent, 2019).

⁸ ‘Trans’ or ‘transgender’ refers to a range of gender experiences, presentations or subjectivities that extend beyond the stable binary categories of ‘woman’ and ‘man’. It describes people whose felt gender identity does not match the gender assigned at birth on the basis of their genitals (Hines, 2007; 2013; Vincent, 2019).

⁹ Although transwomen have widely spoken out about their experiences of sexual and domestic violence under the hashtag ‘me too’, the movement has largely failed to centre or acknowledge their voices, as well as those of BAME women and women with disabilities. Despite the movement being established primarily *for* these marginalised communities (see Burke and Adetibe, 2018).

individual experiences are reflected in public discourse that they come to identify and name their own experience of abuse. Hashtag ‘me too’ along with other similarly motivated hashtag campaigns which emerged in parallel such as ‘*Ni Una Menos*’ (‘not one [woman] less’) in Argentina, ‘*Premeiro Assedio*’ (‘my first assault’) in Brazil, ‘The First Time I Got Harassed’ in Egypt, ‘*Balance Ton Porc*’ (‘denounce your pig’) in France, ‘With You’ in Japan, ‘My Dress, My Choice’ in Kenya or ‘*Nopi Wouma*’ (‘I will not shut up’) in Senegal, fomented a (transnational) feminist polyvocality, which appeared to galvanise victim-survivors and collectivise their experiences of men’s violence. What was less evident was how far these individual disclosures would function as a mechanism for the (re)construction of VAWG as a widespread social problem, rather than one of individual women, for which there was a collective social responsibility to eradicate.

Indeed, while ‘me too’ as well as the other aforementioned social media movements have been widely hailed as a catalyst for social change, they may have inadvertently sustained a discourse which primarily scrutinises the experiences of individual victim-survivors (Butler and Yancy, 2019), albeit with a dedicated focus upon a small cohort of very well resourced men. Scrutiny is thus diverted away from structural conditions and relations of power, resituating the gaze instead, upon those who are relatively powerless (Walby, 2011). ‘Me too’ has also lost its original focus on minority women’s oppression, following its wholesale co-optation some 11 years later (Burke and Adetibe, 2018) by a largely white, (popular) feminism (Rottenberg, 2018; 2019). Foregrounding again the “white norm” through which public narratives of British (and American) feminism are understood (Jonsson, 2014, p. 1013), it begs the question how far movements such as these can truly bring about lasting and sustainable social change for *all* women and girls’ diverse experiences of violence and abuse (Phipps, 2019). The context of ‘me too’ is therefore highly salient to this study because it continues to represent the ideological and epistemological limitations of the discursive frameworks which govern understandings of DVA and VAW. Its rapid ascendancy in public discourse also underscores the need for a movement that works towards the eradication of the harms caused not only by men’s violence on an individual level, but also those perpetrated and sustained through racism, sexism, classism and neoliberal precarity at a societal level (Butler and Yancy, 2019). Having outlined the backdrop against which this study is set, I will now move on to an overview of the study’s aims and objectives.

Aims and objectives

A primary aim of this study is to advance an intersectional, trans-inclusive feminist analysis of DVA as a gendered social problem in which the lived experience of women victim-survivors – particularly those facing marginalisation or social exclusion – is made central within a poststructuralist feminist epistemological and analytical framework. In charting the current gender landscape as it is discursively constituted, challenged and reworked in the context of DVA in the UK, I aim to develop a unique insight into the intersections among three distinct participant groups (PG) to consider the reworking of current paradigms governing DVA prevention, intervention, victimhood and perpetration. The groups are: (i) women with lived experience of DVA (PG1), (ii) women ‘frontline’ DVA practitioners (PG2), and (iii) men practitioners and campaigners involved in work to address men’s VAW (PG3).

This work also aims to establish how gender relations and power dynamics are implicated in victim-survivors' lived experience of DVA, drawing attention to how the three participants groups perform and construct gender within and across diverse community, social and institutional settings. This coalesces with the goal of determining how DVA intervention and prevention discourses may be productively reworked to improve outcomes for victim-survivors as well as prevention approaches. An examination of the scope of men's responsabilisation and the ways in which men's engagement might be expanded, are central components of this goal, while also considering the diversity of potential roles and responsibilities (including within the family) this could encompass. These aims incorporate critical analysis of social policy, legal and social work discourses however this is not a legal nor social work study. Rather, I seek to investigate the ways in which diverse practice, policy, legal and social work discourses intersect with gender relations, and assemble to shape the contours of victim-survivors' experiences of DVA in England. In pursuing these aims I therefore seek to contribute to the canon of feminist sociological research on domestic violence and abuse towards women, with particular emphasis upon the study of gender as it relates to violence and abuse.

Research questions

I aim to address the following primary research question:

- 1. What can be learnt from a victim-survivor focused analysis of the gender discourses and relations underpinning DVA?**

This is accompanied by the following subsidiary research questions which relate specifically to the other two participant groups, and thirdly to the triangulation of the three perspectives:

2. What can be learnt from the lived experiences of women victim-survivors and practitioners when operating in the current climate of UK austerity and welfare reform?
3. What role do or should men occupy within the frame of VAW and DVA prevention and intervention, including within the context of the family?
4. Where do the intersections lie in the perspectives of the three participant groups, and what can be learnt from bringing these into relation with one another?

The three participant groups

The research questions underpinning the study allow for the demarcation of four key areas of investigation relating to DVA and men's violence towards women. The extant gender relations as well as the inclusion, participation and responsabilisation of men are critically interrogated within these four areas. They correspond with each of the three PGs, while the fourth corresponds with the triangulated data of the three groups (Denzin, 1978; 2012). There is a notable paucity of research of this type, in which the discursive contributions of these specific PGs are brought into relation with one another using feminist methodology, and in which the accounts of the victim-survivors are deployed

as the primary organising frame for the study. It is a task entailing substantive challenges as the divergent interests and perspectives of the three groups are addressed during the course of the research. The attendant tensions are undoubtedly exacerbated in the current political and financial climate (McCarry et al., 2017), as the DVA sector continues to face a sustained and significant funding crisis amidst the ‘roll-out’ of more generic, less specialised provision¹⁰ (Davidge et al., 2020). Factors which merge with the rapidly fluctuating gender (‘critical’) landscape against which the study is conducted. With these in mind, I will provide a brief explanation of the rationale for the inclusion of each group¹¹ as well as the key objectives salient to each.

Women victim-survivors (PG1) are included to foreground their lived experiences first and foremost and their participation is integral to the feminist objectives of this study. Their experience narratives are understood as epistemologically productive in the (re)shaping of dominant discourses governing DVA prevention and intervention. The groups’ collective and individual resources are also crucial components in the mapping and development of services to meet victim-survivors’ needs (Maguire, 1987, p. 200; Hanmer and Itzin, 2000; Hague et al., 2003; Hague, 2006; Goodman et al., 2016). The incorporation of the **women’s ‘frontline’ practitioner group (PG2)** provides an insight into the current DVA provision landscape. The term ‘frontline’ practitioner is used here to describe those in non-managerial and non-strategic roles who provide direct support and intervention to adults, children or families, in this case, experiencing DVA. They are situated in statutory, non-statutory and voluntary services¹². Their accounts provide a view from the practice and service-level perspective, including valuable insight into the impacts of austerity as well as the implications of the current and ongoing diversification of the DVA and women’s sector.

The collective aims of the study and the gendered nature of DVA, prompted the incorporation of the **men’s group (PG3)**, in tandem with PG1 and PG2. In contrast to the women’s practitioner group, PG3 is comparatively broad with the men in a variety of roles including: ‘frontline’ practitioner, volunteer, activist, academic, strategic, managerial and consultancy. Located in a range of settings, including campaigning organisations as well as both voluntary and statutory services, all participants in this group worked in some capacity to address men’s violence towards women and or DVA. Given the diversity of this group, Burrell and Flood’s (2019) term ‘engaged men’ is used throughout. The inclusion of PG3 enables an examination of men’s changing role in the field, particularly given the government’s VAWG policy. Their incorporation alongside the two other PGs creates a unique space in which to critically interrogate the challenges and opportunities of men’s participation. It also facilitates a feminist dialogical process, in which women’s concerns and interests are centred, and victim-survivors are positioned as the ultimate decision-makers in this study. Having provided an

¹⁰ This crisis has been further intensified by the pandemic outbreak of Coronavirus in March 2020; however, it was not possible to address the outbreak here, given it occurred long after the data production phase.

¹¹ Methodological implications of each, are discussed in Chapter 4.

¹² ‘Statutory services’ are funded and provided by the government, such as adult and children’s Social Services, or the NHS. Non-statutory services, and those run by voluntary organisations are funded by other sources and are non-government affiliated.

overview of the aims and objectives of the study, I will now clarify my use and understanding of some of the central terms and concepts referred to throughout this thesis.

Definition of key terms and concepts

Domestic violence and abuse

DVA is understood here as a highly pervasive social problem, grounded in normative gender hierarchies, patriarchal systems of power and ideologies of gender inequality, which together, legitimatise and precipitate the subordination of women to men. The study is conducted with the understanding that DVA constitutes one form of VAW and is a social justice issue; a type of culturally constructed violence, embedded in the long standing historical oppression of women by men (Brownmiller, 1975; Stanko, 1990; Walby, 1990; 2003; Hunnicutt, 2009). In this sense, DVA is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality and is sustained by dominant discursive frameworks. The term DVA is used here to refer to violence and or abuse which takes place between people in intimate, family, or partner type relationships, aged 16 or over¹³, of any sexuality or gender identity. The definition refers to both physical and non-physical abuse and violent behaviour, encompassing coercive control, financial abuse, harassment, physical abuse, psychological or emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and or stalking. It refers to a single act, or a pattern of behaviours, perpetrated by an individual to assert power and control over another person within the context of the aforementioned types of relationships.

Crucially, DVA is recognised here as a specifically gendered issue, experienced in the majority of cases by women, and perpetrated by men in the majority of cases. This definition coheres with the Women's Aid definition of domestic abuse but challenges the gender neutral definition proposed by the UK Government (Home Office, 2013a) which does not accommodate for the specifically gendered dynamics associated with, and constituted in, DVA. DVA is a social problem which demands renewed sociocultural change, along with the public recognition of the shared and collective social responsibility to prevent and respond to it. Within the definitional frame proposed here, *all* men are apportioned responsibility for the prevention of men's violence against women.

People with experience of DVA

The definitional challenges associated with naming or labelling individuals with present or past experience of violence or abuse are readily acknowledged in this study. Indeed, as data later reveals, notions of 'authentic' victimhood map onto the shifting category of 'victim' which is grounded in language and the sociocultural context in which it is situated (Hydén, 2005). This exemplifies the

¹³ In 2012 the government definition of DVA was expanded to apply to people 16 years old and over, as well as to include coercive control, following a consultation process. The broadening of the definition was a recognition that DVA also occurs among young people (Home Office, 2013b). March 2020 saw the reintroduction of a new DA Bill, which when law, will make provision for a statutory definition of DVA but this has yet to be released.

extent to which discourse remains a constant site of struggle, particularly for those speaking from a place of oppression or marginalisation (hooks, 2015 [1989]). In the context of DVA specifically, use of the term ‘victim’ has been regarded by some as complicit in the construction of women as the “passive recipients of male violence” (Kelly, 1988; Walby, 1990, p. 146), bringing to the fore the victim/survivor dichotomy which typically characterises the social categorisation of those who have lived experience of violence or abuse. Often unduly narrow in its definitional reach, victim-survivor is a binary which situates the individual concerned in an “either/or” position (Hester et al., 1996), which inadequately reflects the reality and breadth of individuals’ lived experience and leaves some victim-survivors feeling as if they have failed to achieve the status attributed to them (Morgan and Björkert, 2006).

Despite these contestations, for some people, the term ‘victim’ remains salient and necessary because, as Anita (PG1 and PG2) one of the project advisors¹⁴ stated during an advisory meeting¹⁵, the term incorporates an acknowledgment of the fact that what she had experienced was “not her fault”; a recognition that it was “out of [her] control”. Anita regarded this as an essential component, and first step, in recognising and naming an experience as ‘abusive’. In foregrounding these complexities, as well as the assertion that an ascription of each or both terms has the potential to disempower the person concerned (Lamb, 1996; 1999; Morgan and Björkert, 2006), the term ‘victim-survivor’ is used throughout this thesis, not as a solution, but in the absence of a more appropriate term.

Discourse and narrative

Discourse constitutes the primary unit of analysis in this study. While the term itself has been deployed and conceptualised in a variety of ways across disciplines, it is understood here in its broadest sense, referring to all forms of spoken interaction or talk, and all types of written text, both formal and informal (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Discourse is regarded a social practice, which is interactional, action-orientated and crucially, constructive of the social worlds we inhabit. In this sense, discourse is used by people to *do* things (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Gill, 1996). This understanding of discourse is embedded within a Foucauldian framework which holds discourse as historically rooted and constitutive of knowledge, subjectivity, and “the power relations which inhere in knowledges and the relations between them” (Weedon, 1987, p. 108). Discourse therefore constitutes the “elements or blocks” (Foucault, 1979, p. 101-102) within the “field of force relations” which is comprised of the social institutions in which discursive conflict occurs, and in which discursive regulatory rules operate. Crucially, discourse creates an object of knowledge and denotes the possibilities for speech (Alcoff and Gray, 1993), determining not only who can speak, but who can be heard.

It is within this conceptual frame that ‘narrative’ is also referred to throughout this work, and is viewed here as one of the key building blocks of discourse through which individual or collective

¹⁴ See Chapter 4

¹⁵ Meeting took place on 01st February 2018

experience is understood, organised and made sense of (Cavarero, 2000; Tew, 2002). Narrative is considered one discursive resource (among several) deployed by the speaker in the process of historicization and meaning-making (Tamboukou, 2015). Through the forging of connections between readings of the past, future, or across events, narratives are woven together in and by human consciousness (Armstrong and Tennenhouse, 1993; Tew, 2002; Livholts and Tamboukou, 2015). In this sense, there is a strong association between notions of time and cognition. It operates to various power effects, “concerned with the processes, procedures and apparatuses, whereby truth and knowledge are interrelated” in their production (Tamboukou, 2015, p. 45). In keeping with a Foucauldian poststructuralist reading and a discursive analytic framework, meaning, like subjectivity, is neither fixed nor intrinsic, but instead is constantly in the making. One such example of the convergence of discourse and narrative can be found in the accounts of sexual assault and violence articulated within the broader dominant social media discourse of the ‘me too’ movement. These can be read as “(mini) narratives”, which communicate a range of realities arising from, and constituted in, various social settings, across a range of speakers (Archer Mann and Huffman, 2005).

Gender and the scope of the study

Gender and gender relations are a central preoccupation of this study. As such, gender is understood here within a feminist poststructural theoretical framework and is considered distinct from biological sex. Both gender and sex categorisations are viewed as performatively constituted in and by discursive frameworks; any notion that either one is innate or interior to the subject is rejected, in line with Butler’s (2004b) theory. In this way, performative speech acts bring into being that which they name, and it is at this moment that discourse itself becomes productive of (gendered) bodies (Butler, 1993). This conceptualisation is informed by Austin’s (1975) speech-act theory and Althusser’s (2001 [1971]) conceptualisation of interpellation. Drawing upon a Foucauldian (1980) notion of power, bodies are made intelligible via the discursive frames within which they are situated. Discursive power in this sense functions to both produce and destabilises subjects (Butler, 1993) thereby contributing to the construction of regulatory gender norms.

This study focuses exclusively upon the experiences of victim-survivors of DVA who self-identify as women, though I fully acknowledge that people who self-identify as men experience DVA too. The increased recognition of men as DVA victim-survivors, including as an overlooked group within the frame of DVA (Douglas and Hines, 2011), has in part paved the way for the introduction of gender-neutral discourse in UK DVA policy – a policy position which has in turn produced a sector shift towards the provision of mixed-gender¹⁶ and more generic (non-specialist) services for people experiencing DVA (Women's Aid, 2014). The experience of men victim-survivors are not, however, incorporated in this study for a range of reasons which I will go on to discuss. Firstly, existing research

¹⁶ In the year 2018-19, 171 out of 368 services surveyed (46.3%) by Women’s Aid, had one or more services for men, including 35 out of 269 refuges (13.0% of refuges) which can now accommodate men. Survey data also indicated that there were 186 refuge spaces available to men, 25 for men only and 161 for either men or women. This pointed to a significant increase in provision for men from the 3 dedicated men-only spaces, and 13 spaces for either men or women in the year prior (Davidge et al., 2020, p. 32).

attests to the fact that this group require a distinct approach to meet their specific needs (Gadd et al., 2003; Martin, 2016) and to adequately examine this group's experiences is beyond the scope of this study¹⁷.

Furthermore, the implementation of a gender-neutral approach to DVA prevention and intervention (in line with the government's policy position discussed earlier), forecloses critical analysis of the complex gender relations and structural conditions which contribute to DVA perpetration and victimhood, in the case of women and men respectively. Discourses of gender-neutrality serve to falsely equate and mutualise the distinct experiences and needs of women and men, thereby potentially doing both groups a disservice. They also construct a distorted picture of gender and gender relations in the context of DVA, in which violent men's practices are discursively obscured, including through the linguistic choices made in policy (Burrell, 2016). Discursive manoeuvring such as this risks absolving perpetrators of responsibility (Lamb, 1991), and therefore hampers opportunities for the disruption of violent men's practices (Hearn and McKie, 2008; Burrell, 2016).

In keeping with the above frame of understanding, it remains the case that violence and abuse perpetrated against men does not stem from the same structural conditions which foster VAW. This is a reality widely documented in the burgeoning body of research that illuminates patterns and modes of perpetration and victimisation along gendered lines (Stanko, 1990; Hester, 2009; Wendt and Zannettino, 2015), and which I address throughout this work. Further, men's experience of DVA is not rooted in a history of patriarchal oppression and cannot be framed as a cause or consequence of gender inequality. An examination of the limited literature we have on men victims also documents that women perpetrators do not create the same context of fear and control in contrast to men perpetrators (Hester, 2009). As such, men's experiences of DVA are not patterned by equivalent discourses to those of cisgender and transgender women, non-binary and other feminised bodies.

A transgender inclusive feminist position is maintained throughout this study, and it turns upon the notion that recognition of all bodies is crucial both for social inclusion (Hines, 2013), and for the equal 'grievability'¹⁸ of all bodies as subjects worthy of protection (Butler, 2009; 2020). To be trans-inclusive then, is to recognise the subjectivity and experience of those individuals whose gender identity queers or extends beyond the stable binary categorisation of either 'woman' or 'man' (Hines, 2007). It affirms the lived experiences of transgendered and non-binary persons as valid and authentic, particularly in relation to men's violence and abuse. In the shadow of the current debates regarding gender and VAW, it is now more important than ever to recognise how different forms of oppression are bound together and operate to exclude those most at risk of harm. This includes BAME women, migrant women, disabled women, LGBTQ+ women, women engaged in commercial sex practices

¹⁷ The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transwomen, as well as those of transmen and non-binary individuals also require specific support and intervention. A full examination of these groups' needs was beyond the scope of this study although the experiences of LGBT women are briefly referred to in Chapters 4 and 8. I also recognise the valid experiences of these groups living under patriarchy and systems of structural oppression.

¹⁸ See Chapter 3 for an extended discussion on 'grievability'.

(including sex work and prostitution¹⁹), women who use substances, and poor and working-class women, to name but a few.

Structure

Having outlined the terms of reference, key concepts and scope of the study, I will now provide a structural outline of the thesis. I begin with **Chapter 2** which examines literature on the discursive construction of DVA as a social problem. The chapter traces the historical roots of the DVA and women's movement, and the politics of identity and ex/inclusion within the context of DVA intervention and prevention. I include literature on feminist and women-led movements before outlining notions of 'authentic' victimhood in dominant framings of DVA. The chapter moves on to a discussion of the work of Black Feminist thinkers who provided some of the earliest, most incisive examples of coalitional work to cross boundary lines of difference. The latter half of the chapter addresses men's participation in anti-VAW and DVA work, including the concepts of 'allyship', bystander interventions and 'harmful masculinities'.

Chapter 3 is the second literature review chapter and charts the socio-political climate as it manifests in current UK austerity and welfare reform policy. The chapter draws upon the gendered and racialised ramifications of welfare austerity, as it (re)produces and attaches to particular bodies in often highly pernicious and deleterious ways. I examine the literature regarding austerity as state-perpetrated 'institutional violence', which as I later argue, mimics the behaviours exhibited by perpetrators on an individual level. Against this backdrop, the chapter moves on to explore DVA in the context of the family through the lens of child protection and the private law family court. The 'three planets' of DVA are discussed, before moving on to an account of the 'presumption of contact'. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the literature on the responsabilisation of fathers who use violence. In concluding, the chapter draws together the literature outlined in chapters 2 and 3.

Chapter 4 examines the study design and methodological approaches used. Providing an overview of the underpinning rationale for the chosen methodology, I consider the extent to which the research design responds to the research aims and objectives. Specific attention is paid to the (post)structuralist feminist theory and praxis underpinning the research, with discussion regarding the practical use and value of reflexivity throughout the work. I go on to set out the epistemological basis for the research and provide an explanation for the combined use of both narrative and discourse analysis. The second half of the chapter attends to the implementation of the study, elaborating on the emergent challenges during the data production and analysis phases, before detailing how far these were overcome. I also discuss the ethical and risk considerations the study entails.

¹⁹ Some women in this study aligned with the term "prostitute", others with the term "sex-worker"; I therefore use both out of respect for the women as well as, out of acknowledgement that either/both terms hold different significance for different women involved with commercial sex practices.

Chapter 5 is the first of five analysis chapters. It sets out the perspective of women who have experienced DVA. Providing a crucial point of departure for the remainder of the thesis, the chapter brings into sharp relief the complexities of living through and with DVA, via the women's narratives. The accounts demonstrate how dominant discourses of DVA pattern victim-survivor experience, while also revealing the ways women skilfully construct counter-narratives, which both challenge and rework these discourses. Their accounts expose the centrality of articulating the 'right story' in help-seeking strategies and processes, identifying how particular discourses can open up opportunities for assistance, as well as foreclose them. The construction of DVA victim-survivors as inherently 'passive' subjects is strongly contested here as the participants recount individual acts of resistance.

In **Chapter 6**, I build upon a number of the themes raised in the previous chapter, as the focus shifts to the context of welfare reform and austerity. Unlike the chapter prior, Chapter 6 triangulates data from all three of the participant groups to explicate the material and embodied effects of living under austerity, while also negotiating DVA, either as a victim-survivor, or as a practitioner. The systematic and routine introduction, amendment or retraction of welfare provision has had far-reaching effects, with the most severe impact among women victim-survivors. Data reveals participants' resourcefulness as they strive to respond to 'gaps' in provision, while also bringing into relief the 'resilience trap'. I conclude with an analysis of practitioners' experience working under austerity before arguing that austerity can in some circumstances, be understood as 'institutional violence'.

In **Chapter 7**, I centre DVA within the context of families with children. Like the previous chapter, data is analysed from the three PGs. The gendered politics of parenting discourses and the responsibilities attributed to mothers and fathers against the backdrop of DVA, are critically interrogated. The manufacture of a victim/mother-blaming discourse enacted through the family court is foregrounded as I elaborate the ways in which victim-survivor mothers' experiences are heavily modulated along class and race lines. The chapter introduces the first discussions pertaining to men within the frame of DVA. Laying the groundwork for the forthcoming chapter, the engagement and inclusion of men is examined here in the context of fathers who perpetrate violence. The chapter addresses this key issue by examining the extent to which practice and policy frameworks disproportionately responsabilise mothers for the management of domestically violent perpetrators.

Exploring both the challenges and opportunities associated with men's participation in anti-VAW work or activism, **Chapter 8** begins with a focused analysis of the accounts offered by the men participants. Analysis reveals a complex landscape of deeply embedded gender relations, which routinely rely upon a binarised understanding of gender and the preservation of patriarchal norms. Data reveals the dominant discourses and interpretative repertoires (IRs) men typically use to account for their practice in DVA and VAW prevention and intervention. In this the various roles and responsibilities ascribed to men are discussed, via the men's experience narratives. The second half of the chapter explores how men variously deploy discourses of feminism in their work. I conclude with a discussion of the negotiation of privilege, the 'pedestal effect' and the potential for men's entrepreneurialism within the field.

Dovetailing with the preceding chapter, **Chapter 9** provides another perspective on men's participation in anti-VAW and DVA work as it focuses upon the views of women practitioners and victim-survivors. It first outlines the ways in which women practitioners mobilise feminism in their

practice, if at all, before identifying the costs of doing so. In this, the intersecting discourses of class and race are foregrounded, as women discuss their thoughts on anti-VAW work and men's role within it. The chapter elaborates upon the role women practitioners and victim-survivors think should or could be ascribed to men in efforts to address men's violence, while also revealing the tensions associated with the task of broadening the field. The dual discourses of responsibility and accountability circulate in the women's accounts, leading to a critical examination of the nature of men's responsabilisation, in practice.

In concluding, **Chapter 10** draws together the various arguments elaborated upon in the preceding chapters, setting out the key tenets of my argument in a summary of the study. Following this, implications for policy and practice are discussed, highlighting the continuities as well as the potential tensions extant across the three groups, as the data is brought into relation with one another. I then provide a discussion of some of the limitations of the study, as well as potential sites for further investigation based upon the emergent themes and discourses arising from my analysis, but which I was unable to explore in this work.

Chapter 2: DVA, gender & the women's movement

Introduction

This is the first of two chapters examining the scholarship most salient to this study and to which I seek to contribute. This research is situated at the juncture of a range of diverse bodies of literature as it examines discourses of gender in DVA perpetration, victimisation, prevention and intervention, against the backdrop of UK austerity and welfare reform. Research on VAW is wide ranging and the framing of DVA causation, indicators, and impact (social and individual) are variously conceptualised within the literature. I focus upon sociological contributions which espouse a feminist theorisation of VAW and DVA as a gendered social problem. In addition to scholarship which attends to the dynamics of power and intersecting structural inequalities, underpinning women's lived experience of DVA, as well as efforts to combat it (Davis, 2015); particularly among BAME women, and other marginalised groups (Crenshaw, 1991; Richie, 2000).

I begin the chapter with an overview of the literature tracing the origins of the DVA and women's movements primarily in the UK and the USA. I foreground the ways in which societal understandings of DVA have gradually shifted over time, as well as the implications of the definitional limitations associated with DVA. I then discuss the more recent incorporation and recognition of coercive control in understandings of DVA and the ways in which definitional concepts often run counter to narratives of 'authentic' or 'real' victimhood. Following this is an exposition of the literature regarding feminist epistemologies, shared experience and the policing of gender. I then engage with Black Feminist scholarship on the history of (feminist) coalition building, both as a response to VAW and as a mechanism for prevention; work which provides a foundational understanding for more recent social movement theorisations of cross-boundary work to address VAW and DVA. Extending this discussion, the latter part of this chapter outlines literature on the history and nature of men's participation in anti-VAW work and feminist activism. Sociological models for men's engagement including 'allyship' or bystander interventions are addressed in this context.

Origins of the DVA and women's movement

At its inception in the 1970s, the DVA movement, initially termed the 'battered women's movement' (Richie, 1995; Lehrner and Allen, 2009), functioned to (re)construct domestic violence and abuse²⁰ as a social problem grounded in patriarchal structures, rather than an individualised phenomena peculiar to individual women and men (Allen, 1970; Freeman, 1973; Dobash and Dobash, 1981; Loseke and Cahill, 1984; 1992; Lehrner and Allen, 2008). It was a pivotal social movement which brought together the twinned goals of social change and vital service provision for women and children living with violence and abuse (Lehrner and Allen, 2009). Borne out of the women's liberation movement of the 1960s, it defined the issues most salient to the oppression of women living under

²⁰ Then interchangeably referred to as 'wife abuse, beating or assault'.

patriarchy. Crucially, the movement scrutinised the impacts of unequal power relations and violence upon daily life and set an agenda for a feminist analysis which would ultimately produce strategies for social change (Weedon, 1987). The discourses deployed by the DVA movement signalled a radical paradigmatic shift in how DVA was to be understood among the general public, relocating it from the private realm of the home, and driving it into the public domain.

Historically the DVA movement in the UK had at its core, the primary objective of bringing about societal reforms, and the framing of DVA as the product of patriarchy enabled early feminist activists and ‘frontline’ practitioners such as those working in women’s refuges to negotiate for change within the broader context of the economic, political and social positioning of women (Dobash and Dobash, 1992). This underpinned the longer-term goal of obtaining full and equal participation for women in all facets of social life. This task was, and continues to be, predominantly considered women’s prerogative. It is a notion feminist scholars have grappled with for decades, and represents a central consideration of this thesis. The focus upon women as agents for change in relation to DVA and gender (in)equality, originated from a well-founded concern that the inclusion of men in these arenas – as individuals typically invested in *maintaining* the dominant gender order – contravened the overall aims and objectives of the women’s and feminist movements. It also seemed to counter the fight to obtain gender equality, particularly during the early stages of the movement (Brownmiller, 1975; Walby, 1990). The gender identity of those engaged in this work consequently became heavily imbricated with the social justice objectives of the movement itself (Alcoff, 1988; Lehrner and Allen, 2008).

The association between movement and identity instantiated the complexities which later emerged, and which remain relevant to the incorporation of men in the frame of DVA prevention and intervention, including in the context of work with families, as I go on to discuss. These complexities have arguably heightened in recent years as they coalesce with debates around gendered spaces, not only because social and cultural space is itself typically gendered (Pain, 1991; Lewis et al., 2015), but because the “objectification, degradation and silencing of women [continue to] constitute the “wallpaper”” (Lewis et al., 2015, p. 2) of many sociocultural and political spheres. It is this discursive ‘wallpaper’ that has long nurtured the conditions for gender inequality and the perpetration of DVA and VAWG, and that constitutes a threat to women’s “ontological security” (Giddens, 1991). This concept plays out in Lewis and colleague’s (2015) distinction between women’s safety *to* and safety *from*, informed by the notion that true “ontological freedom” is chiefly obtained when and if, women are able to enjoy both. This reading shores up arguments in support of women-only spaces in which the risk of harm from men is perceived to be reduced. The material and epistemological challenges emerging from this position are fleshed out in the forthcoming section, as I outline scholarship relating to the arguments associated with the unifying category of a shared (gender) experience.

Shared experience and feminist epistemology

The 1960s women’s liberation movement appealed to women to recognise gender as grounds for common political interest, underpinned by the belief that women were united in their experiences of oppression under patriarchy (Walby, 1994). This contention formed the foundation upon which the ‘consciousness-raising’ activities which heavily defined the movement, were built (Stanley and Wise, 1993; Dubriwny, 2005). Consciousness-raising carried out in “small group” settings (Allen, 1970;

Freeman, 1973) occupied a central role in the movement and served both a strategic and pragmatic function in connecting women through individual lived experiences, and by providing a practical mechanism for political mobilisation (Alcoff, 1988; Carr, 2003; Murphy, 2012). It also enabled women to draw parallels between personal experience and that of the “political realities of patriarchy” (Carr, 2003, p. 16). Social movement theorists argued that in cases such as these, individuals within movements establish cohesion among them via a shared narrative (Fine, 1995; Dubriwny, 2005). An appeal to shared experience and a common narrative in the context of feminist activism provided both the framework for political solidarity across groups of women, but also simultaneously laid the groundwork for the exclusion of many women who did not see themselves reflected in the largely white middle-class feminism which laid claim to a paradoxically exclusionary rhetoric of ‘sameness’ (Lorde, 1984; Rich, 1984; Lugones, 2003).

The trajectory of the development of the women’s movement as a mainly “white women’s movement” (Lehrner and Allen, 2009) corresponded with the course of the DVA movement (mainly in the UK and USA) which turned on an excessively narrow analysis of women’s intersectional experience of violence, racism and (hetero)sexism (Lehrner and Allen, 2009, p. 668). As the earlier discussions around the ‘me too’ movement show, these tensions remain unresolved (Richie, 2000; Bent-Goodley, 2005). Exclusionary practices endure in contemporary (white) mainstream feminist discourse (Lugones, 2010; Segato, 2010 [2003]; Lugones and García Gualda, 2014), exposing what Hemmings (2011) has referred to as the political grammar of feminist storytelling. It foregrounds the challenges of claiming a falsely unified feminist past or advancing a discourse of the unifying category of ‘woman’ (Crenshaw, 1991), which turns on the contention that a shared woman-gender equates to a shared woman-experience. This has not only precluded recognition of the differences and power relations in operation *among* and *between* women (hooks, 1982; Johnson Reagon, 1983; Lorde, 1984; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002; Jonsson, 2014; Mirza, 2015; Okech, 2019) but has also contributed to the substantive exclusion of black, lesbian, queer, trans, and working-class women’s experiences through the “totalizing effects of the concept of experience” (Ashe, 2004, p. 189). This points to the “struggle over discursive and political territories” that characterise social movements, and which are constantly negotiated by those involved in them (Jardine, 1987, p. 57). These discourses are complicated further when brought into relation with the dominant discourses of ‘authentic’ victimhood, simultaneously in operation; I discuss the intersections of these in the next section.

Gender and ‘authentic’ victimhood

The work of feminist sociological and gender studies scholars has traced the difficulties associated with naming and delineating those individuals harmed by DVA; an issue which has long beleaguered the domestic violence and women’s movement, as dominant understandings of violence and abuse towards women have simultaneously shifted over time (Stanko, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991; Dobash and Dobash, 1992; 1998; 2003). Theorisations of DVA and people who experience it, are typically informed by the corresponding shifts in societal gender dynamics, gender (in)equalities and the status of women within all facets of daily life, with increasing attention placed upon the unique and complex intersections extant between violence and gender. Terminology for those who experience DVA is imbued with meaning as regards to the (psychological and societal) status of the individual concerned

(Dobash and Dobash, 1992), as well as debates regarding the intentions both of the victim-survivor and that of the perpetrator (Dunn, 2005).

Literature charts how the DVA victim-survivor is typically constructed according to a binary opposition of the ('helpless') victim of abuse with limited or no agency on the one hand, and the victim complicit in her own abuse with the freedom to choose, on the other. This construction typically situates responsibility with (women) victim-survivors for addressing or responding to DVA (Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Dobash et al., 1992; 2007; Thapar-Björkert and Morgan, 2010), with notably less emphasis upon the actions of the perpetrator (Hester and Westmarland, 2006; Featherstone and Peckover, 2007; Devaney, 2014; Kelly and Westmarland, 2016). This risks reinforcing notions of victim culpability and dilutes perpetrator responsibility and accountability (Dobash and Dobash, 1998). Empirical research substantiates that in instances where women make certain decisions, or behave in a way that may be considered antithetical to dominant discourse and normative expectations around victimhood – for example, decisions to remain in or go back to a violent situation or abusive partner (Peled et al., 2000; Dunn, 2005; Enander, 2010; Meyer, 2012) – the person's legitimacy as a 'real' or 'authentic' victim is simultaneously called into question (Berns, 2001; Ahmed, 2004; Kolb, 2010; Powell-Williams et al., 2013).

Examination of the feminist sociological literature which charts the shifting understandings of the 'authentic' or 'real' victim reveal the importance of recognising the ways in which gender (and) diversity impact upon victim-survivor experience of violence and abuse (Wendt and Zannettino, 2015). 'Authentic' victimhood entail notions of physical embodiment such that the victim-survivor is typically envisaged as a visibly injured, white, cisgendered, able bodied, often middle-aged, woman. Inherent in this discursive frame are particular presentations of gender: the stronger embodied heterosexual man as perpetrator, and the weaker embodied woman as victim-survivor (Donovan and Hester, 2014; Donovan and Barnes, 2017b). This, as Donovan and Barnes (2017b) have remarked, functions to evoke limiting assumptions regarding race, ethnicity, capacity, physical ability, age and class and thus simultaneously forecloses the possibility of some individuals telling their stories, disclosing their experiences, and or seeking help. Indeed, as existing work substantiates, these boundary lines are not only imposed upon the lives of LGBTQ, BAME and non-binary peoples' experience of DVA (Donovan and Hester, 2014; Donovan and Barnes, 2017a), but also upon other bodies who do not conform to dominant gender role expectations, such as women engaged in sex-work or prostitution, women who have complex or co-occurring needs such as substance use (Humphreys et al., 2005; Tucker et al., 2005) and or women who are disabled (Thiara et al., 2011), thereby bringing significant material and embodied costs for each of these groups.

Prior sociological research on practice responses to DVA further demonstrates that when victim-survivors engage in challenging or so-called 'deviant' behaviour, they are read as 'inauthentic' victims, often as a result of failing to garner sympathy from professionals involved in their support (Kolb, 2010; Thapar-Björkert and Morgan, 2010). Designating some bodies as "legitimate objects of emotion" and others as illegitimate (Ahmed, 2004, p. 191), discourses of 'authentic' victimhood render some people 'ungrievable' and thus unworthy of recognition as people who are harmed or worthy of protection (Butler, 2009). The perceived 'authenticity' of certain victim-survivors' experience and presentation are tightly bound up with racialised, gendered and classed inequalities,

particularly in relation to sexual violence (Phipps, 2009), which map onto dominant constructions of what might be regarded as (hetero)normative, cisgender femininity.

The consequences of a restricted conceptualisation of the legitimate, 'real' or 'authentic' victim are traced in early Black Feminist research such as that of Crenshaw's (1991) seminal work, which refers to the "absurdity" of a feminist approach which fails to consider the intersecting barriers some women victim-survivors face in accessing services, as well as in their diverse and cross-cutting needs. Indeed, practitioners working in the field of DVA, as well as those 'allied' to the cause, at times can reproduce the subordination of women from minority communities (Crenshaw, 1991) or those who exist on the margins of society by virtue of socio-material insecurity (Moran et al., 2001; Skeggs, 2004). These normatively embedded conceptualisations of those regarded as 'legitimately' harmed by DVA have become enmeshed with widely circulating definitions of what constitutes DVA and how it is responded to within practice. This tension remains largely unresolved in the empirical literature and is therefore a central consideration of this work. In the next section, I outline the literature pertaining to what 'counts' as DVA.

Defining DVA and VAWG

Some of the earliest examples of a victim-survivor focused, feminist theorisation of DVA as a gendered social problem can be found in the work of Dobash and Dobash (1981; 1992; 1992; 1998) and Stanko (1990; 1997; 2003), whose foundational works chart the evolution of the dominant sociocultural discourses which typically structure DVA. Discourses which underpin definitional understandings of DVA occupy a key function not only in understanding individual victim-survivor experience, disclosure and help-seeking, but also contribute to the manner in which prevention and intervention measures are designed, implemented and delivered. These prevailing discourses are variously named in the discourse analytic and sociological literature, including as; "public stories" (Plummer, 1995; Donovan and Hester, 2014); "master narratives" (Bamberg and Andrews, 2004) or "formula stories" (Loseke, 2001).

Discourses in wide circulation among the public, function as a "blueprint for all stories" (Andrews, 2004, p.1); they are the mechanism through which people come to understand not only other peoples' stories, but crucially, their own. Typically, dominant discourses of DVA animate an understanding of it as a social problem almost exclusively within a heteronormative framework (Rogers, 2017) in which it is situated as a problem of heterosexual women and heterosexual men (Donovan and Hester, 2014). Within this framework, the re-inscription of dominant gender roles presentations and the embeddedness of stereotypical constructions of femininity and masculinity coalesce with heteronormative notions of what constitutes a 'healthy' intimate relationship (Donovan and Barnes, 2017a). This view of relationships similarly characterises the narratives, which often underpin practice responses to DVA, as work discussed here from feminist sociologists documents.

Feminist sociological research with victim-survivors demonstrates how dominant DVA narratives function as a key interpretative resource for practitioners when working to respond to DVA in the context of their professional roles, as well as to make sense of it as a social problem (Dunn and Powell-Williams, 2007; Thapar-Björkert and Morgan, 2010). These narratives assert that women

should *ideally* leave and stay away from their abusive partner (Baker, 1997; Rothenberg, 2003; Dunn, 2005; Dunn and Powell-Williams, 2007; Grauwiler, 2008; Lehrner and Allen, 2008; Thapar-Björkert and Morgan, 2010; Enander, 2011; Powell-Williams et al., 2013). Prior research indicates that often this cultivates a sense of increased powerlessness among women who experience DVA, as they face further limitation upon their agency within the context of the help they receive, particularly in circumstances where there are children²¹ (Hydén, 1999; 2005; Dunn and Powell-Williams, 2007; Baly, 2010; Samelius et al., 2014; Mirza, 2018). Research also indicates that in some cases, decisions taken by professionals come to unintentionally replicate aspects of the behaviours of an abusive partner, as I go on to discuss in the next chapter.

A significant aspect of many victim-survivors' experience of DVA is that of coercive control, which represents one of the more recent features of the debates regarding the definitional limitations of DVA. The public story of DVA, together with both the institutional and sector-wide response to DVA, have up until very recently been informed by a constricted understanding of DVA as an unambiguously (physically) violent event (Arnold, 2009). It is a conceptualisation which fails to account for the realities of psychological or emotional abuse, particularly as it manifests as coercive control (Brennan et al., 2019). Public recognition of what is a largely hidden reality for many victim-survivors living with DVA is signified in the growing academic research in this area, and is reflected in the expansion of official definitions of DVA to include coercive control within policy discourse such as that of the UK government²² (Home Office, 2013a). The psychological and emotional impacts of DVA bound up with coercively controlling behaviour are often not overtly discernible, despite representing some of the most damaging aspects of DVA for victim-survivors (Stark, 2007; Williamson, 2010). Crucially, the perpetration of coercive control inheres in the maintenance of unequal gender relations and the accompanying power dynamics in operation within the relationship (Anderson, 2009; Downes et al., 2019).

As coercive control has gained increasing prominence in the scholarship around DVA in recent years, the conceptualisations pertaining to an individuals' 'space for action' (Kelly, 2003), have also gained increased visibility. Coined by Kelly (2003), the concept builds upon Lungren's (1998) earlier notion of 'life space' in order to denote the implications of coercion and controlling behaviour upon a victim-survivor's capacity to live freely and according to her own volition. This has far reaching implications for victim-survivors' ability to engage in all facets of daily life. According to this theorisation, a cessation of the DVA contributes to an increase in the women's 'space for action' thereby opening up opportunities for resistance as well as possibilities for increased safety both within, and outside, the domestically violent context. This thesis will contribute to this body of work as I seek to understand the ways in which victim-survivors work to resist or contest the aforementioned conceptualisations of the DVA ('authentic') victim-survivor. In the next section I discuss the tensions emergent in the literature, as the definitional boundaries of DVA have shifted, via a discussion of the scholarship on the politics of gender, and the implications these have for DVA prevention and intervention.

²¹ See Chapter 7

²² See Chapter 4

Politics of gender identity

The ex/inclusion of transwomen within the frame of DVA and indeed feminism more generally, epitomises two of the most significant discursive and political battlegrounds for (re)negotiation, with ramifications for *all* women, but particularly those women existing on the periphery of definitional boundary lines. That transwomen, and specifically their experiences of DVA and men's violence, are not only invisibilised (Rogers, 2017), but often actively excluded from much of the feminist debate on the grounds of gendered 'authenticity' and the policing of 'biological' womanhood (Hines, 2013; Winch et al., 2019), is redolent of the exclusion of black and lesbian women discussed earlier. It also resonates with the moralising debates in relation to women involved in commercial sex practices (Winch et al., 2019), despite there being a history of trans inclusion within radical feminism (Williams, 2016), which has in more recent times been largely overlooked.

The occlusion of transwomen is perhaps most starkly evidenced in the ardent resurgence of what has been termed trans-exclusionary (radical) feminism in contemporary socio-political debate (Hines, 2005; 2019). Operating upon the assimilation of transwomen into the category of men, exclusionary feminism constructs transwomen as complicit in the oppression of (cisgender) women (Phipps, 2019). This conflates the rights of transwomen to be recognised as women and the right to live free of violence, with those of men's rights to participate in women-only or women majority spaces (Phipps, 2019). The deliberations around some victim-survivors' access to, or eligibility for, women's DVA refuge services, are located at the centre of the current political and policy debates relating to transwomen's in/exclusion (see for example, WPUK, 2019; 2020). But the exclusion of transwomen and women engaged in sex work or prostitution, in particular, is a cogent form of sexism, which replicates the routine and systemic oppression of feminised bodies. It is therefore a matter highly salient to the broader questions interrogated in this thesis and intersects with the discursive construction of 'authentic' victimhood mapped out in the literature referred to earlier.

The essentialism that has informed the politics of trans in/exclusion is a key organising principle in the prohibition of other groups of victim-survivors of DVA from services who face other oppressions (Cohen and Jackson, 2016). The question of transwomen's recognition both as women, but also as legitimate victims of men's violence therefore exposes the complex challenges associated with seeking to separate out specific forms of inequalities from structures of privilege (Bywaters and Sparks, 2017; Morris et al., 2018). Indeed, one group's marginalisation should not be isolated from the intersecting forms of discrimination which contribute to their experience of oppression (Winch et al., 2019). Engagement with a trans-inclusive feminist agenda allows for the breaking down of oppressions which contribute to the liberation of all oppressed people, whether drawn along boundary lines of race, gender or class, and shores up opportunities for the possibility of coalitional building which fully embraces the intersectional nature of work and activism to prevent or intervene in DVA (Johnson Reagon, 1983). Further, the incorporation of multiple epistemologies within the frame of anti-VAW work provides fruitful opportunities and possibilities for the distribution of power across differently positioned groups (Harding, 1998, p. 175). This literature is therefore particularly salient to the question of men's role in work or activism to address men's violence, and maps onto the questions raised earlier regarding the shifting of responsibility for doing the work, away from solely women and victim-survivors, and onto those who occupy positions of power. This is one form

of coalition building addressed in the next section, by drawing upon the pivotal works of early Black Feminist thinkers.

Difference, coalition and the ‘pedestalling’ of men

Insights from Black Feminist scholars provide some of the earliest and most incisive examples of coalition building across boundary lines of difference, both within the context of Black Feminist activism to address VAW, as well as in response to racism against black women and men (Combahee River Collective, 1979; Lorde, 1984; Hill Collins, 1986; 2009 [1990]). While this body of work points to the substantial challenges and nuances associated with the type of cross-boundary or intergroup mobilisation referred to earlier (Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins, 2006; Wright and Lubensky, 2009; Tausch et al., 2015), it also indicates how unearned privilege is negotiated within movement spaces and elucidates the productive value vested in the recognition of difference (Johnson Reagon, 1983; Smith, 1983), rather than negating it in an attempt to achieve or adhere to notions of solidarity (Hill Collins, 2017).

In the context of VAW, Black Feminist scholarship offers a prescient insight into how the elision of difference can prove problematic, not least because an individual woman’s experience of violence is fundamentally imbricated with other aspects of identity such as race, class or sexuality. In recognising difference, opportunities for cross-group and intergroup mobilisation emerge, while still preserving the specificity of individual women’s experience. Indeed, Lorde (1984) attested to this sentiment in her support of the “creative function of difference” as a mechanism for the reworking of power dynamics, as well as to precipitate social change. Framing difference as strength confronts the harms associated with a separatist agenda (Johnson Reagon, 1983; Smith, 1983; Lorde, 1984) and underscores the imperative of linking an intersectional analysis of power with coalitional work, in order to respond to the needs of all women who experience DVA (Cohen, 1997). This body of literature also constitutes a key point of departure for the consideration of men’s role in work and activism to address men’s violences, as I discuss in forthcoming sections.

An understanding and recognition of the interlocking systems of oppression women face (hooks, 2015 [1989]), particularly in the context of an experience of violence and abuse, is key to considering how we might develop a response to those violences; whether they be at the hands of an intimate partner or the state (Cohen, 1997). To this end, Segato (2010 [2003]) asserts that while men who engage in work to address VAW, or white people who participate in work to address racism towards black people may receive “commendation”, a failure to do this work would be a degradation of their character as well as every other person of their gender or race. This attests not only to what might be construed as a collective social responsibility on the part of those who occupy a privileged position in society, but also highlights the oftentimes problematic ‘pedestalling’ of the people who undertake this cross-boundary type work (Macomber, 2015).

Social movement and sociological research on the ‘pedestal effect’ draws upon the concept of the “glass escalator” (Williams, 1992), first coined in relation to men’s recruitment into typically women dominated professions. As such, the introduction of men in the women’s or DVA movement spaces can produce their disproportionate valorisation, as they are held up as exemplary or heroic, “reap[ing] the status rewards of just being men” (Macomber, 2015, p. 21). This facilitates men’s speedy upward

mobility within organisational or movement structures (Macomber, 2015; Messner et al., 2015; Peretz, 2018a). A similar phenomenon is routinely seen in perceptions and portrayals of men whose behaviour has deviated from gender-role stereotypes, dominant forms of so-called ‘toxic’ masculinities (see for example, Avin, 2017; Badham, 2017; Hinsliff, 2019; Topping et al., 2019), or who have engaged in activities which are regarded as more typically aligned with women, such as childrearing or domestic labour (Hochschild and Machung, 1990). The concept of ‘pedestalling’ is closely enmeshed with the workings of gendered privilege, as I discuss in forthcoming sections. How privilege is negotiated and ‘managed’ in practice, including within the DVA sector, is far less clear in the literature, and is therefore another ‘gap’ I seek to respond to. With this in mind, the second half of this chapter provides an exposition of the (feminist) social movement and gender studies literature charting the evolution of men’s role and participation in anti-VAW.

Men’s participation in anti-VAW and DVA prevention efforts

In recent years, there has been a notable paradigmatic shift regarding men’s role in DVA and anti-VAW prevention and intervention work, perhaps most visibly signified in the UK government’s 2016 – 2020 strategy to address VAWG, which states:

“Starting from the premise that men can be a powerful force in challenging negative behaviours, we will engage men and boys in challenging VAWG by working with organisations to support widespread awareness about VAWG and how men can be involved as an integral part of approaches to prevention” (Home Office, 2016, p. 17).

The direction men’s incorporation has taken in recent years, has largely been informed by the different roles ascribed to men and the theoretical rationale for their inclusion in work to address men’s violence (Kaufman, 2001; Flood, 2011; 2015; Jewkes et al., 2015a; Tolman et al., 2016). There is a growing recognition in the literature that approaches which include the framing of men not only as potential perpetrators but also as ‘partners’ (Flood, 2011) or ‘allies’²³(Casey, 2010), could go some way to reducing DVA and VAW prevalence rates. The question of men’s role in the DVA movement is situated within the broader discussions relating to men’s ‘place’ in feminism more generally, because of the strong continuities in the anti-VAW and feminist movements’ respective histories, theoretical foundations as well as core objectives. However, men’s involvement in the DVA or feminist movement has also been a site of political contestation (Hester, 1984; Hester et al., 1996), complicated by notions of (male) privilege and accountability (Messner, 1997; McCarry, 2007; Macomber, 2015; Messner et al., 2015).

The concerns regarding men’s participation in the DVA field originate from preoccupations around the security of gendered political and epistemological territories, as well as of women’s

²³ The term used to describe men who take up this type of work is variously conceptualised across the literature, as well as by the men themselves. All the terms mentioned here are therefore used interchangeably to refer to ‘engaged men’; discussed further in Chapter 4.

representation and security within the movement (Allen, 1970; Jardine, 1987; Baily, 2014), as I discussed earlier. These coalesce with long held anxieties regarding the potential for co-optation of the movement, as well as around whether there is in fact a ‘place’ for men within it, and within feminism and feminist-led movements (Braidotti, 1987; Jardine and Smith, 1987; Schacht and Ewing, 1997; Digby, 1998; Harding, 1998; Carbado, 2000; Lewis et al., 2015; Tolman et al., 2016). Enmeshed with these are legitimate fears articulated by women within the movement, that the feminist message underpinning violence prevention work will be diluted (Freeman, 1973; Flood, 2015; Messner et al., 2015; Burrell and Flood, 2019) or that men will be disproportionately valorised or ‘pedestalled’ for their contributions (Macomber, 2015). Scholars in these fields also attest to the risk of further de-politicisation (Hemmings, 2005), particularly in the current socio-political climate, and given the introduction of gender-neutral discourses in UK policy, which serve to further sever the linkages between gender inequality and DVA.

However, the inclusion of men in efforts to combat or respond to women’s oppression and or men’s violence towards women – whether in the context of anti-violence work, (pro)feminist activism, or in the context of gender mainstreaming policies to address key global development indicators – is not a new concept. Indeed, it has a reasonably long, albeit sometimes neglected history, which includes men’s support of the early British women’s suffrage movement of the mid to late 19th century (John and Eustance, 1997). Men’s participation in the feminist movement, particularly in early anti-sexism activism, is also evidenced in the more recent social history of both the UK and the US, with men’s consciousness-raising groups established during the 1970s, alongside and as a direct response to, second-wave feminism (Messner, 1997; Pease, 2000; Flood, 2015; Messner et al., 2015). It was during this period that there was also the emergence of ‘men’s groups’²⁴ which operated as spaces in which men could interrogate dominant notions of masculinities, as well as their identities as “gendered beings”, in the midst of the radical feminist debates regarding widespread gender (in)equality (Ramazanoglu, 1992; Ashe, 2004; De Wolf, 2014; Flood, 2015). Activists within the men’s consciousness-raising movement of the 1970s began to conceive of men’s role in anti-VAW initiatives as “pro-feminist” actors mobilised against VAW (Schwartz and DeKeseredy, 2008; Flood, 2011; Messner et al., 2015; 2016). This type of activism espoused a discourse of male accountability and responsibility, and occurred alongside the work of second wave feminists (Allen, 1970; Pratt, 1988), seeking to address VAW through the dismantling of dominant patriarchal discourses. Crucially, this same discourse of accountability held significant weight for the subsequent work regarding men’s responsabilisation within the context of the family²⁵.

There are some contemporary examples in the social movement and gender studies literature, of men’s participation in anti-VAW activities. However, initiatives involving men around issues of DVA has more recently, taken the form of court mandated criminal justice programs, working with known or convicted perpetrators of DVA (Hester and Westmarland, 2006; Lilley-Walker et al., 2016; Wistow

²⁴ More recent variations of men’s groups include those which celebrate diverse masculinities, challenge harmful masculinities, and those which address issues such as social isolation and mental health among men (see Crabtree et al., 2018; and for critique, see Jordan, 2018).

²⁵ See Chapter 3

et al., 2017). There are also prominent campaigning organisations such as the *White Ribbon Campaign* (WRC, 2017), and *The Great Initiative* (The Great Initiative, 2017), both men-led organisations operating to engage men and boys in awareness raising activities to address VAW. Campaigns such as these loosely construct men and boys' role as that of 'allies' or (pro-social) bystanders, which in turn informs their participation in VAW prevention efforts on a community, strategic, or policy level. Both 'allyship' and 'bystander interventions' also feature in the UK government's strategy to eliminate VAWG²⁶. Empirical research indicates that these approaches are strongly represented within the interpretative resources men engaged in anti-VAW and DVA efforts draw upon, when accounting for their roles and work, as I discuss in the following sections.

The concepts of 'allyship' and 'bystander interventions' engage with some of the literature on coalition building referred to earlier, however broadly speaking, they are grounded in the social movement literature and social norms theory respectively. Both share the common longer-term objectives of VAW prevention and awareness-raising, but the theoretical and epistemological underpinnings of each are somewhat distinct, and the extent to which they map onto a feminist framework, if at all, varies significantly. Despite the lack of concordance with feminist epistemology in places, they remain worthy of discussion, particularly when seeking to understand how and why men participate in this type of work. They also exemplify some of the bigger challenges of seeking to diversify the normative discourse underpinning current approaches to VAW prevention and intervention, and provide an insight into how men may negotiate their privileged status within women only or women majority spaces (Wildman and Davis, 1995; Case et al., 2012; Lewis et al., 2015). Within this frame, it is also possible to see how concepts of accountability are constructed and managed (Macomber, 2012; 2014; 2015). In the next section I will focus upon the literature regarding 'allyship' in broad terms, before moving on to an elaboration of the scholarship that informs bystander interventions.

'Allyship' and the workings of privilege

The framing of men as women's "allies" emerged during the 1990s primarily in the fields of sexual and reproductive health advocacy, as well as in violence prevention (Katz, 1995; Schwartz and DeKeseredy, 2008; Casey, 2010; Flood, 2011; Casey and Ohler, 2012; Macomber, 2012; 2014; Chabot et al., 2016). The concept of allyship in social justice movements (Kraemer, 2007; Droogendyk et al., 2016) is predicated on the notion that institutionalised oppression will persist until members of the advantaged or dominant social group take an active role in ending it (Casey, 2010). It entails a continual negotiation of the tension between privilege and oppression (McCorkel, 2003; Case et al., 2012). The extent to which privilege functions as an organising principle in allyship across differently positioned groups in which there are diverse social hierarchies, is apparent when considered in the context of anti-VAW work (McIntosh, 1997; Donnelly et al., 2005; Case et al., 2014; Macomber, 2015); anti-racist mobilisation (James, 1998; Smith and Redington, 2010; Case, 2012) and anti-homophobia activism (Russell, 2011; Grzanka et al., 2015; Russell and Bohan, 2016). Indeed, the challenges

²⁶ See Chapter 1

associated with allyship stem from the very significance, complexity and function of privilege (Donnelly et al., 2005; Case, 2012); male, white and heterosexual privilege are all unearned and entail material ramifications for women and other oppressed groups (hooks, 1982; Lorde, 1984).

The task of dissociating oneself from one's privilege therefore remains a complex one, not least because as Wildman & Davis (1995) recount, privilege typically remains invisible to those possessing it. To this end, McIntosh (1997) argued that privilege manifests in the capacity to choose whether to commit oneself to more equitable distributions of power; individuals who hold disadvantaged status do not have the same capacity to choose. In this sense, privilege refers to a reality experienced by those who can '*not know*' the reality of oppression, and who do not have to understand it in order to survive (Kraemer, 2007). This resonates with the work of Black feminists discussed earlier, including Smith (2000 [1983]) who spoke of the inherent sense of discomfort entailed in the process of making visible one's own privileged positionality. Speaking in the context of 'whiteness' and white privilege, both Rich (1984) and Pratt (1984) argued for the need to be self-reflexive in order to do this work, such that the task of "making whiteness visible" maps onto the task of making privilege visible (Shollock, 2012). However, Shollock (2012, p. 2015) cautions that while self-reflexivity may be essential to this process, understanding how to respond to, and manage, the "epistemic uncertainty, self-doubt and cognitive anxiety" it generates, is far less understood and presents a more significant challenge when developing what she terms a "methodology of privilege" (Shollock, 2012). Social change in the context of allyship can therefore be deeply uncomfortable, operating against the interests of the most privileged (Freire and Ramos, 1972; Ramazanoglu, 1992).

Strategies outlined in the empirical literature on men's involvement in anti-VAW work, aimed at engaging the "average" man²⁷, often incorporate an understanding of this 'discomfort' as they seek to mobilise the potential strengths vested in men's participation through the strategic use of stereotypical masculinities. Men's comparatively privileged status is therefore instrumentalised in this context to effect social change (Macomber, 2012). Masculinities scholars in this area argue that this functions as a mechanism to overcome the barriers associated with some men feeling "attacked" or "guilt-laden" (Messner, 2016) due to feminist messages, or by those that confront their unearned social privilege (Messner, 1997; 2016). But while allyship type approaches such as these have been shown in some circumstances to successfully engage men, they do also risk "reinforcing or reproducing male privilege within anti-violence efforts" (Casey, 2010, p. 279). Similar worries are articulated from within social justice movements which work to address prejudice through the mobilisation and inclusion of an advantaged or majority group in work carried out by and for, a disadvantaged or minority group. The maintenance of systems of privilege within these types of settings is indicative of what has been termed "hierarchical drift", enabling the reinstatement of a dominant and subordinate status binary, as Russell (2011, p. 390) discusses in relation to heterosexual peoples' allyship with LGBTQ+ people. Crucially, it could produce the decentralisation of the disadvantaged group within the context of collective activism (Russell, 2011), which serves to re-entrench unequal statuses, based in this case on sexual orientation and gender identity (Wright and

²⁷ The otherwise disengaged man who does not perpetrate DVA, in this case.

Lubensky, 2009). Indeed, this sentiment strongly coheres with the concerns voiced from within the women's sector regarding the risk of co-optation of the women's (feminist) movement in the event that men are included (Macomber, 2015); challenges which remain highly salient in the current socio-political moment. An alternative conceptualisation of allyship instead centres the significance of a shared interest in countering patriarchal norms, discussed in the next section.

Reworking 'harmful masculinities'

The participation of men and boys in efforts to address DVA or VAW, particularly on a localised or community level, often turns on the concept of 'harmful masculinities' (Katz, 1995; Goodey, 1997; Messner, 1997; Fleming et al., 2014; Peacock and Barker, 2014; Cover, 2015). Principally, this involves the contention that men and boys are also harmed by patriarchy and "hegemonic" masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Luyt, 2005; Schwartz and DeKeseredy, 2008; Cornwall et al., 2011; Morrell and Morrell, 2011; Morrell et al., 2012; Eckstein and Pinto, 2013; Gibbs et al., 2015; Jewkes et al., 2015a; Jewkes et al., 2015b; Ratele, 2015). Productive of damaging constructions of what is to be a "real" (heterosexual, white) man (Flood, 2015), it provides a framework for a type of men's allyship premised on the understanding that men too have a strategic interest in seeking to dismantle certain forms of masculinities and the violent practices they precipitate (Casey et al., 2013; Carlson et al., 2015; Casey, E. et al., 2016; Casey, E.A. et al., 2016; Storer et al., 2016; Tolman et al., 2016).

The distinction between harm and oppression (Kraemer, 2007) is key to the debates regarding the harms of masculinities. While some forms of masculinities undoubtedly do harm some men, particularly BAME, disabled and LGBTQ+ men (hooks, 1984b; 2004; Coston and Kimmel, 2012), masculinity itself, does not necessarily oppress these groups. Rather, men generally retain the power to choose to engage with or perform certain constructions of masculinities, albeit not without risk in some cases. In contrast, women often cannot exercise this same level of choice, particularly women who experience multiple levels of oppression, including BAME, lesbian, trans or disabled women, for whom the right to choose is further curtailed. Male, white and heterosexual privilege(s) connect to a gendered system of oppression and the "social norms and roles that restrict behaviours of women and men" (Case et al., 2014, p. 724). This differentiates women's embodied and material experience from that of men. A narrative that purports the harms of rigid forms of masculinities may make it difficult to attribute responsibility or accountability to men that perpetrate violence (McCarry, 2007; O'Neill, 2015; 2018). It also avoids any notion of male guilt or accountability, for socially embedded male violence towards women (Messner, 2016). As previous research has consistently shown, a focus upon men's accountability often leads to men's disengagement from anti-VAW campaigns aimed at men (Casey and Smith, 2010; Casey and Ohler, 2012; Messner et al., 2015; Peretz, 2018a; b).

A masculinities focused approach has gained real prominence over the last two decades or so, particularly in relation to gender equality work in the context of global gender and development policy frameworks, often underpinning gender mainstreaming and poverty reduction programming in the global south (Kabeer and Subrahmanian, 1996; Nations, 2015). While there are a number of examples of this type of policy being implemented in the context of gender equality (Bird et al., 2007; Torres et al., 2012; Lwambo, 2013; Sleggh et al., 2013; van den Berg et al., 2013; Boyce, 2015; Das et al., 2015) as well as to address VAW (Hoang et al., 2013; Mitchell, 2013; Channon and Ngulube, 2015; Gibbs et al., 2015; Viveros-Vigoya, 2016), the response from women's development organisations

reflects those of the women's anti-VAW and DVA sector in the UK. These responses are characterised by a residual anxiety regarding the impact men's inclusion may have upon women's decision making capacities, upon the allocation of limited resources, and the risk of devaluing the work of women's organisations (Chant et al., 2000; Hearn, 2010; Cornwall et al., 2011; Flood, 2011; Morrell and Morrell, 2011; Ruxton and van der Gaag, 2013). With these concerns in mind, I will move on to a discussion of Bystander Interventions which similarly engage with the notion that men have a role to play in altering the dominant gender order, but which draw upon the literature on social norms theory.

Bystander Interventions

Like the allyship models discussed above, Bystander Interventions (BIs) represent another example of the mobilisation of men in ally-type roles, but which engage with social norms theory (Berkowitz, 2001) in order to bring about behaviour or attitude change (Gidycz et al., 2011; McMahon et al., 2011; Casey and Ohler, 2012; Cares et al., 2015; Fenton, 2015; Chabot et al., 2016; Corboz et al., 2016; Fenton et al., 2016). BIs engage with narratives that hold that social norms are damaging to men as well (Berkowitz, 2001), and so align with the position espoused in the 'harmful masculinities' literature discussed earlier. BIs involve the educational training of groups of men (and occasionally women, particularly within university settings) to equip them with the skills to challenge or intervene in situations of (gender-based or gender-motivated) violence, abuse or harassment. They are programs typically implemented in male dominated environments in which men do not have a perceived 'natural' interest in challenging VAW, and often don't regard themselves as concerned with the issue. BIs have been mainly implemented in UK and USA university and college settings (Cares et al., 2015; Chabot et al., 2016), and, more recently, in online spaces (Salazar et al., 2014; Ging and Siapera, 2018); environments in which there are statistically higher rates of gendered violence (Lewis et al., 2015; Lewis et al., 2016b), and a predominance of "violence-supportive norms" (Humphrey and Kahn, 2000; McMahon et al., 2011; Deitch-Stackhouse et al., 2015; Corboz et al., 2016).

BIs work to produce 'prosocial bystanders' or 'peer 'leaders' (Cares et al., 2015; Chabot et al., 2016), trained and mobilised to proactively challenge accepted social or cultural norms within their given community over a certain period of time. This is achieved by 'speaking out' against behaviour or attitudes that enact or endorse violence (Banyard et al., 2004; Schwartz and DeKeseredy, 2008; Casey and Ohler, 2012). Fenton (2015; 2016) argues that this process of change is intuitive because implementation of the BI communicates a message to the perpetrator and those around them, that their behaviour is not acceptable. It also contributes to the debunking of dominant myth discourses, particularly in relation to sex, rape or consent among groups of men peers (Fabiano et al., 2003). The theory holds that over time, the BI will gradually generate a shift in the social norms regarding certain, previously accepted, behaviours or beliefs. Arguably this could go some way to resituate behaviours which Stanko (1990) referred to as "typical" among some groups of men, to that of "aberrant".

Approaches which embed notions of harmful masculinities often do so on the grounds that it is strategically more productive in the short term for engaging men and boys in the initial stages (Casey et al., 2017). But it remains the case it is a discourse, which engages with a potentially dangerous construction of DVA as a problem pertaining to "other men", rather than the individual "good men" engaged on a BI program, for example (Messner et al., 2015, p. 123; Messner, 2016). This in turn lays

the groundwork for a harmful racialised discourse of the “violent other” (Messner, 2016), particularly given the environment in which these programs are usually implemented (largely white, middle class university and college settings). In this sense it becomes an anti-violence strategy abstracted from the social conditions which produce it (Messner, 2016). In the case of BIs, the theoretical basis represents a political decoupling from feminism (McCarry, 2007; Messner et al., 2015; Messner, 2016) which potentially obscures the everyday embeddedness of VAW in social discourse. Instead, we see the construction of particular violent men’s behaviour as “individual aberration” (Messner et al., 2015, p. 123), recalling Stanko’s (1990) conceptualisation of DVA discussed earlier. These approaches therefore exemplify the significant challenges associated with seeking to not only diversify the discourse governing VAW prevention to include men, but also the barriers to initiating men’s engagement in violence prevention work (Messner et al., 2015; Casey et al., 2017).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed (Black) feminist sociological literature, gender studies and social movement theory scholarship. These provide a reading of DVA as a gendered social problem, grounded in patriarchy, in which the formation and progression of the women’s movement to end DVA and VAW can be traced. Examination of the epistemological and theoretical foundations of the DVA and feminist movements reveals the challenges of diversifying the field to include men in efforts to address men’s violence towards men. But the longstanding construction of DVA as a ‘woman’s issue’ produces the concomitant responsabilisation of women (victim-survivors), to prevent or intervene in men’s violence. It also contributes to the perseveration of a victim-blaming narrative, particularly in the case of more marginalised or minoritised women, as the gender theory and feminist literature in this area attests. How to *expand* the scope of responsibility for addressing DVA to include all social actors, including men, while also avoiding the epistemic risk it potentially entails, represents one of the central concerns in the empirical literature.

This question coalesces with concerns regarding how to address the workings of privilege within practice and movement spaces geared towards addressing DVA and VAW. Black feminist scholarship and theories of coalition building in the context of anti-racism and pro-LGBTQ+ movements provide some of the earliest examples of how this might be done, while also highlighting the value in seeking to bridge boundary lines of gender difference in the context of anti-VAW work. The literature relating to ‘allyship’ and bystander interventions offer some practical examples of men’s participation in anti-VAW and DVA work. However, they do not provide a clear enough theoretical framework for responding to the challenges of gendered privilege and power, nor do they offer assurances that women’s concerns regarding the co-optation of the DVA and women’s movement, or obfuscation of women’s and other minoritised voices, can or will be addressed. With this in mind, a different approach seems necessary, in which the utility of engaging men is acknowledged, and dominant victim-blaming discourses which pattern DVA are reconceptualised, in order to meet the interests of the full range of victim-survivors harmed by it. The next literature review chapter will examine these same central preoccupations but in the context of DVA, welfare and the family.

Chapter 3: DVA, welfare austerity and the family

Introduction

This chapter examines the sociological, social policy and social work literature regarding UK welfare reform and austerity, and that which relates to DVA as it manifests in the context of 'the family'. I have focused on literature which explicitly engages with notions of gender, and which permits a feminist and or gendered analysis of the key issues salient to the three aforementioned topic areas. Unlike the material referred to in the previous chapter, the literature referencing welfare reform, austerity, family (law) and child protection policy, often lacks a feminist analysis, and does not routinely centre the experiences of women. With this in mind, I begin with a brief historical overview of UK government austerity and welfare reform before moving on to a focused discussion of the austerity literature as it relates to women's and DVA specialist provision. Welfare austerity is understood here as 'institutional violence' and as a specifically gendered, racialised, socio-political issue, with complex and deleterious impacts for women and other marginalised groups, leading to poverty, debt and increased hardship (Howard, 2019). I refer here to literature on notions of 'grievability', precarity and the politics of abjection, drawing primarily upon scholarship from Butler (2003; 2004a; 2009; 2020) and Tyler (2013) in particular.

I move on to discuss the literature regarding DVA and the family, as it relates to victim-survivors who are also mothers on the one hand, and fathers who have perpetrated DVA on the other. As discussed previously, the inclusion or participation of men in the frame of DVA is typically referred to in the context of men's anti-VAW campaigning and activism, with substantially less attention on men's inclusion as fathers, or on their roles within the family. I therefore focus upon the contemporary policy and practice debates regarding the comparative (in)visibilisation of violent fathers, in relation to child contact arrangements, and the parallel, routine responsabilisation of mothers within this context. This coincides with the logic that accountability should be constructed on a structural as well as individual level, which in the case of DVA and the family, incorporates efforts to enable men to cultivate an individual sense of responsibility and accountability (Devaney, 2014). The chapter concludes by delineating key aspects of the approach taken during the course of this thesis, drawing upon the literature discussed both here and in the preceding chapter.

Austerity and welfare reform (2010 – 2019/20)

After almost a decade of austerity in the UK and indeed across much of Europe and the United States, a sizeable literature has emerged regarding both the causation and consequences of austerity. It is a body of work that is highly varied, and which traverses disciplinary boundary lines. Focus here is on austerity as it interfaces with gender, race and class, in the context of UK government welfare reform. Constituting the full range of government economic measures administered to reduce public spending and the national deficit, austerity is understood here as a political *choice* (rather than a necessary set of measures) (Bhattacharyya, 2015); a neoliberal response to the global economic 'crisis' of 2008 and the subsequent recession precipitated by a major failure in financial governance and regulation (G20, 2009; Walby, 2015). Crucially, austerity is both reliant upon, and legitimised by, a dominant discourse of 'crisis', enabling the construction of austerity as both the common-sense, as

well as obligatory response to an extraordinary reality (Bhattacharyya, 2015; Brah et al., 2015). Indeed the discourse of crisis functions on multiple levels and is regularly mobilised within neoliberal governance solutions to ‘crisis’ to shift attention away from the pervasive, everyday inequalities generated through capitalism and onto the individual citizen (Evans, 2015; Griffin, 2015; Cooper and Whyte, 2017). A cogent shift in the locus of austerity is achieved here, such that the responsibility for the failings on the part of dominant political and financial classes become wholly obscured; a shift produced through the deflection of responsibility onto individual people and the public sector more generally (Tasker and Negra, 2007; Cooper, 2015; Evans, 2015). The substantive economic problem of how to ‘rescue’ the banks and restore market stability is therefore ideologically and discursively reworked into the political problem of how to allocate blame and responsibility for the ‘crisis’. This is the “alchemy of austerity”, as termed by Clarke and Newman (2012). Indeed, the allocation of blame and responsibility entails significant everyday implications for individual citizens, particularly women, living under austerity; these will be addressed in the following section.

“We’re all in this together”, or are we?

While the country was living under austerity, members of parliament repeatedly deployed a rhetoric which claimed that “we’re all in this together” (Cameron, 2010; Cameron and Clegg, 2010; Osborne, 2010b; 2013). This enabled the skilful construction of a specious logic of “mutual responsibility” as well as claims that everyone was working towards a shared societal goal of obtaining a “working welfare system” (Cameron, 2011, no pagination). These arguments turn on the logic that the previous welfare system was in fact *not* working while also providing justification for the implementation of a range of state reforms strongly inculcating notions of personal responsibility (Bottrell, 2013; Donoghue and Edmiston, 2019), particularly among those seeking to obtain state assistance. This includes a significant portion of victim-survivors of DVA (Refuge, 2019). Discourses purporting the “façade of togetherness” played a key role in the ideological construction of austerity (Cooper and Whyte, 2017, p. 5), which comfortably coalesced with the discourses of individual deservedness and entitlement imbricated within reformed welfare policy, effectively producing the individualisation of what are deeply rooted structural problems. Reformed policy included penal welfare regimes such as ‘workfare’ policies (Tyler, 2013; Burnett and Whyte, 2017), which were tied to welfare conditionality (DWP, 2010). These resulted in the sanctioning and in some cases, criminalisation of individual benefit claimants for a failure to meet the attached conditionality requirements (Burnett and Whyte, 2017; Fletcher and Wright, 2017).

Extending the punitive and sanctioning capacities of an “increasingly surveillant welfare apparatus” (Jensen, 2018, p.15), these measures were driven by an ‘active citizenship’ neoliberal agenda (Christensen et al., 2013; Verhoeven and Tonkens, 2013). While principally introduced to facilitate behaviour change among individual benefit recipients (Wright, 2016; Fletcher and Wright, 2017), the introduction of these measures – particularly that of Universal Credit – have had devastating consequences for millions in need of state assistance, with disabled people (Goodley et al., 2014; Beatty and Fothergill, 2015) and women (Wakefield, 2019) disproportionately affected, as I go on to discuss in this chapter. Crucially, the measures function to cement a latent victim-blaming discourse, which is installed and sustained by administrative officials (benefit officers, work capability assessors and so on) acting on behalf of the government. Within this discursive frame, the ‘ideal’ neoliberal subject – able-bodied, fit and always ready for capitalist production – is successfully constructed and

ultimately made responsible (Edmiston, 2016; Rafferty and Wiggan, 2017) for her own hardship (as well as recovery from it); the state is absolved of responsibility, even for the compounding crisis it was instrumental in creating.

'Grievable' lives and the politics of recognition

The construction of austerity as the consequence of a reckless and squandering welfare state (Edmiston, 2018; Donoghue and Edmiston, 2019) enabled the government to successfully garner public consent for its paring down (Jensen and Tyler, 2015; Jensen, 2018) while also generating a pervasive 'anti-welfare' sentiment among the general public (Jensen and Tyler, 2015). This provided for the widespread vilification and scapegoating of the (working class) benefit claimant via dominant mainstream media discourse (Allen et al., 2014; Negra and Tasker, 2014). At the same time, the benefit claimant was (re)produced in government discourse and practice, as a subject simply making a "lifestyle choice" at best (Osborne, 2010a; Duncan Smith, 2014); or a "welfare scrounger" or "cheat", at worst (Tyler, 2013; Jensen and Tyler, 2015); dual discourses which have long been used to describe BAME women's relationship to the welfare state both in the UK and USA (Bryan et al., 1985; Cohen, 1997). The manufacture of a class of "national objects" (Tyler, 2013) such as those described has real consequences for those interpellated by them. It not only limits their agentic representation in the public imaginary, but also results in the conversion of the symbolic violence constituted in this rhetoric, into material violence embodied and experienced in everyday life (Tyler, 2013).

Austerity discourse therefore exemplifies the violent effects of the regulatory classification of bodies that 'matter' and those that don't (Butler, 1993), particularly when situated within a politics of social abjection such as that which currently regulates social life under a system of neoliberal governmentality (Tyler, 2013). In this, the politics of recognition are crucial to understanding the designation of bodies. Recognition in this sense is understood as the process through which people come to understand themselves through and in relation to others (Butler, 2004b). Subjects are produced through 'norms of recognition' which are hierarchical and exclusionary, constructing bodies as either recognisable and 'legible', or 'illegible' and unrecognisable, and consequently more exposed to (gendered) harms or violence (Butler, 2015, p. 38). But bodies are never completely determined by those norms since they are routinely and systematically misrecognised or "undone"; a process through which lives are lost to disadvantage, poverty or other social insecurity (Butler, 2004a).

Butler builds upon this theorisation, widening its political applicability to interrogate why the deleterious impacts of social and political life are regarded as "grievable" for some, while for others they result in castigation and individual blame (Butler, 2009; 2020). Grievability maps onto recognition because within this frame, some lives are recognised as warranting protection, and indeed mourning; for others the precarity of their lives and the harm they experience as a result of that precarity, is deemed unworthy of recognition, and they become ungrievable lives (Butler, 2004a). Thus, "[t]o be grievable is to be interpellated in such a way that you know your life matters; that the loss of your life would matter; that your body is treated as one that should be able to live and thrive, [and] whose precarity should be minimised" (Butler, 2020, l. 749). This has significant implications for understanding the process through which victim-survivors come to be known, defined, and recognised in dominant discourse, as I will discuss in forthcoming chapters.

Existing literature exposes how the violences of austerity are felt more acutely by certain demographics; lives deemed ‘ungrievable’ such that the possibilities for protection or recognition of their precarity are further diminished. Most markedly, this includes people from BAME backgrounds and migrant populations (Tyler, 2013; Bhattacharyya, 2015; Emejulu and Bassel, 2015; Bassel and Emejulu, 2018; Berg, 2018); people with disabilities (Cross, 2013; Grover and Soldatic, 2013; Goodley et al., 2014; Beatty and Fothergill, 2015; O'Hara, 2017; Pring, 2017; Elson, 2018; Ryan, F., 2019); older people (Ginn, 2013; Karamessini and Rubery, 2013), and women from across all social stratifications and demographic groups. Indeed, women have shouldered a greater proportion of the damaging consequences of austerity and welfare reform measures (Pearson, 2019). In particular, single, young and or working-class mothers experience the impacts even more sharply (Lapierre, 2010; Pulkingham et al., 2010; Allen and Taylor, 2012; Bottrell, 2013; Allen, 2015; Walby, 2015; Jensen, 2018; Millar, 2018; Portes and Reed, 2018; Rosen, 2018). In the following section, I will build upon these points as I examine the literature regarding austerity in the context of intersecting inequalities.

Intersecting inequalities

Austerity has undoubtedly exacerbated existing insecurities and uncertainties across whole communities. However, its injurious impact is further exacerbated by social categories of gender, race, class and citizenship status (Hall et al., 2017), as levels of precarity among the already highly precarious are deepened (Bennett and Sung, 2013; Sandhu and Stephenson, 2015; Cooper and Whyte, 2017; Bassel and Emejulu, 2018). But the de-racialised narrative of ‘everyone together’ referred to earlier occludes the specific threats working-class and minority women face under austerity (Bhattacharyya, 2018) which are, as Emejulu and Bassel (2018) argue, reflective of a widespread “political racelessness” across Europe (Theo Goldberg, 2006). Widely reproduced and legitimised, this occlusion obscures and renders inaudible and invisible the interests of marginalised women (Bassel and Emejulu, 2018). Crucially, this is not a new development nor experience for minoritised women (Bryan et al., 1985), but rather represents an intensification and protraction of the pre-existing conditions which typically characterise their everyday experience of “routinised crisis” and inequality (Emejulu and Bassel, 2015; 2017; Bassel and Emejulu, 2018; Bhattacharyya, 2018). Mapping onto the “routinised forms of domination” which often converge in the lives of BAME women, as articulated by Crenshaw (1991), the importance of recognising these in women’s ability to challenge dominant discourse in order to construct pathways not only out of inequality, but also DVA, is brought sharply into relief.

Indeed, that a larger swathe of the population – in particular formerly well-resourced middle-class individuals – now find themselves in states of economic and social precarity, is representative of a shift towards the conditions which approximate those under which minority women have long been existing (Allen, 2018; Bassel and Emejulu, 2018). It is according to this frame that the discourse of ‘crisis’ referred to earlier comes to be defined as such, revealing the classed and racialised “constructedness” of crisis discourse (Strolovitch, 2013). It is only when the harms endured by marginalised populations are experienced among the more privileged that they come to be viewed as a ‘crisis’ or indeed considered extraordinary. ‘Hard times’ produced through structural inequalities of race, class, sexuality or gender are otherwise normalised within dominant institutions as they are routinely read as the ordinary quotidian existence for those who exist on the margins (Strolovitch, 2013). The realities described therefore substantiate the need for an intersectional mandate which

recognises the interlocking systems of oppression that construct different women's experiences of living under austerity and or patriarchy, with emphasis upon how they inform women's experiences as victim-survivors of men's violence and abuse. In the following section I will examine how the aforementioned realities tease out the material consequences of the routinized violence of austerity policy, and the ways in which austerity can be read as an example of state perpetrated 'institutional violence'.

Austerity as 'institutional violence'

For the first time in the history of the UK welfare state, there is a notable pattern of death and physical injury as a direct result of the cuts made under the guise of austerity (Cooper and Whyte, 2017; Ryan, F., 2019). At the same time, UK life expectancies across key demographic groups and regions have begun to fall for the first time in 100 years, as social division becomes more pronounced and the social problems people face are intensified by austerity (Rushton and Donovan, 2018). These harms take the form of death by suicide, worsened health conditions or increased levels of deprivation as a result of increased cuts to, or the withdrawal of, state provision and assistance (Cooper and Whyte, 2017; Cooper and Whyte, 2018; Ryan, F., 2019). Equivalent harms are precipitated by the withdrawal of vital specialist domestic abuse provision, which would otherwise have enabled a 'safe exit' from a violent perpetrator, for example through access to community support, or refuge accommodation. Instead, victim-survivors are increasingly forced to remain with, or return to violent partners, often with tragic consequences (Wild, 2017; Howard, 2019; Refuge, 2019). These outcomes are made all the more extreme when attached to punitive conditionality requirements administered by the state, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

For these reasons, austerity can be understood as 'institutional violence'. Conceptualising austerity as state perpetrated institutional violence (Cross, 2013; Burnett and Whyte, 2017; Cooper and Whyte, 2017; Durbin et al., 2017; O'Hara, 2017) necessitates a reworking of the dominant legal discourse which constructs violence as an interpersonal phenomenon, enacted in order to cause *deliberate* harm. Austerity as institutional violence is the product of the "routine and detached administration of policies, implemented by public and private authorities that produce acute physical and psychological violence" (Cooper and Whyte, 2017, p. 2). This form of violence works to various power effects to produce violent, often invisible outcomes, during which time conditions become progressively worse (Cooper and Whyte, 2017). Cooper and Whyte's (2017, p. 1057) designation of austerity as such draws upon Nixon's (2011) notion of 'slow violence', originally theorised in relation to environmental damage which is "enabled by an emphasis upon a particular epistemic construction of [crisis] and disaster". This aligns with the discursive framing of austerity as rooted in (economic) 'crisis', as discussed earlier.

Specific emphasis is placed here upon how institutional violence accumulates power gradually, often insidiously, and over an extended period of time. In this sense, harm is both spatially and temporally detached from the initial events which preceded it (Cahill and Pain, 2019), in much the same way that austerity measures ultimately precipitate (unintended) harms. The notion of institutional violence builds upon Galtung's (1969) earlier concept of 'structural violence' which referred to the harms associated with preventing people from meeting their most basic needs. Warranting particular attention is the fact that it is a form of violence, which is indirect, impersonal, and does not

demarcate an obvious perpetrator or aggressor. Cooper and Whyte (2017; 2018) argue that this denotes its major limitation when seeking to name the violence experienced by those who suffer the consequences of austerity policy first-hand. Citing the 2017 Grenfell fire as an example, the authors argue that the devastation and loss of life caused by this event are more accurately described as ‘institutional violence’ since the fire was the result of an institutional chain of events underpinned by a neoliberal political austerity agenda (Cooper and Whyte, 2018). In this, a series of “mundane decisions administered at an institutional level” resulted in the increased vulnerability and precarity of a working-class population that ultimately lead to a catastrophic outcome (Cooper and Whyte, 2018, p. 7). It is within this frame that the simultaneous construction of institutional violence as both mundane and spectacular, as well as multi-scalar (Pain and Staeheli, 2014) can be understood. In the following section, I move on to an examination of the literature regarding policy in relation to violence and the family, which as I discuss, entails a similarly complex set of deliberations regarding notions of (individual) responsibility and accountability.

DVA’s ‘three planets’ and the family

The roles and responsibilities attributed to men in the context of DVA and the family are addressed here against the backdrop of this study’s research questions regarding men’s participation in DVA prevention. There is a burgeoning literature pertaining to the accountability and responsibility ascribed to fathers who perpetrate DVA as the debates relating to this area of work become increasingly more complex. Crucially, confronting the tensions this endeavour entails requires a recognition of the divergent theoretical and ideological ‘worlds’ underpinning DVA prevention and intervention. To this end, Hester offers a model outlining what she terms, the ‘three planets’ of DVA (Hester, 2011) which refer to: (i) work with victim-survivors and perpetrators, governed by criminal and civil law, and in which DVA is considered a gendered crime; (ii) child protection, governed by public law, in which a non-gendered welfare approach is taken to intervene with families in which there is abuse; and (iii) child contact and visitation, which is governed by private law in the family court, and which focuses upon parental responsibility in gender-neutral terms.

The ‘three planet model’ provides a key framework for analysis when interrogating the tensions inherent in DVA practice responses with mothers and fathers and is therefore referred to throughout this work²⁸. The ‘planets’ each encompass contrasting principles according to which work is typically organised (Hester, 2011), therefore making efforts to bridge the ‘gaps’ between the three ‘planets’, and to formulate a more cohesive, coordinated approach to DVA at all levels, particularly challenging. This is primarily because they are each governed by a distinct set of discourses, cultures, ethos, history and populations (Hester, 2011). The ‘three planet’ model clearly foregrounds the tensions and discontinuities across the ‘three planets’, in which discourses regarding fathers who are abusive are inconsistently constructed in the case of the family court on the one hand, and child protection proceedings and policy, on the other (Hunter et al., 2020). Family and child welfare policy significantly minimise the reality that some fathers are also perpetrators of DVA, and as such, “everyday practices

²⁸ See Chapter 7 in particular.

within statutory services collude with this disconnection by failing to hold violent men to account for either the violence to their partner or the failure to protect their children” (Alderson et al., 2013, l. 21). This foregrounds questions of responsibility in the context of DVA and the family, not least because current practice has been shown to re-embed the responsabilisation of the mother, and the absence of the father, as I go on to discuss now in relation to the ‘presumption of contact’.

‘Presumption of contact’ and the family court ‘planet’

Family law applies in circumstances of a parent seeking contact with their child(ren) post separation or divorce. Child contact²⁹ arrangements in cases where DVA is a feature of the relationship and parents separate, or in circumstances of the state-ordered removal of children, are two of the most problematised and complex issues pertaining to DVA and the family. Current research indicates that at least 50% of child contact arrangements in England and Wales are determined in the context of domestic abuse (CAFCASS and Women's Aid, 2017). Post-separation arrangements for children in such cases have long been a central concern for women’s and feminist organisations, as well as feminist (socio-legal) scholars working in this area (Harne, 2008). Indeed, debates regarding the management of DVA within the context of family law gained significant focus during the 1990s, as concerns regarding the ‘presumption of contact’ (Bailey-Harris et al., 1999) began to emerge (Radford et al., 1997).

The ‘presumption of contact’ holds that contact with a parent is always in the best interest of the child. The complications associated with this premise are most significant in cases where the parent concerned – typically the father – has a known history of DVA. This central supposition continues to dominate family court proceedings (Barnett, 2020; Hunter et al., 2020), despite a substantial body of research to show that it is often detrimental to women victim-survivors and their children (Radford et al., 1997; Mullender et al., 2002; Radford and Hester, 2006; Featherstone, 2010b). The ‘presumption of contact’ is further legitimised by growing societal concerns regarding ‘fatherlessness’ and an increased emphasis upon retaining the father in a child’s life (regardless of any abuse). These have meant that the interests of the father frequently take precedent over those of the mother. This is particularly pronounced in family court proceedings (Harrison, 2008; Harne, 2011) and is informed by a specifically gendered discourse of parenting in which an increased social value and status is conferred upon the father, in contrast to that of mothers, as regards to a child’s wellbeing (Harne, 2011).

Crucially, the process of determining child contact arrangements in the case of DVA is characterised by two key competing factors: an effort to reconcile the principle of promoting and upholding the child’s right to a relationship with a separated or ‘non-resident’ parent; and recognition of the harmful consequences of DVA for mothers and children as a result of the DVA (Hester and Radford,

²⁹ The term ‘child contact’ no longer appears in legislation and has since been replaced with the term ‘child arrangements’ however the term ‘child contact’ is used here because it remains the most commonly understood phrase to reference this issue (CAFCASS and Women's Aid, 2017). ‘Child custody’ preceded child contact, however that too has been withdrawn from legal discourse (Hester et al., 1996).

1996; Radford et al., 1997; Macdonald, 2016). Negotiation of these two competing factors is further complicated because risk is often inappropriately assessed during contact disputes as the nature or full extent of the abuse is simply misunderstood or marginalised (Trinder et al., 2010; Trinder et al., 2013). This is partly rooted in the routine and systematic failure to recognise DVA in its full scope and complexity (Bailey-Harris et al., 1999), combined with the use of a legalistic definition of DVA. A definition located in a social science framework more adequately attends to the full range of abuses DVA encapsulates (Barnett, 2015; Hunter et al., 2018), and coheres with the definition of DVA referred to in Chapter 2. This eventuality is particularly pronounced in the case of coercive control and consequently, women and children are often left at increased levels of risk. There is also a dogged insistence on the part of the judiciary to view mothers who question contact applications from violent fathers, or who raise concerns regarding DVA, as suspicious, malicious, or of using it as a means to delay contact arrangements unnecessarily (Coy et al., 2012; Barnett, 2015).

Cohering with the widely circulating narrative of victim-blame and individual culpability, these factors indicate the extent to which the “cultural change” called for by the Family Justice Council has in fact failed (Craig, 2007). Indeed, existing research substantiates that despite the introduction of best practice guidelines to the contrary, and the introduction of new policy (CAFCASS and Women's Aid, 2017), efforts to balance the two competing factors frequently result in ambiguity and contradiction in policy, law, and practice (Thiara and Gill, 2012). Crucially, the fundamental commitment to maintain child contact at all costs within the family court system routinely takes precedence (Hunter et al., 2020), therefore severely undermining the possibility of safety and recovery for victim-survivor mothers (Radford and Hester, 2006; Lapierre, 2009; Hunter and Choudhry, 2018) as well as for their children (Holt, 2011; Macdonald, 2017; Holt, 2018). These difficulties are felt even more acutely by women and their children from diverse ethnic and cultural communities (Thiara and Gill, 2012). The following section will address issues pertaining to children within the context of the ‘planet’ of social care and child protection.

The ‘planet’ of child protection and post-separation contact

Gender neutral discourses of parenting in the context of social care and child protection have not only led to an inadvertent emphasis upon women’s responsabilisation as mothers in contact disputes and child protection proceedings but have also contributed to the continued invisibilisation of men’s identities as fathers (Sinnott and Artz, 2016). In the context of social work and social care, there is also the routinely inconsistent application of gender in policy, with gender assumptions applied to areas of care, in contrast to ‘gender-blind’ approaches regarding parenting roles and responsibilities (Featherstone et al., 2010). The harms posed to children who have continued contact with violent fathers following separation of their parents often outweighs any benefits, according to existing research (Thiara and Gill, 2012; Kelly et al., 2014; Morrison, 2015; Feresin et al., 2019) - a sentiment echoed by children themselves, when given the opportunity to voice their opinion (Holt, 2011; Macdonald, 2017; 2018).

Research also strongly substantiates the extent to which abusive fathers use child contact arrangements as an additional mechanism for the ongoing perpetration of violence and abuse long after the relationship has ended (Harrison, 2008; Devaney, 2009; Coy et al., 2012; Coy et al., 2015). This frequently situates mothers in the paradoxical position of being required to support and facilitate

their child(ren)'s interaction with a known perpetrator of abuse, if contact is granted (Holt, 2016). Children are consequently made responsible within this setting (Holt, 2011; 2018; Feresin et al., 2019) for the negotiation of what is often a complex and volatile relationship between their parents after separation (Morrison, 2015). It is an eventuality strongly exacerbated by the fact that ending the relationship is a significant risk factor, with the frequency and severity of the abuse likely to increase post-separation (Abrahams, 1994; Hester and Radford, 1996; Humphreys and Thiara, 2010).

With these considerations in mind, there has been a growing recognition of the harm posed to children as a result of witnessing DVA in recent years. Recognised and enshrined in statute in England and Wales since January 2005, it is outlined in Section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, in which the definition of "significant harm" (Children Act 1989 s.31) was extended to include "impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another"" (Macdonald, 2016). But, despite the legal recognition, problems persist regarding how the family courts practically deal with fathers who perpetrate DVA during cases of contested child contact, after the separation of the parents. Indeed, as existing literature in this area attests, DVA had been "virtually ignored" in legal and family law practice pertaining to child contact in cases of DVA up until 2001 which saw the landmark case of *Re L, V, M, H (Contact: Domestic Violence)* [2001] Fam 260. Following this case, the Court of Appeal set out guidelines for the courts and professionals adjudicating on contact cases in which DVA was a feature.

New guidelines emerging from this landmark case, necessitated holding a 'fact-finding hearing'³⁰ at the earliest opportunity in circumstances of disputed DVA allegations, as well as an obligation to ensure that the risk of harm is reduced, and the safety of the child(ren) and resident parent is secured before, during and after contact (Hunter et al., 2018, p. 401). However, feminist legal scholars in this area assert that despite these changes, there continues to be a discernible "cycle of failure" as new and updated guidelines are routinely disregarded, prompting new reforms, followed by failure to implement the subsequent new guidance (Hunter et al., 2018). This equates to a persistent failure to protect the interests of children and their mothers in favour of those of the (violent) father – an outcome which ultimately rests upon the primacy of the presumption of contact. Indeed, the apparent inalienable right of the father, regardless of any history of violence or abuse, is further problematised when considered against the backdrop of the child protection 'planet' which in contrast to the 'planet' of the family court system, systematically invisibilises fathers within discourses of parenting in circumstances of DVA. I will discuss the responsabilisation of fathers in the next section.

Holding violent fathers to account

Despite a growing body of work indicating the problems associated with the current 'pro-contact' approach, the notion that fathers who use violence should address their fathering capabilities has

³⁰ Fact finding hearings consider the evidence surrounding an allegation of DVA and take place in cases where the court is tasked with determining a child's contact with a non-resident parent. They foreground the abuse in court and ensure that it is factored into decisions regarding any child contact arrangements (Barnett, 2015, p. 48).

been much slower to emerge (Smith and Humphreys, 2019). This coalesces with the routine separation of violent fathers' dual identity as father on the one hand, and perpetrator on the other. Correspondingly, the engagement of fathers within the context of a multi-level model of prevention and early intervention has also been slow to materialise (Pfitzner et al., 2017) and debates regarding the most appropriate approach to this work is similarly variegated. Strengthening the case for the responsabilisation of fathers is research indicating that the majority of perpetrators are not engaged with the criminal justice system, and nor do they come to the attention of statutory services. The statutory child protection system is therefore often the only mechanism for ensuring the safety of children living in homes in which there is DVA (Devaney, 2008; 2009). But attempts to responsabilise fathers who use violence, particularly in cases where there are child contact disputes, are fraught with challenges, particularly in the shadows of efforts by men's rights activists to roll back feminist gains regarding DVA and the family, under the guise that fathers' 'rights' are being eroded (Flood, 2010). An increased focus upon fathers who perpetrate DVA as accountable within child protection proceedings, contact disputes, and safety planning regarding the victim-survivor, offers an important counter-narrative to these assertions (Heward-Belle et al., 2019).

Much of the literature pertaining to fathering and fathers in the context of DVA is situated within social work practice, policy and procedure as it manifests in child protection proceedings (Stanley, 1997; Stanley et al., 2010; Stanley et al., 2012; Stanley and Humphreys, 2017). The governing discursive paradigms within child protection work in cases where there is DVA often produces the routine and systematic responsabilisation of the mother (Strega et al., 2008; Lapierre, 2009), who is held accountable not only for ensuring that the perpetrator desists from abusing (Holt, 2016), but also for the fact that she and her children are in that situation (Hester and Radford, 1996; Coy et al., 2012). A secondary consequence of this is the fostering of a relationship between mother and social services (or individual social workers) which is often fraught with difficulties and characterised by distrust on the part of the mother (Devaney, 2009). This can sometimes lead to the concealment of DVA by some mothers who fear the consequences from social services, if they make a disclosure (Feresin et al., 2018).

That a large proportion of fathers who perpetrate DVA continue to have access to their children in some capacity, combined with the knowledge that perpetrators will likely go on to establish new relationships post-separation from their current partner, provides compelling justification for the engagement of fathers who use violence; – including, in efforts to engage men in activities to address their fathering capabilities (Featherstone and Peckover, 2007; Devaney, 2008; 2009). This is imperative in a climate of 'pro-contact', in which there is a determined political focus upon the involvement of fathers as conducive to the promotion of positive outcomes for children, providing parenting arrangements can be managed 'safely' post separation (Harne, 2011). But the absence of the father within practice policy and procedure, and the corresponding requisite presence of the mother, provides fertile grounds for the construction of the mother as culpable or blame worthy (Strega et al., 2008; Brown et al., 2009; Ewart-Boyle et al., 2015), while the fathers "get away with it" (Featherstone and Peckover, 2007). The invisibility of fathers as perpetrators has arguably been further cemented by the adoption of a gender neutral definition of DVA in the UK, which has contributed to the obfuscation of the role of the violent father. By extension, it has also concealed the harms caused to children through their fathers' parenting practices (Harne, 2011). Against this backdrop, Devaney makes the case for the refocusing of professional efforts to hold men to account

for their behaviour, and to engage them as fathers in ways that better meet the needs of children, particularly in the case of families in which there are multiple or co-occurring complex needs such as substance use or mental health challenges (Devaney, 2008, p. 452).

Conclusion

This chapter constitutes the second of two chapters in which I have reviewed the literature salient to the study. The first examined scholarship relating to DVA as a social problem, in which notions of men's accountability and responsabilisation are framed within the context of the DVA movement and anti-VAW campaigning and activism. In contrast, this chapter has addressed the role, responsibility and visibility of men within welfare austerity policy as well as that of family law and child protection policy and procedure. In the case of welfare austerity, the literature illustrates how narratives of 'crisis' have shaped common understandings of austerity, and the extent to which they have informed the imposition of government welfare reform measures. It is within this same frame that neoliberal discourses of individual responsibility and accountability are adeptly constructed. Viewed through the lens of domestic abuse, these extend the entrenchment and mainstreaming of an already pervasive victim-blaming discourse, in which women are made responsible for their own precarity, insecurity or indeed their own abuse.

This same trenchant discourse, which leads to the responsabilisation of the victim-survivor can be traced within the dominant discourses patterning current paradigms in operation across the 'planets' of child protection and family law practice. In both cases, the mother victim-survivor is not only held almost solely responsible for the management of risk posed by the perpetrator, but also shoulders the blame for a failure to protect a child from the perpetrator's harm. This points to a conceptual link between the responsabilisation of women victim-survivors for the management of the abuse they experience in the absence of services and the responsabilisation of the victim-survivor mother in the case of the family. But while the literature certainly expounds the challenges associated with the reworking of dominant gender paradigms in operation within the context of DVA and the family, it also indicates how far holding fathers to account and making them responsible for their actions is "a crucial driver of policy and practice reform aligned with the feminist goals of eliminating sexist institutional practices" (Heward-Belle et al., 2019, p. 369). Crucially, men's increased participation in anti-VAW efforts, as well as in the family in the context of violent fathers, offers up opportunities for bridge building in order to rework the dominant discourses which currently pattern DVA as a social problem, and which contribute to the perpetration of VAW and DVA. In the next chapter I discuss the methodological and theoretical approaches to this work, within the context of this study.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter focuses upon the methodological and theoretical underpinnings of the thesis, as well as upon its practical implementation. This study employed feminist, participatory-action based methods to foreground the stories and perspectives of three distinct participant groups³¹: (i) women victim-survivors, (ii) women ‘frontline’ practitioners, and (iii) men engaged in DVA or VAW activities. A combination of in-depth, unstructured narrative interviews and focus groups were conducted separately with each of the three groups, in order to respond to the research questions situated at the heart of this work. The primary question is: **what can be learnt from a victim-survivor focused analysis of the gender discourses and relations underpinning DVA?** With this question in mind, part one of this chapter opens with a discussion of the diverse theoretical frameworks guiding this work. I address the epistemological and ontological conflicts within these bodies of scholarship, as well as the benefits of bringing them into relation with one another. I then consider how their combined usage responds to the overall aims of the study and research questions, before providing an overview of the analytical approaches used to distil the learning from this work. The final section of part one elaborates upon the research design, detailing the methods of data production, sample composition and the ethical and risk considerations pertinent to the study. Part two focuses on the execution of the study. It provides a detailed account of the methodological challenges encountered, and how these were addressed in practice. This includes a discussion of those associated with seeking to incorporate a participatory element in a study such as this, as well as the complexities of *doing* reflexivity in the context of this work. I conclude part two of the chapter with a brief outline of the dissemination of data outcomes before moving onto the data analysis in chapter 5 to 9 of this thesis.

Part I: Theoretical and epistemological framework

In the spirit of what Gavey (2011) has termed informed and sensitive “theoretical impurity” this study is situated at the nexus of three epistemological and theoretical frameworks, including feminist poststructuralism, intersectionality and feminist participatory action research. Seeking to engage simultaneously with these epistemologically divergent frameworks and perspectives is not without its challenges. However, the points of convergence across them enhance the possibilities for responding to the social change objectives of this study, while also securing an analysis which accounts for the differentiated nature of women’s experience of DVA. In line with a Foucauldian approach (1980), I reject use of a closed methodological or analytical framework, in favour of a type of ‘genealogical mapping’ in which the researcher is invited to pursue “trails” of thought, amending them or extending them, in order to fit her purposes (Foucault, 1980, p. 79; Kelly et al., 1994). The use of the three theoretical positions is further rooted in a belief that theory “should and can be broad and flexible enough to respond to crucial omissions and the limitations of dogmatic iterations” (Gavey, 2011, p.

³¹ See Appendix for complete list of all participants, including demographic information (where available).

187). I will now turn to a discussion of feminist poststructuralism, which is the most prominent epistemological and theoretical position underpinning this work.

Feminist poststructuralism

This study is epistemologically located within the reflexive ‘turn to language’, and is grounded in feminist poststructuralism (Weedon, 1987). While the theoretical underpinnings of feminist poststructuralism cut across disciplinary boundary lines (and indeed, its applicability is equally transdisciplinary), they are mainly situated within poststructuralist and postmodern enterprises. Broadly speaking postmodern paradigms sought to challenge the dominance of positivist rationality as the primary mode of knowing and knowledge production. Challenging the oftentimes taken-for-granted assertion that language can adequately describe the ‘real world’, postmodernism instead argued for the disavowal of absolute knowledge claims, attesting to the notion that there are no knowledge claims ‘out there’ to be exposed or uncovered, but rather that the social world is “constantly in the making” (Elliott, 2005, p. 19). Consequently, the ‘post-theories’ as Lather (2007, p. 164) has referred to them, have worked to destabilise all major epistemological, ontological and methodological concepts. This set into motion the deconstruction of dominant paradigms, producing the wholesale recapitulation of notions of objectivity as it was understood according to positivist (patriarchal, empiricist) modes of thought. It is within this frame of understanding that concepts of subjectivity, power, and knowledge are at once fundamentally reworked.

All knowledge claims are understood here as partial and situated, imbued with the power to open or foreclose (new) ways of seeing and understanding the world, and in which the possibilities of radical (social) change and transformation are also located (Braidotti, 2002; Gannon and Davies, 2012). Indeed, the dominant discourses that typically pattern the manner in which the world is constructed and understood often foreclose alternative ways of viewing it, as the discourses of those who occupy positions of power are systematically and routinely privileged. It is also in this process that a linear trajectory of history is falsely assumed within dominant discourse, thereby failing to consider the inherent contradictions and process of continual (re)interpretation discursive understanding is subject to (Foucault, 2000). Further, everyone is (unavoidably) imbricated within discourse in much the same way that we are always situated within relations of power which function to categorise everyday existence as well as to construct the subject (Foucault, 2000). This theoretical footing aligns with the broader motives of feminist research to challenge dominant power differentials in research practice (Stanley and Wise, 1993; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002), and to develop epistemological insights from the perspective and position of women and other oppressed groups, situated at the centre of the research (Letherby, 2003; Mullender, 2005; Hague and Mullender, 2006).

(Feminist) poststructuralism has been rebuked for failing to address (feminist) social and political concerns due to its anti-foundationalism and rejection of absolute truth claims (see for example, Flax, 1987; Waugh, 1989; Hamnett, 2003). Critics further assert that by calling into question the category ‘woman’ the platform upon which representational politics is constructed is negated and the possibilities for resistance undermined (Benhabib, 1994). However, I argue instead that poststructuralism provides strategies and avenues for responding to exactly these types of social concerns (Cameron and Gibson, 2005). Far from foreclosing the possibility of addressing ‘real world’ concerns, poststructuralism provides opportunities for social change, that hinge upon the reworking

of discourses which perpetuate and sustain dominant forms of power (Foucault, 2000) and thus offers a productive framework for understanding the complex workings of power within society (Weedon, 1987, p. 10). This is essential to addressing the perpetration of violence against women and other marginalised groups. Further, specific focus upon discourse and its constitutive capacity, particularly as regards the normalisation of the subordination and domination of particular bodies within regimes of power, enables transformative thinking by dismantling that which was previously taken for granted as inevitable or unquestionable (Foucault, 2000). The next section will tie my participatory informed methodological approach to the poststructuralist feminist theory underpinning this thesis.

Feminist participatory action research (FPAR)

Deconstructive, relativist paradigms such as that of feminist poststructuralism are often regarded as necessarily precluding social action. An attempt to combine it with (feminist) participatory action research ((F)PAR) (Maguire, 1987; Gatenby, 2000; Reid, 2004; Cahill et al., 2010) may therefore appear contradictory. This is because (F)PAR is typically characterised by modernist objectives concerned with liberating oppressed populations when in contrast, poststructuralism has been charged with “deserting politics” and of being incapable of provoking action to improve the lives of marginalised people (Alldred, 1998; Cameron and Gibson, 2005). Despite this, I propose that the two are compatible (Reason, 2001), arguing instead that the methodological principles of participatory action research strengthen the possibilities for social change within a feminist poststructural theoretical framework. FPAR is theoretically grounded in Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Hall, 1992), in which the pursuance of social change through the meaningful engagement of oppressed communities is a principle objective. It also enshrines collaboration as key to the research process (Hall, 1979; Maguire, 1987; Reid, 2004). At its inception PAR, like poststructuralism, existed as a counterpoint to dominant positivist research paradigms which routinely failed to address the lived realities of people who existed on the peripheries. PAR emphasised the utility of the knowledge produced for and by the people concerned (Kindon et al., 2009).

The combination of knowledge production with action in order to bring about social change emerged from The Chicago School of Sociology at the turn of the century (Reinharz, 1992), despite facing derision for departing from the positivist paradigms of social science research which have historically sought to maintain a division between the realms of epistemology and social action. Participation according to this frame entails the involvement of people in “problem posing”, as well as “problem solving”, not only to address the underlying structural contributors to the challenges they confronted (Maguire, 1987), but also to interrogate the structural conditions undergirding society’s ailments. But despite seeking “to shift the centre from which knowledge is generated” (Hall, 1992, p. 21), PAR also attracted criticism from feminist researchers, who brought attention to the ways in which PAR was often conducted as if situated within a gender-neutral social world (Gatenby, 2000). Failing to challenge the “androcentric bias in both dominant and alternative paradigm social science research” (Maguire, 1987, p. 110; 1996), PAR was accused of upholding traditional power structures, while also failing to acknowledge the impact of male biases (Hall, 1992) upon the lives of all women living under patriarchy (Maguire, 1987; Reid, 2004). It is at this point that FPAR departed from PAR.

FPAR is a methodological framework which has five core principles: “inclusion, participation, action, social change, and researcher reflexivity” (Reid, 2004, p. 5). It operates to address the “gender blind”

conceptualisations of women's interests which often inform dominant research methodologies and instead is orientated to women's specific needs and experiences, locating them within the broader context of a social justice agenda (Reid, 2004). Incorporation of FPAR principles locates the study within an activist tradition such that the creation of social change is as crucial as knowledge production (Ackerly and True, 2010). When operationalised in the context of this study, the inclusion of FPAR principles enables participants to occupy roles as active decision-makers and problem-solvers in their own lives. It facilitates their contribution to broader change through the elevation of the participants' voice via "ordinary talk" (Maguire, 1987, p. 114). In this way, FPAR can enable the reworking of dominant discourses and relations of power, including between participant and researcher, with gender operating as a key organising principle, incorporated at all stages of the research process.

FPAR strongly coheres with 'co-production' practice approaches in operation across the UK health and social care sector, homelessness and increasingly, the DVA sector (Needham and Carr, 2012; Bovaird et al., 2014; Scourfield, 2014; Voorberg et al., 2014; Bovaird et al., 2016; Flinders et al., 2016; Durose et al., 2017; McCarry et al., 2017). 'Co-production' approaches incorporate the strategic engagement of people who have 'lived experience' of the issues being addressed as equal partners in the design, delivery and evaluation of the services they use and receive (SCIE, 2015; Bovaird et al., 2016; Flinders et al., 2016). It engages with a discourse in which people are understood as 'experts in their own lives' and requires that power is shared across all actors (Bovaird et al., 2016), thereby underscoring the strong continuities between FPAR and 'co-production'. The co-production of services or research resurfaces questions regarding how structural barriers to participation might be overcome, particularly for those facing increased marginalisation or 'vulnerability'; voices typically 'silenced' within dominant power structures (Sawas et al., 2019). Intersectionality offers a critical discursive lens through which to address these issues, as I elaborate on in the next section.

Intersectionality

Coined by Crenshaw (1989; 1991), intersectionality was first elaborated as a metaphor grounded in structuralist ontology, understanding BAME women's experience of violence as realities fundamentally shaped by intersecting gendered, racialised and classed inequalities. Intersectional thought is firmly rooted in Black feminist scholarship, with early work emerging from the United States, which identified and theorised the interlocking systems of oppression BAME women routinely face, and which are imbued with the shifting terrains of race, gender and class (Combahee River Collective, 1979; Davis, 1982; Lorde, 1984). Increasingly the term is imprecisely (mis)used as a 'catch-all' term to refer to multidimensional thought, or inclusivity within a feminist theoretical framework (Phoenix and Pattynama, 2006; Archer Mann, 2013; Carbin and Edenheim, 2013) and is often inappropriately severed from its Black feminist genealogy (Alexander-Floyd, 2012; Bilge, 2013). Its usage here therefore warrants attention, not least because it is deployed within a feminist poststructuralist frame, which arguably conflicts with intersectionality's structural feminist foundations (Brah and Phoenix, 2004; Mirza, 2009).

Intersectionality is conceptualised and deployed here as a 'discourse' in the Foucauldian sense (McKibbin et al., 2015), thereby permitting its incorporation within a poststructuralist feminist framework; a framework which is itself open to, and accommodating of, discursive plurality (Gavey,

1989). There is also common epistemological ground³², firstly in the strong social constructionist view of knowledge characteristic of both perspectives, and secondly in their simultaneous call for the reclamation of subjugated knowledges as imperative to the reworking of dominant discourse. Thirdly, both cohere with the understanding that there is no value neutrality in social research or analysis, thereby countering any belief in the ‘god-trick’ which falsely promises a detached “view from nowhere” (Haraway, 1988). Finally, the reflexive nature of the production of knowledge claims, influenced by diverse social locations (Archer Mann, 2013), is also recognised in both, thereby enabling an analysis of issues affecting those who exist on the periphery without assigning them to positions of inferiority (Nixon and Humphreys, 2010).

With these points in mind, the dual incorporation of intersectionality alongside poststructuralism provides gainful opportunities for a theorisation of women’s *differentiated* experience of DVA and gender, from and within the margins (Wendt and Zannettino, 2015). The incorporation of intersectional thought as a discursive (analytic) resource within a feminist poststructural structure produces a more nuanced reading of DVA and gender relations in diverse settings; not only between women and men, but also among different groups of women (Wendt and Zannettino, 2015). Consequently, the manifestations of power which sustain the oppression of certain bodies, are scrutinised in this thesis (Weedon, 1987). Perhaps most crucially, the incorporation of intersectional thought turns on the recognition that for many women, gender is not the primary lens through which their experience of DVA is constructed or organised, instead foregrounding the interconnecting discourses of gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality and (dis)ability which come to pattern women’s experience of DVA. Indeed, “to lose sight of these [...] is to construct the frame [of DVA] too tightly and risk further excluding vulnerable women” (Nixon and Humphreys, 2010, p. 15). Having explicated the theoretical, epistemological and methodological framework underpinning this study, I will now move on to a discussion regarding the analytical framework, which informed the data analysis.

Analytic framework

This study utilised a combination of discourse and narrative analysis, since narrative is understood here as a key discursive resource³³. Turning first to discourse analysis (DA); DA is primarily concerned with the function of language, grounded in a belief that people use language to *do* things (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). It is an analytical approach which is highly compatible with the aforementioned feminist poststructural framework referred to earlier, as it is informed by a poststructural understanding of power, which operates in and through the process of analysis itself (Alldred, 1998). DA further embeds researcher self-reflexivity as it calls upon the researcher to recognise that analysis is as culturally specific and contingent as the data in question (Fraser, 1990). As such, DA focuses upon talk and text as social practices in which the discursive resources utilised and deployed by

³² It is not my intention to fully rehearse here the theoretical debates regarding the accommodation of intersectionality within a poststructuralist frame. I instead seek to demonstrate their dual applicability and utility within the context of this study.

³³ See Chapter 1

participants in order to enable and organise those practices (Potter, 1996b) and to *construct* social realities are interrogated (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). The analysis itself entails the identification of patterns present in the data primarily in the form of account variability and consistency. Variability here refers to the differences in form and content of the accounts being analysed, while consistency relates to the variety of discursive features shared in and across the accounts (Potter and Wetherell, 1987).

A key part of the analysis process involves the demarcation of 'interpretative repertoires' (IRs) (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984), which are rooted in the dominant discourses pertaining to a particular issue such as DVA. Historically contingent, IRs refer to sets of normatively used, systematically associated terms which people draw upon to describe and evaluate particular events (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Potter, 1996a). They are culturally and socially embedded (Wetherell, 1998), often within workplace settings (Wetherell, 2012) and function to make intelligible, the social worlds we typically inhabit (Taylor and Littleton, 2006). One example is: the IR of 'men as followers' in men's anti-VAW work, which is rooted in the dominant discourse of men as (women's) allies in work to address men's VAW. Termed "off the shelf" discursive resources by Potter and Wetherall (1987), IRs have a diverse applicability within a range of contexts, and usually function to carry out a particular task. But they also retain a "bespoke flexibility" in so far as they can be selectively deployed and reworked dependent upon the setting in which they are situated (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). This is of particular importance when considered in the context of the dominant discourses which structure DVA and concepts of gender.

The decision to use narrative analysis together with DA, was informed by the study's research questions which are primarily concerned with the experiences of three distinct participant groups. They assemble and intersect under the broader category of DVA prevention and intervention. Unlike structured or semi-structured qualitative interview analysis, narrative analysis does not seek to fragment or fracture participant narrative accounts (Riessman, 1993), and instead seeks to elucidate meaning-making through an examination of narrative form; what and how things are said, and to what end (Riessman, 1993; Marais, 2016, p. 244). It also acknowledges the shifting positionality and social context of the speaker, as well as that of the listener-researcher (Riessman, 1993). Salient to the analysis undertaken here is Benhabib's (1999) assertion that a person's self-narrative exists in a "web" of narratives or discourses, intermingling with those of others. Therefore, perhaps unsurprisingly, I have drawn upon my own personal narrative during the course of the analysis offered by the participants. Because, as Jones and Da Breo (2017, p. 153) write, "if the individual draws upon available resources to tell her story, so too does the listener". The various interpretative repertoires at my disposal, arising from my triple-role as researcher, (former) practitioner and woman with lived experience, will "inevitably [leak] into the narrative space" and will "[colour my] interpretations" (Jones and Da Breo, 2017, p. 153). This interaction between my own narrative history and that of the participants – between listener and teller – produces the co-constructed meanings arising from the analysis. With this in mind, I will now move on to the study design.

Study Design

In seeking to illuminate the perspectives of three distinct, differently positioned participant groups (PGs) I used a multi-staged design (Hague and Mullender, 2006) which incorporated both methodological and data triangulation (Denzin, 1978; 2012), as I go on to discuss. The participant sample consisted of 54 people, located within each of the three PGs: (PG1) women with lived experience of DVA; (PG2) women 'frontline' DVA practitioners, and (PG3) men active in a variety of roles and settings, working to address VAW or DVA. The design was devised to respond to the complexities associated with violence and abuse research (Bosworth et al., 2011), and to address, at least in part, the methodological challenges associated with the study (Cahill et al., 2010), which I will go on to discuss. It was further motivated by the primary objective of ensuring that research serves both as a mechanism for epistemological production, as well as for the production of meaningful social change (Maguire, 1987; Reinharz, 1992; Leckenby and Hesse-Biber, 2007; Ackerly and True, 2010), through the reworking of the dominant discourses which typically pattern DVA (Loseke, 2001). As such, the research design sought to respond to questions regarding which voices are constructed as epistemologically valuable in the study, as well as *who* is regarded the 'legitimate' subject of feminist thought. The research design and the designation of the participant groups included within the study sample were therefore closely linked.

A key aspect of the research design was the planned inclusion of a Project Advisory Group (PAG) (Swain et al., 2004; Liddiard, 2013; Martin, 2014); a self-selected group of participants (from within PG1) who would act as independent project advisors to the study. The incorporation of project advisors (or a PAG) is consistent with a feminist praxis and methodology, as well as with inclusive research principles more generally (Johnson, 2009), which place emphasis upon removing the barriers that prevent the active participation of particular groups. The merits of using a PAG model in this type of research is well evidenced in disability studies research (Chappell, 2000; Kitchin, 2000; 2001; Swain et al., 2004; Barton, 2005; Beresford and Campbell, 2007; Oliver, 2007; Zarb, 2007; Liddiard, 2013; Martin, 2014); health care research (Rhodes, 2002; Blythe S, 2013; Bradbury-Jones and Taylor, 2013; Gelling, 2013) and in social justice research more recently (Maiter et al., 2008; Carney et al., 2012; Maiter et al., 2012; Eckstein and Pinto, 2013), including in DVA research (Mullender, 2005; Hague, 2006). Typically holding a consultant or advisory function, a PAG works in consort with the researcher as a "guide" to the research (Liddiard, 2013). Within this frame, researcher accountability is increased (Munford et al., 2008) not only to the sector within which the work is being conducted, but most importantly to those involved in the research (Lunn and Munford, 2007).

At the same time, greater accountability increases the researcher's vulnerability to criticism, as well as claims of misrepresentation or a misunderstanding of those participating in the research (Kitchin, 2000; 2001; Liddiard, 2013). But accountability constitutes an important aspect of the reworking of the power dynamics that ordinarily govern 'traditional' research hierarchies. As such, "research is no longer the exclusive province of the 'expert'" (Johnson, 2009, p. 252) and instead incorporates a recognition of the varied and distinct skills and contributions that can be brought by all parties engaged in the study. In part two of this chapter, I discuss the practical challenges I encountered when trying to implement the PAG, as well as the ways in which I sought to overcome these

difficulties, while maintaining the integrity of the original research design. First though, I will discuss the methods of data production.

Methods of data production

Unstructured narrative interviews and focus groups (FGs), were the two primary methods of data production. Unstructured narrative interviews were chosen because they strongly cohere with a (poststructural) feminist theoretical and discourse analytic framework, given the emphasis placed upon personal discourse and experience as epistemologically valuable (Cotterill, 1992; Reinharz, 1992; Stanley and Wise, 1993; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002; Letherby, 2003). Within this frame, the communication of personal narrative is understood as inherently valuable given its suitability for making sense of complex and often difficult lived experiences of abuse, violence and trauma (Ely, 1997). In this sense, experience is understood as discourse (Gavey, 1989), allowing for an examination of how participants narrate their individual lived experiences (Riessman, 1993; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000) and the discourses they deploy in order to make sense of those experiences.

Focus groups (FGs), like narrative interviews, are considered conducive to ‘sensitive’ research topics (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999), and lend themselves to work which seeks to elevate the voices of particularly marginalised groups (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2007; Ahrens et al., 2011). For this reason, they are especially common in the context of feminist sociological and health research. FGs can function to make audible the discourses which circulate and become embedded among defined, pre-established or social groups, foregrounding the specific role played by social actors in the circulation of social phenomena (Morgan, 1993; Caillaud and Flick, 2017). They are also increasingly used as a method in combination with interviews as part of ‘methodological triangulation’ (Denzin, 1978; Hesse-Biber, 2012; Caillaud and Flick, 2017), which denotes the combination of methodologies in a singular study (Denzin, 1978) in order to achieve a fuller, more comprehensive understanding of the research questions; not as a means of data validation (Flick, 2007; Denzin, 2012). It is deployed in this study in combination with ‘data triangulation’ which relates to the use of different sources of data, as distinct from different methods, in the production of data (Denzin, 1978). The use of ‘data triangulation’ here enables data from the three distinct participant groups to be brought into relation with one another and in so doing, establishes a link between the research questions³⁴ and the research design itself (Hesse-Biber, 2012). It also allows for the identification of “dissonant gaps” in the participant discourses, while also highlighting the complementarities and or tensions, between and across them, culminating in the production of a more nuanced understanding of the issues under consideration (Hesse-Biber, 2012).

The victim-survivor group were positioned as “leaders” within this triangulated structure, and the researcher as “navigator” (Martin, 2014) or “enabler” (Kitchin, 2001). PG2 and PG3 occupied non-leadership roles within that same methodological design owing to their comparatively advantaged

³⁴ In particular, number 4: Where do the intersections lie in the perspectives of the three participant groups, and what can be learnt from bringing these into relation with one another?

positionality (as professionals and or as men practitioners) to that of the women victims-survivor group. This arrangement enabled the scrutiny of dominant hierarchies and (institutional) relations of power extant in knowledge production and that often function to silence more marginalised voices (Newman, 1997; Lunn and Munford, 2007), such as those of women victim-survivors (hooks, 1984a; Hague et al., 2003; Hague, 2006; Hague and Mullender, 2006). I therefore sought to amplify their voices (Kulkarni et al., 2015) via their own narratives, ensuring that the women were not only present in the research, but that their accounts informed the design and implementation of the study. This functioned to render visible victim-survivors' knowledges as both situated and subjugated (Foucault, 1980; Leckenby and Hesse-Biber, 2007; Hill Collins, 2009 [1990]; Hesse-Biber, 2012). In keeping with the principals of feminist participatory methodologies, this particular design permitted the possibility of multiple perspectives on the telling and reading of events, and in turn, allowed for multiple voices to discursively construct them (Newman, 1997). In the next section, I will address the ethical and risk considerations associated with this work.

Ethics and risk

The ethical imperatives bound up with this study were primarily rooted in two key considerations; firstly, that the participant/researcher relationship is characterised by an inherently unequal power dynamic (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002; Sultana, 2007). Secondly, because research that addresses issues of violence and abuse is typically regarded as 'sensitive', and therefore potentially entails (negative) consequences for those taking part (Lee and Renzetti, 1990; Renzetti and Lee, 1993; Cloke et al., 2000). Focusing first upon the relational power dynamics in operation; ensuring ethical practice throughout the study required that the 'insider/outsider' binary was continually challenged in an attempt to 'flatten' the hierarchies inherent in 'sensitive' research (Smith, 1987; Kindon et al., 2009) and, in order to conduct the research with a sense of reciprocity and an ethics of care (Oakley, 2016; Toombs et al., 2017; Campbell et al., 2019). To this end, I engaged with all the participants as equals and acknowledged that they are experts on their own lives, as we worked to produce a co-constructed knowledge, based upon our negotiation of shared meanings (England, 1994). This guiding principle functioned to ensure that the research was done *with* participants, rather than *on* them (Stanley and Wise, 1993; Lykes, 2001). It required constant self-reflexivity (England, 1994), as well as an understanding that I am accountable for "what and how [I] have the power to see" (Castor, 1991, p. 64). This was crucial to ensuring that the oppression or occlusion of socially marginalised participants within the study was challenged, rather than reinforced (hooks, 2015 [1989], p. 81).

Turning attention now to 'sensitive' research; while the definitional parameters for the demarcation of research as 'sensitive' are to a certain degree contested (Lee and Renzetti, 1990), the ethical and risk implications associated with the categorisation remain salient to this study. For the purposes of clarification, the term 'sensitive' is used here to refer to research which makes public that which is usually private, research that may generate an emotional response in participants, and or research which entails a cost or risk of harm as a result of participation (Renzetti and Lee, 1993). This brings with it specific methodological, risk and ethical considerations associated not only with the complexity of the lives featured in the study, but also occasionally in relation to adult and child safeguarding (DOH, 2014). As such, the ethical and risk considerations of this study were diverse and specific to each of the participant groups concerned.

While work with PG2 and PG3 generally entailed more minor ethical or risk concerns, the work with PG1 brought with it elevated levels of risk and ethical considerations (Lee and Renzetti, 1990; Hague et al., 2003; Mullender, 2005; Mitchell and Glendinning, 2008; Bosworth et al., 2011; Downes et al., 2014) with participants in PG1 regarded as ‘vulnerable’ in some cases (Bosworth et al., 2011). While ‘vulnerability’, like ‘sensitive’ research, is also sometimes considered a contestable category, it remains applicable to some of the participants in this study. I align myself here with Butler’s understanding of vulnerability, which she asserts is not a “subjective state but rather a feature of our shared and interdependent lives” (Butler, 2020, l. 580). In this sense, people are not simply vulnerable, but instead are vulnerable *to a* situation, a person, social structure or something to which they have been exposed (Butler, 2020). Considered in the context of DVA, this conceptualisation gains particular authority because it construes vulnerability not as an aspect of a person’s character or being, but rather the product of something external, and which permits them to make a claim for protection (Butler, 2020). I deploy this concept of vulnerability throughout this thesis.

Efforts to mitigate any harm posed to participants, most importantly those in PG1, were of paramount concern, and rigorous ethical vetting and risk assessment processes were carried out. The ethical protocols governing the research were developed and implemented in accordance with existing British Sociological Association ethical guidelines (British Sociological Association, 2017), and aligned with adult safeguarding procedures as set out in The Care Act (DOH, 2014). The study was subject to ethical review and received favourable ethical opinion from the ESSL³⁵ faculty research ethics committee (reference AREA 17-017). The approach taken to risk and ethics management was one of ‘positive-empowerment’ (Downes et al., 2014), underscoring the iterative and dynamic nature of ethics, which are regarded as emergent, dynamic and situationally constituted (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). It is an approach which is especially important when responding to the complexities of conducting ‘sensitive’ research because it ensures that the epistemological implications are also addressed, to ensure that particular voices are not excluded on the grounds that it is simply ‘too risky’ (Smith, 2014). Indeed, there was huge value in incorporating more marginalised voices in the study, which far outweighed the difficulties associated with their inclusion providing the accompanying risks and ethical considerations were managed (Hague et al., 2003; Hague and Mullender, 2006; Downes et al., 2014). The approach used also required an understanding that the inclusion of people who use services, as well as victim-survivors more generally, is integral to the ongoing work to meet their needs and is crucial to the design and development of specialist DVA provision. Attesting to this, Hague commented; “the participation of abused women is an essential component of domestic violence policy and practice [...]. It is not an ‘optional extra’” (Hague, 2006, p. 6).

Throughout this thesis, all participant names have been altered to protect the anonymity of the participants across the three groups. In cases where participants provided information, which was highly specific or unique to them, or which could potentially lead to their identification, this information was omitted. Furthermore, details regarding the location of participants, or the organisations or campaigns they worked for (in the case of PG2 and PG3), were made deliberately

³⁵ English, Social Sciences and Law

broad or were excluded in order to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of participants³⁶. This was of particular importance in relation to the victim-survivor group due to any ongoing risk of violence and or detection by perpetrators in some cases (Sullivan and Cain, 2004). In part two of this chapter, I will discuss the fieldwork stage of the study.

Part II: Implementation

Recruitment

Multiple avenues for recruitment were used to reach a broad range of people across the three PGs, with specific attention paid to peoples' varying degrees of digital access, social inclusion, literacy and engagement with services. Focus was on reaching professionals and campaigners from a broad range of organisations and services in order to reflect a diversity of practice across the sector. In total approximately 80 people contacted me, expressing an interest in participation either on a service level as 'gatekeepers' (in the case of PG2 and PG3), or on an individual level (in the case of all three PGs). Of these, 54 people ultimately took part in either an individual face-to-face in-depth, unstructured interview and or FG.

Two primary recruitment routes were employed: online recruitment, and face-to-face or direct recruitment. Turning first to online recruitment; given the nature of the study, a generic project name was selected from the outset (*The Bridges Project*), which was used on all recruitment materials and channels. Recruitment was conducted through two project websites³⁷, which I set up using the free content management platform *Wordpress*; site 1 was specifically for the recruitment of women victim-survivors and 'frontline' DVA practitioners, and site 2 for the recruitment of men activists and professionals working in the field of anti-VAW or DVA. Both sites contained links to information about the project, project aims, participation (tailored to each group), as well as data management, disclosure, privacy and confidentiality. Site 1 also contained a page about the Participant Advisory Group (PAG). Both websites had a web contact form which interested parties could complete and submit via the website (anonymously if they wished), indicating their interest in the study, either as a participant and or a project advisor in the case of site 1. Upon completion and submission, an email was generated and sent directly to a secure, non-university email address. This separate email account was set up using the completely secure, end-to-end encrypted email service *Protonmail*, in order to increase the safety of victim-survivor participants making contact via the website and to reduce the possibility of the email address being traced back to the project.

Generating participant contacts via the websites permitted communication to be screened at the initial stages, prior to making direct contact with the person, as well as allowing participants to make contact via secure and anonymous means. The following extracts are two examples of contacts made via the website:

³⁶ See Appendix for risk and ethics documentation as well as sample recruitment poster.

³⁷ www.thebridgesforwomenproject.wordpress.com and www.thebridgesprojectblog.wordpress.com; see Appendix.

“I am a survivor of domestic violence, in all its forms, 30 years ago and also worked in the sector for 16 years. I’m currently doing a MA in Criminology and hope to go on to a PhD. I’m horrified at the way that the advances made over the past 30 years appear to be being systematically undone; if my experiences can help in any way I’d love to be involved” (Alison, PG1, website communication, 15th December 2017).

“I have worked with [men’s organisation] for a few years, now just carrying on delivering the programmes with teenage boys that the organisation trained me in. Been an absolute eye-opener. Also, I tweet [...] on issues connected to prevention of male violence. I have done a [...] talk on male privilege (soon to be available online) and last week I spoke [...] about the role preventative work in schools can play in a holistic approach to ending male violence and coercive behaviours” (Patrick, PG3, website communication, 12th December 2017).

These extracts show how in initiating contact with the project, people frequently shared detailed personal information, albeit in brief ‘snapshots’, regarding their experience. This underscores that the process of participant engagement begins at the very first point of contact, even prior to meeting or speaking to the individual or indeed, prior to obtaining formal consent for participation. While exemplifying the iterative nature of the process of engagement as well as of ethics, it also emphasises the extent to which rapport and empathic praxis are required from the outset. Additional measures implemented in line with risk management procedures included ensuring that the specific location of the study, as well as the identity of the researcher and supervisory team were not made available on the website. This was to reduce the risk of any malicious contact, and to avoid compromising the anonymity of the study. Website 1 also contained additional safety features including an advisory message³⁸ and an ‘exit now’ button on each page which users could click in the event they needed to exit the site rapidly if it was no longer safe for them to be on it (the button redirected the user to a BBC news page, a neutral ‘safe’ site with no reference to DVA). This is in line with DVA sector-wide digital practice, to increase the safety of victim-survivors who use the internet as a source of help-seeking or information when living with a violent partner (Sorenson et al., 2014; Rempel et al., 2019).

Both sites contained the secure email address as well as a mobile phone number which interested persons could call or text. This number was set up prior to the study commencing, to be used solely for the project, to reduce the risk of spurious contacts being made to my personal number and due to the potential risk of perpetrators obtaining the number. In all cases, when potential victim-survivor participants were contacted, steps were taken to ensure that it was safe for them to speak to me at that moment, and no reference to the nature of the study was made in any text communication in case the participant’s texts/phone were monitored by a perpetrator (Sullivan and Cain, 2004). In addition to recruitment via the project websites, online social media platforms such as Twitter were

³⁸ “Please only contact us if it is safe for you to do so. If you need urgent help or there is an emergency, please call 999”.

utilised. Recruitment into PG3 was conducted almost entirely via the website, Twitter or direct email (discussed in the next section) with participants spanning the broadest geographical area. This is indicative of the more disparate dispersal of men's anti-VAW organisations, as well as the limited 'frontline' statutory services in which men are employed to address DVA, across the country.

Shifting focus now to the direct or face-to-face methods of recruitment; email communication was sent to specific DVA specialist organisations (in the case of PG1 and 2), via contact with 'formal' and 'comprehensive' gatekeepers (Emmell et al., 2007), as well as to campaigning organisations and services which worked with men to address VAW or DVA prevention (in the case of PG3). In some cases, I utilised existing relationships with professionals in the DVA sector, established during my time working in women's services, which expedited direct contact with service managers who could facilitate access to their staff teams, or to the people they supported (Sieber and Stanley, 1988). Recruitment was also conducted by attending service management meetings, staff team meetings in relevant organisations (for all participant groups), as well as specialist networking events across the North of the country. While recruitment via 'gatekeepers' created new spaces for inclusion (Lund et al., 2015) by facilitating my access to certain groups of people I would otherwise have been unable to reach, both the aforementioned methods of recruitment entailed limitations in relation to the scope and potential to reach participants, as well as (personal and systemic) challenges, as the following extract from my fieldwork diary attests to:

"I went [...] to speak to a team of IDVAs [at an organisation's premises in a small northern English town]. I felt at once at risk of 'mis-selling' or poorly selling the research on account of my own nerves, while also at the same time, seeking to 'protect' it and ensure that the primary motivations for doing the study were clear. Structuring a study such as this in the way that I am, which essentially [seeks to] resituate the power from those on the 'frontline' / practitioners, to their service users is also a tricky business. Of course, in theory 'empowering' victim-survivors is an important and valuable endeavour [...]. But in practice it is fraught with problems, and at once destabilises the worker [due to] concerns regarding client safety, risk, vulnerability and potential harm caused as a result of participation. With this in mind, when speaking to the team, I tried to be clear around the aims of the study, allaying perceived concerns [...]. [But there seemed to be an] unease practitioners felt [about] disseminating such information to their clients, [alongside] a belief that [clients] are free to make the decision independently of what their worker feels regarding their capacity to engage with the process or choose to participate" (Fieldwork diary, 13th November 2017).

Concerns from providers around engaging service users in the study were especially prominent in the case of victim-survivor participants who were not engaged with support services; those considered 'harder to reach' (Atkinson and Flint, 2001; Taylor and Kearney, 2005; Marpsat and Razafindratsima, 2010) or 'vulnerable' adults facing increased levels of social exclusion, deprivation and barriers to participation (Liamputtong, 2007; Sawas et al., 2019). The limitations associated with online recruitment were particularly pronounced in the case of participants facing increased social isolation, deprivation or inequalities; they included issues such as lack of access to digital technology or limited digital literacy. I therefore tried to broaden and diversify the recruitment strategies used, to increase accessibility to the study for these people, as individuals often excluded from research. I did this in a few ways, including, attending a number of community meetings and groups across two Northern

cities, facilitated by voluntary organisations and charities. One of these was a 'breakfast club' run by a women's specialist charity, in the North of the country. Another was a community feminist network meeting in a second Northern city. Further, I volunteered for five consecutive weeks at a crafting and support group for women experiencing domestic abuse in a third Northern city. My participation in these groups enabled me to build rapport with attendees, establish a more reciprocal relationship, and answer questions about the project in a space that was familiar and safe for the attendees concerned. Crucially, I was able to reach and recruit women who would otherwise not have had contact with the project.

In addition to the direct methods of recruitment, posters and flyers were distributed across locations in five northern England cities as well as distributed via email to providers, in order to be disseminated in service premises by staff. In the case of PG1 and PG2, this included not only specialist domestic abuse services, but also homelessness providers, substance misuse services, specialist criminal justice support services and services for women engaged in commercial sex practices including prostitution or sex-work. In the case of PG3, this included men's anti-VAW campaigning organisations and DVA perpetrator programs with a community intervention remit, as well as affiliated organisations who may have conducted work with men and boys regarding DVA or VAW. In the case of all three groups, flyers and posters were distributed in public libraries, GP surgeries, children's centres, specialist DVA counselling services, as well as statutory DVA and community outreach services. The following section will elaborate on each of the PGs and methods of participation.

Participants

Using purposive sampling via the aforementioned routes, the following sample (n=54) was recruited: (1) women victim-survivors of DVA (n=24); (2) women 'frontline' DVA practitioners (n=18); and (3) 'engaged men' (n=12). Participants were situated across fifteen different cities and towns across England; in the case of PG1 and PG2, all participants' localities were in the north of the county, while PG3 were spread across both the north and south of the country. Participants in PG2 and PG3 all participated independently. In the case of PG1, all but one person took part independently; one participant, Sandra, took part with the assistance of her Support Worker, who sat with her throughout the interview. During interviews as well as the focus groups, participants were able to share as little or as much information as they wished regarding their demographic information as well as regarding their personal experiences, in keeping with the broader principles of the study. Some victim-survivor participants shared minimal personal information because any greater disclosure was regarded as too risky or unsafe by the participant. I was also aware of the barriers some of the formal documentation presented for some participants and did not obligate them to complete any of the forms, although I did secure informed consent in all cases. These barriers are discussed elsewhere in the context of participatory research (Gerassi et al., 2017; Campbell et al., 2019).

All 26 people in PG1 disclosed lived experience of DVA, as well as childhood (sexual) abuse in the case of 7 participants; they all identified as cisgender women, excluding one person who identified as 'gender fluid'. In PG2 all 17 identified as cisgender women, and among that group, 4 also disclosed personal experience of DVA. In PG3, all the participants identified as cisgender men; 2 disclosed personal experience of DVA; one as a child who witnessed the abuse of his mother, and another as an

adult in a heterosexual relationship. None of the participants identified as transgender. In all cases, participants completed the consent form and in the cases of the FGs, the signing-in sheet. Participants were provided detailed information regarding what participation entailed including any associated costs or risks of participation, as well as protocols for the withdrawal of information, if they wished to do so. The tone and language used when communicating this information was adapted to suit each of the three groups, with emphasis placed upon accessibility and an avoidance of jargon³⁹.

Some of the participants from PG1 also elected to be project advisors, recruitment for which took place during the early stages of the study, following the initial recruitment for all three PGs. This was done through email or phone communication with those participants in PG1 who had expressed an interest in the role via the website. While a PAG constitutes a useful tool to assess the relevance and validity of the research, the subtle nuances of how it is deployed in practice are worth acknowledging here, as Martin (2014) cautions when writing about her research with adults with Asperger's in which she sought to install a similar advisory group. Martin argues that while an advisory group can function to include participants, it should not be construed as an *emancipatory* method to include all participants at every stage of the research, given that in many cases participants may not be equipped, able or willing to occupy this type of role. Instead, setting up an advisory group may be considered a way of partially countering the tendency to conduct research using a "top-down" (Reid, 2004) approach, in which the participants have little, to no say in the design and operationalisation of the research, or regarding the claims made about their lives.

The caveats provided by Martin (2014) were brought into sharp relief as I sought to recruit and employ a PAG when the study commenced. Following communication with all participants in PG1, a small group of women (n=6) expressed an interest in being project advisors. But following a number of attempts to establish a group meeting over a period of several weeks, it transpired that the complexities of establishing the group meant that it was no longer a viable option. The women faced a number of barriers, which meant they could not commit to being in the group, in practice. There were also barriers associated with access to facilities such as a computer or internet, both of which I could not resolve within the timeframes of the research in order to facilitate a virtual meeting as an alternative to a face-to-face one. The possibility of holding a physical meeting was similarly precluded due to difficulties some of the women faced in travelling across the country. In light of these obstacles, I altered my approach and moved away from the group formulation, and instead proposed that project advisors work independently, if they felt able to do so. Ultimately this resulted in three project advisors working with me: Anita, Sylvia and Louise. I travelled to meet Anita and Sylvia independently, while Louise, shared her thoughts via email correspondence after I forwarded her a series of questions to provide feedback on. The topics consulted upon had a specific focus upon what (limited) questions were asked during the interview, the language and terminology used (including the use of the term victim or survivor), as well as strategies for the engagement of 'harder to reach' participants or more socially excluded women, particularly those not engaged with services. The

³⁹ See Appendix for all participant information sheets and consent forms.

contributions of all three women were incorporated in the data production as well as analysis stages and enabled me to review my own practice throughout.

The difficulties I encountered with this aspect of the research design shone a light upon the challenges associated with how participation and collaboration are enacted in practice, and how power is embodied in the context of research such as this. It similarly highlights a disjuncture between theory and practice (Bain and Payne, 2015). These challenges were made most apparent when I was unable to achieve participant input during the analysis stages, primarily due to time and resource constraints⁴⁰. Throughout the study though, I have maintained contact with all the participants, providing updates and leaving the 'door open' for participants to contact me if and when they wish to do so. In several cases, participants have contacted me with updates about themselves, and have sent additional information for inclusion in the study (via email and text message), which I have incorporated where appropriate. In the next section I will discuss the fieldwork.

Fieldwork

Participants chose how, when and where they took part in the study (as far as could be accommodated within the ethical and logistical limitations of the study). This extended to those who wished to contribute to the project, but who did not wish to take part in an interview or focus group. One example is that of Sylvia, a white woman in her 70s, who initially made contact via the project website. Sylvia explained her decision regarding participation in an email following a meeting at her home a few days earlier:

“My thoughts and feelings about getting involved have varied since we met and have unnerved me from time to time. As I told you I had already decided to revisit and write up my memories about the abuse I endured, but then I keep avoiding it, and the upset I know it will bring. But I know I need to do it, and even the knowledge of my prevarication is perhaps useful in recognising how other women might feel” (Sylvia, email communication, 27th November 2017).

This extract exemplifies the destabilising effects participation in such a project often entails for those involved. Although Sylvia did not wish to participate in an interview, she later contributed to the project by providing written work (poems and prose) which she had authored during the last five decades or so and leading up to the present day. She transcribed these and sent them to me over the course of several months, during which time we maintained regular communication via email. Sylvia consented to anonymised inclusion of her written work in the study. The significance of correspondence as data in feminist research is somewhat under-theorised (Letherby and Zdrpdowski, 1995), however, it holds real value in building and maintaining more equitable and reciprocal participant-researcher relationships (Lather, 1991; Skeggs, 1994; Sultana, 2007; Maiter et al., 2008). It enables a shifting of control from researcher to participant, while also making audible otherwise

⁴⁰ Discussed further in Chapter 10.

unspoken, unheard experiences, broadening the scope of participation. The next section will discuss the interviews and focus groups, in which similar steps were taken to provide participants as much control as possible.

Interviews and focus groups

A total of 39 individual, unstructured narrative interviews were conducted with participants across the three PGs. The majority were conducted in person in the case of PG1 (n=17) and PG2 (n=9), with 1 interview conducted via telephone, as per the request of one participant in PG1. In the case of PG3, interviews were similarly conducted mostly in person (n=8), with some also conducted via Skype or telephone call (n=4). This was mainly due to the more disparate geographical dispersal of participants in PG3, therefore some opted for a 'virtual' meeting instead. The remaining participants in the sample engaged with the study via a FG (outlined in the subsequent section). In keeping with an unstructured interview format, I routinely encouraged participants to share their stories on their own terms and to recount their experiences according to what they considered to be important to them. This was grounded in the theoretical understanding that the encounter was a dialogical process, in which the research interaction was jointly structured by the participants as well as the researcher (England, 1994). Structuring the interview in such a way also meant that I had less control over it, and instead I was led by the participant as to where the interview 'went', albeit with the overall topic of the study in mind (Hesse-Biber, 2007). The following extract from my fieldwork diary attests to this sentiment:

“bell hooks wrote that one should be mindful of the risk of “concealing a woman in her suffering” (hooks, 1999). [This was] something that I was particularly aware of when asking women to speak about their experiences. I did not want to dwell upon all the things that have had happened to them, and instead wanted them to speak about their experiences in the way they chose, rather than according to a set of questions I stipulated. I was also mindful of asking about specific acts of abuse or harms caused to the women because I did not want it to become a study into the specificities of their victimisation” (Fieldwork diary, 04th January 2018).

With hooks' caveats in mind, I sought to respect the gaps and silences in the accounts offered, mindful that asking participants to 'go back' and 'fill in' spaces in the narrative could be asking them to do something they were not ready to do (Lawless, 2013). This sentiment embeds a key tenet of discourse analysis which necessitates sensitivity not only to how language is used, but also to what is *not* said during the course of an interview (Billig, 1991). The questions asked during the interview were also deliberately very limited in number (usually one or two, with some exceptions that will be discussed in the following sections, as well as Chapter 4). They were as 'open' as possible to minimise the possibility of imposing upon the participant a particular way of talking about, or framing their experience (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). The prompt questions I asked were unplanned and stemmed from the topics raised by the participant herself; in some cases, I also occasionally asked for clarification around things that had been mentioned in order to support or guide the participant through the process. This was particularly useful in the case of participants in PG1, not least because the process of sharing what might be one's most traumatic or painful life experience is complex and often very difficult to do (Jones and Da Breo, 2017; Langley, 2017). Victim-survivors' personal narratives also often inadvertently interact with, or are at times complicated by, the dominant

cultural discourses, “master narratives” (Bamberg and Andrews, 2004) or “formula stories” (Loseke, 2001) regarding DVA as a social problem. Indeed, set against this backdrop, the prospect of being offered the role of ‘lead’ during the interview process was itself a challenge for some participants across all three groups, but most profoundly in PG1 and occasionally PG2. The following extract from my fieldwork diary illustrates this point:

“[I am] asking someone to 'tell their story', with as little intervention or interruption from me, as a researcher, albeit that I 'guide' the process and support the 'telling'. A description of this [method] is usually included in my preamble prior to an interview, accompanied by assertions that “I'm not looking for anything specific”, “I'm not trying to 'prove' a particular hypothesis”, nor do I have “any 'set' or predetermined questions” I intend to ask. Rather, I ask a limited amount of questions “off the back of” whatever the person has told me. While for some participants this preamble provides the necessary 'go ahead' for them to start talking, and to start providing an account of their lives, for others, it provokes a visible and determinable sense of fear regarding how the task of talking about their lives will be carried out. I have seen it in the faces of some of the women after I have said what is now a well-rehearsed preamble, [which is] sometimes accompanied with assertions from the women that they “don't know where to start”, or that “there's just too much”” (extract from fieldwork diary, 18th November 2018).

Narrative unstructured interviews were selected because they are regarded as an effective mechanism for the production of complex and convoluted data, centring how participants make sense of their lived experience and sense of self, through the stories they tell (Woodiwiss et al., 2017). However, this extract illustrates how the merits of this type of interviewing should not be overstated, nor the extant complexities simplified. Instead the intersections with individual subjectivity and positionality, and the extent to which one feels *able* to speak *freely*, should be taken into account when trying to understand how far this type of approach benefits the participant concerned. Narrative interviewing does, however, lend itself to studies such as this in which highly “sensitive issues with complex layers of meaning” are explored and participant agency, identity and subjectivity are foregrounded (Elliott, 2005, p. 45). In this way, narrative form functions as a tool for meaning-making and is useful for making sense of difficult or traumatic life experiences because it enables the speaker to “create plots from disordered experience” (Riessman, 1993, p. 4).

A total of three focus groups (FGs) were conducted, all of which took place with pre-established groups, rather than researcher-selected groups (Frey and Fontana, 1993). One was with a DVA support group consisting of women victim-survivors (n=7), and two with separate practitioner teams working for different specialist DVA organisations, situated in the north of England (n=4 and n=5). The FGs were conducted using a reflexive, psychologically informed approach (Liljestrom, 2010), which utilised a combination of what has been termed by Puchta and Potter (2004) as ‘minimal’ and ‘elaborate’ questions to structure the session⁴¹. Further, questions were formulated according to

⁴¹ See Appendix for Focus Group question schedule.

what the same authors have termed POBAs (perspectives, opinions, beliefs, attitudes) (Puchta and Potter, 2004), used to platform the various discourses the participants engaged with. This was in contrast to seeking to obtain objective responses to specific questions, which participants may or may not have felt able to respond to, particularly within a group setting. In the next section I address the central role of reflexivity during the data production phase using these methods.

Reflexivity and (researcher) positionality

The study inevitably entailed a politics of representation in which participants' relationships, locations and meanings are represented via the lens through which I as researcher made sense of them. As a white, cisgender researcher, I possess various privileges, and exist in a power relationship with the participants, vested with the power to make claims about the lives featured in the study (Wendt and Zannettino, 2015). This process necessitated researcher reflexivity and a nuanced understanding of individual positionality (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003), given the extent to which the "self" remains present in the research (Stanley and Wise, 1993). Discourse analysis similarly demands self-reflexivity because as Gill (1996, p. 147) points out, the discourse of the researcher-analyst is "no less constructed, occasioned or action orientated" than that of those we are working with.

Reflexivity is understood here as "self-critical, sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious *analytical* scrutiny of the self as researcher" (emphasis in original, England, 1994, l. 61). In keeping with the tenets of a reflexive feminist praxis, I wrote a comprehensive reflective fieldwork diary (Malacrida, 2007) using Microsoft *OneNote* (Tam, 2017), throughout the study. I began writing the diary shortly before commencing the study and terminated it following the completion of the final stages of data analysis. I critically reflected upon my own positionality within the study, with emphasis on the extant power dynamics and relations in operation. Personal thoughts and observations regarding the progress of the study more generally were also documented in the diary, extracts of which have been included, where appropriate, throughout this thesis.

The operationalisation of reflexivity was complicated by the fact that I, like many other researchers and practitioners in the field of DVA (Hanmer and Itzin, 2000; Hague et al., 2003; Hague and Mullender, 2006), came to the research with childhood experience of DVA. This merges with a professional background working at both a 'frontline' and management levels in the women's, DVA and homelessness sectors prior to returning to academia. My personal and professional narratives were both therefore strongly imbricated in this study (Riessman, 1993), contributing to the construction of an intersubjective knowledge (Fowlkes, 1997; Benjamin, 1998; van Stapele, 2014), which indeed, shores up the notion that both researcher and participants are continuously engaged in a process of shared meaning-making (England, 1994), particularly where experiences align (but not exclusively so). As the study progressed, it became apparent that my proximity to the issues addressed necessitated acknowledgement, despite initially deciding against incorporation of my own story. But my own narrative eventually began to 'seep' in, perhaps unavoidably (Chaitin, 2003), because as England (1994, p. 249, emphasis in original) has remarked, "fieldwork *is* personal" and researchers "cannot conveniently tuck away the personal behind the professional". The following extract from my fieldwork diary perhaps evidences this:

“I guess in some ways [self-disclosure] has always been a 'blind spot' of sorts for me; one I always knew was there but never tried to make clear in my own mind. Listening to the women speak [...], articulating and naming their experience, was strangely obtrusive because they spoke about things that so closely aligned with my own experience, yet I have never articulated them or named them. [...] In telling the stories of the women I am meeting, I am at once telling my own story. But it is a story that is in some ways being pulled from me, stubbornly embedded and struggling to come out.

Why then do I expect women to tell me their stories? Why should the process of telling their stories, of narrating their own experience, be any more cathartic a process than it has been or may be for me? Does my own position of privilege by virtue of my social positioning allow me the opportunity to distance myself from my own experience to such an extent that I can suppress it and still be unscathed by [it]? In fact, to assert such a thing would at best be a type of arrogance and at worst demonstrate how deeply these privileges run” (Fieldwork diary, 28th March 2018).

Indeed, Okely argued that attempts to protect oneself from scrutiny, as a researcher, risks being categorised as “arrogant in presuming that [one’s] presence and relations with others to be unproblematic” (Okely, 1992) (incidentally something I only read long after the above fieldwork entry). Thus, while researcher self-disclosure is often regarded as essential to good feminist research praxis (Reinharz, 1992), the attendant complexities of it, as well as its utility and benefit (most importantly for participants) within the research process, requires ongoing deliberation (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003; Probst, 2016), not least because the intersections with race, class and gender complicate any research interaction. I was aware of my comparatively privileged position during my work, which often fuelled, in part, attempts to avoid any disclosure, which is of course in itself a privilege. The following extract from my fieldwork diary provides an insight into these deliberations:

“During the interview process [...] it was relationality that was so important to the research encounter, as well as the experiential parity that in some cases existed between me and the participant. Nonetheless, the inherent power dynamics that governed our relationship meant that it was in my gift to withhold or disclose as much information as I chose to, regarding my own experience. Some participants did however seek out this information, when I gave them the opportunity to do so.

I began all the interviews with the same set of preliminary questions; did they understand everything that I had given them or said, and did they have any questions for me, either about the research, or me as an individual. In most cases these questions were responded to with nothing more than an affirmation that they were happy to proceed. However, in a couple of cases, the participants asked specifically, “why DV?”, and did I have any ‘real’ understanding of the issues at hand. In these few cases I felt compelled to divulge at least some of my own story because it felt disingenuous to avoid this completely, particularly when set against the ethos of my feminist praxis, as well as understanding the value that is placed upon shared experience by victim-survivors themselves” (Fieldwork diary, 27th September 2018).

The above extract arguably espouses what Phoenix (1994, p. 62) argues is one of the most important contributions made by feminist researchers; that “it is not “bad science” to allow the balance of power within interviews to be shifted such that participants are given the opportunity to ask questions”, and the researcher answers them rather than avoids them. Crucially however, as Phoenix goes on to state, the impact this has is heavily influenced by the (structural) positionality of the two people concerned (Phoenix, 1994). Within this context, the knowledges produced are always already within the context of our intersubjectivities and the social, political and institutional locations of both parties (Sultana, 2007). These arguably map onto the researcher’s physical, emotional, professional and embodied selves, which are instrumentalised as tools for the production and analysis of data, as well as to build rapport with participants (Oakley, 1981; Lee and Renzetti, 1990; Carroll, 2013). This is evidenced in the following extract from my fieldwork diary:

“Today I felt compelled to disclose from the outset my own 'insider' status, as someone who has worked, and lived, the issues we were addressing. It was a short and succinct disclosure, which was left entirely to the [participant’s] interpretation, but it was enough. It immediately established some kind of parity in knowing; nothing in that regard was required further. And throughout the interview there was an unspoken and subtle return to this knowing, an unspoken knowing, which meant that particular things could be said [by the participant] without further justification or the need for validation” (Fieldwork diary, 23rd March 2018).

This extract substantiates Reinharz’s (1992, p.34) assertion that self-disclosure functions to reformulate the researcher’s role in a way that maximises engagement of the reflexive self, however, reflexivity also has its limitations (Phoenix, 1994). In the case of the researcher, self-disclosure can create researcher vulnerability to criticism for the act of disclosure itself (Reinharz, 1992), owing to the unequal researcher-participant relationship and the challenges of achieving equitable relations within the research encounter (Nnawulezi et al., 2018). The level of reflexivity demanded by sensitive research also potentially involves longer-term implications or even risk for participants, as they are invited to reflect upon often highly traumatic events (Oakley, 1981). These are particularly pronounced in the case of research with women who have experienced DVA, giving rise to the complex ethical and risk considerations, referred to earlier. In the next section I discuss how principles of reflexivity map onto the analytic framework deployed at the analysis stage.

Analysis

Phase 1: Transcription

Analysis of the data began at the transcription stage, during which time I kept detailed notes and commentary on the data as it was being transcribed. It entailed engaging in a process of focused listening and re-listening, with most interviews being listened to at least 2 to 3 times. This was done due to the sheer density and richness of the data produced during the interviews, all of which were between an hour and 90 minutes in length, and consisted in most cases, of largely uninterrupted dialogue from the participant. While paradigms governing the transcription of data are addressed to a limited extent in methodological literature (Lapadat, 2000), the negotiation of, and the emotional

labour associated with, the transcription process and the impact upon the listener–researcher is seldom acknowledged (Malacrida, 2007; Kiyimba and O’Reilly, 2016). But transcription is not a neutral process and in the case of repeated exposure to ‘sensitive’ data, transcription can carry with it the potential for “emotional injury” (Gregory et al., 1997), or secondary traumatisation (Kiyimba and O’Reilly, 2016). Indeed, these assertions cogently reflect my own experience of the transcription of some of interviews, as the following extract from my fieldwork diary illustrates:

“This is one of the hardest interviews I have done, [and] now transcribing. The hardest aspect of it is that [the participant] has faced abuse and exploitation from as early as she can remember. To be precise, from the age of 4, all at the hands of men who have consistently and routinely abused her. The suffering she has experienced and the pain she probably still feels is so palpable when she talks, I find it hard to listen to. Indeed, my heart breaks re-listening to her story” (Fieldwork diary, 23rd May 2018).

Written after completing the transcription of a particularly harrowing interview, this entry captures my emotional response to the data. My experience coheres with what Gregory and colleagues (1997, p. 297) called the augmentation of the “transcriber’s vulnerability”, as a result of repeatedly listening to emotionally disturbing events, which become “deeply embedded into the consciousness of the transcriber”. The impact was such that ultimately, I sought permission to auto-transcribe some interviews using specialist computer software. This provided temporary respite as it enabled me to engage with the data at the initial stages without the process of deep, recursive listening, for some of the most emotionally challenging interviews. After completing every interview and focus group transcription, I recorded my initial thoughts relating to particularly prominent themes and discourses, however vague or contradictory. These reflections formed the basis of a rudimentary coding framework, which I developed into a more comprehensive coding schedule at the second phase of analysis⁴².

The interviews and focus groups were transcribed using an amended version of the Jefferson (1984; 1985) transcription convention⁴³. This included recording instances of speech disfluency such as moments of silence or pauses, speech irregularities, and non-lexical vocabularies such as ‘mm’ or ‘blah blah’ (Redford, 2015). Indeed, deciding how much to transcribe in the transcript is itself a challenging task as Potter and Wetherell (1987) discuss. However, I tried as far as possible to avoid “cleaning” the transcripts (Elliott, 2005) while also seeking to avoid unnecessarily complicating the transcript with complex notation. I sought to more faithfully portray the narrative accounts in the participants’ own words, reflecting the messiness, nuance and fragmentation of their discourse, thereby confronting a social tendency to impose order upon everyday talk and text (Potter, 1996b). This transcription practice had the dual purpose of increasing the participants’ visibility in the discourses they used to make sense of their experience, particularly in the case of the women victim-

⁴² See Appendix for coding framework.

⁴³ See Appendix.

survivors (Riessman, 1993; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). In the next section I will discuss the second phase of analysis, which entailed coding the transcribed data.

Phase 2: Coding

It is well understood that coding data is far from an exact science and the procedure undertaken when doing the work of coding is highly variable but driven, albeit quite loosely in the initial stages, by the underpinning research questions. I therefore set about doing the coding with Potter and Wetherell's (1987) guidance of doing it as "inclusively as possible", in mind. As such, coding functions as a practical means to gather together what are often quite disparate and sometimes seemingly only vaguely related pieces of information to construct a "body of instances" ready for analysis (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p. 167). As Gill (1996) also points out, what the 'inclusion' of those 'chunks' of data ultimately looks like, is dependent upon individual working style. In my case, I sought to first immerse myself in the data via a process of repeated reading of electronic transcripts, bearing in mind the preliminary version of the coding schedule referred to earlier. I then printed the transcripts and went through them again in hardcopy format, identifying by hand any additional coding labels, while also eliminating or merging others. The final step in this process entailed inputting the transcripts into data analytics software package *NVivo*. This allowed me to hone the coding framework further and also gave me a truer picture of just how expansive it had become. This process left me with a large coding framework, with pieces of data often appearing under more than one coding label. In some cases, I returned to the audio of the interview and listened again; this assisted me when making decisions about which coding-labels would ultimately 'stick' as I sought to reduce the range of coding categories I had accumulated during this stage of the analysis. In the next section I discuss the final phase of analysis.

Phase 3: Analysis 'proper'

As discourse analysts have discussed, unlike content or thematic analysis which typically seeks to produce simple or unitary summaries of data and its overarching themes (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Potter, 1996a; Antaki et al., 2003), the work of DA is far more nuanced, with emphasis on the "fine grain detail" (Antaki et al., 2003) of the accounts offered. I sought to identify discursive patterns within data, which was often highly fragmented, contradictory as well as challenging to engage with. It was complicated further by the fact that I began to triangulate the data from the three participant groups at this stage. I searched for patterns in and across all three bodies of data. This was an illuminating exercise since the convergences as well as discontinuities were often situated in unexpected locations across the three data sets; an example being the groups' deployment of 'radical' feminist discourses⁴⁴. This process also enabled me to identify the often stark absence of, or over reliance upon, particular kinds of (gendered) discourses in the texts, particularly when situating the accounts within the broader social, cultural and political contexts in which they were located (Gill, 1996). Building upon these readings I moved on to identifying what *function* the discourse fulfilled,

⁴⁴See Chapters 8 and 9.

and to what effect. How this analytical work is then developed for dissemination is briefly discussed in the next section.

Dissemination of data outcomes

In order to maintain the inclusive, collaborative principles espoused in the research design and data production phases, outputs from the study will take two primary forms; this formal academic thesis which I plan to convert into scholarly publications, and an accessible version which will be made available to participants and organisations engaged with the study. The latter will take the form of a summary report, written and presented in an accessible format. Analysis outcomes will be communicated with participants once the study has been completed. The participants have been contacted via their preferred method of contact in order to provide them an update, and to ask whether they wished to receive the final report. Approximately half of the participants responded to this request and confirmed they would like to receive it.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided an overview of the theoretical and epistemological underpinnings of the study, as well as of the overall design. The study design and the methods used are closely enmeshed with the broader aims of the study, in which I have sought to ensure that the voices of the participants are most audible. The lives featured in this study are complex and often patterned with deeply traumatic and painful events. I therefore operated, as far as possible, according to the parameters set by the participants themselves in terms of the way I conducted the interviews and in relation to how much they shared with me. I wanted to ensure that I accurately and comprehensively represented what each participant told me, in their words, rather than my own. It is for this reason I have included fairly long, unedited extracts throughout this work.

My analysis is only an interpretation of what the participants communicated to me; I was not seeking to uncover a 'truth claim', situated somewhere 'out there' (Haraway, 1988). Nor was I seeking to uncover peoples' stories to the extent that they felt uncomfortable, disarmed, or exposed, particularly given the nature of the topics discussed. My analysis is necessarily partial and undoubtedly informed by my own positionality, self-narrative and history. This has therefore been a bidirectional process which occurred alongside continued self-reflection, as the extracts from my fieldwork diary will attest to; reflections which sometimes left me 'tied up in knots' as I grappled with the ways in which the narratives of the participants were entangled with my own. However, this has led to an increased awareness on my part, of the challenges associated with sharing one's story in the context of a research study and the emotional labour participants themselves undertook to share their experiences. With this in mind, I will now move on to the second half of the thesis in which I address the discursive themes that emerged from analysis of the participants' contributions.

Chapter 5: Women's lived experience of DVA

"Sometimes in life, your voice has to be heard. And if you can help another woman, oh my god, if I can help another woman from going through [...] that...Oh my god, I wouldn't half"
(Aileen, PG1)

"A lot of women suffer in silence, and they shouldn't (.). They should let it out, and they should be able to talk to anybody they want to about it. And I know it's hard to do that, because I could never do it."
(Sandra, PG1)

"Do you know what, I really don't know...I feel like I don't know who I am? I don't know whether...I feel like...I feel like I'm getting a bit better. I'm not as anxious. I think I am. People say, you need to find yourself first. How do you find yourself?"
(Dawn, PG1)

Introduction

This chapter is the first of five analysis chapters, focusing upon the narrative accounts of women with lived experience of DVA. It seeks to understand how the women's experiences may be used to tell a different story about DVA, and the strategies used to prevent and intervene in it. It focuses not only upon individual responses to DVA, but also upon discourses relating to the structural conditions and the reality of the social worlds the narrators inhabit. A connection is established here between individual experience and broader systems change, so that prevention, early-intervention, and post-separation responses may be reworked to better meet the needs and interests of the *full range* of women who experience DVA. The complex ways the women construct meaning through the form and content of their accounts is foregrounded here (Mishler, 1986). The question of "who is, or is not, entitled, obligated, or invited to offer their stories and under which social, institutional, historical, and material circumstances" is central to this analysis (Gubrium and Holstein, 1998, l. 418). Indeed, to narrate one's own experience of DVA in any circumstance relies upon the acquisition of the language necessary for its articulation, the opportunity and space in which to speak, and for one's story to be *heard* and acknowledged. As Herman (1992, p. 5) writes; "[t]o hold traumatic reality in consciousness requires a social context that affirms and protects the victim and that joins victim and witness in a common alliance". For if people are not ready to listen to DVA victim-survivors' stories, they become obscured, increasingly fragmented over time, and in some cases remain undisclosed.

Experience-based narratives function as a mechanism for individuals typically excluded from knowledge production to take control of their own representation (Stone-Mediatore, 2003) and to amplify what are often "subjugated knowledges" (Haraway, 1988). Narratives of lived experience also function to expand the 'norms of recognition' of differently positioned bodies within dominant discourse (Butler, 2015), as the interviews exemplify both the challenges and the opportunities associated with telling one's own story of DVA. This includes when participants engage in 'narrative resistance' work (McKenzie-Mohr and LaFrance, 2017) thereby offering counter-narratives to dominant cultural discourse (Andrews, 2004) or 'story-lines' (Throsby, 2004) of DVA, in which the

'ideal' victim is the main protagonist. This most notably includes a contestation of the framing of DVA victim-survivors as passive subjects, lacking agency or control (Lehrner and Allen, 2008). The accounts instead demonstrate the extent to which victim-survivors routinely work to wrest back an element of control and agency, even in circumstances when they have little to "no space for action" (Kelly, 1988). They engage in individual acts of resistance which, I argue, in some cases amount to acts of 'quiet activism' (Pottinger, 2016; Hall, 2018) which contribute to a broader feminist agenda for social change. Within this, the complex strategic decision-making processes victim-survivors undertake to maintain their safety and that of their children, are brought sharply into relief. As experts in their own lives, victim-survivors understand the complex terrain of this social problem more so than any other. Their voices are therefore not only epistemologically valuable (Stanley, 1993), but constitute the platform upon which social policy and sector-wide responses to DVA should be built.

This assertion gains further salience when considered against a socio-political backdrop shaped by neoliberal ideals which privilege individual resourcefulness and resilience as the common-sense response to structurally rooted VAW (Banet-Weiser, 2018). The importance of allowing these stories to be told, but also more importantly of *earnestly listening* to them and what they convey, cannot be underestimated. This point is reinforced by the fact that the allocation of public resources and access to services is robustly organised according to a dominant set of "formula stories" (Loseke, 2001), or 'master narratives', against which 'authentic' victimhood is measured and assessed by apparatus of the state. This chapter will examine the intricacies of individual women's accounts of DVA, considered against this backdrop, as I take up the primary research question at the heart of this study: **what can be learnt from a victim-survivor focused analysis of the gender discourses and relations underpinning DVA**, as well as **the fourth research question** relating to the intersections in the perspective offered by all three PGs.

I begin by elaborating on notions of 'authentic' victimhood, before outlining how women speak about their experience in the absence of suitable discourse, drawing upon artefacts and bodily signifiers. I then move onto an account of the ways in which DVA disrupts a victim-survivors' sense of self-identity, and the implications this has for help-seeking processes. I continue this line of argument in the discussion of the ways in which victim-survivors seek to contest the violence they experience, by engaging instead in individual acts of resistance as they '(re)story' their lives (McKenzie-Mohr and Lafrance, 2017). This discussion is expanded to talk about the value vested in (therapeutic) group work among victim-survivors. I close the chapter by thinking about how the women's resistance work enacted both in individual and group settings might be understood as a form of 'quiet activism' (Hackney, 2015; Pottinger, 2016), expanding on what this could mean for notions of collectivism and broader feminist social change regarding DVA prevention and intervention.

'Authentic' victimhood

Data substantiates a clear correlation between the perceived 'authenticity' of victimhood, with that of victim-survivors' access and entitlement to various forms of help or assistance. This coalesces with a narrow conceptualisation of what constitutes DVA within widely circulating public discourse, as well as regarding how those experiencing DVA are recognised or 'labelled'. Participant contributions repeatedly illustrate the shortcomings as well as the definitional limitations of the dominant public

discourse patterning contemporary understandings of DVA. Constructions of ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ victimhood suffuse policy and sector-wide responses to victim-survivors, often leaving women who do not cohere with these constructions unable to access provision or help. Anita (PG1), a woman in her forties with a history of childhood abuse, homelessness, substance use and mental health challenges, attests to this as she relays her experience of attempting to access DVA support stating; “it’s like, if you use substances, you are not a ‘true’ victim; you’re not a ‘real’ victim, it’s a ‘lifestyle choice’. What do you expect if you’re going to use drugs?” Anita’s account, as well as others discussed in forthcoming sections, strongly corroborates how dominant constructions of ‘authentic’ victimhood routinely fail to capture the full range of victim-survivor identity and life experience. What it means to be a ‘real’ victim is often based upon ideas of ‘innocence’ or blamelessness (Meyer, 2016), which coalesce with notions of personal choice and responsibility⁴⁵ as Anita recounts:

“(…) You know, services, even drug services, the way that (.) they viewed women like me was (..) fucking awful (..) ((crying)) So, not only do you feel like scum anyway, not only do you know that you’re doing wrong, even women who haven’t had the best upbringings (.) not that mine was good, but you know…they know that it’s not good enough and they know that they wanted more for their kids. Erm, so to have professionals sit in judgement is horrific. So, you stay away from services” (PG1)⁴⁶.

Anita’s sense of guilt and complicity in her own victimisation is notable in this extract, which she positions within the discourses of ‘failed’ motherhood (“they wanted more for their kids”) and a challenging “upbringing”. The guilt and inferiority Anita describe are characteristic of the feelings experienced in the aftermath of trauma (Herman, 1992), which in this instance is strongly compounded by the contact she has with “professionals”. The moralising judgement received from professionals colludes with Anita’s own sense of failure, and replicates the social disapproval attached to “women like her”, “doing wrong”. Taken together, Anita’s ‘authenticity’ as victim-survivor is severely undermined. That victimhood is typically delineated according to a binary opposition of the ‘perfect’ victim or the ‘complicit’ victim, means that women are often left in “warped territory” (Pham, 2018), unable to disclose their experience to access help without fear of judgement. Like Anita, they instead opt to “stay away from services”. This undoubtedly nurtures a culture of victim-blame and responsibility within some institutional settings (Thapar-Björkert and Morgan, 2010).

When victim-survivors make disclosures of abuse, they are at the same time assessed from the ‘outside’, as to their ‘authenticity’. A woman’s ‘eligibility’ and ‘entitlement’ to assistance therefore become corollaries of her perceived ‘authenticity’ as victim-survivor, grounded in her ability to conform to norms of recognition which determine her body ‘legible’ as victim-survivor (Butler, 2015). Gemma, an IDVA working in a statutory DVA service, confirmed this when talking about the difficulties she encounters supporting her clients to access housing provision after leaving a violent partner:

⁴⁵ Also discussed in Chapters 3 and 6.

⁴⁶ The participant group (PG) or focus group (FG) of the speaker is indicated in brackets at the end of every quotation.

“I think with Services, it's more their response to victims. So, I think you know, if you tend to be working class, middle class, you know, no criminal record. No substance misuse issues. No issues around anti-social behaviour or offending you tend to get a more positive response than say, you know if [...] the phrase at the minute is the ‘Toxic Trio’; so domestic abuse, substance misuse, and mental health issues. So, if you've got those three things entwined, which the majority of clients are going to have, it's harder to...it's obviously harder for [our IDVA service] to impact, but it's also harder to get that client in the services. And I think when you do manage to get [the women] to engage, it's disheartening when they then don't get the response that they should do. I think if clients are viewed as ‘chaotic’, ‘difficult’, ‘not wanting to help themselves’, that does affect the response that they get from some of the services” (PG2).

Fragments of a neoliberal, moralising discourse of personal responsibility (clients who have the “toxic trio”, or those “not wanting to help themselves”) are in evidence here, reflecting the discourse present in Anita’s earlier account. Gemma draws upon these to describe *some* professionals’ response to particular groups of women who present at their services. The discourse turns on the logic that victim-survivor identity informs eligibility for access to help (getting the “client *in* the services”), which in this instance functions as a mechanism for service gatekeeping⁴⁷. This facilitates the systemic exclusion of women with more complex needs such as substance use on (false) notions of personal choice and responsibility.

However, contributions from other participants show how women with non-complex needs are also often viewed as not cohering with dominant conceptualisations of the ‘real’ victim. One example is from Melissa, who identified as a gender-fluid lesbian, white and in her forties. Her account signals the seemingly intractable nature of ‘authentic’ victimhood, unattainable for many women victim-survivors; no woman appears to fit the “profile”:

“There seemed to be a set structure, or pattern, that people were expected to have, as a (...) ... a ‘profile’. So, there was women in there who had things happen to them, who had been in and out of the services, the police had been called several times, the perpetrator was known, they were known to be ‘vulnerable’, they had been in care, all these kinds of things. There was a whole history that went with it, and I didn't have any of that (.). And, I was technically on a higher income” (PG1).

Melissa’s account, along with Anita’s, foregrounds the inadequacy of a limited discourse as a framework for structuring service-level responses to DVA experienced by the full range of women presenting at services. The exclusion of some women from services then is produced through the widespread adoption of a conceptualisation of DVA victimhood, which remains focused upon a narrow set of biographical or identity signifiers. These are mapped out here in Melissa’s account, according to a genealogy of significant life events, mostly attributed to the workings of various

⁴⁷ Understood here as the activity of controlling or limiting a person’s or group’s access to certain services.

apparatus of (state) power (the police, statutory social work), but always episodes in which “things *happen[ed] to them*”. Melissa’s choice of language here – “to them” rather than “by them” – resists holding the women themselves responsible. It also underscores the women’s comparative powerlessness not only in relation to their biographical histories, but also their future trajectories which become indelibly inscribed by past events.

The dominant story about DVA is therefore characterised by conflicting notions of the ‘passive’ victim-survivor on the one hand, and the ‘complicit’ victim-survivor on the other. The life events Melissa describes create the conditions of possibility for the women’s narratives to emerge, often from the “margins of hegemonic discourse”, but imbued with relations of power (Tamboukou, 2008, p. 106). This has significant implications for victim-survivor help-seeking, and functions to both enable and disable particular narratives of DVA to be heard, dependent upon the context in which they are situated. Adhering to a Foucauldian understanding of discourse, these discursive limitations come to constitute “the configurations of possibilities for speech acts through rules of exclusion and classificatory divisions” (Alcoff and Gray, 1993, p. 265). These ultimately set out that which can be attributed truth-value and correspondingly that which is ultimately possible to say (Foucault, 1972). Indeed, the material consequences of these discursive limitations are made evident when considering the experiences of other demographics of victim-survivors, as Louise attests to:

“You know, on soaps, and on kind of like [DVA] awareness posters. It would always kind of be a very typical picture of like a white woman with a black eye pretty much every time and I think...and she'd always be, I would say probably about 40, 45. So I guess just kind of from what I had seen at the time” (PG1).

Louise, a white heterosexual woman in her late twenties, experienced DVA when she was sixteen years old, while still living in the family home. The perpetrator was her boyfriend with whom she went to high school. Her experiences underscore how dominant cultural narratives of domestic abuse risk invisibilising young women’s experience of domestic abuse. They also highlight the extent to which prevailing conceptualisations of ‘the problem’ need to be expanded to account for the variety of modes and localities of perpetration, assembled under the category of an ‘intimate relationship’. Imperative to this, is a reworking of what constitutes the “domestic” sphere itself, as Louise goes on to describe:

“I think having the knowledge that, kind of, [...] what I was dealing with (.) was kind of like, legitimate. Because I think there was some physical aspects to it, and some kind of like sexual aspects to it as well, which were you know, to me, and still are, like quite damaging. And I think I kind of [...] almost kind of thought to myself, well because you know, I don't have you know, I'm not walking around with like a black eye or whatever, it's not kind of that very prescriptive definition of domestic abuse. And I thought, well it's not domestic because we don't live together. And you know, I just thought, none of this counts” (PG1).

That Louise cannot see herself reflected in widely circulating “prescriptive definitions” of what “counts” as DVA, means that she begins to understand her experience as not “legitimate”, leading to a process of minimisation, and impacting upon her future help-seeking. Indeed, the risk of occlusion associated with the inadequacy of definitional discourse, and the poverty of language associated with

domestic and sexual violence (Adetiba et al., 2018), also present barriers for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender women, as Melissa says:

“So how would you go to a straight counsellor and say, I feel like I've been raped (..) but I'm not sure because, does the law allow me to feel like that? [...] you know, even for like sexual health. There are still sexual health issues. [...] Um (.) so there's just a variety of stuff that aren't covered. And some of it I can't tell you because I don't know, because I don't have the service ((laughs)) to give me the insight into what else I should know. [...] You know, if a woman sleeps with another woman for the first time, because she's been in abusive relationships before, and wakes up thinking; ‘Oh my god did I consent to that?’ (..) Was that right? [...] You know...they have no reference point to go and say, ‘look you know, something happened last night, and I'm actually not sure what (...) what, is that right?’” (PG1)

In this extract, Melissa progressively establishes an association between her ability to identify or name her experience as “right”, with the naming of that experience within the discursive framework of “the law”. This in turn creates the conditions for an account of sexual violence to potentially emerge. Further, Melissa equates her “knowing” and understanding of issues such as “consent” in a relationship between two women, with the availability of, and access to, LGBTQ+ specialist “services”, which are in increasingly short supply⁴⁸. The formal recognition of LGBTQ DVA in (legal) discourse provides the “reference points” Melissa needs to name and disclose her experience. Together, Anita, Louise and Melissa’s accounts variously emphasise the power of dominant cultural discourse in cultivating possibilities not only for the emergence of victim-survivor narratives, but also for the self-recognition of victim-survivor experience as such. This has specific implications for certain groups of victim-survivors, including young women, women in later life, as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender women, all of whom are grossly underrepresented in the dominant story we tell about DVA. As Plummer (1995, p. 26-27) argues, this opening and closing down of spaces in which people are permitted to tell their story “under the conditions of [their] own choosing” is an inherently political process characterised by the fluctuations of power which work to various effects in the lives of victim-survivors. Indeed, in some cases, when certain experiences or identities are not reflected in dominant DVA discourse, or if they are not afforded the space to speak freely, they are dismissed instead as ‘disordered’, ‘chaotic’, and ultimately ‘un-hearable’. This can result in a life lived in the margins of society, discussed in the next section.

Speaking from the margins

There is a cultural tendency to try to impose order or linearity upon the stories that we hear and tell. But, to recognise and acknowledge the fragmentation that often characterises accounts of trauma in particular (Herman, 1992; Jones and Da Breo, 2017) provides valuable insight into the impact these experiences have upon the lives of those concerned. They also emphasise the social role of stories

⁴⁸ Statistics from Women’s Aid for year 2019-20 indicate that there are 3 specialist services for the LGBTQ community, 2 of which are in London; none have allocated refuge spaces (Davidge et al., 2020, p. 25).

and the work they *do* within the broader social order (Plummer, 1995). Indeed, linearity is a complex issue considered in the context of DVA, as DVA can situate victim-survivors in a seemingly relentless pattern of violence or abuse which can destabilise the victim-survivor's sense of a coherent identity and produce a life-trajectory more closely resembling an oscillation between points of crisis, respite and recovery. The expectation that people should or can provide a linear or coherent life-story in many ways becomes a mechanism for their disempowerment. Thus, for some participants, their story emerges in fragments during the course of the interview, illustrating not only the challenges of articulating a traumatic memory of DVA in the absence of a suitable narrative framework, but also the complex interpretative task of analysing narratives which chart traumatic episodes.

Participant accounts patterned by gaps and discursive ruptures exemplify the challenges of speaking the 'unspeakable' and illustrate how self-narrative can gradually atomise over time; life stories ultimately 'hung' on one or two major events. The story then is held, or carried through these signifiers, and the detail surrounding them becomes less of a necessity and falls away. The account offered by Jacqueline, a white woman in her thirties and mother of three children, illustrates this, as she struggles at times to move beyond a catastrophic event in her life. Her interview was short and stilted, and I asked more questions prompts, than I would typically have asked, as I carefully endeavoured to support Jacqueline's personal narration without asking her to 'fill in blanks' or provide specific details of the events she was alluding to. The following excerpt details the first three minutes of our interview in which Jacqueline repeatedly returns to the state-ordered removal of her son 18 years ago⁴⁹:

"(...) Beginning, originally, I (.) I (.), I had problems with an ex-partner (.) um, I had a child (.) But it got...I weren't even with him but he were quite emotionally, er, mentally disturbed, I'd say. And...he eventually had to go up for adoption, to keep him safe. So there was no err (?), so I lost a child through the abuse, so it's not...He's 18 next year...He's 18 this year, so he's been adopted since he was three. He was in and out of foster care 'cause I had break downs all the time and...and...whoever had him, he just put a wheelie bin through the window so...(sighs) (.) it was, it was...very, very difficult. But I had to let the baby go. And then since then, I've had two children, not to him, thank goodness! And I've got to keep them. But, some women do go through the social services and it's not very nice. No (...) (...).

JW: And you mentioned the abuse, could you tell me a little bit about your life around that time, what was happening?

Erm...well, at first, he were a bit emotionally abusive, and then, in the end I was assaulted on the...ff(?).....when I left work, and erm...(.) I was working, I was about to get the baby back (.) but erm...I got injured so I got a tooth that's (.) I had to have a...something in the tooth that's...but yeah, it got knocked back. But...I got a veneer in it now. But er, I decided to let the

⁴⁹ See Chapter 6 for in-depth analysis of this issue.

little boy go. Ironically, he did try to go and get him back, but social services said no! Thank goodness. And he's been adopted ever since (...) (...)” (PG1)

Jacqueline speaks here as a passive narrator, foregrounding instead her ex-partner’s subjectivity and state of mind within the account, rather than describing events as an “active memory” (Scarry, 1985) in which she is the subject of the violence perpetrated. At times the events are completely separated from Jacqueline as the speaking subject (“some women do go through social services, and it’s not very nice”). The shift in pronoun use produces a discursive distancing which may also signal Jacqueline’s own dissociation from the traumatic memories she narrates (Herman, 1992). But despite offering an account, which is overtly detached and fragmented in places, Jacqueline conveys the life-changing impact of the DVA and subsequent removal of her son, with painful clarity. The affective and materially embodied ramifications of these events are communicated through the narrative pieces in Jacqueline’s account: “break downs”, a “wheelie bin” through the window, an assault as she left work, a veneered tooth. Though seemingly unconnected to the speech prior or post their articulation, the narrative fragments in this account are reminiscent of the shattering impact the events had upon Jacqueline. What might be read as a lack of narrative linearity, does not therefore equate to a lack of narrative coherence (Gubrium and Holstein, 1998), but rather, it produces a circular narrative, precipitated in and by the repetition of a singular event. This perhaps signals that which is still “unprocessed” by Jacqueline (Jensen, 2016).

At the same time, the account also implies a type of time suspension or ‘time stuck’ (Baraitser, 2009; Riley, 2012; Baraitser and Riley, 2016), as the past, present and futurity of Jacqueline’s account become intricately enmeshed with one another. Jacqueline strives to move past the traumatic event yet is repeatedly drawn back to it. This recalls Jensen’s (2016, l. 337) assertion that for some victim-survivors, trauma continues to exist in the body as a “perpetual now”, disrupting the process typically undertaken when assigning meaning to lived experience in memory. The importance of attending to the gaps and silences in some victim-survivors’ accounts (Lawless, 2013), which in this case knit together a distressing post-traumatic account, cannot be underestimated. Crucially, they should not be discredited as mere disordered testimony, particularly when articulated within the context of formal help-seeking procedures, but instead should be understood as indicative of the embodied consequences of living through and with DVA.

A similar discursive fragmentation is discernible in Jean’s account. A white woman in her late forties with a complex history of abuse, Jean adopts a similarly detached but far denser narrative style to that of Jacqueline as she relays a genealogy of pivotal life-changing events. These are loosely bound together with and through the discursive breaches and unspoken details of Jean’s account. The following excerpt details the first 2 and a half minutes of our interview:

“I’m Jean; I’m an alcoholic. Been clean 8 months. I’m happy now, but before, going back 12, 13 year ago, I met a guy. Drugs. I just met him. I’d only known him what a week. I was prostituting for him, every fucking...(?) alcohol. Had to go to jail. I got...I went to court...he thought I’d just...I got 6 week. I got served while I was in jail. I lost everything. He was the one...become addicted to alcohol, know what I mean? We started seeing other. But I lost my flat, so I moved in, with him. Straight off. I...after (?) losing my son and everything. It was one of them, spiralling out of control. With the beer and prostituting. Whatever I had to

do to get beer. Um...then him, just him. Never fell in love with him. It were just for the beer. Stayed with him for 8 year. (?) Never had else place to go. If I really wanted to, I could have found... (?) but I was too skint because of the beer. Understand that? And then it started. Smacks with (?)... This is all down to beer. And his mates thought it would be funny to cut me hair. Shave it. Set fire. I went through 8 year of that. I used to climb the windows....I...I done my fair bit of it as well. Um... (...) But in the end I had enough. I just...after the beating, I just went straight to the police. He got arrested. And (...) never loved the guy, but he was into the BNP shit, and everything. Kinda...fucking latch(?), racist bastard, and that. BNP. Now this is...the family's fucking (...) well known [...], do know what I mean? Um...people knows what goes on behind closed doors. People seen the black eyes. And they must have put 2 and 2. Do know what I mean?" (PG1)

Jean begins by deploying a typical discursive pattern for self-identification (Bamberg, 2011), reminiscent of those used in *alcoholics anonymous* and other self-help, peer support group meetings ("I'm Jean; I'm an alcoholic"). Jean's account is scaffolded by a form of institutional storytelling (O' Toole, 2018) which recalls the oftentimes testimonial nature of victim-survivor discourse (Alcoff and Gray, 1993). The account foregrounds the dynamics of 'speaking out' as an act of resistance and as a political act in so far as confessional speech participates in the construction of domination; it is not "mere verbalisation" (Foucault, 1972, p. 216). Jean mobilises this testimonial discourse so that she can begin the process of telling her story while at the same time bringing into relief the obstacles she faced; a constellation of acute socio-material insecurity, substance use, forced prostitution, and structural disadvantage. Jean presents a series of "episodic snapshots" (Bamberg, 2012, p. 113), like Jacqueline, roughly pieced together. Her dense account is heavily compartmentalised, perhaps as a result of living in a perpetual state of crisis, loss and trauma. A life pattern interspersed with sporadic and sometimes fractious engagement with the criminal justice system (CJS). Jean also had intermittent engagement with children's social services, which in this instance, led to the state-ordered removal of her son⁵⁰.

The difficulties encountered by both Jean and Jacqueline before her underscore how pain is not only "resistan[t] to language", but also demonstrate the socio-political obstacles attached to individuals' entitlement to narrate pain or to have their stories of pain heard (Scarry, 1985). As such, when referring to the visible injuries she sustained, Jean at once calls attention to the continued prevalence of sociocultural barriers to disclosure of DVA, which remain firmly grounded in a public/private dichotomy ("people knows what goes on behind closed doors"), which impedes disclosure further. Indeed, the confluence of embodied pain and bodily resistance to the harms of perpetrators and those in power provides a framework for the story to be disclosed. In the following section I explore the notion of 'unspeakability' further, but in the context of embodied pain and artefacts, as strategies for resistance and self-narration.

⁵⁰ Discussed in Chapter 6.

The body, objects and artefacts

Data analysis agonisingly illustrates the challenges of expressing (bodily and psychological) pain, typifying Scarry's (1985) early work which maps the relationships between pain, bodily injury and the substantiation of meaning in the context of differential relations of power (Dawney and Huzar, 2019). In this, the body becomes a crucial site of knowledge production and subjectification while also exposing the manner in which 'made' objects function as an expression of an interior, previously inexpressible state of pain. Data shows the complex relationship between discourse and embodiment, as bodily injury, violence and materiality are brought into sharp focus in the forthcoming participant accounts. Material objects, artefacts or isolated body parts become sites of projection, functioning as signifiers for unspoken realities of trauma and violence. This practice enables some women to omit description of the harm they experienced in favour of the mobilisation of a discourse of 'anti-victimisation' (Meyer, 2016), which, like in earlier accounts, exposes the subjectivity of the perpetrator and at the same enables victim-survivor resistance to the harms they experience. The projection onto material objects, or the singling out of certain body parts, enables meaning-making in a landscape of discursive paucity. Even when language fails, the women are able to relay their experiences in a way that does not obscure them in favour of their wounding (hooks, 1999), as they resist a dominant discourse often mobilised in accounts of domestic abuse in which women's bodily injury becomes the primary signifier for a gendered social problem (Dawney, 2019). The focus upon material detail is tantamount to an act of resistance, functioning as a mechanism for coping with traumatic memory.

In the following extract Pamela orientates her account around parts of the body and incorporates them as a crucial component of her narrative practice (Scarry, 1985). The predominance of body imagery and sensation is characteristic of traumatic memory (Herman, 1992) as the body in this instance becomes a repository for the telling of Pamela's experiences. Any silences or gaps in the discursive formation of events are made speakable through her body:

“And then he started going for my face (.). He started hitting me in the mouth, breaking my teeth and everything and then course [...] I wouldn't look at anyone when I was talking then (..) because it was always the front ones he went for first and (...) I wouldn't smile (..). You know, show my teeth (.) [...] I think out of everything, that's what really got me more. Out of all the physical injuries (.), my teeth were perfect. I had to have a lot of treatment on them after I had [my daughter]; she took all the calcium off me (.) and I went through all that and my teeth (.) were looking like they were before I'd had her. So, um...and then to go (..) and have him do that (..) that really...(.) got me down more” (PG1).

Pamela, a white heterosexual woman in her forties, and mother of one, painfully recounts how her teeth come to signify the pain and destruction of her abuse. Like in previous accounts, Pamela adopts the role of passive narrator, omitting any detail of her feelings when she sustained the injuries referred to. Indeed, her pain is evidenced not in the words used to account for her experience, but in her description of how her injuries left her unable to engage with those around her; unable to smile or “look at anyone” when she was talking to them. The profound impact of the injury – which far extends beyond physical, bodily injury – is communicated through the points of comparison Pamela sets up in the account (“out of all the physical injuries (.), my teeth were perfect”; “my teeth were

looking like they were before I'd had her"), as she describes how all that she once had is literally and symbolically decimated through the breaking of her teeth.

In a similar way, for Aileen, catastrophic injury and the years of abuse and reoccurring trauma that precede this particular event, are encapsulated in, and articulated through, a cigarette lighter. The account is indicative of the construction of traumatic memory which often lacks a verbal narrative (Herman, 1992). The following, deeply disturbing extract illustrates this:

"I bought him a lighter...I'll never forget. It was solid...it was a block, and it was solid silver, but it was electronic lighter, had a little button. Never fails, do you know what I mean? Yeah. But that, that, that morning when I woke up and I felt wet, you know, I looked at bottom of bed and he were there, do you know what I mean? He were there with lighter. Yeah, but you know, he went down...because that lighter, it would not light. The one that I bought him, but he still went down in my kitchen and got it...because in them days, I used to have a...like I used to have a thing for cooker like a clicker thing to light the gas stove. Yeah. Yeah. Set me on fire" (PG1).

Aileen, a white heterosexual woman in her late fifties, calmly describes an event which can only be described as truly horrific, as she recalls the moment, she is set on fire by her then partner with whom she had a 23-year relationship. Reminiscent of other women's accounts both in this study and prior research (Lawless, 2013; Paper Dolls Research Group, 2019), Aileen provides little detail of the specificity of the physical pain this attack entailed, but rather constructs the account through the repeat reference to the electronic silver lighter she bought for her partner. Serving as a principal signifier for her experience, Aileen intricately describes the lighter. That she can describe it in this way reinforces how the event itself remains indelibly cast upon Aileen's mind ("I'll never forget"), while at the same time, remaining literally unspeakable. In so doing, Aileen persistently resists constructing herself as the victim in this story, almost entirely invisibilising her own pain and trauma; instead she speaks as a detached, passive narrator, "deflecting the story away from the language of pain" (Lawless, 2013, p. 70). The focus is upon the calculated, methodical actions of the violent perpetrator. Capturing Scarry's (1985, p. 281) assertion that the "made object is a site of projection" in the absence of an articulation of pain, Aileen describes the moment her partner, upon discovering that the electronic lighter would not work – a lighter that usually "never fails" – walked to the kitchen and retrieved an alternative means to ignite the flames that would burn her body as she lay asleep in bed.

The use of everyday objects as a mechanism for the articulation of DVA is also salient in the account offered by Louise, the youngest victim-survivor participant in the study. Louise speaks here about photo-frame in her mother's house:

"[M]y mum used to have a photo, like one of those photo frames with two like spaces for two photos in, and, and she had one of my brother with his prom date, and one of me with my prom date, who happened to be my ex-boyfriend. And when [my boyfriend] came round he was like, 'I can't believe you've got that up, that's disgusting, I don't want to look at that'. And I was like, 'well look it's not up because I want it up, it's because my mum wants it up [...] So again like, I took it out of the frame. [...] I just remember feeling so stressed and so tense, and I kept hiding it and [my mum] just kept finding it and putting it back in, and saying I

just don't understand what's come over you? Why are you doing that? And I just remember feeling so stressed, and so angry with her. And being like, 'why don't you understand?' If he sees that I am absolutely going to get it. You don't understand...That real kind of walking on eggshells feeling, I think" (PG1).

Louise's account of the photo-frame captures the complexities of living in a coercively controlling environment, made all the more complicated because she is a young person living with her mother. While the photo-frame functions as a relatively innocuous object in the eyes of her mother, for Louise it becomes a site of conflict and potential violence. It sustains a persistent battle between her and her partner, as well as between Louise and her mother, as Louise repeatedly tries to hide the object, while her mother "kept finding it". That Louise's mother struggled to understand what was really happening, and that Louise felt unable to tell her, are both worthy of attention because they emphasise the additional barriers younger women face when living with DVA.

Louise also articulates with real clarity the reality of living with coercive control, an experience characterised by a feeling of "walking on eggshells"; in a constant state of hyper-vigilance, heightened stress, anxiety and chronic fear. Crucially, it is this chronic fear that sets DVA apart from other crimes (Pain, 2014b). This account, together with those that precede it, demonstrate how material objects or certain parts of the body are transformed into mechanisms for narrative production in the absence of a suitable vocabulary to articulate experience. The body is made an "inscribed surface of events", violently visibilising the regimes of power in operation in the lives of the women concerned (McNay, 1992, p. 16). This includes the structural conditions that shape lived experience of DVA. With this in mind, I now shift focus from notions of embodiment, to concepts of the self and subjectivity, as another surface upon which the pain of DVA is made legible.

Un/making subjectivity and self-identity

Pain can be both "world-shattering" and "world-making" (Scarry, 1985; Dawney and Huzar, 2019) and the former is perhaps reflected most clearly in the loss of self, articulated by several of the participants in this study. The accounts point to an erasure of personal identity in the midst of an experience that has the potential to completely segregate the victim-survivor from the 'knowable' world she typically inhabits. This detachment and destruction of self is precipitated by the DVA experienced and is indicative of the effects of trauma (Herman, 1992; Brison, 2003; Paper Dolls Research Group, 2019). It also often corresponds with the victim-survivor's ability to disclose abuse, to seek help or to leave the relationship (Neale, 2018). The following extract from Pamela exemplifies this:

"I can remember sitting there one day... [my neighbour] upstairs come down to see if I was alright and that, and I can remember saying to her, I said, 'I don't know who I am'. 'Who am I?' (...) And I thought.... you know a grown woman to question herself like that, what is going on?" (PG1)

Pamela's self-questioning underscores this sentiment with devastating clarity, and signals a narrative rumination (Marin and Shkreli, 2019) on something that seems unanswerable, as she tries to recuperate her sense of self after ejecting her violent partner from her home following years of near

fatal abuse. Pamela's experience leaves her untethered from the world, which she equates to an almost childlike state of unknowing and confusion ("a grown woman to question herself like that"). Pamela's struggle to move the narrative on in this extract hints at the immense challenges of making sense of such an experience so that one might re-anchor oneself. Abigail, a white disabled lesbian woman in her mid-fifties recounts an experience that echoes Pamela's:

"I would literally have a little list; a sort of, 'ok talk about the weather now'...kind of thing. Because I didn't know how to do that. I lost it...and I lost my identity completely; who I was before all the abuse...It just eroded away. And... I mean it got to the point where my name wasn't used; where I was 'bitch' and I never heard him say my name for a couple of years unless we were in company. And then he was nicest partner in the world" (PG1).

Abigail's reflection upon a "complete" loss of identity is coupled here with a loss of understanding of how to actively engage in the world, or to effectively negotiate everyday tasks or conversations because her identity has been so "eroded away" by her partner's coercion, violence and control. With both her identity and subjectivity rendered obsolete, Abigail is made a nameless entity, referred to only as "bitch". This deeply dehumanising tactic is redolent of those used in slavery or torture regimes and functions to eradicate who Abigail was "before all the abuse". Abigail's account is characteristic of people who are highly traumatised. It does not indicate "learned helplessness" but rather is the product of living in a state of constant surveillance and control in which the smallest of actions carries dangerous consequences in the volatile world constructed by the perpetrator (Herman, 1992, p. 66; Stark, 2007; Williamson, 2010). Resonating with Abigail's experience, Charlene, a specialist DVA practitioner in the north of the country, spoke about the actions of her ex-partner:

"I had to move back to my mum and dad's, and I slept with my dad every night for weeks because when the light went out...I would get locked in cupboards for days, thrown food. I would be dragged round the kitchen with a lead round my neck, in front of my little boy, you know it was (.) erm (.) it was very traumatic, and it happened very quickly" (PG1 & PG2).

Charlene's experience relates to that of Abigail's as she provides an account which reflects a coercively controlling regime of total oppression, enslavement and isolation, in which the freedoms of daily living are micro-regulated or removed all together (Williamson, 2010). In both cases, the perpetrator removes the women's autonomy and constructs an environment in which any action conducted of the women's own volition comes to be understood as risky or disobedient, and therefore to be avoided (Herman, 1992). In this way, perpetrator isolation tactics undermine Abigail and Charlene's sense of selfhood to the extent that their "primary source of interpretation and validation" of the world, is that of the perpetrator (Stark, 2007, p. 262).

Abigail's account also shines a light on the inconsistent dual identity status of the coercively controlling perpetrator in her description of her ex-partner as violent perpetrator on the one hand, and the "nicest partner in the world" on the other. This duality is typical to many perpetrators' presentation (Stark, 2007), and it can constitute a major barrier to victim-survivors' disclosure or reporting of abuse, particularly when coupled with the isolation strategies discussed above. Dominant pathological models of DVA have up until recently not accounted for the complex realities of coercive

control, an abuse often undetectable by the outside observer (Williamson, 2010). That perpetrators are able to carefully orchestrate and manage their presentation of self, while corroding entirely that of their partners, is testament to the insidious, perverse, and methodical way in which they perpetrate abuse. This debunks any notion that the perpetrator's behaviour is a momentary loss of control or anger. When considered against the sociocultural backdrop of a general disbelief of victim-survivors' disclosures, particularly in the case of sexual violence, the substantive difficulties women must overcome in order to tell their stories and have their voices heard, are starkly apparent. This barrier to disclosure also constitutes one of the most significant gendered strategies by which victim-survivors are silenced. Corroborating this assertion is a contribution from Sylvia, a white woman in her seventies, who provided a written account of her experience⁵¹:

“What caused me most damage for longest in my life was not something that I could have reported to anyone. It would have been possible to explain an attack, a sexual assault, and show the bruises and marks, and people could have understood my trauma.

[...]

[T]he point I am trying to make is that real pain and suffering is often hidden and insidious and can completely destroy self-respect and any feeling of self-worth. As I type, here now in my seventies, I am choking back tears” (PG1).

Sylvia's account brings into sharp relief how the violence used in coercive control is oftentimes not physical. Her description of the deeply damaging impacts of an abuse which leaves no physical evidence correlates with prior studies on coercive control (Stark, 2007; Williamson, 2010). Sylvia's account evinces how coercive control can limit possibilities for disclosure, help-seeking as well as recovery because, without visible “bruises and marks”, the victim-survivor is not recognised as such. Other participants also deploy a discourse that replicates the aforementioned discourse of identity loss but coupled with an account of attempted recuperation in the wake of domestic abuse; an embodied task of self-(re)discovery, usually following the departure from a violent partner. But as the women themselves articulate, the notion that one can recover a (lost) self simply through willpower and self-determination alone is marred with inherent contradictions, not least because it presupposes the prior existence of 'self' before the abuse. As Dawn states:

“Do you know what Jess, I really don't know...I feel like I don't know who I am. I don't know whether...I feel like...I feel like I'm getting a bit better. I'm not as anxious. I think I am. People say you need to find yourself first. How do you find yourself?” (PG1)

Reflecting here upon her sense self-identity in the aftermath of significant physical and emotional abuse in adulthood and years of childhood abuse before that, Dawn expresses real doubt as to “who” she is while also grappling with the abstract notion of “find[ing] yourself”. Assessing her personal (psychological) progress, Dawn cites her reduced levels of anxiety as a possible indicator of her improved mental health, albeit with some uncertainty as to its genuine applicability to her life (“I feel

⁵¹ The full extract appears at the beginning of Chapter 1.

like I'm getting better... [...] I think I am"). Dawn's account illustrates the existential difficulties brought about by a pervasive, gendered cultural discourse of finding the 'true' self (Riley et al., 2019). It is a discourse further problematised when combined with DVA, which so often turns upon the perpetrator's systematic erasure of the victim-survivor's personhood, self-esteem, self-belief and self-worth as evidenced in Sylvia, Pamela, Abigail and Dawn's previously discussed accounts. Often rooted in the pseudo-scientific rhetoric of self-help, the particularities of 'finding oneself' are largely intangible and frequently abstracted from an individual's lived reality. This makes them unattainable for those who lack the material, personal or social resources to participate in neoliberalised economies of self-help, or indeed to embark upon a journey of 'self-discovery'. Tracey, a white woman in her early forties and mother of one, also alluded to the incongruity of the self-help advice she was being offered in therapy, when she was at the same time going back to daily violence and abuse at home:

"[Y]ou're in therapy, and the therapist is saying, saying right, 'when you get a quiet time tonight get yourself a piece of paper and a pencil', whatever. And it's like, I've just told you what me home life's like. Do you really think I'm going to be able to find a quiet space with a pencil and a piece of paper? (...) 'Well, just try'. 'No, I won't. It's stupid'. And they put these ideas in your head and it's like (...) you've just got no idea. You've got no idea, and you're just like constantly, kind of being like disappointed, because something builds you up, gives you a bit of hope, but then you go home, and it's gone" (PG1).

While highlighting the inapplicability of the task recommended by the therapist, reinforced by her repeated use of "no idea", Tracey articulates the severity of her own situation at the time. Also, in evidence though is how Tracey begins to believe that another life might be possible, when not in her home environment, as she orientates the latter part of her account towards a discourse of "hope". Her hope is promptly shattered upon returning home. Echoing Dawn, Tracey states the following when talking about finding the "courage" to recover her sense of self after the abuse:

"Not to just like, I were gonna say, not just to like rehabilitate to what you used to be, because you can't do that because (...) I don't know who I am, because it's always been other people. So, I'm now like on this journey of, who am I?" (PG1)

Tracey reveals the complex identity work she embarks upon, after the abuse had ended, foregrounding the convergence of trauma, self and agency, as she, like many of the other women victim-survivors, searched for "a way to live in the future" (Jensen, 2016). It is a task complicated by the fact that so much of the dominant discourse regarding 'recovery' and post-separation 'move-on' is characterised by a narrative of restoration; a process of "rehabilit[ing] to what you used to be". However, as Tracey's account indicates, this is often a false notion which functions as an additional obstruction in the "journey of who am I?", disrupting the possibility of moving forward. It problematically presupposes a linear trajectory from 'non-victim' to 'victim' to 'survivor' in which 'survivor' equates to a 'restored' self. But movement through these is not linear, as the participants' accounts attest, and women with experience of DVA often move between and across them, or indeed, deviate from this trajectory all together. Tracey's account also brings into relief the relation Foucault referred to between *knowing* oneself, and *taking care* of oneself (Foucault, 1988) because an experience of DVA can often prevent self-care in favour of mere survival, particularly for women

like Tracey, Abigail, Charlene and Dawn – lives which have at some point, been characterised by a series of challenges, during which time the possibilities for self-care are far narrower, although by no means irrevocably so.

The women's contributions exhibit the incredibly "precarious properties of narrating the self" (Woodiwiss et al., 2017, p. 49) particularly when sense of self shifts in tandem with a fluctuating victim-status. It is a process shaped in part by the dominant discourses women draw upon to (re)construct accounts of DVA experience, which coalesces with the aforementioned identity labels: non-victim, victim, survivor. These present real difficulties for some victim-survivors as they struggle to align their sense of self with the identity constructed within and by these dominant discourses, particularly in relation to the 'victimised' and 'survivor' self, as Tracey's account elucidates. Crucially, together, these can produce the silencing of some victim-survivors, as the discourses of self, interface with help-seeking strategies, as the following account from Leah indicates:

“I didn't even know who I was. I would...I doubted everything, everything and everyone. Doubted myself, first and foremost, and that was a direct result of him and his abusive behaviours. Emotional and psychological abuse. Um (.) I can remember there were several times, I would go and get a bus and get as far as being outside the doctors (.) just to make an appointment to go and see the doctor and then lose all bottle and walk away, because I just didn't know how to, how to present the problem, you know?” (PG1)

Leah's account resonates with the aforementioned women's accounts, as she directly attributes the unmaking of her subjectivity with the actions of the perpetrator. This identity erasure *is* the abuse produced through coercive control, which incapacitates the person living with DVA, and as Leah indicates, prohibits her from accessing the language to “present the problem”. When thinking about prevention and intervention, it is crucial to acknowledge victim-survivor identity practices via a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which notions of self and personhood articulate with help-seeking and disclosure, when experiencing domestic abuse. In the following section I will explore the issue of help-seeking further, but in the context of victim-survivors' individual acts of resistance to the violence they experience and the implication this has for accessing assistance.

Resistance work & help – seeking

Participant accounts repeatedly convey the depth and extent of victim-survivors' resourcefulness in their contestations of, and resistance to, the DVA they face. Following the work of Pain (2014a; b), the accounts illustrate how resistance is “never in straightforward opposition to violence but exists in messy and dynamic relation” sometimes amounting to “an intimate practice” (Pain, 2014a, p. 352). Analysis of the accounts reveals the ways in which participants account for their 'resistance work' which is understood here as a resistance to violence through individual action (planning); actions to (re)gain control, and or a contestation of dominant narratives of DVA which work to construct victim-survivors as 'passive', 'helpless' subjects, as referred to earlier. The resistance work undertaken by victim-survivors' regularly entails the skilful implementation of complex precautionary measures and risk management plans, geared towards increasing their safety and that of any dependent children. Often these actions are taken within highly constrained, unsafe and risky environments and are

underpinned by a process of informed, rational-decision making (Meyer, 2012). Tracey provides an example of this as she relays a conversation with her daughter, regarding an elaborate strategy to facilitate their departure from the home she shared with her husband:

“So, I'm like, right yeah, that's when we'll do it. Wait till you finish your exams, and then we'll go. So I spent my...about six months planning it, because I just weren't prepared to risk anything going wrong, (...) and my daughter was 16 by then as well, which were a determining factor because if she's 16 she can't get taken off me, and there's no reason she should get taken off me, because I'm a good parent” (PG1).

The significance of children in the shaping of women's decision-making processes cannot be underestimated (Meyer, 2012), illustrated here as Tracey explains how she initiated a plan carefully developed over months, to avoid “anything going wrong”. The plan centres her daughter's safety, her educational needs, and the avoidance of any risk of her removal into state care in the event that something did go wrong. Taken together, these factors underscore how leaving a domestically violent partner is a particularly precarious and finely balanced act for mothers in particular (Pain, 2014b). It also belies any notion that the onus should be placed upon women to “just leave” given the levels of risk they contend with, particularly post-departure. Tracey goes on to discuss the extent of her planning:

“So, I had to siphon some money off [...]. But I got this bag, that I carried everywhere with me, that had all the details of moving. I had like, it were like military, military precision, you know. And it just had to be done in secret, had to be done in complete secrecy. [...] Started emptying the house without him knowing, so like pans were disappearing, one by one, you know, there were gaps in the wardrobe, that were unnoticeable, you know the clothes that you've got that are either now too big or too small, yeah, they started hanging up ((laughs)). I had a couple friends come around who'd never been to my house before (...) ...I got a group of friends at church, I kinda...people who used to just be like, 'hello' in smokers' corner, I kinda like, recruited them to help me. Because they knew nothing about me, nothing about my husband, nothing about... Nothing. Erm (...) because it's kind of a trust no one situation and same with services as well, Professional Services. They didn't know fuck-all” (PG1).

Despite having most aspects of her life controlled by the perpetrator, Tracey successfully leaves her husband, expediting an exit with “military precision”, combined with notable composure, determination and patience, as she slowly emptied the house of half of the possessions. Tracey recounts how she constructed decoy narratives upon which she knew her partner would seize, the moment she and their daughter left. Tracey, like other participants including Aileen and Pamela, did not disclose the abuse to anyone therefore her abuse had no public recognition at the time (Williamson, 2010). But the methodical, “secret” build up to their departure, reveals the changing contours of Tracey's fear, ostensibly bringing to bear Pain's (2014b) concept of the ‘seismologies of emotion’, as Tracey harnesses her fear to set in motion her eventual departure. A similar account of resistance work, also independent of any external intervention, can be read in the following excerpt from Melanie, as she tells me about the process leading up to the termination of her second abusive relationship:

“[T]here was one day where he got really, really drunk (.) and I thought right, this is it, he's going (.) So, while he was asleep, I took the key off his keyring (.) and then, I knew if I started really annoying him, winding him up, he'd go out, and there, I lock the door (.) You don't get back in. So that's exactly what I did, cause I wound him up, and he said, 'oh I'm going out'. 'Ok, you're a grown man, I can't control you, you go out'. And (..) I...I did a really naughty thing, really (.) it was my little bit of protection; (.) I had all his bank codes (.) so I could ring the phone bank to find out how much he'd got cause he'd just spend every last penny on drink and smoking (..) so I checked his bank and he'd got nothing (.) He'd got a fiver and he'd spent his fiver in Sainsbury's, so I knew he'd bought drink (.) So I thought right, he's going to come back even more worse for wear (.) So he started texting me; 'I'm coming back', and I says, 'no you're not' (...) I says, 'cause you're drunk'. 'I'm not drunk'. 'No, you're not coming back'(..)” (PG1).

Melanie, a white woman in her early forties and mother of three children, carefully engages in a process of 'scene setting' (Potter, 1996b) as she describes a detailed plan of action to provoke her abusive partner's departure as well as to manage the risk associated with this process. The events described cohere with what Pain (2014b) has termed a “critical moment” in the process of leaving a violent partner, connoting the culmination of a gradual shift in perspective or emotions (“this is it, he's going”), and underpinned by a complex negotiation of fear and risk. Melanie seeks to put measures in place to mitigate the risk by calculating how much money her (ex)partner would potentially spend on alcohol, to determine how drunk he may be, as it provides a certain amount of protection. Providing another compelling account of highly calibrated risk taking and strategic decision-making, Anita discusses her efforts to locate a viable exit from her partner, albeit temporarily in this instance:

“He'd held me in the house for three days (...) Held me in the house for three days. Wouldn't leave. Kept saying he was gonna leave. On the morning that he was supposed to leave, I said 'why aren't you leaving'? (...) He told me, 'I will do. Go and score for me and bring the drugs back'. So, I went and scored. Used all the drugs. Went back, and said, 'used all the drugs', intentionally, to try and see if he'd kick off and leave. He kicked off, battered me, and then left (..). I ended up reporting that” (PG1).

This extract is punctuated by the repeated coupling of key words (“held me”, “leave”, “score” and so on), combined with short, truncated sentences which have the prosodic effect of emphasising the severity of Anita's entrapment. In it, we see how the contestation of the violence is not limited to women seeking to leave the relationship but is also enacted by those who remain in a relationship, and often accompanied by a careful cost-benefit analysis of the potential outcomes (Meyer, 2012; 2016). And like Melanie, Anita knowingly takes steps to incite a certain reaction in her partner, fully cognisant of the implications of those actions. Being viciously beaten by her partner is a high price, but one Anita is willing to pay so that he will leave, ending her captivity in their flat. This account, as well as the one prior, provides a stark reminder of the levels of risk women must negotiate in these circumstances, often on a daily basis. The accounts also vividly exemplify the extent to which the abuse is compounded by the fact that it takes place within the domestic sphere which not only serves

to accentuate the potential for physical entrapment, coercion and control, but also functions to complicate women's avenues for exiting and help-seeking.

Saima, a British Asian woman in her thirties, with two young children also provides an account, which aligns with the previous ones. In it, we see the interaction of the various cultural, familial, and economic obligations women must often negotiate (Pain, 2014b) when seeking to confront the violence they face in their own homes. These operate against the backdrop of the physical and psychological control and surveillance exerted upon Saima, as she tries to access help from service providers:

"Once I had this emergency appointment at the solicitors, you know the free consultation you get first (...) and it's like chucking it down with rain outside and I was like shit! [...] how do I go, how do I go? And his mum's like, where you going, where you going and I was like, what do I say? It was sooo much stress and pressure going anywhere, doing anything, because people are keeping an eye on you. And I had to just lie, and just go. [...] And apart from that, I always used to go in school and make out that I've got like...I'm going to see the teacher, or I've got a class, or something, and I used to be there forever. Met the police at the school, met [the support service] people at the school. I used to see everyone at the school because it was like the only thing I could do, there was no other way I could see anyone" (PG1).

This extract elucidates the extent of the regulatory regime imposed upon Saima by her husband, characterised by restrictions on her access to money, freedom of movement, her appearance, and her right to communicate freely with others. Despite these, Saima engages in resistance work by orchestrating an appointment with the solicitors as well as other helping agencies, under the guise of going to her children's school or a (adult education) class. Her extended family also occupies a key role in Saima's abuse, as her husband's parents became a proxy for the maintenance of her surveillance; their involvement cohering with the experiences of other South Asian women in studies conducted by Thiara and Gill (2012). Saima's extended family believed it was culturally inappropriate to contest the DVA or to seek help, including calling the police, as Saima says; "cause another big thing of our culture [...] [y]ou can never ever call the police. It doesn't matter what it is. He can murder me, but for me to call the police, 'how dare you!' 'What are the community going to say?'"

Saima's experience of abuse and leave-seeking is located at the intersection of race and gender (Crenshaw, 1991), as a key discourse of DVA is fundamentally challenged. Calling the police is constructed as a risky contravention of cultural norms leading to a loss of social status and cultural integrity (Thiara and Gill, 2012). Indeed, Saima refers to a formalised method of help-seeking which incorporates an implied trust in the police, which for some minoritised communities is understandably problematic as it intersects with legitimate concerns regarding police institutional racism, particularly when living as a minority in a majority white community. It is also within this context that Saima experiences a heightened sense of powerlessness, as her agentic capacity is further diminished during her attempts to exert control over her own situation. The account coheres with an Althusserian (2001 [1971]) theorisation of subjectification, in which the range of 'ideological state apparatuses' productive of the ideologies within which individuals assume particular identities, are made clearly apparent (Weedon, 2013).

Like many other victim-survivors, the only possibility of movement outside of the home for Saima is limited to the carrying out of child care responsibilities which, taken together with the aforementioned everyday regulatory measures imposed by Saima's husband, underscore the uniquely gendered nature of coercive control as it aligns with the governing of stereotypical gender roles and the maintenance of an unequal gender political dynamic (Stark, 2007; Williamson, 2010). Strongly substantiating this claim, is another extract from Aileen, in which she details her captivity in her own home; forced to go into the cellar after taking her three children to school and nursery every morning, and then permitted to leave by the perpetrator, to collect the children from school in the afternoon. As she told me; "he'd put me down my cellar, you know, tell me to go down cellar, till quarter 3 in day, when he'd open the door. Tell me to fix up my face" (PG1). Redolent of the accounts provided earlier of total oppression at the hands of the perpetrator, Aileen's account points to the careful premeditated nature of DVA, perpetrated in such a way as to ensure it is not detectable to any person outside of the home, while also policing a perverse standard of (heteronormative) feminine beauty as she was told to "fix up [her] face".

While perhaps the most significant expression of resistance to violence is leaving the relationship, or attempting to orchestrate a departure, for some women this is either not a viable possibility, or it is not one that is sought for a whole host of complex reasons. Indeed, Aileen discusses later on in our interview that she remained in the relationship for her children, primarily because she was not able to financially support them independently of her partner who was financially well resourced. Aileen's capacity to endure in the relationship for some 23 years, under these conditions, points to another iteration of victim-survivor resistance work. Her performance of her gender-role expectations also functions to some extent as a key mechanism for the management of the abuse (Cavanagh, 2003). Aileen's practice is thus a reminder of how resistance remains a possibility for victim-survivors who stay. Pamela provides another example of this as she recalls instances in which she countered the abuse by engaging in the routine but prohibited activities "we take for granted". For Pamela, undertaking these tasks became an act imbued with far greater significance, as they came to signify her resistance work which disrupted the power relations within the relationship (Enander and Holmberg, 2008), albeit temporarily:

"We weren't allowed to have a bath (.); we were only allowed to have a shower (..) Of course with [my disabled daughter] especially in the winter, she needs to soak in warm water to...because her joints go so stiff and then that's when all the pain kicks in (..) But he'd allow her to do that once a week (.). We did it more when he was out (.). I did start getting a bit..(.) 'Oh well, we'll do it, we'll try, I'll take the consequences if he catches us'. But we used to have a bath, the two of us, and then after, I'd got out then...because I'd wait for [my daughter] to go into bed first then I'd have a bath. So... (.) I'd get out then, I'd empty the bath, clean it, dry it then with a towel, so he wouldn't know we'd used it. And it was all (..) things that we take for granted, he'd stop me doing (...)" (PG1).

Pamela's use of "we" in this extract underscores the alliance between her and her daughter, as they carefully navigate the rules set by the perpetrator, confronting together the limitations imposed upon their freedoms. Like other women's accounts discussed earlier, Pamela's account of her partner's behaviour evinces the micro-regulations characteristic of coercive control (Stark, 2007) which she

begins to emulate in order to regain an element of agency and control. What they are “allowed” to do becomes a central preoccupation in order to keep safe, and the smallest acts are instilled with significant weight. But even when their ‘space for action’ (Kelly, 2003) is almost non-existent, Pamela and her daughter resist, and push against the boundaries imposed upon them.

Steph, a white woman living in the north of the country, also provides an account in which she elucidates micro-acts of resistance while living with her abusive partner. She orientates her resistance-work towards a discourse of “revenge”, saying; “when I was making his tea, I'd spit in his tea, and...[...] And I have cleaned the toilet with his toothbrush before, and just thought...because I'd see me kids upset, and I'd think, it's alright. Don't worry, I've sorted it.” (PG1). For Steph, these acts of resistance provide some restitution in the absence of another means to resist. This substantiates Berlant’s (2018, p. 107) assertion that, “sometimes [...] revenge is the only efficient justice people feel they have”. Steph’s account, like those before her, foregrounds the workings of fear which, like the waves beneath the earth’s surface, rises and falls to produce gradual change (Pain, 2014b). The account emphasises that women continuously negotiate both resistance and agency within the limitations relative to their individual situations, and the complexities of these should be acknowledged as such. Anita provides another example of this, as she discusses an incident with her ex-partner who had forced her into prostitution:

“[H]e got a lot out of me sex working. In fact, I don't want to use that word because I don't like the word sex working, it's flipping awful, and everybody here [at work] uses it and I'm like, no actually it's prostitution, it's not fucking work. It's the most traumatic thing. And as much as when I was in it I used to lie to myself and say it was my choice and that it was empowering -- because in some sense it was, it was, better for me to sell my body, have some control over my own abuse and get the money put in my hands, than it was to live with a drug dealer, or live with a guy who was raping me every night, erm, and forcing me to do whatever sexual acts (.) because I felt scared that I was going to lose my home or whatever” (PG1).

This account exposes the profound complexities associated with “prostitution” which centre the debates regarding what it means for different women, to be living under patriarchy. For Anita, prostitution is another tool for the perpetration of DVA and a deepening of her trauma. We see how the normatively understood principles of self-determination are reworked relative to the constraints imposed upon victim-survivors, while also highlighting the limitations built into narratives of “choice”. These regularly surface in discussions regarding women’s actions when in a relationship with a violent partner and often culminate in an interrogation into why she ‘stayed’ (Enander and Holmberg, 2008; Enander, 2010). When set against the dominant discourses that pattern help-seeking processes, the complexities associated with women’s negotiation of choice in circumstances such as Anita’s are brought sharply into focus. In the next section, I discuss how the women’s resistance work might be understood as ‘quiet activism’ which has the potential to accomplish broader social change.

‘Quiet’ activism, collectivism and social change

Political or social justice movement activism is typically understood as activity conducted on a large scale, demonstrative, antagonistic and collective in nature (Pottinger, 2016). Acts of everyday resistance carried out within small scale settings such as the home, in small groups, and on an

individual basis, would therefore not typically be regarded as activism. However, drawing upon the work of feminist geographers in particular, it is possible to argue for the value vested in making connections between everyday actions and broader social change (Pain, 2014b). This is accomplished via an analysis and reworking of the extant power relations in operation (Martin et al., 2007), as well as building social relationships among people, in order to foster change on a community level (Martin et al., 2007; Askins, 2014; 2015; Pottinger, 2016). Understood as ‘quiet activism’ (Pottinger, 2016), it is constituted in small, quotidian, embodied acts which are valuable both in their potential to connect to a larger, collective cause because of their potential for ‘scaling-up’, but also because of the potential to challenge, resist and rework social, environmental or political relations (Martin et al., 2007; Askins, 2015).

A ‘quiet activism’ can be traced in the women’s crafting support group I attended while doing the fieldwork. The power of the group to counter the effects of trauma by galvanising victim-survivors and creating a sense of unified belonging is captured here in Melissa’s account:

“[I]n the craft room, there's everybody from council estates to people who are career women who can only come once a month, but still come [...] even take holidays to make sure that they can come. And having that dynamic where the women all understand each other, because they have a mutual understanding, it's like a common thread. Common bond. It's like being in war. You know. And would these people mix at another time? I don't know” (PG1).

Akin to what Tyler has termed a “maternal commons” (2013), Melissa’s account illustrates the extent to which these types of groups serve as a mechanism for the enactment of “common bonds” across boundary lines of including class and race (Askins, 2014). The breadth of difference is captured here through Melissa’s discursive juxtaposition of those from “council estates” together with “career women” who book annual leave to attend. In describing the group Melissa orientates her account towards a discourse of ‘wartime’ unification (“It’s like being in war”), accentuating the activist-like properties of the group, which in this example crystallise around a “mutual understanding” of DVA; “a common thread”.

The trauma of DVA not only impacts upon the victim-survivor’s sense of self, but also fundamentally effects the systems of secure attachment that connect a person with her community. Her ability to trust others is also fundamentally breached (Herman, 1992; Paper Dolls Research Group, 2019). Data from this study illustrates the ways in which group work, functions to enable victim-survivors to begin (re)connecting with others, while also providing safe opportunities to (re)build a sense of trust in others. The formation of trusting bonds as well as a network among the women, is indicative of the formation of social capital among group members (Larance and Porter, 2004). The craft group also becomes a site for the placement and performing of care (Askins, 2015; Power and Hall, 2017), in which the women can access peer support, often in the absence of any formal support provision, given the significant cuts made to DVA specialist provision in recent years. Melanie corroborates this assertion as she tells me; “[t]he biggest support I've had, is all the girls at [the group]. We've actually got our own Facebook site on there and everything [...] (..) I don't know what I would have actually done without them [...] (..) no one offers you any support otherwise. You're just out there, you're on your own (...)” (PG1). Melanie’s formulation of the group points to the ways in which the relationships of trust and care initiated in the group space are instrumentalised to effect change outside of the

group through the use of social media platforms in this instance. Facebook becomes a discursive resource which cements the group as a cohesive peer-support unit, working to informally respond to 'gaps' in provision ("no one offers you any support otherwise") amidst a gradually shifting landscape of care during times of austerity (Power and Hall, 2017). Melissa provides another example of this:

"[I]t looks like we're all having a whale of a time but actually it's pretty serious. I know women that have not killed themselves because they were expected to be at the group, the next day (...) ((crying)) Well it's been...I don't know if [the organisers] know, but there's been four of them, that I know of (.) have (..) come very close to killing themselves. Just from December. [...] But we do, we do, keep track of each other. And we do support each other. And we are honest with each [other]" (PG1).

Melissa's use of extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) is striking here ("I know women that have not killed themselves"), as she mobilises a discourse in which the group is constructed as a protective factor against suicide. Melissa's testimony corroborates Herman's (1992, p. 154) assertion that "the solidarity of a group provides the strongest protection against terror and despair, and the strongest antidote to traumatic experience". The account demonstrates the extent to which "small-scale and intimate experiences" within the group space have the potential to contribute to change (Hackney, 2015, p. 187), which extend beyond the group's boundaries. Indeed, the group has the effect of cultivating an alternative public discourse to the individualistic and alienating agenda of political neoliberalism, functioning as a genuine survival mechanism for some women. This is particularly the case for women facing heightened levels of isolation, and those coping with the consequences of the state-ordered court removal of a child, itself a highly stigmatising and isolating experience (Morriss, 2018). This assertion is corroborated by Heidi who attended a support group in another part of the country group for 7 years before it was discontinued due to funding cuts. Speaking of the impact the group had upon her ability to manage the ongoing abuse she experienced, Heidi says; "I would nowhere near have got where I am. Absolutely nowhere, because it's just somewhere that you can say something in an environment where people can understand you (.) They don't question you (..) and they just accept it" (PG1). Heidi's formulation of the group, along with the contributions of Melissa and Melanie before her, substantiates how far a group "bears witness and affirms" (Herman, 1992, p. 154) the experience of victim-survivors, while also nurturing a vital sense of solidarity among its members.

Data suggests that in some cases the bonds and relationships forged in the group space imbricate with the individual acts of resistance the women enact within their own homes discussed earlier, after finding strength and courage from other women within the physical or online group space. The group also enables the construction of a counter-narrative, to contest the violence and isolation imposed upon women by their violent partners (Larance and Porter, 2004). This in turn enables victim-survivors to begin rebuilding their sense of self-worth and self-esteem within the boundaries of a group that is affirmative and built upon (a partially) shared experience narrative. Arguably, these spaces foster "an affective solidarity", which "prioritises embodied knowledge, affective connection and a desire to transform the social terrain" (Hemmings, 2012, l. 109) through the harnessing of personal relationships.

Conclusion

Analysis reveals the extent to which the inadequacy of current sociocultural understandings of ('authentic') DVA victimhood coalesce with the problems associated with defining DVA. Taken together, these severely impede victim-survivors' ability to disclose abuse, thereby impacting upon individual help-seeking processes, and ultimately obstructing individual victim-survivor attempts to locate viable and safe pathways out of the DVA (if this is an outcome the victim-survivor seeks). Indeed, the burgeoning limitations placed upon contemporary understandings of what adequately captures the DVA victim-survivor experience, and what correspondingly amounts to the social problem of DVA, also produces the exclusion of certain bodies from accessing help when their lived experiences do not cohere with dominant narratives. Women who live more marginal or liminal lives, such as those with complex or co-occurring needs (including substance use, engagement in prostitution or sex-work, those involved in the criminal justice system), BAME women, and migrant and asylum seeking women, experience the consequences of an overly narrow conceptualisation of DVA even more keenly. It is therefore crucial that the diverse vocabularies and alternative modes through which victim-survivors express and communicate their experiences are recognised and understood. This includes acknowledgement of non-linearity, non-uniformity or fragmentation in victim-survivor accounts as signifiers of meaning rather than impediments in the process of disclosure. This point is strengthened when considered in tandem with the impacts of trauma following DVA, which have a profound and long-lasting impact upon notions of self and individual capacity to lead a future-orientated life; effects which far extend beyond the point of departure from the relationship (if applicable). This has significant ramifications for help-seeking processes which, taken together with the previous point, denotes a key consideration when developing sector-wide interventions and responses for people experiencing DVA.

The participant accounts underscore the importance of connecting individual experience of DVA in the private, domestic realm, with the public sphere and structural systems. In so doing, a more meaningful critical analysis of the gendered relations which underpin the social problem of DVA and VAW is made possible. Construed as a 'quiet activism' carried out on an individual level, the actions of some victim-survivors foreground how individual acts of resistance can contribute to, or engender, social change at other scales (Pain, 2014b), which in turn can help to inform societal and sector responses to DVA and shore up the possibility for survivor-led social change. The prospect of social change in this context is however bound up with the individual labour of resistance and the contestation of violence, enacted by victim-survivors in the context of their own relationships and the spaces they habitually inhabit, including support group spaces. And while participants demonstrate an impressive adeptness at contesting the violence they face, the resistance work they do simultaneously risks providing grounds for the justification of a withdrawal of provision on the part of the state, bolstered by neoliberal ideals of individualisation and self-reliance. As Pain (2014b, l. 547) has argued, individual activism is arguably only necessary where "formal political mechanisms do not adequately protect or ensure people's rights, in this case to safety". With this in mind, the following chapter will explore these issues specifically in relation to austerity, welfare reform measures and the systematic withdrawal of DVA provision and welfare assistance for victim-survivors.

Chapter 6: Austerity, welfare reform and resilience

“So, when it comes to benefits and you know, just the simple things, like the training, of job centre staff [on] how to deal with people who have come out of domestic [abuse], you know.

You're trying to figure out how to think again, you're trying to figure out how to make decisions, and they're like firing questions at you, and you feel interrogated again, and that makes you feel abused again.”

(Abigail, PG1)

“You know everybody comes with this thing; ‘oh why didn't you get out sooner’?! It's like, well I actually got out when I could, and they don't give you the, sort of, nice praise for getting out when you actually did, and getting out alive! ‘Oh why didn't you do it before?’”

(Melanie, PG1)

“Think....think that I have value as well. I have value.”

(Fay, PG1)

Introduction

In this chapter I consider the second research question regarding **what can be learnt from the lived experiences of women victim-survivors and practitioners when operating in the current climate of UK austerity and welfare reform**. I attend to how discourses of austerity and welfare reform interface with, and are mobilised in, everyday experiences of DVA as well as in efforts to respond to it at a sector level. For those living with DVA as victim-survivors and for practitioners and campaigners responding to DVA, the systematic and routine amendment or retraction of welfare and support provision has left many in a perpetual state of flux and uncertainty, as they negotiate and rapidly adapt to these reforms. This chapter seeks to make visible the contradictions embedded within notions of resilience as conceptualised in contemporary neoliberal welfare discourse, and the specific implications these have for DVA victim-survivors as well as practitioners working in the field of domestic abuse.

The spectre of austerity and welfare reform looms large in the accounts offered by participants across all three groups, whether explicit or implied in the stories they tell (Plummer, 1995; Gubrium et al., 2012). The socio-political context of welfare austerity has undoubtedly shaped the experiences of victim-survivors and practitioners as they navigate what is often a volatile and hostile (funding) environment, or as they seek to obtain or deliver vital support. Crucially, the discourses operationalised in welfare policy interpellate people in diverse ways, and intersect with the classed, gendered, and structural inequalities people (particularly women) already negotiate on a daily basis. They also inform the trajectories victim-survivors' lives will follow prior, during and after experiencing DVA. Most significantly, welfare austerity discourses inform victim-survivors' access to, and eligibility for, support and intervention, as well as possibilities for recovery. This in turn shapes the extent to

which victim-survivors are expected to be resilient, independent, resourceful, and even entrepreneurial⁵² subjects in the current socio-political climate.

I begin this chapter with a discussion of the role the welfare benefits system occupies in the lives of many victim-survivors, identifying the extent to which the withdrawal of state assistance embeds the call to be personally resilient, creative and resourceful, both for victim-survivors as well as for practitioners operating in the DVA sector. I go on to discuss the salience of telling the ‘right story’ to access welfare assistance, which in this case coalesces with the notions of ‘authentic’ or ‘real’ victimhood outlined in the previous chapter. Austerity destabilises or in some cases closes down opportunities for resourcing an exit from DVA, as I elaborate in the next section, necessitating that victim-survivors take steps to remedy the shortcomings of a failing welfare state. They consequently face a series of ‘impossible choices’ (Safe Lives, 2018; Howard, 2019). In the next section I outline the complexities of work and employment in the current climate, identifying the ways in which discourses of resilience function in the lives of all three groups. The realities of living with DVA in austere times, shores up a reading of austerity as ‘institutional violence’, which I discuss in the final part of this chapter. The analysis set out in this chapter provides an important contextual framework for understanding how and why the inclusion and participation of men in anti-VAW efforts is further problematised in the current socio-political climate, as discussed in the chapter that follows.

Resilience and austerity

‘Resilience’ is a somewhat elastic concept but it’s definitional malleability enables applicability across a wide range of settings, both within social policy, and within arenas of popular culture such as lifestyle and (women’s) self-help literature (Gill and Orgad, 2018). It is understood here as broadly referring to a person’s capacity to adapt, cope or even thrive in the face of, or despite, adversity (Rutter, 1985; Bottrell, 2013). It necessitates the personal qualities which enable one to “‘bounce back’ from difficulties and shocks”, negative life circumstances or stressors; whether that is coping with leaving an abusive partner or managing the material consequences of a benefits sanction (Gill and Orgad, 2018, p. 478). A quality simultaneously demanded and promoted in austerity policy, resilience is routinely operationalised against the backdrop of worsening social inequality (Gill and Orgad, 2018; Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar; Donoghue and Edmiston, 2019). The consequences of which are made particularly apparent in the context of DVA.

Melanie provides just one example of this, as she describes a “therapy group” for which “funding [...] was stopped; end[ing] what was a really good group” (PG1). Melanie’s experience of suddenly having crucial support withdrawn is indicative of those of other participants’, as Heidi describes:

“So, I went to [...] a domestic violence group (.) um...and I went there for about seven years and then because of the change of funding and all of that side of things they basically lost the funding for that that group. [...] And from that group (.) there were...(.) at the time, I

⁵² Discussed in Chapter 8.

think there were three of us who are all MARAC [multi-agency risk assessment conference] cases (. . .) um (. . .) and basically, we were being told (. . .) ‘that’s it’ (. . .) ‘There’s absolutely nothing for you’. But we all still had a lot going on in our in our lives. Um.... (. . .) we were offered um...a 12-week program with [another organisation]. We’re like...(. . .) we don’t need a 12 week program; we’ve been doing this for eight years. We could run those programs. And so...[...]

We basically set it up, and we set it up. It was really small, like really, really small; took us quite a while. Originally, we were doing it through [an organisation]; they felt not able to support us because many of the risk factor, because we’re (. . .) MARAC cases...helping other women” (PG1).

In this extract we see the identity-work done by Heidi, a white, heterosexual woman in her fifties, as she repeatedly mobilises a sector-wide risk discourse (“MARAC”), which she owns as a type of identity label. Heidi provides a cogent example of ‘resilience in action’, as she recalls how she and the other women established a support group after their group⁵³ was discontinued due to budget cuts. Resourcefulness and creativity in this context inadvertently feed into a type of ‘resilience trap’⁵⁴. The ‘trap’ of resilience is understood here as the way in which resilience narratives function to foster individual survival and self-reliance, in turn catalysing victim-survivors and practitioners to proactively respond to system failure or shortfalls in provision. But the enactment of individual resilience in this sense simultaneously absolves the state of responsibility for its citizens. It ‘proves’ that state assistance is no longer necessary, instead validating the paring down of the welfare system. This logic gains further legitimacy when embedded within a neoliberal discourse that nurtures entrepreneurialism, self-reliance and the individualised pathologisation of victim-survivors (Morris, 2018).

The welfare benefits system very often plays a critical role in supporting many victim-survivors of DVA, and as such, the rules governing it impact upon them at various stages; when living with an abusive partner, when leaving or ending the abuse, and or when seeking to rebuild a life post-separation. Cuts to DVA provision occur within the context of wider austerity measures implemented across welfare, health and social care provision more generally. Frequently, they are most keenly felt by victim-survivors at the point of departure from the abusive person, and are often exacerbated in the event that children are involved (Sanders-McDonagh et al., 2016; Porter, 2019). In this sense, DVA serves as a catalyst for the social repositioning of some victim-survivors, rapidly propelling them into ‘the system’, as Tracey recounts:

“I were like trying to work out everything that I needed to work out, like how to rent a house, never rented before, and how to rent a house when I’ve got no income, and that I don’t qualify for benefits, (...) how do I do it? So, it was just the complete like (...) leap of faith

⁵³ Discussed in Chapter 5.

⁵⁴ The term ‘resilience trap’ has been used in environmental research to refer to the growing use of resilience discourses in climate change policy, instead of those of life-style adaptation. This risks the prioritisation of short-term responses to climate change, rather than longer term strategies of adaptation to respond to climate change, thereby denoting the ‘trap’ (Kythreotis and Bristow, 2017).

really. [...] So, I ended up (...) sort of trying to work my way around (...) private renting, which is what I ended up doing” (PG1).

In describing the circumstances following her initial departure from the home she shared with her abusive husband, Tracey’s discourse paints a picture of real uncertainty. A key feature of the account is the repeated use of the word “rent(ing)”, around which the account is organised, and which functions to construct the new landscape Tracey must “work [her] way around”. This is a reality encountered by many victim-survivors, now exacerbated by the reduction in crisis support from central government⁵⁵, which further curtails the options available to victim-survivors to meet the immediate costs of leaving (Kelly et al., 2014; Howard, 2019). Tracey progressively equips herself with the requisite life-skills to live independently; in this her persistence and willingness to “take a leap of faith” becomes analogous to her capacity to “bounce back” from adversity (Gill and Orgad, 2018).

Leah provides another account of unfamiliar territory following her departure from an abusive husband and shared family home with her two young children. Here she describes their arrival at a refuge:

“[A]most immediately when you're there [at the refuge], you know when I said you're faced with a whole new set of problems? So, you've got to start with somewhere to live. So, you have to...with council housing, you have to sign up to a website where you bid on houses and things, so..., ‘have you got one of those accounts?’ ‘No’. ‘Have you got Wi-Fi access?’ ‘No’. ‘Have you got data on your phone?’ ‘No’. ‘Um, right well that's one of the first things you need to do’. ‘Ok, so can I go downstairs [to the refuge office] and do that?’ ‘No, you can't use the computers in the office’. ‘Right ok’. So, it was a pure struggle just to do...just to pick up your phone and do whatever [...] So I'm sitting there thinking, oh my god, I need to do something, I need to sort things out...! I need to be proactive here, and I couldn't do anything! I had to wait all the time for somebody else to do it” (PG1).

Leah’s account brings into relief the cross-cutting narratives of chronic under-resourcing at an institutional level, and a lack of material resources on an individual level. These coalesce at the point of her family’s relocation. The accumulation of barriers encountered at every stage are discursively represented through Leah’s repeated use of ‘adjacency pairs’ (Schegloff and Sacks, 1969), (“have you got Wi-Fi...” / “no”; “have you got data...” / “no”), all with negative response at the second-turn. The account substantiates Gill and Orgad’s (2018, p. 379) assertions that the promotion of resilience is “intimately related to the cutting back, closure and privatisation of public services”, in which people are “made responsible for their own well-being”. The sense of powerlessness and displacement of self and home following her exit is tangible in Leah’s account as she describes being confronted with a “whole new set of problems”, which in this case revolve around achieving successful ‘move-on’ from the refuge. The lack of internet resources, combined with the progressive digitisation of the welfare

⁵⁵ Crisis support was previously available via the centralised DWP discretionary Social Fund but was abolished under the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and replaced by localised provision; this too was made subject to cuts (Porter, 2019).

benefit system (DWP, 2010) mean that residents are prevented from taking control of key decisions pertaining to their future life trajectories. This includes carrying out simple tasks such as ‘bidding’⁵⁶ for council properties, as described by Leah, in order to move out of the refuge.

Leah’s account points to the inherent problems associated with recent welfare reforms which have been designed and implemented with the erroneous ideological assumption that everyone has equal access to equal resources. We see therefore how a person’s experience of austerity is heavily informed by their access to material resources and cultural capital (Skeggs, 1997). In the absence of these resources, it is difficult for some women to move forward, or indeed to help themselves, as Leah goes on to discuss:

“So, I was able to manage a lot of it myself, but I did used to feel really, really sad for some of the women that were there who couldn't manage it themselves, because of things like a language barrier, or not having...not having...needing a passport for ID. You know, for your basic things like signing up for houses and applying for council tax credit while you're there. Housing benefit, you know. [...] So luckily, I was able to... [...] I have the things I needed so I was able to just go off and do it. Although I had to go take a bus, and go and sit in someone else's house all day, using their Wi-Fi, to be able to do it. Or try and find a local library somewhere, or something like that. It was always harder, but I managed it” (PG1).

This extract stands as a clear instantiation of how structural inequalities function in the lives of women experiencing DVA. Leah constructs her own positionality as a comparatively well-resourced subject by orientating her account towards a discourse of self-sufficiency and self-help, thereby validating her own resilience (“I was able to manage [...] myself...”; “luckily I was able to...”; “I was able to just go off and do it”; “...but I managed it”). Her account illuminates how individual experience of austerity is amplified by social categorisations of gender, race, class, citizenship, and economic status (Emejulu and Bassel, 2017). Together they work to disadvantage as well as alienate the most ‘vulnerable’⁵⁷ from the system that has been set up to help them, including BAME and migrant women (Emejulu and Bassel, 2017); groups also often considered “key targets” of resilience discourse (Jensen, 2018). This has a direct bearing upon these women’s opportunities for help-seeking and presents one of the biggest challenges facing the DVA sector⁵⁸. These difficulties are complicated further when set against the backdrop of an exclusionary digitised benefit system, as I go on to discuss.

‘Digital by default’ welfare

While foregrounding how victim-survivors respond to the withdrawal of provision by locating alternative sources of assistance, Leah’s account also exposes the shortcomings of a ‘digital welfare

⁵⁶ ‘Bidding’ refers to the Choice Based Lettings system for council and housing association properties.

⁵⁷ See Chapter 4 for a definition of ‘vulnerability’.

⁵⁸ In a recent Women’s Aid audit 12.6% of respondents described supporting victim-survivors who are denied recourse to public funds, as the biggest challenge their service faced in 2018-19 (Davidge et al., 2020, p. 49).

state', particularly when regarded in the context of its application to domestic abuse. Notably, Universal Credit⁵⁹ was the government's first 'digital by default' benefit (DWP, 2010) designed to incentivise work and the production of self-sufficient, responsabilised 'active citizens' (Verhoeven and Tonkens, 2013; Donoghue and Edmiston, 2019). But, the government's digitisation of the benefit system has increasingly "[left] people behind" (Alston, 2019) with a UN General Assembly report declaring that "the British welfare state is gradually disappearing behind a webpage and an algorithm" (Alston, 2019, p. 13). Cohering with this claim, as well as with research conducted with disabled people, Leah's account corroborates assertions that those most in need of state welfare assistance are the segment of the population least likely to have internet access (Ryan, F., 2019, p. 58). At present, a switch to Universal Credit is usually activated by a change in personal circumstances; crucially, this includes leaving a relationship or shared family home due to DVA. Thus, at one of the most significant moments of crisis, many victim-survivors' difficulties are exacerbated by the current system, as the following extract from IDVA Debbie, a white woman in her fifties working in the north of England, substantiates:

"[R]efuges spaces are now very hard to come by (..) Our local one is always full (..) Of course it is (..) Then you think, 'oh it's [got to be a move to another city 120km away]'. But you know, if they've got a support network here, if they've got kids at school, if they've got income support now, and then any change in their financial circumstances means a claim to Universal Credit, which means a five week wait now⁶⁰ (..) which is just utterly (...) how....? [...] And I know there's advances (..) but they're not a god given, it's not gonna happen automatically. You have to fight for it. And when your life is upside down and you're moving from one area to another area (..) Jobcentre make it as hard as possible" (PG2).

Debbie uses an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) here to reinforce a picture of an overstretched domestic abuse sector, and a welfare state that fails victim-survivors when they need it most. Illustrating the ways in which practitioners are routinely called upon to be resilient, Debbie mobilises a battle-type discourse as she recounts how both victim-survivors and practitioners must "fight" the system. A "fight" which often mimics the battles victim-survivors must contend with at home. Taken together, these evidence the intersecting factors which complicate or disrupt potentially viable routes to safety for victim-survivors. The flaws in 'digitised' reforms are further exposed here, as Debbie's account signals how the new system can foreclose the possibility of leaving for some victim-survivors because they simply do not have the financial means to withstand a "five week wait" without funds.

⁵⁹ Universal Credit (UC) was first announced in 2010 and was legislated under the Welfare Reform Act 2012. It will gradually replace 6 different social security benefits for working age people. Roll out of UC began in 2013 for new claimants and completed in 2018; the full migration of all people already on benefits is not expected before 2024.

⁶⁰ UC is paid monthly in arrears to the claimant; it can take up to 5 weeks from making a claim to receiving the first payment. A claimant can ask for an 'advance' if they are in financial need during this period but the advance has to be repaid by the claimant within 12 months of the first UC payment (DWP, 2019d).

The reality described by participants has worsened in recent years, as Felicity says, “particularly for women who've got no recourse to public funds⁶¹, or [for those that] work. Because the cost is too much to pay⁶², to stay in the refuge” (Felicity, PG2, FG3). The practitioners accounts have the effect of destabilising a DVA dominant discourse manifest in the public story told about DVA in which leaving an abusive partner is constructed along a linear trajectory and presupposes the existence of state financial assistance, as well as a place of safety to go to upon departure. In view of the current system, these narratives seem like an overly simplified depiction of the ‘exit route’ some victim-survivors will embark upon in order to leave a relationship. In the next section, I explore how victim-survivors as well as practitioners work to respond to these shortfalls in provision.

‘Plugging gaps’ in provision and ‘DIY’ creativity

The barriers victim-survivors encounter when seeking refuge are closely enmeshed with welfare reform measures. The eligibility requirements for assistance have been made more stringent, to accommodate for the allocation of more limited resources. Farhana captures this during one of the focus groups saying; “the criteria have changed to try and match up with how much money is left, to match things. So, it excludes people. So that's substance use, mental health, anybody with complex needs. And that's most of our clients!” (PG2, FG2). Farhana, a British Asian woman in her thirties, working as a specialist community based practitioner, illustrates the extent to which discourses of ‘authentic’ victimhood compete with the interpretative resources used to pattern practitioner responses to DVA in the current moment. Practitioners routinely deploy a collectively shared narrative which expounds how they are increasingly called upon to provide support to women who have been formally excluded from services. As Felicity mentioned, this has historically been because the women have no recourse to public funds, or as Farhana alludes to, because the women present with ‘complex’ needs and therefore cannot be housed in ‘general needs’ refuge accommodation.

But increasingly women are now being excluded from services because they are employed. Labour participation in this instance prevents access to refuge accommodation. This is because women who earn an average salary do not have the funds to pay for the refuge placement themselves, and their employment precludes them from accessing benefits to pay for it, even when their wages are not sufficient to cover the cost. Without question, this creates a significant barrier to leave-seeking and was mentioned by all of the DVA practitioners involved in this study, as well as several of the victim-survivors. It presents a real challenge for workers who must negotiate these obstacles while also seeking to make clients safe. As Erin, a white woman in her thirties and an experienced IDVA in a specialist domestic abuse service describes:

⁶¹ The government states this means “you will not be able to claim most benefits, tax credits or housing assistance that are paid by the state” (UK Visas & Immigration, 2014, no pagination) due to insecure, unclear, or lack of, appropriate immigration status.

⁶² The housing element of a refuge is usually funded by housing benefit. If women are deemed ineligible for benefits, access to refuge or community support is impossible unless alternative funding arrangements can be made, or the woman can pay herself.

“The women are told there's equity in the house. But just because you've got a house doesn't mean you have money. Or going into refuge but [they're] working, having to pay for your mortgage or your tenancy, but also having to pay refuge costs. Stuff like that is really frustrating and I don't know that it's getting any better” (PG2, FG2).

Concurring with Erin, Amber another IDVA, discussed how the difficulties associated with accessing welfare benefits to finance refuge accommodation result in workers altering the advice they give to some women presenting at their services, despite being aware of the potentially negative consequences the advice may have. She recalls; “people are being advised to leave their jobs. Realistically you'd be better off leaving your job, which is affecting people's progression in their careers, it's affecting their mental health potentially. [...]” (PG2, FG2). Amber provides another example of the competing discourses in operation within the DVA practice space, which function to *produce* precarious subjects (Berg, 2018). The discourses interpellate victim-survivors in particularly classed ways, cultivating a system that is equipped to respond to two opposing groups of victim-survivors situated on either end of a ‘spectrum of need’, while failing to address the needs of a large majority. This is made particularly evident in the case of low to middle income earners such as those described by Erin and Amber (Kelly et al., 2014; Austin and Smith, 2019) .

This reality, coupled with changes in legislation around legal aid⁶³, elevates the need for resourcefulness on the part of practitioners, when seeking to meet their clients’ needs, as Erin recalls:

“Due to the massive impact of changes in legal aid we've just started doing DIY injunctions, trying based on a previous colleague's [experience] [...] to get [the clients] non-molestation orders when [she] works. Because we've seen clients get lumbered with huge bills and it just...you've either got people on the lower end of the economic scale who get things for free in the court. Or people who are super, super rich, who can afford it, but everybody else, sort of in the middle, i.e. us lot, if we had a problem, then we'd face the same challenges with legal aid. Makes you quite angry stuff like that” (PG2, FG2)

In describing the impetus for turning to “DIY” creativity, Erin mobilises a discourse which positions her and her colleagues’ subjectivities, in line with those of their clients. There is a collectively shared identity construction here, which in this instance is made central to understanding the material and affective impact of recent reforms. The permeability of the boundaries between worker and client identity are simultaneously brought into focus in Erin’s account, highlighting the complex process of negotiation and the balancing of resilience and risk undertaken by both practitioners and victim-survivors. In this, personal priorities and potential outcomes are weighed against availability and viability of financial and service resources. This has the effect of fundamentally disrupting the dominant discourses used to pattern practitioner responses to DVA, as they are rendered unworkable in the current climate of austerity. It also serves to re-embed a latent victim-blaming discourse in which the responsabilisation of the victim is secured; in few cases do perpetrators leave the shared

⁶³ Introduced in April 2013.

home, often because they are the legal occupiers of the tenancy and therefore removal from the property is fraught with additional legal wrangling. In the next section I address some of the hurdles women victim-survivors must overcome to secure benefit assistance in circumstances such as these, which often rest upon articulation of the 'right' story.

Telling the 'right story'

Welfare reforms have included the intensified use of capability for work assessment procedures, described by Pring (2017, p. 51) as "possibly the most violent and discriminatory tool ever handed to a government department". The measures produce significant and unnecessary stress for benefit recipients, particularly those with mental health needs (O'Hara, 2017). Indeed, women who have experienced domestic abuse frequently experience mental health challenges including those associated with (complex) trauma (Herman, 1992; Humphreys and Joseph, 2004; Paper Dolls Research Group, 2019) and are regularly disadvantaged by the current system as a result. The following extract from Saima substantiates this, as she relays her experience of a capability for work assessment:

"[The benefit assessors] judged me on all these things, and I went up to the support group here, to show them...tell them what happened. Like they said, in the report, 'she was dressed well' (.) like, oh my god, what the hell? I was dressed well, yeah...just because I looked ok and I don't, I don't come scruffy (.) 'She had no-one with her'; if I had someone to come with me, I would, but I'm bloody all alone. What do you want me to do? I haven't got any friends and family here (.) If like my parents, or anyone were nearby, they would come with me (..) but, isn't that just another slap in the face? [...] Like oh my god, isn't it bad enough to think I am on my own and dealing with [the domestic abuse] ...and then they're like, we can't give you any points because of all these stupid things [...]" (PG1).

Snippets of the institutional discourse which pattern the ESA⁶⁴ capability for work assessment are discernible in Saima's account as she mobilises them to narrate her experience. The assessment she refers to is routinely used to determine claimant entitlement for benefit assistance using a points-based system. The institutionalisation and formalisation of the measurement of need according to a standardised process enables the state to 'streamline' the benefit claim process, filtering out potentially illegitimate or invalid applications (HM Government, 2015). Dominant socio-cultural signifiers of wellness (such as being well dressed, bathed and so on) are used as gauges for work capability, as the extract from Saima attests. But assessments conducted according to this frame permit the construction of applicants (many of whom have a disability) as "suspects" rather than citizens in need of state support (Ryan, F., 2019). Often resulting in people with long term poor physical or mental health being transferred from disability benefits and onto unemployment benefits (Beatty and Fothergill, 2015). It is during this process that the benefit-claimant identity is made visible and intelligible (Butler, 1993), while the lived experience of DVA is rendered inconsequential and

⁶⁴ ESA is gradually being replaced by UC.

unseen within this same frame. The shortcomings associated with assessment procedures such as these are made particularly apparent in the case of domestic abuse, especially when considering the perpetration of coercive control. Assessment criteria such as those used in capability for work tests fail to capture the nuance of individual claimants' experience and are limited in their ability to account for circumstances in which the need for assistance is not overtly discernible, or reducible to a uniform set of questions.

The narratives that victim-survivors are required to tell to access provision oftentimes conflict with the narrative of resilience promoted in a welfare policy discourse that expects claimants to be "work ready" and willing to do "everything [they] reasonably can to give [themselves] the best chance of finding work" (DWP, 2019d, no pagination). As Saima's account illustrates, this leaves many victim-survivors in a 'no-win' situation, unable to access help unless the 'right story' is told at the moment of asking for help. They also risk being denied support if they present as resilient (strong, stable, coping) but equally, they cannot be completely devoid of resilience because they may be left without the means to respond to the adversity they face. Indeed, the current welfare regime further intensifies the need for resilience among the most disadvantaged (Bottrell, 2013). This is another example of the 'resilience trap'. In the following section I discuss the implications of 'failed' resilience and how this positions some DVA victim-survivors.

Impossible choices and the barriers to leaving

The intersections of class, gender and race are clear when examining how victim-survivors are expected to exit an abusive relationship. A commonplace response to DVA disclosure incorporates the questioning of victim-survivors regarding 'why they didn't just leave' or "get out sooner" (Melanie, PG1), or indeed, why they remained within that situation, even when they may have been given an opportunity to leave (Meyer, 2012). While the limitations of this discourse – and the discourses of victim-blaming they give rise to – have been well documented elsewhere⁶⁵, I focus here upon the corollary between austerity and the possibility of resourcing a viable, safe 'exit' (if sought by the victim-survivor). There is a pervasive false assumption that all victim-survivors have the ability and resources to furnish their chosen 'exit' strategy, coupled with a failure to recognise the real structural and material limitations placed upon many victim-survivors. These assumptions produce barriers to leaving for the least well-resourced and have instead become unjustly bound up with questions of individual aspiration, expected life trajectories, and realistic futures. In the context of DVA, austerity and welfare reform measures have in some cases removed the remaining supportive mechanisms that were in place to support women who face additional challenges. As Melanie attests:

"[The council could have] ... (...) moved the perpetrator out (..) and then found me somewhere, so I could move all of my possessions, and then the perpetrator would not know where I (..) where I was. Where [as], you know, you stay there, they still know where you are, but if you move on, you're leaving everything behind. There's not enough support in that way.

⁶⁵ See Chapter 2

Two people living...(?) All these professionals are like, 'why didn't you do it sooner'? There just isn't the support there to go sooner! (...)" (PG1)

Melanie imports a well-known public rhetoric through which victim-survivors are impelled to justify why they didn't 'just leave'. This highly individualising discourse diminishes the significance of any material, social and cultural capital in the story told about leaving an abusive partner and more importantly, the availability of those options for some people ("There just isn't the support there to go sooner!"). Indeed, the accounts offered by many of the women and practitioners in this study demonstrate the extent to which a victim-survivor's right to determine the trajectory of her own life, is organised according to a range of external factors, including the state.

Pamela's account illustrates the workings of these structural barriers, as she recounts leaving her abusive husband with her young disabled daughter, and her attempts to locate suitable accommodation:

"Well...especially in the winter, stairs and that are really bad for [my daughter] so...of course [the council] were like, upstairs flat or upstairs maisonettes they were offering me. So, I was allowed to turn [them] down but where we...., where they put us in this interim housing [...] there was police and fire and ambulances every night. And I couldn't sleep. I was worried about my car. [My daughter] was getting bullied in school. So, [my friend] said right, come on, we'll start looking on private properties. Well, the only one that took DSS at the time was [location] [...] I never heard of it so, we come and had a look, [I said] 'oh my god it's so far out from everything'. And I thought well, (..) 'what do you wanna do? Do you wanna move or do you wanna stick up with this and not sleep?'" (PG1)

Pamela's story echoes those of other victim-survivors' in which the options before her are largely determined by factors beyond her control and informed by her socio-material insecurity ("the only one that took DSS at the time..."). Pamela uses an oppositional discourse ("do you wanna move or do you wanna stick up with this and not sleep?"), to construct the impossible choice she faces. Pamela is "allowed" to decline the properties as unsuitable for her needs only because of her daughter's disability. This is a particularly classed discourse in which working-class families are required to accept what they're offered, without contestation – often sub-standard housing, or indeed housing in a town they've "never heard of" as Pamela describes (Anderson, 2010; Daly et al., 2012; Fitzpatrick et al., 2019). Pamela's account is indicative of the profile of many UK local authorities' social housing stock in the current climate, which is often not commensurate to the level of homelessness need (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019). Domestic abuse therefore often functions as a key driver for women's homelessness as victim-survivors leave their homes to protect themselves (and any children) (Ponic et al., 2011; Safe Lives, 2018; APPGEH, 2019; Fitzpatrick et al., 2019), but increasingly, with nowhere to go (Austin and Smith, 2019).

Pamela's account signals how welfare reforms can inadvertently 'trap' women in a circular pattern which precludes them from leaving a violent relationship on their own terms, if at all (Kelly et al., 2014; Howard, 2019). Sandra also provides an account which substantiates this reality as she narrates her process of exiting a relationship. She experienced multiple episodes of street homelessness and precarious housing, together with DVA and the challenges of substance use. For Sandra, leaving a

highly abusive partner equates to “jumping out of the frying pan and into the fire” (PG1), because it entails immediate housing uncertainty. Upon leaving the relationship and shared property, Sandra is deemed ineligible for statutory homelessness provision because current homelessness policy determines that not all those presenting as homeless are in ‘priority need’⁶⁶, thereby amounting to another impossible choice (APPGEH, 2019). Here Sandra discusses her decision-making process prior to leaving while admitted to hospital following a drug overdose:

“I were in hospital (..) for five week. I didn't want to leave hospital because I didn't want to go home (..) [...] I said to [my friend], I can't go home. Can't go home (.) She's saying why? [...] [A]nd then I went out of hospital (...) and I went [back to him]. And I went with another one [...] who were an alcoholic. [...] So (.) it were like I either had to move, I had to get away, and I had nowhere to live at the time. I had a little bedsit but what I used to have, I had a 2 bed maisonette with a garden...I had everything you know what I mean. And [my ex-partner] had took all that away from me” (PG1).

Sandra feels unable to return home due to the DVA, while also feeling unable to disclose to clinicians or her friend what was really happening. Key features of this discourse are the twinned notions of security and shelter, and the dislocated route Sandra follows in pursuit of safety. Her repeated use of the word “home” functions to powerful rhetorical effect in this extract and is further emphasised by her construction of a “2 bed maisonette with a garden” as a signifier for having “everything” and all that was “[taken] away from [her]”. This painfully underscores the value attributed to the home Sandra lost as a result of the abuse. Furthermore, the survival ‘sofa-surfing’ she describes, constitutes just one form of ‘hidden homelessness’ common among women, particularly those who are experiencing DVA, because it mitigates or reduces the even higher risks associated with street based homelessness (Safe Lives, 2018; APPGEH, 2019).

These constraints are often even more stringent for women who are not British nationals with reforms to benefit entitlement particularly damaging for EEA national women victim-survivors, as the following extract from practitioner Felicity illuminates:

“But with policy makers, and government and things, they have to link all these things, don't they because the immigration is linked to the housing, housing is linked to financial. Your access to finance and things. In terms of...I mean this benefit issue is crazy. You know, the bedroom tax. We're also [...] working with some people who have been in the country for quite a few years, often from Eastern Europe and things like that, and then [...] she's not eligible for housing. Even though she's still with the husband whose really abusive and everything. Because, the past ten years, she's had children. And now the law's changed. That you have to be working for three months, but she's been bringing up children, so it's

⁶⁶ Current legislation dictates that “a person has a ‘priority need’ if they are *vulnerable* as a result of having to leave accommodation because of (threats of) violence from another person (MHCLG, 2018a, Chapter 8.36, no pagination). A determination of ‘vulnerability’ is not automatic and is dependent on the nature of the violence, support networks in place, and or continuing threat from the perpetrator (MHCLG, 2018b, Chapter 21.32).

discriminating. Even housing advisor agreed that it was discriminatory to women like her. Who originally came and were working. And now she has to try and start working again, to be eligible for housing” (PG2).

In evidence here are snippets of the dominant discourse of the abject ‘foreigner’ subject determined ineligible for state protection, even when facing acute threats of violence because “immigration is linked to the housing, housing is linked to [finances]”. Felicity deploys a circular discourse, providing an example of a life that according to this frame is no longer ‘grievable’ (Butler, 2020). The abject ‘foreigner’ discourse operates in tandem with another dominant narrative; that of the demonised mother in which motherhood is systematically penalised within welfare reforms (Tyler, 2013). Although new regulations are applicable to all mothers, the penalties are felt most keenly for non-British women, therefore emphasising the bordering practices implicit in the implementation of new benefit regulatory frameworks (Guentner et al., 2016).

The stories provided by both victim-survivors as well as practitioners vividly indicate how the circumstances women victim-survivors now routinely find themselves in through no fault of their own, not only increase the need for individual resilience in order to survive but are exacerbated by the imposition of welfare austerity reforms. Austerity discourse operates at times to legitimise a punitive victim-blaming narrative, which is particularly harmful to women who are not British nationals. Clearly illustrating the ways in which austerity policy coheres with neoliberal ideals (Farnsworth and Irving, 2018), the accounts from practitioners Farhana, Liz, Erin, Felicity and Debbie, as well as victim-survivors Pamela, Melanie, Sandra and Saima, together all undermine government rhetoric which claims a commitment to reducing DVA and homelessness respectively. It is clear from these accounts that the onus is consistently placed upon women victim-survivors to carve out alternatives, so that they can rebuild their lives as well as that of their children. They also underscore the extent to which women are made subject to state control (some more so than others) within this process. In the next section, I examine issues related to labour participation within the same framework of analysis.

Labour participation

A pervasive discourse in many of the interviews is that of employment. Often this includes discussion of the meaning attached to participation in the labour market, or indeed exclusion from it. While this is bound up with austerity, it is also connected with the impact of domestic abuse on victim-survivors’ ability to work, as well as on ‘frontline’ practice in the domestic abuse or women’s sector. Current welfare policy operates to incentivise work and to construct economically active citizens. For many victim-survivors, DVA disrupts or precludes meaningful participation in the labour market, while for others, unemployment has deepened or helped facilitate further abuse by perpetrators because they are reliant upon the abuser for sustenance (Howard, 2019). As Steph states: “I lost...ended up leaving me job because I was on the sick that long, and [...] I just thought I can't go back, I can't...He knew where I worked and everything [...]” (PG1). In Steph’s case, sustaining her employment becomes untenable while she is experiencing ongoing abuse from her partner, consequently rendering her in need of state support, at least in the weeks and months following her initial departure from the home

and relationship. However, for other participants, the consequences of the abuse and the disruption it causes to their ability to work is much longer term, as Marion discusses:

“I've lost my whole career based on something I experienced because I was in a violent relationship that still follows me every day (.) I was actually a bloody good [...] [employee], and here I am, struggling now to get a job [...] because, actually, why is this on [DBS] filtering? Because again, it's oppression of women yet again” (PG1).

Marion, a white woman in her late fifties, was forced into prostitution by her partner during which time she acquired a number of convictions for ‘soliciting’. Following changes in 2013 regarding DBS filtering procedures⁶⁷, Marion was required to disclose her former convictions and struggled to get back into employment as a result. Marion situates this reality within a broader framework of gendered injustice faced by women as part of an oppressive regime, which routinely fails to consider or acknowledge the diverse impacts of DVA upon the lives of victim-survivors. It is also worth noting that Marion is not the only woman in the study to have experienced this form of abuse, with Anita recounting a similar experience of forced prostitution, during her interview⁶⁸.

Fay offers another perspective on the complexities associated with the intersection between employment and DVA. She is in the minority of women in the sample who did not have children. Aged in her late thirties and living in shared rental accommodation, Fay is working on a casual contract, while also managing a long-term health condition. These factors coalesce with the fact she is also coping with the aftermath of an abusive partner as well as a recent bereavement. In the following extract, Fay discusses calling her employer:

“I've got to do it myself, I really don't feel...I just don't feel up to it. I'm fatigued. I'm literally just thinking, where's my bed? Can it just get in here and I'm gonna sleep for a couple days and I've got [my granny], and also we're moving, moving house soon. I've got to deal with things with my house mate, it's just, you know, I'm not earning a lot and this is happening at home. And, and I don't feel very assertive at the minute. [...] I think [work will] be really stressed but they've put me under some stressful [situations], you know.... I needed time off. [...] They've upped my hours from 8 hours to 16 hours, which is all I can do. Well, they've actually upped it to 18 which I can't do. So, then that messes with my housing. [...]” (PG1).

Fay deploys a discourse here which evinces the affective impact of living as a ‘precarious subject’, unable to be the resilient, “assertive” person that the current neoliberal economy calls upon her to be. In it, we see a progressive discursive accumulation and melding of various factors (“I've got [my granny]...”; “we're moving...”; “I'm not earning a lot...”), along with the use of an oppositional discourse in which Fay's needs are juxtaposed alongside that which is required from her (“I needed

⁶⁷Filtering refers to the process which identifies and removes protected convictions and cautions when a DBS check is conducted, so that they are no longer disclosed on a standard and enhanced DBS certificate (DBS, 2013).

⁶⁸ See Chapter 1

time off"/ "They've upped my hours"). Together, these function to convey Fay's physical and emotional "fatigue", while her struggle to respond to the challenges life has presented to her will likely render her a 'failed' subject. This account exposes how contrasting narratives of precarity and victimhood interface with one another, converging in her triple and at times conflicting identity as worker, victim-survivor, and bereaved family member. In this Fay illustrates the everyday, deleterious effects of casualised working when set within the contradictory regulatory framework of the state benefits system, pointing to yet another example of the 'resilience trap' facing some victim-survivors. The navigation of welfare rules produces a real sense of weariness as "austerity becomes just another episode that one has to endure" (Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar, 2018, p. 156). The next section examines contributions from the practitioner group regarding their experiences of working in austere times.

Working in the DVA sector during austere times

Data substantiates how resilience functions as a governing principle in the professional lives of workers too, as they struggle to respond to the demands of working under austerity. In the following extracts we see the ways in which various numerical formulations are marshalled as persuasive rhetorical devices to construct the severity of the environment practitioners now operate in. Angela, an IDVA working for a statutory DVA service in a northern UK city provides one example:

"When we originally started there was 17 of us [in the team], and now there's 4. But we're still doing the same job. We used to have a perpetrator program. Used to have women's workers. We used to have children's workers. Now there's just the DV workers (.) We don't go to court as much anymore. [...] (.) CPS don't engage with us anymore. The [safeguarding team] are down to 2" (PG2).

Angela outlines here the systematic paring down of services across the sector in response to financial cuts imposed in English local authorities. She deploys a combination of numerical quantity formulations ("there was 17..."; "now there's 4..."; "down to 2") along with a set of former facts ("we used to...", "used to...") which together strengthen the validity of her claims, as she orientates her account within a discourse of quantification (Potter et al., 1991). The sequential decrease constructed by Angela is emblematic of the gradual reduction of specialist DVA provision established to cater for a range of victim-survivor needs. This includes provision for perpetrators; an important mechanism to ensure that they are held to account, now removed. The following extract from another practitioner, Isobel working elsewhere in the country, paints a similar picture:

"[W]e've had a government for nearly what, 7, 8 years, who are following this austerity program. Where councils have had to make massive savings and things like that. [...] The first time I was working here there was a program [...] that looked at, particularly the women who were staying with the perpetrator; [...] we would work with the women, and er, it was through the probation service, they would work with the guy, to look at you know, his behaviour and deal with that sort of thing. Now, that's, that's not funded anymore" (PG2, FG2).

Isobel also orientates her account towards a discourse of quantification however less overtly so than Angela, instead deploying a non-numerical formulation (“massive savings”) to reinforce the extent to which alternative pathways to help-seeking have in many cases been closed down as part of cost-saving measures, thereby limiting the options available to victim-survivors. Programs which include perpetrators such those described here enable responsibility to be shifted away from victim-survivors and onto the perpetrator, but they are often the first casualties of budget cuts, as both Angela and Isobel’s accounts indicate. Likewise, Nigel a practitioner working in a non-statutory service for women and men experiencing DVA, spoke of a “gradual decline” in funding for the services he and his team provide; consequently, the service was facing immanent closure at the time of interview:

“In 2016 they cut all funding for counselling department, completely. Just like that. No warning or anything. But they still funded other services. [...] In 2017 they cut all funding all together. So, we've been relying entirely on perpetrator program [funding] and fundraising, and [...] we put a charge on for counselling of £3 per a session, which is minute really. And we rely entirely on volunteer counsellors who you know, most of them, it costs them to come here (.) and sometimes quite a lot. It has been a gradual decrease and decrease. [...] But we can't sustain that, it's not possible to keep it going. So, it is a gradual decline. [...] But, er (.) this is typical of decline that's happening, particularly in more rural towns [like this town], it's not just here it's all over... (.) and people don't see what you see. It's invisible” (PG3).

The devastating accumulative impacts of cuts to local authority budgets are reinforced here through the use of ‘factualisation’ techniques (Potter, 1996b) (“In 2016...”, “in 2017...”, “£3 per a session”). The account substantiates what Potter and colleagues termed “applied quantification” where numerical formulations are imported into an argument of a non-mathematical nature (Potter et al., 1991, p. 335), which in this case, has the effect of underscoring the desperate implications of ongoing austerity. Nigel’s account signals the ways in which austerity has deepened existing socio-economic insecurities, particularly in smaller, more rural towns in the north of England which have been chronically under-resourced for the last ten years (Centre for Cities, 2019). But it is a reality that is so often omitted in public discourse, and “invisible” to those in positions of power.

The reality of working in this context has, for some workers, resulted in a work pattern characterised by perpetual crisis management as Kayla, a practitioner in her twenties, attests to as she describes the voluntary organisation she works for as “severely underfunded”. She discusses how it “[a]lmost seems like it has to get to crisis point, before there's any intervention. Whether that be people suicidal, or in an abusive relationship, it's not until it gets to crisis point until people start to listen or step in really” (PG2). Kayla’s comments exemplify the extent to which budget cuts have forced services to implement much higher thresholds for intervention to accommodate for the reduction in resources. Considered in the context of DVA, the possibility that DVA is or should be, “everybody’s business” (Home Office, 2016; 2017) is severely undermined, because workers simply do not have the (resource) capacity to act or intervene. Community-based IDVA Felicity provides another perspective on this:

“I think, you know, in this continued austerity...my brother works for the DWP, and he said something about one of his clients. He works on the fraud team, you know before it

gets to court, it goes to these people. And he knows about people who are suffering domestic abuse but he never [tells anyone], he says, 'that's not my job', which made me quite angry (...) So I think a lot of professionals are tired and underpaid, and over worked and they think, 'oh god, I can't, I can't even look at that because then that will involve more work won't it, so...(.) It's sad (...)' (PG2).

At a state level, fraud detection and debt collection operations have been integrated as key governmental priorities and represent a significant aspect of welfare reform measures (Cooper and Whyte, 2017). They have produced a 40% increase in 'benefit investigations' between 2015 and 2016 alone (Ryan, F., 2019). This extract instantiates the secondary repercussions of these policies, which have instilled a culture of surveillance, fuelled by a false government rhetoric that welfare claimants are likely to "cheat the system"⁶⁹ (HM Government, 2015, p. 15). Considered against the backdrop of an overworked, under-resourced workforce, the pragmatic implications are that monitoring practices can sometimes take precedent over and above any safeguarding responsibilities because of a lack of capacity to take on more work ("they think, 'oh god, I can't..."). This risks a reversion to an outdated conceptualisation of DVA as a 'private' matter to be maintained within the confines of the domestic sphere, thus embedding the responsabilisation of the victim-survivor.

It is also a policy approach which implicitly turns upon harmful notions of the 'un/deserving poor' (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2013), as the following extract from IDVA Angela substantiates:

"People expect everything free of charge, and it's really difficult, because when you get a genuine person that needs [something], we haven't got [it]. [...] It's lack of resources, but it's also people giving things out just because somebody needs something. I won't do that. I would look at why. If somebody said, 'I need a food voucher', I'd be saying, 'well, why?' (.) Is it because somebody was out Friday night, smoking and drinking, and hasn't got any money? [...]. But no. Some people on my team will just go and get food vouchers and just give 'em them, without asking any questions. [...] Because they're [the food vouchers] limited, and when they're gone, they're gone. And I'm just tight. It's not my money, but I just think you have to be really careful. Budget" (PG2).

Akin to the bordering practices engendered through the benefit regulatory frameworks mentioned earlier, the latent discourse in Angela's account echoes that of the government's justification of welfare austerity: that it is not the global economic crisis that has led to the imposition of widespread fiscal retrenchment but rather the product of a reckless welfare system⁷⁰. Society's poorest and most at risk are instead construed as "scrounging" (Ryan, F., 2019), illegitimately receiving state assistance at the expense of everyone else, while at the same time, living a life of unearned affluence. The discourse deployed here finds legitimacy in a moralistic logic which denies those in receipt of state

⁶⁹ According to the most recent official government statistics, 2.2% of total benefit expenditure was overpaid due to fraud and error, equating to an estimated overpayment value of £4.1 billion. The net government loss, after recoveries was £3.0 billion, or 1.6% of benefit expenditure (DWP, 2019a, p.1).

⁷⁰ See Chapter 3.

welfare – *particularly* (single) mothers (Gillies, 2006; Allen and Taylor, 2012) – the freedom to enjoy the most basic of pleasures such as “going out on a Friday night smoking and drinking” without reprisal. Characteristic of a neoliberal anti-poverty discourse (Rosen, 2018), this operates to re-embed a patriarchal model of the family within which ‘traditional’ gender presentations are maintained. Those of more privileged-status are, in contrast, permitted to engage in these activities freely and without judgement⁷¹ (see, Tyler, 2013).

That the demonization of this demographic has partially seeped into the daily practice of some DVA workers perhaps accentuates more than ever the toxic environment the Coalition and successive Conservative governments have successfully cultivated and continue to embed through the variously conceptualised mantra of “welfare that works” (DWP, 2010). In this case, this construction adheres to a victim-survivor’s eligibility for subsistence support from her local foodbank. Operating in a climate which is so under-resourced will not only impact upon ‘frontline’ workers’ ability to do their jobs but will also promote a culture of more stringent gatekeeping of a reduced set of resources, based upon classed, gendered and racialised notions of individual entitlement such as those described by Angela. These again shore up the notions of ‘authentic’ victimhood discussed in the previous chapter, which disadvantage the groups of victim-survivors least likely to be able to resource a viable exit from the abuse without assistance. This can lead to women returning to violent partners, or remaining with them, as the least dangerous option, because as IDVA Gemma states, “clients can't move on because they're blocked by so many other things” (PG2).

Debbie also speaks about the personal and material costs of working in the current climate but in this case, demonstrates how they converge to (re)produce the responsabilisation of women victim-survivors accessing specialist DVA services:

“I know I've got a lot to offer (..) but it's the, you know, the lack of safety, and the lack of (...) basically, the safety for women is...we tell 'em, you know, 'ring the police', but we don't have any real target hardening measures (.) [such as] Sanctuary Schemes⁷²; there's just no money for anything. So basically...it very much feels that we're just putting it back on the woman – because it's usually the woman – ‘well keep your phone charged’, ‘ring the police’...(.); the options are so limited. Refuge places are so limited. And that is the real frustration; it's a real frustration for me personally, I think, that's also fed into my ((makes a strangling type sound in her throat)) what actually can we do? [...] But no amount...it becomes wishful thinking doesn't it, if we haven't got the practical bits in place that enable these women to make escapes, and then make safe, secure futures” (PG2).

The confluence of discourses of (limited) resources and women’s responsabilisation are platformed here in Debbie’s account, as she recounts how women victim-survivors are tasked with implementing

⁷¹ Much like they are free to choose where they live, as discussed earlier, in relation to Pamela’s experience.

⁷² Sanctuary schemes are localised programs which provide a range of security measures to enable a victim-survivor to remain in her own home (when/if she chooses to do so), rather than requiring that she moves and risk homelessness, relocation etc.

meagre personal safety measures, often with limited efficacy given the severity and levels of risk they face. But in the absence of formalised safety interventions, it is these 'make-shift' safety planning measures that workers and their clients have come to rely upon. In this, we see again, how a lack of resources equates to a lack of focus upon perpetrators and their behaviour ("...it very much feels that we're just putting it back on the woman"). Debbie establishes a correlation between access to help in the immediate, with the possibility of constructing a "safe, secure future" for victim-survivors post-separation.

Similar sentiments are reflected in the contributions of practitioner Stuart, who worked in a statutory service for families where DVA is a feature of the parents' relationship. Stuart, a white heterosexual man in his forties, offers an account which highlights the difficulties associated with achieving the stipulated outcomes of the role, which in the current climate is increasingly more difficult as the pathways to achieving key outcomes are also more fragmented. In this context, the impact of practice interventions becomes diluted, as the following extract elaborates:

"[I]t's very much a sign of the times from my perspective, in terms of resource. And it's a challenge to say the least, but, at least when you have the resource you have the space and the time and the opportunity and the right environment, and you can nurture that ability for people to practice and make a real impact. Embark on the cycle of change with people. Take them through that gradually, over time. But ultimately, you know we are, we are at a stage, and in an age whereby we're going 'unconscious incompetence' here, in that area, but we haven't got the time to help you get to the point where you're 'consciously competent' so what we'll do, we'll just tell you that, that's a problem and actually this is how we manage the risk. We just remove it (.). Child protection plans. Just, dad's not allowed in the house (...)" (PG3).

In this account Stuart deploys the discourse of the 'four stages of competence'⁷³ to construct an account of the ways in which he works with families in the current moment. Stuart likens it to "going unconscious incompet[en]t" as a lack of time prevents him from doing the necessary preliminary work to support the development of clients' learning to effect meaningful behaviour change on the part of the perpetrator. Instead, workers are required to prioritise risk reduction and time efficiency over longer-term change, which might address the source of the "problem"; the perpetrator and his behaviour. Notably absent in this account is a discourse of gender relations, providing instead another example of how the responsabilisation of the woman victim-survivor is secured and mothers remain the easiest 'targets' for punitive statutory intervention. In this, victim-survivor choice and control are put aside in favour of "just remov[ing]" the problem through the introduction of child protection plans which typically hold the mother responsible for ensuring that "dad's not allowed in the house". This reveals how state imposed austerity measures often collude with the responsabilisation of some victim-survivors, as the choices they have before them become even more limited, in line with a

⁷³ Taken from the *Conscious Competence Ladder*, devised in the 1970s by Noel Burch, an employee of Gordon Training International.

broader cost-saving and risk aversion agenda (Bambrough et al., 2019). In this way, an examination of the everyday impacts of austerity elucidate the interconnections between different scales of violence from the intimate to the institutional (Pain and Staeheli, 2014), as I go on to discuss in the following section.

Austerity as ‘institutional violence’

While the various ways in which austerity can be understood as ‘institutional violence’ pervade this chapter, this section focuses upon the harms produced through the imposition of welfare austerity policies at the level of state administrative workers such as benefit assessors. These are policies that determine whether people are entitled to benefits while simultaneously compounding the harms of the abuse they have experienced. This is corroborated in the following extract from Abigail who faced significant mental health challenges, as well as having a physical disability which required the full-time use of a wheelchair:

“When it comes to benefits and you know, just the simple things, like the training, of job centre staff [on] how to deal with people who have come out of domestic [abuse], you know. You're trying to figure out how to think again, you're trying to figure out how to make decisions, and they're like firing questions at you, and you feel interrogated again, and that makes you feel of abused again. And then you know, like with ESA and disability living allowance, I was...you know I'm physically disabled but also, I have mental health issues as well. And they were like, ok, why is that it? I go, domestic abuse. And, it's kind of not enough, just to write that down, you've got to explain it; how it affects you and everything” (PG1).

Cohering with discussions in Chapter 4, Abigail’s account foregrounds again the problems inherent in institutionalised help-seeking protocols which necessitate that the claimant is able to describe her experience of abuse to access state help. Indeed, simply reporting the abuse is not sufficient; claimants are required to describe the impact of that experience, “how it affects you and everything”. This description must be coupled with the provision of evidence if they wish to exercise their right to be exempt from work-related activities under the ‘domestic abuse easement clause’ (DWP, 2019c)⁷⁴, and thus avoid benefit sanction or outright denial (Howard, 2019). Considered within the frame of coercive control, the complexities associated with obtaining evidence are made all the more apparent, as victim-survivors find themselves “trying to figure out how to think again” after years of psychological abuse and the traumatic impact this has upon daily life (Stark, 2007; Williamson, 2010). Even setting aside the evidential requirements, disclosure itself relies upon the victim-survivor making sense of her experience, at least in part. For many, this is a long and painful process, and the discourse required to articulate it, is not easily mobilised for the purposes of accessing state welfare assistance, as the previous chapter attests to. The convergence of the formal questioning together with a lack of understanding of victim-survivor needs, results in Abigail feeling “interrogated” and

⁷⁴ To qualify for the DA easement, the applicant “must provide [their] work coach with evidence of the abuse within one month of telling them about it” (Public Law Project, 2019, p.1).

“abused again”, foregrounding the routine and mundane ways in which victim-survivors experience the violent impact of austerity (Cooper and Whyte, 2017). This is particularly true for those with a disability, such as Abigail (Cooper, 2015; O'Hara, 2017; Pring, 2017; Cooper and Whyte, 2018).

The violent consequences of welfare austerity are felt far more severely for people who experience the ‘double-impact’ of institutional violence combined with that of an abusive partner. Indeed, there are strong continuities between the actions of the state and those of the perpetrators, as certain behaviours (monitoring, surveillance, control and withdrawal of resources, interrogation and so on) enacted by the state replicate those of victim-survivors’ abusive partners. Pamela’s experience substantiates this claim, as she describes attempting to access benefits after leaving an abusive partner:

“I had trouble with Jobcentre; trouble with council; their attitudes. The job centre when I phoned them to make my own claim, it was hard enough for me to do that. But then for them to come back to me: ‘Are you just saying this to get extra money?’ ‘And, you're going to get back together?’ And please I said, get in touch with [...] [the] police. I said, [or] social services and she said no, ‘if we do find out you're back together’, she said, ‘there will be repercussions’, and I put the phone down, because I started crying” (PG1).

Like Abigail, Pamela’s account exemplifies how administrators of the current system are at times unable to respond to the complex needs of victim-survivors when seeking state assistance. This is in spite of government claims that training has been put in place nationally for Job Centre staff and other administrative personnel to better equip them to respond to these issues (DWP, 2019b). Also, in evidence here is the revival of a victim-blaming discourse which imbricates with a general disbelief in victim-survivors’ accounts of violence and abuse; emphasised to Pamela via a veiled reference to the seemingly omnipresent surveillance capabilities of the welfare state (“if we do find out you’re back together, there’ll be repercussions”). This account as well as several others, exposes the deep flaws in the current system which is generally ill-equipped to respond to the unequal gendered power dynamics and gendered inequalities in operation within families and households in which there is domestic abuse (and indeed, those in which there is not DVA). As Pamela states; “I phoned them to make my own claim, it was hard enough for me to do that”. The government has faced criticism for failing to adequately incorporate analysis from its own gender equality impact assessments for proposed welfare reforms (Bennett and Sung, 2013). The latest means-tested benefit (UC) thus contains a number of structural features which have direct implications for gender equality (Bennett and Sung, 2013, p. 1208) and which increase the possibilities for, and likelihood of, economic or financial abuse within the context of a DVA relationship.

Also salient in both this account, as well as those that precede it, is the significance placed upon recognition of the experience of abuse, underscoring the role it plays in the performativity of resilience (Butler, 2004a; Aranda et al., 2012). In this, recognition is understood as the process through which subjects come to understand themselves through and in relation to others. As Butler (2004a) suggests while we are produced through ‘norms of recognition’, we are never completely determined by them, because certain bodies are routinely misrecognised and “undone”, their lives lost to disadvantage, poverty or other social insecurities. Abigail corroborates this when describing the need for “more training [of Jobcentre staff] [...] because you're in panic mode. I lived nearly 15

years in panic mode; survival mode” (PG1). Abigail’s characterisation of her existence in “survival mode” is symptomatic of a trauma response following significant and sustained abuse (Herman, 1992), illustrating the extent to which a person’s ability to carry out the tasks commensurate to everyday life or indeed, to meet benefit conditionality requirements, are severely destabilised. This account, and those that precede it, highlight the procedural requirement not only to ‘tell the right story’ when presenting at services, but crucially, how the ‘right story’ competes with the everyday survival practices victim-survivors develop to manage living with and through DVA.

Conclusion

The accounts discussed in this chapter emphasise the importance of including austerity and welfare reforms as key factors in understanding the nuances of DVA victim-survivor experience as well as those of the practitioners supporting them. The impact of austerity cannot be abstracted from broader discussions regarding DVA prevention and intervention, as the consequences of welfare reform continue to reverberate through services and in the lives of individual victim-survivors and practitioners. Data further shows that in the absence of adequate provision both victim-survivors and practitioners work to develop alternatives. The consequences of working in this environment though, weigh heavily upon the practitioners concerned, and often leave them unable to deliver a service. Indeed, both practitioners and victim-survivors are called upon to be ‘resilient’ subjects when living in austere times. However, this too can leave people at risk of falling into a ‘resilience trap’, which could inadvertently provide justification for the continued withdrawal of government assistance. In this, victim-survivors often find themselves facing a set of impossible choices as regards their help-seeking or leave-seeking options, which are increasingly constrained by a lack of material resources. These coalesce with a lack of social, material and cultural capital, necessary to resource a viable exit or access help. In this, the classed, racialised, gendered, and structural inequalities women already experience (to varying degrees), intersect with the trajectories victim-survivors’ lives will follow during and after experiences of DVA and into recovery. Crucially these inequalities inform individual women’s access to, and eligibility for, support and intervention and the extent to which they are expected to be resilient in the face of adversity. The interpellation of ‘resilient’ subjects in this context correlates with the notions of ‘authentic’ victimhood discussed in Chapter 4.

The analysis here shines a light on what is perhaps the ‘darker’ side of resilience, made visible when situated within the broader frame of welfare austerity, as victim-survivors are increasingly made responsible for their own well-being, irrespective of the actions of their abusive partners. In this we see the re-embedding of a victim-blaming discourse which routinely fails to scrutinise the actions of the perpetrator, or indeed hold him to account for his behaviour. Finding themselves adrift in the neoliberalised welfare economy after leaving a violent partner, victim-survivors are instead heavily scrutinised and surveilled; expected to be ‘work ready’ and able to engage with everyday life in a way that does not recognise their complex experiences of DVA. When considered against this backdrop, the government’s commitment to tackling DVA is severely undermined by the welfare system it presides over, while the gendered implications of its reforms are systematically obscured. In the next chapter I examine how similarly gendered discourses structure victim-survivors’ experiences as mothers, when they come into contact with statutory services and the private law family court.

Chapter 7: ‘Bad’ mothers & ‘good enough’ fathers

“Why is it the women? Women get so much shit, you know. I attended all those child-in-need meetings, rightly so because it was my responsibility. Where was her dad in all of this?”
(Anita, PG1 & PG2)

“Women are losing their kids through abuse. They should have offered support to me, at the time there was none. I kind of just dealt with it on me own.”
(Jacqueline, PG1)

“[I]f you know someone's dangerous why try bring him into a child's life?”
(Melanie, PG1)

Introduction

This chapter engages with the debates regarding men’s violence towards women in the context of the family, as I take up **all four research questions**, but with specific emphasis on the **third research question pertaining to the role attributed to men within the family**. Family is understood here as a (cis)gendered, patriarchal system of social organisation legitimised by state-sanctioned practices such as marriage (Tallbear, 2007; Tallbear and Willey, 2019). The family is considered as a key site for understanding the range of intersectional inequalities women victim-survivors experience (Hill Collins, 1998). The extent and nature of men’s participation in this context is varied and is often contentiously constructed through the narrative that typically patterns statutory policy and procedure on the one hand, and the dominant socio-cultural narratives that construct domestic abuse as a social problem on the other. Statutory discourses can produce the disproportionate responsabilisation of mothers for the management of domestic abuse, held to account for the management of risk, the maintenance of safety, and the preservation and security of the family unit, often irrespective of any abuse they continue to experience themselves (Ferguson et al., 2020). Of the 24 women victim-survivors⁷⁵ who participated in this study, 19 were mothers. Twelve of those mothers had experienced involuntary separation from their child(ren) following a judicial decision at a family court; in at least three of those cases, full ‘contact’ was awarded to the woman’s abusive ex-partner and father of their child(ren). Through these women’s accounts, I consider one aspect of the debate regarding the question of men’s role within the frame of DVA and VAW prevention and intervention.

The data elucidates the discursive politicisation of mothering, fathering and parenting. The notion that victim-survivor and ‘good’ mother are mutually exclusive subjectivities permeates discourses widely in circulation around DVA (Lawler, 2000). Concepts of ‘good’ mothering in policy have progressively changed in recent years (Gillies, 2006), in conjunction with the introduction of austerity measures which have expanded the scope of responsabilisation of mothers (Bottrell, 2013). In this,

⁷⁵ This is excluding victim-survivors who were situated in the practitioner group.

motherhood remains a site for the construction and configuration of class as well as contested 'authentic' victimhood within the frame of DVA (Skeggs, 1997). This allows for an elaborate, yet often very insidious and inconspicuous, mother-blaming agenda in which the least well-resourced mothers are most closely surveilled and disciplined (Jensen, 2018). These mothers also experience the impact of state intervention in family life in its crudest, most interventionist form (Skeggs, 2004), the starkest example of which is the state-ordered removal of children. For many victim-survivors, this remains the unspoken story of domestic abuse. The huge traumatic loss of child-removal represents one of the most significant, yet often unacknowledged 'collateral consequences' (Broadhurst and Mason, 2017) of domestic abuse, but there is little to no support provision available for the mothers affected, as I go on to discuss (Bambrough et al., 2019). By highlighting these stories of motherhood, loss and blame, I endeavour to elucidate the lived, affective and embodied impact of certain legal and social work discourses regarding families in which DVA is a feature.

Hester's conceptualisation of the 'three planets' (Hester, 2011) model is employed in this chapter as a key framework for analysing the tensions and contradictions extant in interventions relating to mothers experiencing DVA, judicial decisions made regarding child contact in cases of DVA, and practice to engage (violent) fathers. Mapping onto each of these are the 'three planets' designated as: (i) work with victim-survivors and perpetrators, (ii) child protection, and (iii) child contact (facilitated by the family court)⁷⁶. In addressing these tensions, I explore the dual identities of violent men as fathers and perpetrators, alongside the problematic but routine failure to acknowledge these identities as co-occurring, and indeed pertinent to a father's capacity to parent his children. I also draw upon the debates regarding the primacy of the 'presumption of contact' in family court care proceedings; the presumption refers to the notion that contact with a parent is always in the best interest of the child⁷⁷. It is with the 'three planets' in mind that parenting is a key focus of the analysis that follows, surfacing the complexities associated with the figure of the 'good' mother. The chapter begins with a discussion on mothering in and through DVA and the ways in which they navigate the child protection system, before moving on to a discussion of child contact. This provides a platform upon which to foreground the debates pertaining to fathers, explored in the second part of the chapter. In my discussion of fathers, I discuss practice to engage fathers in the current environment of austerity. The devastating consequences of the state-ordered removal of children is addressed in the third and final part of this chapter.

Mothers

The dominant discourses of responsibility and accountability discussed in the previous chapters remain equally salient in the debates set out here. Victim-blaming discourses take on a new and specific complexity when regarded in the context of mothers and children living with violent men. When children are brought into the frame, the responsabilisation of mothers coalesces around child protection policy and practice, consequently making them responsible within a statutory framework,

⁷⁶ See Chapter 3.

⁷⁷ See Chapter 3.

and arguably “letting [fathers] get away with it” (Featherstone and Peckover, 2007). In the current moment, discourses of austerity animate an already toxic rhetoric around the ‘bad’ mother. As decisions are made about mothers and their children, structural factors are often obscured, functioning to abstract the lived experiences of DVA from the policies that govern families in which there is DVA, and which contribute to the challenges they face (Ferguson et al., 2020). Instead, the challenges mother victim-survivors encounter become subsumed under the dichotomy of the ‘good/bad’ mother, at once legitimising state intervention and surveillance of the family. This has enabled the individualisation of certain social problems, construing them as Jensen (2018, p. 130) argues, the consequence of flawed decisions on the part of equally flawed subjects. The accounts discussed here bring this reality into sharp relief; as Saima states; “I'm fighting for my life here; they're my kids (.). There's nothing more important. And I've lost [in court] every time (.).” (PG1).

Data from this study repeatedly points to the ways in which mothers are routinely tasked with managing the DVA perpetrated by their partners, while also being encouraged to engage with opportunities to perform ‘good’ mothering and to demonstrate their adherence to the measures put in place by statutory services. Frequently, there is limited recognition of the reality women confront in contrast to that of their men partners who often enjoy a 'pick and mix' type of parenting which accentuates the ease with which it is possible to be a ‘good enough father’ (Eriksson and Hester, 2001) in contrast to that of a ‘good enough mother’. Anita’s account reflects this as she discusses the absence of her child’s father during child welfare proceedings:

“Why is it the women? Women get so much shit, you know? I attended all those child-in-need meetings, rightly so because it was my responsibility. Where was her dad in all of this? You know? Erm (...) all the focus, social care, children's workers, you name it, it's mum mum mum, gets all the fucking shit. It's like you made choices; well I don't really know how many choices I really had in all of that! Yeah, I did make choices, but they were really limited choices” (PG1 & PG2).

Anger clearly permeates Anita’s account as she recounts how she was required to navigate a host of interventions focused upon ensuring her daughter’s welfare, with her compliance and behaviour change the central focus of services’ attention; not the perpetrator’s. The repeated use of rhetorical questioning here functions to underscore the injustice Anita felt, coupled with the repetition of the word “choice” which accentuates the falsity of those ‘choices’. While wholly accepting her responsibility within this frame, Anita situates her experience within a dominant discourse of women’s social responsabilisation, in which women are routinely held to account for much of society’s “shit”. Debbie, an experienced DVA practitioner, echoes this:

“But [...] as a society (..) we put it all on the woman, don't we, to deal with? We just ask the woman to make the changes, ‘well you'll have to leave him’ (.). but then, he, even if she manages to leave him (.). he goes on to the next one (.). So I just don't know how far we need to roll that back, and...Well, patriarchy (..) We need to roll that off! (..) Gender” (PG2).

The prosodic features of Debbie’s speech have the effect of foregrounding particular words, redolent of a dominant victim-blaming discourse, that gains legitimacy when situated within the framework of patriarchy. The discourse is mobilised here to account for the disproportionate charge routinely

placed upon women to mitigate the harm posed by the perpetrator. The nature and extent of victim-survivor agency in this context is therefore heavily dependent upon the social context in which she is situated and is, as Anita and Debbie both indicate, compounded by normative expectations regarding women's gender role. This produces the continued preservation of social and gendered hierarchies within the family. Offering another perspective on the same set of discourses is Gemma, an IDVA working in another part of the country:

“I think it's a patriarchal society. And I think we're conditioned; we grow up with very clear ideas of what a woman's place is. I think it's also...I do think it's biological, you know, women are nurturers. The whole nature of having a baby and giving birth tends to be that you want to fix things. You want to look after people, you want to have that caring side. Therefore, when you're suffering abuse, you tend to the blame yourself and think well, what did I do wrong? And I think even just compounded by all the stuff in the media recently about Weinstein and you know...” (PG2)

Culturally constructed gender scripts (Cavanagh, 2003) alongside the enduring gender binary are both palpable in this account, structuring the roles ascribed to women and men. Gemma correlates the dominant gender order with the perpetration of DVA in so far as an experience of abuse disrupts a victim-survivor's ability to cohere with the expectations of the 'good' mother, the blame adhering to her as she is made a 'failed subject.' Motherhood and care work are framed here as the product of both “biology” and patriarchal “conditioning”; two discourses brought into relation with one another to account for a societally imposed narrative of mother-victim-blame. Gemma's reference to “Weinstein” further locates the account within a broader conversation regarding men's sexual and domestic violence, and the narratives which challenge victim-blame, set into motion by the 'me too' movement.

Mothers regularly adapt their behaviours and routines to minimise abuse (Sharp-Jeffs et al., 2018), and engage in strategic decision-making processes to protect their children from harm (Paper Dolls Research Group, 2019). The significance and complexity of these decisions is often overlooked by the statutory services, which have oversight of child protection arrangements. In the following extract Melanie speaks about a house-move to distance herself from a violent partner:

“I got a proper house last year, from a housing association, which is in a lot nicer area. I did that for my little boy, who's 7, and then several weeks later social care took him into care (.) because they said I couldn't keep him safe (.) . Because of all the bad relationships that I've had. That's what they blamed it on. And it's like I said to social care (.) it's the most annoying thing because you just fire it at me, telling me again about the abusive partners that I've had, and like I've said, we've not got a rewind button on life (.) I can't go back there (..) I can't change anything, so (...) They keep going on about having like all these different therapies but sometimes they don't do no good because all you're doing is raking to the front of your mind all the things...[...] (..)” (PG1).

Attending to the temporality of this account is crucial to understanding Melanie's primary proposition; that “we've not got a rewind button on life”, past events cannot be changed. We see how the genealogical lines mapped out in this extract knit together to produce the conditions for the

story regarding the impact of Melanie's abuse to emerge (Tamboukou, 2015). Together they chart the ways in which Melanie's past experience of abuse continues to disrupt her imagined future, and that of her son's; her use of temporal signifiers of only past and present, further corroborating how Melanie is prevented from making any claims for their futures. This account painfully illustrates the long-term, often indelible impact of having been in a relationship with a violent partner, which Melanie feels is routinely held against her by children's social care, preventing her from moving forward. Melanie is also repeatedly encouraged to participate in therapy as part of child protection proceedings, emphasising a social work practice which first and foremost seeks to instigate behaviour change on the part of the victim-survivor, rather than the perpetrator.

A persistent focus upon (working-class) victim-survivor mothers as the rightful target of state intervention in cases of DVA, effectively obscures the risk reduction strategies these women routinely employ within the limitations imposed upon them by the perpetrator, while also striving to comply with stipulations made by children's social care (Featherstone et al., 2018). Within this frame, women are expected to protect their children from the same man that is also abusing them (Featherstone, 2010a), often in the absence of adequate support (Ferguson et al., 2020). Together, these discourses produce the systematic failure to hold violent men to account for the violence towards their partners, as well as for their failure to protect their children (Alderson et al., 2013, l. 217). When women are not able to comply with the measures put in place as part of child protection proceedings, particularly in relation to the perpetrator of abuse, there are significant consequences for both her and the child(ren). Melanie was one of the many women I interviewed who eventually had her children taken into state care following a lengthy period of engagement with children's social services:

"I said to them, when in the [social worker] reports, us parents can sort of do three things that are good, five things that are not so good, them three things are never put in any of those reports, it's all the bad. So, when they go to court, the judge sees; 'oh, this mother's complete and utter trailer trash!' Cause they're not putting the whole nine yards in there...So I brought that up at one of the meetings and now [the social worker] started putting in all sorts of good things in the, in the reports. She says, 'I suppose it is a good thing that you showed commitment and you confirmed the meeting' (.) and she started putting all these good things in but before I said anything, all it was, was saying all the bad things" (PG1).

Like Anita's account above, the discourse of the 'good/bad' mother is clearly discernible in this extract. It operates here as a standard against which women must measure themselves and which they are measured against. It is heavily modulated by discourses of gender, race, class and poverty, and undoubtedly has become a more stringent measurement in the current climate of austerity in which families are increasingly struggling to provide the basics for their children (Bywaters and Sparks, 2017). Melanie signals her awareness of the pejorative class identity ascribed to her within this discourse, as she invokes the image of white working-class "trailer trash", gesturing what she believes to be the family court judges' similarly negative perceptions of mothers 'like her'.

Indeed, the unspoken discourse here is that of poverty and disadvantage in the lives of families like Melanie's; its concealment analogous of how structural inequalities are routinely occluded in child protection decision-making procedures (Bywaters and Sparks, 2017). Melanie's resistance to her potential silencing within and by statutory reporting systems, and a failure to recognise the "good

things” she has achieved as a mother, is similarly signalled in her insistence that her actions are formally recorded. This act of discursive resistance constitutes just one of the actions undertaken by her to evidence her ‘worth’ as a mother, literally constructing a counter narrative to that of the ‘bad’ mother formulated by the courts and the statutory services managing her case. Melanie is also subject to sustained surveillance and assessment in the form of multiple social worker home visits, often unannounced; referrals to group and individual therapy; numerous “parenting courses” – sometimes at opposite ends of the city to where Melanie lives and served by a very limited bus service – in addition to child protection meetings.

Parenting programmes represent one of many childrearing interventions borne out of a political focus on ‘deficient parenting’ and ‘troubled families’. First emerging under the New Labour government (1997 – 2010) (Jensen and Tyler, 2015), this catalogue of policies was extended by the successive coalition government following the 2011 riots in England (Allen and Taylor, 2012; Jensen, 2018). Parenting classes have subsequently become a “routinised response” in many local authorities, but are often detached from the actual needs of mothers and families (Ferguson et al., 2020, p. 27), who are more likely to have needs relating to housing, social support or financial difficulties (Morris et al., 2018). As many scholars in this area attest, the hostilities provoked by these policies were (and continue to be) most keenly felt by single, working-class mothers (as well as other marginalised groups such as those in precarious employment, those on low incomes, and BAME families) (Gillies, 2006; Jensen and Tyler, 2015; Jensen, 2018; Morris et al., 2018). Considered against this backdrop, the poor single mother is transformed into the metonymic figure for the ‘bad parent’, lacking the skills and moral responsibility sufficient to raise her children while child-rearing practices are successfully partitioned from the socioeconomic context in which they occur (Gillies, 2005). In this, the path to single motherhood is obscured by single motherhood itself, because as Skeggs has asserted, “mothers [become] both the problem and the solution to national ills. They can be used, and they can be blamed” (Skeggs, 1997, p. 48). Indeed, Melanie attended all of aforementioned classes and meetings without fail; her partner did not attend a single one. Melanie’s account, along with the other women’s, elucidates the full “scope of state policy to infiltrate and surveil family life” (Jensen, 2018, p. 104). Correspondingly child protection practices which continue to ‘turn a blind eye’ to perpetrator fathers have laid the groundwork for the construction of victim-survivor mothers as deficient or neglectful (Lapierre, 2010).

In the same way that Melanie’s perceived shortcomings (the “things that are not so good”) come to represent the overriding signifiers for the formal story told about her as a parent, so Pamela offers an account which paints a similar picture:

“I'd want to tell them, especially Social Services, things I'd want to tell Social Services is: don't come in prejudging us, do you know what I mean? We think we're bad enough mothers as it is, and then you put us down even more!” (PG1)

The spectre of the ‘bad’ mother is clearly in evidence here too, producing a subject-identification imposed upon Pamela by external actors (“them”, “social services”), but functioning at the same time to galvanise mothers as a collectivised group (“us”, “we”), bound together via a shared narrative of children’s social care. We see the successful attribution of a derogatory class identity upon these mothers, always already constructed on the basis of an evaluation of her capacity to perform ‘good’

motherhood, and embedded first and foremost by the abuse and violence she has experienced (“we think we’re bad enough mothers as it is”). Abusive men often target a woman’s mothering as part of their abuse (Radford and Hester, 2006), by deploying a range of strategies which are successful primarily because they take place within a social context which holds mothers as solely responsible for their children (Lapierre, 2010, p. 136). For many of the women in this study, their identity as a mother is one they fight hard to preserve, therefore a synchronised attack on their capacity as a mother by the state alongside that of a partner, serves as a powerful mechanism to denigrate their self-worth, and further emphasises the demand for personal resilience (Mullender et al., 2002).

Melanie also corroborates this assertion as she recounts how she challenged a social worker who had excluded her from the writing of her son’s “life story” book following his removal into state care:

“I said, how do you expect people to bring up their children in a positive way, when all you do is throw negative, after negative, after negative...? (..) So I went in one day and (.) helped them do this life story book (.) and this social worker sat there gobsmacked (.) [...] And I said yeah, you look at (..) things, little snapshots of people's lives and then think that you can make mass decisions about them, and I says you can't (..) [...] Yeah, they think because they've been through university and they've got letters after their name that they can make a decision about anyone's life” (PG1).

Melanie’s account again confirms how child protection policy and practice interface with class, material and gender inequalities. Together they work to produce the systemic exclusion of less-resourced, more marginalised mothers, and it is at the intersection of these discourses that women like Melanie are constituted as ‘object’ subjects. Melanie discusses her determination to wrest back control over her own story and to re-embed herself in the narrativization of her son’s story, the account foregrounding the ways in which (institutional) power intervenes in creating or foreclosing the conditions of possibility for specific narratives to emerge (Tamboukou, 2008). In this instance, these narratives serve as a stark reminder of the power of the state to monopolise or (re)author the life-narratives of those subject to its monitoring, often on the basis of mere “snapshots”. Crudely pieced together for a child protection meeting or a court hearing, but by no means sufficient to capture the complexities of the lives featured. And as such, we see here just how much can be lost in this process, and the extent to which a recuperation of one’s own story is so heavily reliant upon possession of the requisite socio-material resources to do so in the first instance (“they think because they've been through university...”). In the next section I discuss in more detail some of the participants’ negotiation of the child protection DVA ‘planet’.

Child protection

DVA as a child protection issue was recognised in statute via the introduction of The Children’s Act 2004, which was an amendment of The Children’s Act 1989 (Featherstone et al., 2010). Care proceedings are issued by the Local Authority under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering or may suffer future harm. In the case of families in which DVA is present, child protection measures are used to safeguard the child(ren) and mitigate the risk posed by the perpetrator. Child protection proceedings can, however, result in the

paradoxical intervention of the state in cases of DVA, in which mother victim-survivors find themselves occupying opposing positionalities before and after separating from an abusive partner and father. This exemplifies the inconsistencies across the ‘three planets’ of domestic abuse, the disjuncture between the private law family court and the criminal court, and the routine dismissal of women’s experiences of DVA in favour of an agenda that privileges fathers’ rights. Indeed, the application of child protection policy is combined with the longstanding and ubiquitous absence of the father figure in social work practice (Nygren et al., 2019). Taken together, mothers are construed as (solely) responsible for the risk posed both to them and that of any child(ren). The following from Pamela, speaking about her ex-partner, encapsulates this:

“I went to all the meetings down in Social Services [...]. I was there when [the social worker] arranged to meet me at the house. [...] I mean, she could have just turned up, but I was there, but every meeting he never turned up. She even sent him letters to attend down there, when... (.) on his own, without me; he just used to rip them up” (PG1).

Pamela mobilises a discourse here that illustrates the progressive intervention on the part of children’s social care, triggered by Pamela’s partner’s abuse. It is a discourse in which Pamela herself is constructed as always, already present and compliant. Her partner’s persistent failure to engage in child protection proceedings resonates with the accounts of several of the women involved in this study. His actions announce a clear disregard for the child protection process, while also elevating the challenges Pamela and other women like her face when seeking to cooperate with children’s social services. As Pamela’s experience attests, fathers are rarely involved in child protection planning in cases of DVA⁷⁸, and often they will not even be physically present in the room because they cannot be located.

DVA is the most frequently raised welfare issue during family court proceedings in the UK (Coy et al., 2015), and the threat of state-ordered removal of a child represents one of the most significant and enduring fears women victim-survivors grapple with, as Leah articulates:

“So yeah, it's like a fear. A fear of losing your family. Losing your children (..) [...] Everything...you're living in fear (.) The fear that you're surrounded by, on so many different levels. You could be scared at the doctors about what they're gonna say and how they're gonna intervene. And you can go home and be equally scared, you know, because you don't know when you're next going to get hurt” (PG1).

This extract makes visible the range of anxieties women in this context must often negotiate at once. In the case of mothers, the threat of losing their children often compounds these anxieties; women who are already engaged with social services or who have already had one child removed, often

⁷⁸ There is a growing body of work which examines the changing landscape of fatherhood in the UK, and which documents how fathers often feel excluded from family and children’s practice and intervention. This is coupled with research which argues that fathers in some cases *want* to be included but feel ill-equipped to do so (see for example McConnell et al., 2016; Bateson et al., 2017; Menzies, 2019).

experience this fear even more acutely⁷⁹. As Kirsten attests, deploying a common idiomatic device (“walking on eggshells”), regularly used by women to describe life with a perpetrator: “children’s social care’s first threat is, ‘well we’re gonna be involved with your kids’. ‘We’re worried about your kids’ safety’, so then you’re walking on eggshells, thinking, shit!” (PG1, FG1). Both Kirsten and Leah before her, mobilise a discourse of ubiquitous fear, produced in Leah’s account through the repeated pattern of psychologically charged terms (“fear” and “scared”). Their accounts echo themes reflected across the empirical literature, in which women equate involvement with care proceedings and the legal system, with the conditions of living with a perpetrator (Williamson, 2010; Coy et al., 2015). They also convey how the threat of stated-ordered removal can complicate barriers to leave-seeking and disclosure of abuse (Harne, 2011). Corroborating this assertion, Steph speaks about her attendance at a DVA group as part of a children’s social care intervention:

“But they’re like, social services said I had to come [to the group] or they’re gonna take me kids off us. And it’s like, well, that’s kind of wrong, but (.) where do you get a happy medium? Where do you get; ‘if I push her, I know she’ll give [in] and she’ll not go back’. [...] but [...] other authorities get involved so that it’s like...[choice] is taken away. Because I would never have... [...] If social services hadn’t of [stepped in], I probably wouldn’t have [left]” (PG1).

This extract communicates a fundamental tension extant in women’s decision-making processes prior to leaving as well as the complexity of the work undertaken by children’s social care. The discourse offered by Steph traces the fine line women often tread between wanting or *needing* services to intervene due to the severity of the DVA, while also dreading the consequences if services do step in. Steph therefore questions the veracity of the ‘choice’ available to women in these circumstances, corresponding with Anita’s assertions discussed earlier in this chapter. Mapping onto the concerns articulated by these women, is the following extract from Stuart, a children and family’s intervention worker, who relays the conversations he has with the mothers he supports:

“I try to be very matter of fact [when talking to the mothers]; ‘you’ve been through this experience which must have been horrible and upsetting, but equally my job is to focus on the health and wellbeing of the children. So, if you go back to that relationship, I’m going to have to make a referral to children’s social care because (.) that relationship, that violence and that level of psychological and emotional abuse, is jeopardising the health and wellbeing and the outcomes of your children’ (.) So, it’s very erm (...) very disempowering. And very sort of (.) difficult for the women to go through. Because they just then get judged for having the relationship, I suppose” (PG3).

In this extract, Stuart ostensibly provides the counter-narrative to those provided above; arguably constituting the “authorities” (Steph, PG1) narrative, Stuart’s account corroborates the

⁷⁹ Prior research indicates that ‘care experienced mothers’ who have already had a child removed are more likely to have any further children removed or subject to child protection (Morris, 2018; Ryan, M., 2019).

preoccupations voiced by several of the women I interviewed. Offering an account in which his discursive constructions are already evaluated (Potter and Wetherell, 1987), Stuart underscores that the focus remains upon the children – which, to be clear, I am not contesting – but at times, to the detriment of the mother. Stuart signals his concomitant recognition that the process may be experienced as “disempowering” by the mother, leaving her feeling inevitably “judged”. The narrative of child exposure to harm deployed here by Stuart, is as Ferguson and colleagues (2020, p. 29) assert, the dominant discourse routinely emphasised in child protection law, policy and practice, with women’s experience of the DVA, a secondary concern for children’s services. This discourse produces the disproportionate responsabilisation of mothers for the management of DVA, in this case, catalysed by a possible “referral to children’s social care”. The perpetrator does not feature in this discourse. Recognising and acknowledging that women victim-survivors’ personal agency and control is so enmeshed with the decision-making to leave is absolutely fundamental to understanding the complexity of exiting a relationship with an abusive, controlling partner. What is more, as I discussed in the chapter prior, mothers are increasingly unable to take their children and leave, because they do not have the financial resources to do so, yet socio-economic inequalities are routinely obscured in child protection proceedings (Bywaters and Sparks, 2017; Morris et al., 2018; Ferguson et al., 2020).

Crucially, if mothers do attempt to leave without their children to secure the means to live independently, they face losing contact rights with their children all together. This desperate catch-22 is constructed in and by current legal discourse and is exacerbated by the climate of austerity. IDVA Felicity explains during one of the focus groups:

“Women can't go and try and get a job and build up resources to be on their own and then go back and get the kids from the father because it will be held against her that she has left. Questions will be asked; Why did you walk out? He can't be a problem. You can't think he's unsafe if you've left the children with him. Absolutely, that would just be flipped over, and it would still be a problem, and it would be the woman who had made these crazy decisions!” (PG2, FG3)

Victim-survivors across the sample echo Felicity’s assertions, including Saima who recalls the night she left her abusive husband; “should I have woken the kids at one in the morning? (.) I left them asleep but...(.) [...] But the problem is, what do you do... [...] how do I explain to someone I can't physically do it, because he's stronger than me! He doesn't let me, so what the hell do people expect me to do? (.)” (PG1). Cohering with Saima is an anecdote from practitioner Rose, regarding one of her clients; “it went through court and [the perpetrator] got the kids, because she left to try and set up home and everything, and he's been given the kids. She gets supervised contact with them” (PG2, FG3). This is an experience frequently repeated in accounts across the sample, from both victim-survivors and practitioners, highlighting yet another impossible choice mothers often face. In the next section, I examine how some participants navigate the family court system in circumstances of disputed child contact.

Experiences in the family court

Several of the women involved in this study had experience of the family court after being involved in child protection proceedings, as described above. Saima is one example of these women. Despite

having experienced significant physical and psychological abuse from her husband, Saima lost the right to full time contact with her two young children after pressure was placed upon her to concede contact during the first court hearing. The children were then placed in the perpetrator's care. Her experience is unfortunately not unique and coheres with findings from other studies with South Asian women (Thiara and Gill, 2012). The difficulties women encounter when navigating the family court system are clearly apparent, as hearings are often complex and bewildering, as Saima attests:

"It's not fair! How do these things happen? Where I was getting abused, this is how it's all come out, I've stepped away from him because of the abuse; he's took the kids from me. Now, when I'm in court (.) they have to do what he wants. Because the kids are with him [...] I don't understand how anything works! (.) How the hell do they decide these things? So, I'm there...he wouldn't agree to anything, and we had to negotiate constantly with him, to agree on something. Why should he agree to anything; he doesn't want to agree on anything" (PG1).

The court process itself is often (re)traumatising, and Saima's account foregrounds her difficulties in making sense of it while also coming to terms with the abuse she has experienced. Gendered power imbalances endure, even within the confines of the courtroom, as Saima's account illustrates how men's domination is normalised. Thiara and Gill (2012) argue that this is typical of professionals' treatment of South Asian and other BAME families, during child contact disputes. Further, because the DVA is routinely disregarded during family court proceedings, victim-survivors like Saima, are left feeling even more vulnerable and literally silenced (Coy et al., 2012). Heidi, a mother of four children, provides another illustration of this:

"[T]he problem [is for] women who have experienced domestic violence, who have children, and the relationship between the two courts. So (..) on the criminal court side of things, as a victim of domestic violence you're protected from your ex (..) Um...you know, you're protected, you've got a room, you're [safe]. However, if you're going through the [family] court processes as well, on the contact, [the perpetrator] can call you back, as mine has, regularly and you're forced to sit in a room, with him, being questioned and interrogated, and harassed by him (.) And (.) when you get into the contact issue (..) they don't discuss domestic violence because it's about contact with the dad and the child, and what's happened between parents is seen as, as irrelevant (..)" (PG1).

Heidi draws upon her substantial experience in court with her ex-husband to highlight the ways in which current law and policy can provide a platform for the continued perpetration of abuse and the reassertion of perpetrator control (Coy et al., 2015). Heidi sets up an oppositional discourse in this extract to construct the contrasting experiences of the two courts; in the criminal court being "protected" and "safe", and in the family court, "being questioned and interrogated" by her abusive husband during proceedings. Though still permissible at the time of interview, this practice has recently been deemed unacceptable in cases of domestic abuse as part of a raft of measures

proposed with the new Domestic Abuse Bill⁸⁰, following sustained and lengthy criticism of it. At the second reading of the new Bill in the Commons in October 2019, Justice Secretary Robert Buckland stated; “[f]ew things are likely to retraumatise victims more than being subject to direct cross-examination by their abuser in legal proceedings. Such an experience [...] would of itself be a continuation of the abuse” (Home Office, 2020b, no pagination). While the abandonment of this practice will provide some solace to victim-survivors when made law, the continued separation of the Criminal Court and Family Court systems, as Heidi refers to, exacerbates the ongoing challenges women victim-survivors encounter when involved in child contact disputes at the family court.

These challenges are compounded by changes made to legal aid under welfare reform policies introduced in 2012 which have resulted in many victim-survivors representing themselves⁸¹ in private law proceedings (Kelly et al., 2014). Mother victim-survivors involved in contact disputes must then grapple with the central paradox of “post-separation mothering” (Holt, 2016). As such, during children protection procedures the mother is held responsible for protecting children *from* the violent father, as the previous section discusses. But, in family court proceedings, after the couple separates, the mother becomes responsible for supporting and enabling the contact between the (violent) father and their children. This entails a conceptual shift in the identity and role of the father, determined by two key organising principles: the primacy of the ‘presumption of contact’, on the one hand, and the bifurcation of the man’s identity between that of father and perpetrator, on the other.

Both Heidi and Saima’s experience before her, instantiate with painful clarity how “the culture of the family law system is framed within a paradigm of conflict between equals” (Laing, 2017, p. 1331). The social problem of men’s violence towards women completely belies this claim, and the treatment of it as such fails to acknowledge the specifically gendered nature of this crime. Cohering with Saima, Heidi recounts the words of a judge: “[he’s] said to me in court on numerous occasions; ‘I don’t know why you’re frightened, I wouldn’t be frightened of that. It’s not something that happened’. You know, ‘it’s not something that I would be afraid of...’” (PG1). Heidi alludes to the fact that her ex-partner used multiple applications to the court, primarily as an instrument for control and to maintain instability in the lives of the family. This is a reality for Saima too, with both women’s experiences reflected in research with victim-survivor mothers elsewhere (Coy et al., 2015; Hunter et al., 2020).

The women’s experiences highlight the extent to which this is a legal process heavily modulated by gender, race and class, with hearings orchestrated by those with the material resources and cultural capital to do so. At times, perpetrators are both emboldened and enabled by this system which compromises victim-survivors recovery from trauma, particularly when there is a fundamental commitment to maintain contact at all costs (Hunter and Choudhry, 2018). But as these accounts indicate, judicial understandings of DVA are often wholly inadequate (Radford et al., 1997; Coy et al., 2012; Coy et al., 2015; Laing, 2017). As a result, we see the routine disregard of women’s testimonies, as well as a general culture of disbelief of women’s reports of abuse (Harrison, 2008). This is despite

⁸⁰ Reintroduced in March 2020, see Chapter 1.

⁸¹ Latest available statistics indicate that in 2017, 3,234 victim-survivors had no legal representation at, at least 1 private law hearing. This contrasts to 1309 in year 2012 (Ministry of Justice and ONS, 2017).

the fact that often women provide testimonies of abuse during ‘fact finding hearings’⁸² as part of the court proceedings (Barnett, 2015). Reports of DVA, along with any attempt to query the suitability of contact with a perpetrator-father, are instead, frequently regarded as an act of obstruction (Laing, 2017) on the part of the mother, rather than a legitimate attempt to increase the safety of the child(ren) concerned (Eriksson and Hester, 2001). The resultant contact arrangements made in the family court frequently require that women handle untenable, often very risky situations at the behest of the court, which I elaborate upon in the next section.

Negotiating child ‘contact’ post-separation

As Radford and Hester (2006, p. 9) have argued, while women are urged to leave their abusive partners by police and other agencies when in the relationship, the family court system routinely “locks them into relationships after separation by making unsafe contact orders for children”. As such the family court system both sustains and enhances a perpetrator’s capacity to exert power and control over his (ex)partner, as perpetrators are authorised access to the family after separation (Macdonald, 2016; Laing, 2017). Representing what has been termed an “absent presence” (Thiara and Humphreys, 2017), the father can maintain a (harmful) influence on the family, even when not physically present. This disrupts families but also functions as a mechanism to undermine the relationship between mother and child while also placing both at risk, as the following extract from Abigail attests:

“I [...] did a Skype call with [my son] and he was crying his eyes out, with his dad in the background, where I could only see his dad from the neck down; with his dad shouting, ‘go on tell her’! And my son crying going, ‘I never want to talk to you or see you again’. And I was like, ‘okay, I understand what's going on. I get it, we've talked about this, I know, don't worry. Keep yourself safe’. And I said if you need to insult me, call me a bitch and say I'm the worst mother, to keep you safe, so he doesn't hit you, you know, or do anything to you, then do it. Do whatever you need to keep safe” (PG1).

Abigail’s ex-partner repeatedly sought to rally their son against her after he was awarded full, unsupervised contact. The temporal structure of this extract is pivotal to the discursive construction of the spectral and dangerous presence of the father, epitomised in his headless image on the computer screen. As Abigail recalls a past trauma, she imports an agonising conversation with her young son, in which the discourse of the ‘bad’ mother is deployed by Abigail as a strategy to protect him. The account serves as a stark example of how children are made “emotional capital” (Radford and Hester, 2006) by perpetrators, used in the political wrangling of contact arrangements. In Abigail’s case, her son was eventually abducted by the father during a contact visit and at the time of interview, she did not know where he was. Evoking similar concerns, Saima describes an interview conducted with her two young children after contact had been awarded to their father:

⁸² See Chapter 3.

“[M]y son just said everything as if his father is speaking. [...] You think, oh my god, he's basically just said everything his father's saying. And my poor daughter, she was so traumatised she wouldn't speak, she just cried and ran out the room. [...] And the truth is, a few months later, my daughter said to me, mummy [...] I wanted to be with you, but I was too scared to say, because they said it's a police officer. And like, people had scared her, and all sorts” (PG1).

Both these accounts fundamentally challenge the validity of the decisions being made on the basis of the ‘presumption of contact’. Like Abigail, Saima imports excerpts of her daughter’s talk, as she recounts how her children were weaponised against her, through her husband’s psychological tactics of fear and intimidation; equivalent to those deployed by Abigail’s partner. In this, we see the workings of power reinforced through the figure of the “police officer”, whose performative speech gains legitimacy by virtue of his authoritarian position (Butler, 1990; Althusser, 2001 [1971]).

Accounts discussed here are redolent of the growing focus upon fathers’ rights (Harne, 2011) in child contact cases, as Saima states, recounting the words of a judge: “‘so what if you're the mother? (.) [...] 20 years ago, it might have been different where the mother just got the kids, but that's not the case now (.) And he's the father. What about the father?’” (PG1). A ‘pro-contact’ agenda combined with a disproportionate emphasis on fathers’ rights (mis)directs attention away from the interests of the mother and children (Hunter et al., 2020). It is an agenda which comfortably coalesces with the systemic “de-gendering”⁸³ of family court discourse (Eriksson and Hester, 2001), and is evidenced in talk of ‘parenting’, which has become metonymic for ‘mothering’ (Allen and Taylor, 2012). This is coupled with an institutional reluctance to see violent fathers’ perpetration of DVA as consequential to their parenting capabilities, and instead the two are separated out and viewed in isolation (Alderson et al., 2013, l. 217). In the following section I will examine the attendant debates pertaining to the engagement of fathers against this backdrop.

Fathers

While there has been an increased policy focus on the engagement of fathers (biological or ‘social’⁸⁴) across settings such as in education and health care, the notion that violent men should address their fathering in the context of DVA has been much “slower to emerge” in policy and practice (Smith and Humphreys, 2019). The shift towards engaging fathers, in general, has developed as part of strategies to improve children’s outcomes, particularly those from more disadvantaged backgrounds (Featherstone, 2010b), cementing narratives which espouse the importance of the father in a child’s life. Although some progress has been made in relation to fathers who commit DVA (Featherstone and Fraser, 2012), it remains the case that far too little attention is paid to a violent father’s

⁸³ There are parallels here with the government’s gender-neutral definition of DVA, see Chapter 1.

⁸⁴ Fathering carried out by men who are not genetically tied to the child(ren) concerned, including as stepfather, boyfriend or intimate partner of the mother.

responsibility to stop his violence (Radford and Hester, 2006, p.112), both in the arena of child protection as well as that of the Family Court and child contact.

Crucially, violent fathers often continue to see their children after the relationship with their mother has ended. They also go on to form *new* relationships, often without ever reforming their behaviour (Hester and Westmarland, 2006); this provides a compelling rationale for the engagement of violent fathers (Devaney, 2009; 2014), particularly around their parenting capabilities, as well as to increase their individual accountability. But as the data shows in the current climate of austerity and reduced resources, the task of engaging men as fathers is complicated further:

“[A]s a local authority there was this, go and do this training, [...] and it's kind of like a tokenistic rather than a realistic (.) thing, you know. [...] I did a report to the board and it was like, ‘oh so we're thinking about how we're engaging men’ [...] (...) But really (.) it didn't follow through to mum, because actually when we've got a busy workload (.) and mum answers the door, we need to sit down and have a conversation with mum (..) You fulfil the outcome you set out to achieve when you left (..) the office. And we probably aren't tenacious, and probing and you know, inquisitive enough to get the dad involved as much as we could” (PG3).

Children's and families worker Stuart provides an account which illustrates how organisational culture change is jeopardised when implemented in an environment in which workers are over-stretched and under-resourced. In this extract Stuart positions the task of “engaging men” as the unattained “tokenis[ed]” ideal, in contrast to that of the practice norm of engaging “mum”, construed here as a more “realistic” and achievable avenue for intervention, given the constraints upon resources and in the absence of the father. Stuart's successive reflection upon his and colleagues' practice (“we probably aren't tenacious...”) orientates the discourse towards an acknowledgement of the current system's failings, while also functioning to pre-empt possible counter-arguments that may refute his claims (Edwards and Potter, 1993). The account also corroborates that fathers who use violence are often not seen as ‘legitimate’ clients of children and family services which in turn, sustains their comparative invisibilisation (Heward-Belle et al, 2019, l. 125). IDVA Debbie echoes this sentiment:

“You know, the expectation, I just think, particularly when we get child protection [involved] [...] If you look at the child protection plan (..) 99% of what the tasks are, is for the mother to do (.) and the father, he can get off by just saying, ‘well, I'm not living there at the minute’. Oh well, then...But he's still a father to children, with responsibilities and I just think, we just seem to almost hand them a ‘get out of jail card free’, don't we? So, I think, it's that shift [...] There's been a level of entrenchment and it's about time that they sort of reach...so it's going all the way back...” (PG2)

The discourse deployed here is situated within the frame of an equality-focused feminist politics, as Debbie derides an “entrench[ed]” cultural narrative in which women continue to carry the burden of childcare and child protection responsibilities. The injustice of these societal gender norms is warranted through reference to numeral formulations (“99% of what the tasks are...”), a quantification technique which has the persuasive effect of validating Debbie's argument (Potter et al., 1991), while also providing a counter-discourse to the “get out of jail free card” handed to fathers.

Both Stuart and Debbie's assertions substantiate the material consequence of continually overlooking fathers, cohering with assertions made by victim-survivors earlier in this chapter.

A key aspect of the work to responsabilise fathers entails equipping men with the skills to adequately respond to their caring responsibilities, while also recognising that they have a duty to uphold those responsibilities. This encompasses what Rivett (2010) has called a "both/and" approach which considers the violent father's dual identities. However, when operating in an environment of limited resources, and continued budget cuts, the possibility of shifting the responsibility from mother to/and father, is made even less feasible. Together, the accounts bring to bear the stark disparity between government rhetoric around "making DVA everyone's business" (Home Office, 2016) and the resources and funding made available to local authorities to carry out this complex work. They also communicate a lack of political will and a disregard for the wellbeing of the women and children the government purports to prioritise in tackling DVA (Home Office, 2016). Saima captures this sentiment when talking about the moment she lost contact rights with her children, saying; "what message are they giving out there? [My ex-husband] can go to other men and say, I done it, and I got away with it. Go for it, you can do it too! It's easy!" (PG1). In the next section I discuss the traumatic consequences for mothers of the state-ordered removal of their children.

The state-ordered removal of children

The accounts discussed here illustrate the extent to which perpetrators have the power to fundamentally disrupt the future trajectories of victim-survivors, even after the abuse has ended. Indeed, this is the "future-work" (Morriss, 2018, p. 821) done by the perpetrator such that the state-ordered removal of children comes to constitute the final act of disruption of these imagined futures. It is the threat of state-ordered removal of children that is the anathema for many mothers living with domestic abuse. The mothers' accounts bring into sharp relief the woeful lack of *any* post-removal support for them, echoing prior research in this area (Broadhurst and Mason, 2017; Bambrough et al., 2019). Almost all of the women who had gone through removal procedures consequently articulate a real need for ongoing and specialist support, particularly therapeutic intervention, in order to cope with the traumatic loss of their child(ren). Jacqueline attests to this:

"Social services are very quick to put your child into adoption, but they offer no (.) support for the mother afterwards, whose gone through an experience like this. So there's no support. They're just, 'that's it', they leave (...) And I had to go and find counselling on me own (.) So I found it through a charity in the end. And they had about a 9-month waiting list for it. [...] Women are losing their kids through abuse. They should have offered support to me, at the time there was none. I kind of just dealt with it on me own. And I still do sometimes" (PG1).

As Jacqueline deploys a narrative of loss and grief in this account, we see how despite the time period elapsed, the impact of the removal of her son at age three, continues to shape her daily life, because as she continues, "[mothers], they're grieving for their child, and their child's not dead!". Despite grieving though, women like Jacqueline are not afforded the typical rituals of bereavement, and instead are left to "[deal] with it on [their] own". Jacqueline reinforces this sentiment by orientating her account towards a discourse of self-sufficiency, resisting any notion of implicit weakness ("So I

found it through a charity in the end”; “I kind of just dealt with it on me own”). Jacqueline’s experience of independent help-seeking is indicative of many others, characterised by long periods on waiting lists, during which time her mental health deteriorated. Abigail communicates similar difficulties in trying to obtain therapeutic support:

“If I had therapy, as soon as I actually needed it, right at the beginning then I would be more moved on in my life, than where I am now. And that panicked me because I kept feeling like, you know, I’m 51, I kept thinking, my god how long is it going to be for me to get sorted? I’m going to be retirement age by the time I feel like I’m a normal human being again! And you kind of panic, like you feel like time is running out...And I was so...you know, I have suicidal thoughts and there were quite a few times where, I’d gather tablets. The only reason I didn’t commit suicide was because of my kids. Because one, I didn’t want to give my daughter permission to commit suicide, and two, if my son does come looking for me, I want to be here” (PG1).

At the time of interview, Abigail had not seen her youngest son for almost 6 years. He was abducted by his father, shortly after unsupervised contact was awarded to him. The interlocking discourses of time in this account function to convey the lasting affective and psychological impact of child removal upon women like Abigail and Jacqueline before her. The women find themselves living in what Morriss has termed a state of “haunted motherhood”, maintaining the hope of a possible reunification with their children when they reach adulthood (Morriss, 2018), while also coping with the continual “ghostly absence” of their children (Gordon, 2008). The anticipation that Abigail’s son may seek to find her upon turning 16, coupled with the need to live for her daughter, both serve as vital protective factors for Abigail’s mental health, as she contends with the unbearable sense that “time is running out”. Another excerpt from Jacqueline’s interview further illustrates this haunting:

“I will have a word with social services and explain that, if [my son] comes to find me, I don’t want to have no contact with the father (.) And that’s gotta be put in the plan; I don’t want no contact with the father (...) (...)”

JW: Does it make you anxious that he’s going to be 18 soon?

Yeah, and he’s going to want to know everything and I’ve got to explain it all to him (...) (...) [...]

JW: Do you know what you’ll say?

I’ve wrote a letter (.) for his file. But (.) it just never leaves you, does it. [...] But I’ve had to rebuild the best I can do (..) So I am like a survivor, in a way (...)” (Jacqueline, PG1).

Fifteen years after her child was removed from her care and adopted, Jacqueline too lives with the anticipation that her son may one day try to find her when he turns 18. But it is a futurity complicated by the anxiety that his father may also seek her out, coupled with the fact that she will be required to “explain it all to him” if she ever sees him again. In this extract, Jacqueline constructs children’s social care as a key component in the work to keep her safe (“I will have a word with social services...”), but

also, in enabling her to “[write] a letter for his file” thereby permitting her to articulate her side of the story. This has the effect of foregrounding the significant power of institutional story-telling in the lives of care experienced women and their children. Akin to earlier extracts, Jacqueline orientates this account towards the sector-wide discourse of survivorship, allowing for the emergence of her subject-position as “survivor”, and thus refuting any perception that she is a helpless, passive victim. This account is testament to the ways in which women like Jacqueline, and thousands like her, have futures emphatically shaped by their pasts (Morriss, 2018). Painfully illustrating this is Melanie, who describes her feelings walking out the courtroom after losing contact rights for her youngest son:

“That day, all I'd got was my solicitor, and I literally...I walked out of that court (.) completely alone, and my mum was totally worried, until I walked through her door, that I was gonna throw meself under a bus. Cause I just phoned her in a total state, she said ‘shall I come in town and meet you’, and I'm like no (.) I'll just catch tram. And I sat on tram all the way from town to me mum's [...], and I was just streaming. [...] And the only reason they're keeping him in care now, is because if he stays with, with me ‘he'll not reach his full potential’, because of the abuse that I suffered (...) So you pay for it, and you go on (.) suffering for it, a lot longer than when it, it finishes, in many ways, by many professionals (.) and it should not be allowed” (PG1).

The prolonged disruption to Melanie’s futurity is clearly evidenced here, and her experience captures the extent to which decisions made by state authorities continue to reverberate far into victim-survivors’ futures. The interaction between two vastly different discourses here; that of the banal (“I’ll just catch tram”) and that of extraordinary visceral pain (“I was just streaming”), converge to produce Melanie’s subjectivity as the bereft, ‘abject’ mother, alone and wrought with grief. The sheer depth of her traumatic loss is typified through Melanie’s use of the extreme case formulation of possible suicide (Pomerantz, 1986). Melanie’s experiences of state-ordered removal, like Jacqueline, Abigail and Saima before her, are tantamount to secondary victimisation (Laing, 2017) at the hands of the state, which is so often allowed to play out on the stage of the family court (Coy et al., 2015).

For some women, the state-ordered removal of their children functions as a catalyst for a worsening of existing difficulties such as substance use, mental health or housing insecurity, which in the absence of support to deal with these issues post-removal, lead to an increase in levels of deprivation, social exclusion, and vulnerability. As Jean conveys when discussing the permanent removal of her son into adoption; “that was before I got on the alcohol. Was when I lost my son and that. That year. That year was...Yeah, that was the year that, I become an alcoholic basically. 14 year ago” (PG1). Jean’s account as well as those before her, demonstrate how the women most affected by state-removal and separation procedures are those women who face heightened levels of socio-material insecurity and inequalities and they are the least well-resourced to respond to this complex trauma, loss and violence, independently of state assistance.

Conclusion

The contributions from participants outlined in this chapter starkly emphasise the persistent inadequacies of the current family court system as well as child protection proceedings. Practices in both 'planets' continue to cultivate a tacit victim-blaming agenda, which routinely disregards the interests of mother victim-survivors, thereby cementing a key rationale for the engagement of (violent) fathers and the reworking of current practices (Devaney, 2009). The mothers' experiences of children's social care indicate a routine lack of scrutiny of perpetrator-fathers' behaviours; a practice which has the effect of rendering fathers invisible within the context of children's social care. This is contrasted by an over-emphasis upon fathers' rights within the context of the family court, in which the impact and role of DVA is deprioritised and rendered inconsequential to matters of child contact. The structural barriers mothers must confront when negotiating the current family law and child protection systems are often obscured and are instead subsumed within the broader discourse of 'good' motherhood. Data also elaborated with painful clarity the consequences of the state-ordered removal of children. The mothers' experiences exemplified the importance of viewing DVA not as a singular or a series of incidents which dissipate once the victim-survivor has left the relationship, but rather, as a continuous event which endures far into the future. The women's stories strongly substantiate the urgent need for post-removal support provision, which is trauma-informed, and which incorporates a recognition of the complexities of structural disadvantages in the lives of mothers subject to care proceedings.

With the above in mind, the experiences of the victim-survivors discussed in this chapter strongly substantiate the considerable value vested in dedicating time and resources to work constructively with fathers, not only to address their use of violence, but also to meet their parenting responsibilities in the context of child protection proceedings. The benefits of interventions which seek to hold fathers to account would extend far beyond the confines of one family given the likelihood of repeat victimisation by the same perpetrator, when or if he moves onto another partner, and would contribute to the larger-scale, more ambitious task of shifting dominant practice and policy paradigms in this area. The engagement of fathers in this context must be done though, in a manner that vigorously supports and recognises women's efforts to protect their children, and in a way that acknowledges the significant impact of the DVA they have experienced. As Heward-Belle and colleagues (2019, p. 369) assert, increasing the visibility of fathers who use violence represents a crucial driver in the reformation of policy and practice, to more closely align with the feminist goals of eliminating institutionally embedded sexist practices. But these types of interventions require substantial political commitment and investment to develop meaningful, long-term whole family interventions in which fathers are engaged, monitored and held to account for their behaviour. The new Domestic Abuse Bill (Home Office, 2020a), when law, will go a significant way to making the family courts a safer place for victim-survivors and their children as well as to holding perpetrators to account, but only if it is underpinned by substantial funding for women's specialist services. In its current form the new Bill also does not make any provision for migrant women which is a major omission, likely to impact upon some of the most vulnerable mothers. Extending these discussions, I examine men's engagement outside of the context of the family, in the following chapter.

Chapter 8: Men's participation in DVA prevention & anti-VAW work and activism

“[H]ow do we break open that conversation more explicitly to name and validate women's experience of violence? And do something about it. Whilst making sure that the men are also able to understand [...] what they can do. But also, how they benefit from some of those things.”
(Lloyd, PG3)

“[I]s this agenda, and is this work, exclusively [...] you know for women, in women's services. [...] [I]s it an exclusively women's agenda when it suits or not? Do men ‘tokenistically’ get involved, rather than genuinely?”
(Patrick, PG3)

“Clearly, men are capable of taking on board these things and not behaving in oppressive [...] and violent ways. Then why shouldn't we expect that of all men?”
(Max, PG3)

Introduction

This chapter responds to the third research question, regarding **the role men occupy within the frame of VAW and DVA prevention and intervention**. As such, I explore both the challenges and opportunities associated with men's participation in these fields, via a focused analysis of their accounts. Some participants in this group were also involved with projects for men victim-survivors, men perpetrators, and or other social justice activism. The participants' stories point to the entanglements of gender, power and identity, which pattern this area of work, operationalised and embodied on miso (individual interactions and relationships), meso (community, services), and macro levels (structural, societal) respectively. The analysis of their contributions is set against the backdrop of the current UK government's welfare and domestic abuse policies, as well as the anti-VAW movement's feminist genealogy. The UK government's current strategy to end VAWG specifically endorses the engagement of men and boys as integral components in prevention and early intervention strategies (Home Office, 2016)⁸⁵. However, the increased participation or inclusion of men in this field brings challenges for women-only spaces and feminist social justice activism. These arise from concerns regarding the possible co-optation of the movement⁸⁶ as well as around the allocation of resources in an already hostile funding environment.

In analysing the narrative accounts offered by this group, the often-complex relationship between men and feminism as well as the broader DVA movement, is made clear. The extant tensions have

⁸⁵ See Chapter 2.

⁸⁶ See Chapter 2.

arguably become more convoluted in recent years, as the divisions within the feminist and women's movements have further deepened, and battles centred upon gendered 'authenticity' have re-emerged. The role of embodied gender and experience in the formation of knowledge is variously constructed in the discourses offered, and analysis reveals a complex landscape of gender relations. These routinely rely upon a dedicated investment in a binarised understanding of gender, which plays out in the construction of men's VAW prevention and intervention efforts and map onto the debates regarding gendered spaces. These intersect with the dominant discourses and IRs within them, typically used to account for men's engagement in DVA or anti-VAW work.

I begin the chapter with a discussion of the politics governing gendered spaces, and the implications this has for specialist DVA provision. Moving on, I discuss the range of approaches men employ when conducting anti-VAW activism or DVA prevention, including those which incorporate the tenets of 'allyship' and bystander interventions. Following on from this, I elaborate upon the strategic instrumentalisation of gender (hetero) norms to produce a societal or cultural shift regarding men's attitudes towards DVA or VAW, as well as approaches which rely upon the engagement of men *by* men. Extending this line of enquiry, I outline an approach which incorporates men's emotionality as a mechanism to address men's violence towards women; this integrates aspects of the 'harms of masculinities' and 'masculinities in crisis' discourses. In the second half of the chapter I outline the participants' engagement with feminism, elucidating the divergent implications of feminist identification for men, in contrast to women in the field⁸⁷. This same disparity in women and men's experiences is in evidence when considered in the context of sector entrepreneurialism, as I go on to discuss. I conclude with a discussion of the implications for men's work and activism in this field.

Gendered spaces and specialist provision

The debates regarding gendered spaces, as well as which bodies should have access to them, occupy a central position in the deliberations around men's participation in this area of work. With the shift in the government's policy position towards a gender-neutral understanding of, and approach to DVA, the gendered boundaries lines governing service provision have become increasingly porous. This has generated consternation among specialist DVA providers within the women's sector due to concerns that the interests of women, particularly those with more complex needs, will be obscured. However, the continued reduction in local authority funding for specialist women's DVA provision, in favour of generic services (Women's Aid, 2014) or mixed gender services for women and men⁸⁸, aids the cost-saving agenda of the current government (Davidge et al., 2020). Furthermore, the increasingly more common-place participation of men in the women's sector as employees is further confirmation of the paradigm and policy changes currently underway nationally. This diversification of the sector permits the implementation of policies which reflect principles of collective responsibility, in which

⁸⁷ Outlined in Chapter 9.

⁸⁸ Women's Aid data indicates in year 2018-19, 71 out of 368 services surveyed (46.3%) had one or more services for men. This included 35 refuges (13.0% of refuges) which could accommodate men, with a total of 186 refuge spaces available to men. This represents a substantial increase of the 3 dedicated men-only spaces and 13 spaces for either men or women reported in the year prior (Davidge et al., 2020, p. 34).

domestic abuse is conceptualised as “everyone’s problem” (Home Office, 2016). It also lays the groundwork for the responsabilisation of men for VAW. But the inclusion of men simultaneously resurfaces the concerns of obfuscation and co-optation voiced by women from within the sector. The contributions of the men in this study provide an insight into the machinations of these debates as the participants account for their individual experiences as professionals operating in women-majority spaces.

Lloyd, a white gay man in his thirties, held a senior role with strategic and budgetary responsibility for VAWG prevention in a southern local authority. Here he discusses his perceptions of men in the field:

“[Men] are very used to certain ways of behaving and being listened to. And then the other side of that is, [...] because they're quite often [...] quite senior, it's not just that they insert themselves into space and then stay in that space. They're not looking at anyone else in or around that space. They're not necessarily taking the time to be aware of other people wanting to speak or perhaps speaking in a certain way, or being a bit more tentative and therefore, [...] needing to concede space to people. To let them feel that they can expand into [...] that space” (PG3).

Lloyd echoes the concerns voiced by women in the DVA sector in his reference to the risk of co-optation of women’s spaces (men “inserting themselves into spaces”) and obfuscation of women’s voices (“not taking the time to be aware of other people wanting to speak”). Arguably including himself in his description of the ‘poor’ behaviours of men, Lloyd demonstrates an awareness of the politics of gendered spaces, made especially apparent when men enter typically women majority spaces. In evidence is an individualised process of self-reflexivity, which is itself often circumscribed as an ‘antidote’ to the risks of obfuscation referred to (Casey and Smith, 2010; Casey, E.A. et al., 2016; Tolman et al., 2016).

Lloyd’s account also conveys the extent to which men’s participation in VAWG work is bound up with the workings of men’s unearned privilege. And although the IR of “conced[ing]” space to some extent acknowledges the significance of privilege, the positioning of men in senior roles within organisational management structures can work to (re)embed privilege, rather than challenge it. Further, the act of conceding space, is not a relinquishment of power, since it constructs women’s inclusion or participation as a ‘gift’, not a right. The ubiquity of the structural sexism which underpins men’s privilege also further complicates the task of dismantling it. Indeed, Lloyd’s account signals how ‘engaged men’ continue to benefit from the structural privilege afforded to them, with even the most well-meaning ‘ally’ at risk of “co-[opting] women's leadership and experience[ing] an elevated status in the movement” (Macomber, 2012, p. 21). As Lloyd goes on to discuss:

“[W]hat would often happen for example is; if I and a female colleague were doing something together at the most basic level, often stuff would be directed towards me. Even if that female colleague was the most appropriate person to answer it. Or [...] another example would be; I'd be saying something which [my female colleague had] already said. But for some reason, it was [...] better. [...] but what you can do is, without sounding all ‘jargony’, ‘pro-socially’ model the behaviours you are expecting” (PG3).

Lloyd appoints a particularly academic rubric here as he discusses the modelling of “pro-social” behaviour, referring to the embedment of behaviours deemed to be socially acceptable and in the interest of everyone in society (Banyard et al., 2004; Deitch-Stackhouse et al., 2015). The discourse is deployed here as a means to make sense of the negotiation of gendered privilege and is offered as a type of ‘blueprint’ for the challenging of unequal gender relations in the workplace.

Practitioner Nigel offers another perspective on the negotiation of men’s privilege. He is a heterosexual white man in his late fifties, working in a community-based service in a managerial role, in a northern English town. Here Nigel discusses the service approach to working with men, using the heteronormatively gendered space of his own home as a frame of reference:

“I would say there's very few instances where men aren't treated in a more privileged manner, it's in our culture to do that. It may be tiny, may be small, but it's still there. And again, I can see it in my life, because like I say, I don't wash. I don't iron. I don't cook. (.) Well, I do...very rarely, well like I say if it's a microwave I cook. So I have it in my life, but there's a practical reason. If me wife's gone off with her friends for a week, then yes, I do cook. Not learnt to iron yet. And you can't...we live in a culture where you can't avoid that. And there's no good pretending that it shouldn't...that it has to stop, you can't stop something. What you do is you gradually change it. And what we're trying to do is gradually introduce change. If you try to force it on somebody they'll just stone wall you. And what we're doing is introducing change or introducing the concept of change” (PG3).

Nigel’s account foregrounds plausible inconsistencies in the way he lives his life in contrast to the gender equitable discourse which underpins his practice on the perpetrator programs he facilitates. The account shines a light on the difficulties associated with the dominant discourses used to frame men’s participation in anti-VAW work, and the cognitive dissonance between professional ethos and lived reality. Nigel’s argument is made intelligible within a framework, which relies upon the coherence between women’s subordination and domestic labour. A specific patriarchal domestic arrangement is constructed as the most logical, socially harmonious and economically productive social order, and in which we see the mutually beneficial convergence of capitalism and patriarchy (Hartmann, 1979). This construction enables Nigel to legitimise his own living arrangements but also his “gradual change”, primarily prompted by necessity rather than an ideological driven desire to alter the dominant gender order (“when me wife’s gone off with her friends”). Indeed, for Nigel as well as other participants, the sheer prevalence of unequal gender relations requires a uniquely gradual process of change. This equation is common in the context of social change concerning gender equality and women’s rights, which presupposes that a rapid change to the dominant gender order would be incompatible with daily life or would simply constitute too bigger change for men to handle. Conversely, it may produce an *adverse* outcome, including the alienation of some men as Nigel remarks (“they’ll just stone wall you”), echoing analysis from studies conducted with men around altering gender norms (Messner et al., 2015; Peretz, 2018b).

Dale provides an account of his work structured along similar discursive lines, in which more gender equitable relations between women and men are ‘modelled’ and negotiated within the group space. A white heterosexual man in his late fifties, Dale co-facilitated a women’s DVA group in a large northern city:

“We set the program up, so we've got a man and a woman as facilitators. So that the [participants] in the group [can see] that a woman can be in control. And can be in control around men. And can make decisions. And that a man can accept those decisions [...] there's a kind of narrative there which needs to be played out” (PG3).

Dale outlines how there is a clear “narrative that needs to be played out” which in this case operates as a counter-narrative to the dominant discourse that patterns the lives of the women attending the group, several of whom were still living with abusive partners. The importance of ensuring that the attendees were able to witness as well as envisage for themselves an alternative gender power dynamic is made central in Dale’s formulation. It also provides an opportunity for some of the IRs such as ‘men not taking over’ or ‘conceding space’ to be operationalised in practice within the comparatively safe confines of the group. For some participants in the men’s group though, the confluence of the politics of gendered spaces with those of identity politics, complicates their interaction with women in particular spaces, as Lloyd explains:

“I think that in the same way that being a man meant I could get into some spaces or be heard in a different way to perhaps someone else in my job, who was a woman...It benefited me in that kind of more public arena, I suppose, or at least the institutional public arena. Being a gay man in the sector, I think took the edge off, me being a man, if that makes sense? And not for everyone, and obviously [...] people don't read that universally, but there was a sense that some of those dialogues were easier because of...either I, or people made assumptions about [my] understanding some of those aspects of how gender and, and things play out in the world and things like violence and abuse for example” (PG3).

Lloyd describes how his identity as a man permitted him access to, and audibility in, spaces he would otherwise have been unable to gain access to as a woman. But his identity as a gay man facilitates access to, and acceptance within, the women’s sector in different way, potentially because his identity incorporates a shared experience of minoritised status, thereby lessening the significance of his embodied gender (“being a gay man [...] took the edge off”). Crucially, this account foregrounds the complex and frequently unspoken discourses of identity politics in operation within sector spaces on both a micro and meso level, and which often turn on the ‘legibility’ of bodies, thereby resonating with wider arguments around gender ‘passing’ (Hines, 2013).

By way of contrast, Jacob’s position regarding the participation of men in gendered spaces differs to Lloyd’s as well as other participants, particularly when discussing (epistemic) privilege within the confines of the occupational space. A black heterosexual man in his mid-thirties, Jacob held a senior management role in an English local authority. Jacob’s discourse relies upon the maintenance of the dominant gender order, which coalesces with a lack of recognition of the structural sexism women routinely encounter. In the following extract Jacob describes the literal reordering of the workplace in which there is a clear (re)occupation of a space:

“When I got on board [...], it was always done [by women] ...I mean there was no men before me, so there were always women in my post [...]. And our little DV forum, you know, when we come together, was always women who came together. So last year I said, ok, the

only way I'm going to be able to do this is if no woman joins the team. Let's just have a small group of men, you know, and funny enough ((laughs)) [...] I remember some of the women in the wider group, [saying] 'oh you know, this was a closed group, no women were allowed', and I had to deal with that too. So, you can't win. But I think we need men to understand that sometimes, you know, [...] with the big victories, you might have small losses, but you know, you just have to take it on the chin. [...]"

Asked to elaborate on the primary motivations for excluding women, Jacob says:

"Because you wouldn't get the men to do anything. Because the women would do it all [...]. So, [...] if you had a mixed group, you know, the men may not be as confident to, to, to take on the actions. They may not be as willing, you know, they may feel they're not capable because you know, there are other experts around the table and the other experts may take charge and will probably do an awesome job, but...(.) men are not going to do [it]...you know I pulled men from our crime and enforcement team. You know guys who go out with vests and visits on sites and stuff. They don't ever think about DV" (PG3).

Albeit perhaps well-intentioned, these extracts are replete with highly gendered language, as Jacob draws upon a tired lexicon which trivialises women and demeans their labour, as he describes the "little DV forum". Men colleagues are in contrast encouraged to "take it on the chin", when women contest their exclusion which is construed here as a "small [loss]". On this basis it seems fairly difficult to interpret this example in any other way other than a recuperation of patriarchal control. Jacob's account of his negotiation of the gendered dynamics in operation attests to a latent expression of "popular misogyny", which is often expressed in less obvious ways (Banet-Weiser, 2018) but which embeds the parallel narrative of men's injuries caused by women and women's social progress within gender equality debates. Jacob's recollection of men "pulled" from "crime and enforcement" corroborates this argument, as he refers to a group emblematic of state sanctioned violence which as Segal (1997, p.82) argues, "gain much of their legitimacy through appeals to heightened gender ideologies: strong, active, 'protective' males must defend weak, passive, vulnerable females".

This formulation juxtaposes the attendant politics of a postfeminist masculinity (Tasker and Negra, 2007; Gill, 2014), which comfortably fits within the broader neoliberal agenda of welfare reform measures and austerity (Negra and Tasker, 2014). According to Jacob's formulation, men are "not capable" and lack the "confiden[ce]" to "take on actions" alongside the women "experts" within the same team. This resonates with Gill's (2014, p. 191) work in which she argues postfeminist masculinity is personified "in the repeated depiction of men as somewhat hapless, bumbling 'victims' or 'losers' in the 'sex wars,' alongside the presentation of feminism as extreme, old-fashioned and unnecessary/superfluous". Jacob's account brings into relief the interplay between the often-competing gendered discourses used to structure VAW prevention and perpetration, particularly as regards to men's positionality, conceived as powerful agents with the capacity to both harm women but also to 'save' them (Hunnicut, 2009). On the other hand, there is the simultaneous construction of men as unheroic and equally vulnerable both to domestic abuse victimisation as well as to a system which has left them without the means to adequately furnish their individual sense of self-worth as (hetero-masculine) men. I discuss these points further in the following section, but in the context of the approaches to engage men in anti-VAW and DVA work.

Men's participation in efforts to address men's violence

The set of dominant discourses and IRs within them typically deployed in approaches to prevention and early intervention involving men, are fundamentally shaped by divergent conceptualisations of men's privilege and power. Broadly speaking, these dominant discourses include 'allyship' models of engagement (IRs: 'men as followers'; 'men conceding space'); the instrumentalisation of heteronorms of gender to engage men ('men calling out other men'); gender-identity sameness as a platform for engagement ('men talking to other men'); the transformative power of emotions among men and boys ('men talking to other men'); and the construction of VAW as personally relevant to the lives of individual men, particularly when considered in the context of the harms of masculinities. Each will be addressed in the sections that follow.

'Allyship' in practice

For some participants, men's role in anti-VAW is structured according to an 'allyship' type model of behaviour and engagement, predicated upon a dominant group member's ability to be self-aware and reflexive regarding their own positionality. This provides a basis for the formulation of an alliance between two differently positioned groups. It operates on the notion that until members of the dominant social group take an active role in seeking to end discrimination, it will persist (Casey, 2010; Casey and Smith, 2010; Casey, E.A. et al., 2016). 'Allyship' type approaches are ideologically and conceptually rooted in anti-racist activism and anti-homophobia activism, and the assimilations between these two movements were raised by some of the men participants, including Cameron, stating; "if it's talking to people of colour, and saying I'm like an 'ally' for...you know, anti-racism, but I don't experience it myself so I never truly know what it's like. I don't experience sexism myself, so I don't truly know what it feels like" (PG3). Cameron goes on to discuss the ways in which anti-racism or anti-homophobia activism provide a meaningful framework for the implementation and analysis of men's participation in anti-VAW work. An 'ally' identity label therefore functions as a mechanism for the negotiation of individual privilege, in combination with the simultaneous recognition of "pretty much all the privileges" enjoyed by men like Cameron. Invoking a similar line of reasoning, Patrick describes his aversion to the self-assignment of certain identity labels:

"[B]ecause of experience of glaring examples of how dissonant people's behaviour and their statements are. But fundamentally thinking why, why don't I just try and be a good human being, who's a man. And I'm not chasing any form of status, or self-description, it doesn't make any sense. I don't see what it helps anybody else with" (PG3).

Patrick, a white heterosexual man in his early fifties, works in community settings with young men and boys around gender-based issues, as well as in campaigning and activism in the same area. The sentiment he expresses is redolent of one of the most significant challenges associated with 'allyship' and is bound up with the identity politics of naming and labelling. They arise from the difficulties associated with work to bridge the conceptual gap between the discursive construction of 'allyship' and its practical implementation. This parallels the cognitive dissonance discussed earlier and it begs the question as to how privilege is negotiated, relinquished or responded to in practice. The simple act of naming it, does not at once mitigate it and indeed, it is a marker of privilege *not* to name or

acknowledge one's own privilege (Shollock, 2012; McIntosh, 2015). This sentiment is in evidence elsewhere, including in Max's interview. A white heterosexual academic and activist in his twenties, Max also alludes to the problematic of naming oneself an 'ally', which in this case maps onto the self-identification with feminism:

"I just feel like [calling yourself an 'ally' is] a bit like the whole thing of declaring yourself to be a feminist. [...] It's about, if you do consider yourself an ally, then that's not really a thing you can be, it's more about like acting as an ally, and you hand in your ally badge at the end of the day, and every day you have to kind of pick it back up again, do you know what I mean? So it's about that kind of thing of trying to act in a certain way, rather than being a thing. But even still [...] [the] ally term, [...] I wouldn't use that to describe myself because I feel like it's for women to decide whether or not I'm being an ally to them or not I guess. [...]" (PG3).

Like Cameron and Patrick, Max is critical of the ease with which some men 'allies' name themselves as such. Grounded in the contention that it is not a "thing you can be", but rather a performatively constituted "badge" which gains its authenticity from the reflexive actions and behaviours of its wearer. It therefore becomes the responsibility of men to evidence their 'ally' status and for women to be vested with the authority to assess the legitimacy of their chosen identity label. Max's contention recalls the work of Black Feminist thinkers who spoke of the ignorance bound up with the politics of naming and the concomitant failure of some white feminist thinkers to transmit words into concrete action during the early stages of the anti-VAW movement (Smith, 1983; hooks, 1984a). Crucially, the emphasis upon performativity in the discourse deployed by Max, severs notions of 'allyship' from concepts of embodied gender as grounds for an alliance, in favour of one that rests with behaviour as the foundation for valid alliance. Similarly Rob, a white man in his early sixties, who had been active in anti-VAW campaigning since the early 80s, like Max explicitly mobilises a discourse of "pro-feminism", and speaks about the fact that it is often not in men's own interest to challenge the dominant social order, stating, "men should be taking action all the time but [...] of course, it's all in our self-interest not to notice, and not to take action" (PG3). Rob's use of the pronoun "our" is important because it gestures an awareness of his own complicity in men's violence as a social problem and provides the rationalisation for conducting anti-VAW. He deploys a discourse which asserts the need to ensure that men don't become the majority in this field, instead promoting a message that men should work alongside women in leadership roles ('men as followers'). As Rob goes on to say, it is "absolutely the place we should be [at the side]. Helping out. [...] I'm quite happy to [be asked] to cooperate and be told what to do by the [women] organisers" (PG3).

Echoing Max before him, Lloyd offers an account which foregrounds three key critiques of men's allyship in the form of 'pledge' type activism:

"[W]hat I think is problematic about [some men's anti-VAW campaigns] is it rewards the good bits of being a man standing out against violence against women and girls, too quickly and too easily. So, you know, all you need to do is rock up and hold your badge and you've got it. And of course, that is really good in some ways. If you can get that on a screen in a sports stadium for some people that's going to be important, but I don't think [these] campaign[s] necessarily [...] on an individual level or an institutional level really say to people,

[...] ‘what is your actual understanding of these issues and what are you personally going to do about them’? Whether that's in your own life or more generally. So again, the interrogation is not there. It's a superficial, a fairly superficial level which means it's then just a performance which probably means it's just reinforcing privilege. ‘Gosh, I am the great...normally, white heterosexual, middle aged male coming to rescue those poor damsels’. And it, you know, on some level it becomes absolutely ridiculous and you just think oh god, this is not helping” (PG3).

The first critique is associated with the disproportionate praise and valorisation assigned “too quickly and too easily” to men who “stand out” against men’s violence (Macomber, 2015). The second lies with ‘pledge’ type awareness-raising campaigns (Kaufman, 2001) and the problematic of ‘wearing’ a particular symbol (a badge, a ribbon etc.) in isolation of any tangible change in one’s daily life. The critique elaborated here recalls critical analysis of other high-profile campaigning strategies pertaining to ‘big’ social justice issues or (gendered) health issues such as breast cancer awareness in the UK (King, 2008; Moore, 2008; Sulik, 2011) – iterations of a neoliberal commodity activism (Banet-Weiser, 2018), which produce widespread commercial endorsement to bolster sales of merchandise in the name of ‘the cause’.

There are continuities here with the contributions offered by Gary, a white heterosexual man in his mid-fifties working in a consultancy capacity, who says in relation to high-profile men’s anti-VAW campaigns; “all we're asking guys to do is put a signature on [...] and then they can relax in this smugness about how [they’ve done something]. [T]hat's not going to do anything” (PG3). Like Lloyd, Gary’s critique stems from the contention that provision of a “signature” does not necessarily produce material or structural change, despite perhaps functioning to alleviate men of the burden of individual guilt for their inaction or complicity. It also implicitly acts as a defence against further criticism of men more generally. Indeed, the act of signing something, wearing a ribbon, badge, or bracelet becomes *the* act of activism, which achieves limited social change, without necessarily cultivating genuine compassion or understanding of the issue. Reminiscent of a discourse of a (post— and ‘popular’) feminist commodity culture (Tasker and Negra, 2007), the practice achieves visibility, but this may be as far as it goes, “as if seeing or purchasing feminism is the same thing as changing patriarchal structures” (Banet-Weiser, 2018, p. 4).

The third critique discernible in Lloyd’s account rests with the endurance of ‘salvation’ type models of intervention and awareness-raising, which mobilise a paternalistic ‘(white, heterosexual, cisgender) ‘man saviour’ rhetoric. Contributing to the maintenance of gendered hierarchies rather than a contestation of them, this discourse centres the notion that men use their position of assumed relative superiority and gender-stereotypical role to ‘rescue’ a woman from harm (James, 1998; Edwards, 2006; Casey, 2010; Flood, 2015). This formulation also arguably shores up another widely circulating public story of DVA in which DVA is constructed as the sole purview and problem of “other” men, as Cameron elaborates:

“I think you could reinforce negative stereotypes, [...] guys who think that their behaviour is great, they just think ‘oh yeah, we’re talking about other guys, out there, in the world. Hiding in bushes and alleyways’. And I think one of the issues is that the conversation could be kept like we’re just talking about this abstract, ‘other person, out there’. And that

links back to this idea of gender-based violence being an ‘everybody issue’, and not just an issue for women, or for a small number of perpetrators. I think that's the key...that's really important” (PG3).

Cameron’s account has the effect of destabilising the notion that DVA or VAW is an issue perpetrated only by aberrant ‘othered’ men, in exceptional circumstances (Stanko, 1990). The account gains legitimacy via a framing of “gender-based violence” as an “everybody issue”; attributing a collective responsibility to *all* men to respond to a social problem, and orientating the account towards current policy discourse (Home Office, 2016). But, as I will go on to discuss in the next section, for some men active in the field, the security of the dominant order and gender role stereotypes, are core tenets of their work, and denote another prominent discourse patterning work in the field.

Gender (hetero) norms as instruments for change

The deployment of (hetero) normative gender role presentations in anti-VAW prevention discourses, combined with the use of ‘real men’ (and by extension ‘real women’) tropes, constitute a strategy readily used to engage men in anti-VAW and DVA prevention work. It is endorsed not only by men, but also by women victim survivors and practitioners, as I show in the next chapter. Discourses of commonly held versions of manhood not only provide a platform upon which to theorise the perpetration of men’s violence towards women, but are also harnessed as a mechanism to effect change by seeking to alter the way men conceptualise their own gender identities; how they understand themselves as men (Fleming et al., 2014; Jewkes et al., 2015a). Within this frame of analysis, ‘traditional’ masculinities, gender norms and roles are understood as creating risk for men’s violence (Casey et al., 2018, p.233) while also serving as a platform for its prevention. However, it is a formulation which requires careful consideration when operationalised, in order to avoid reinforcing notions of gender hierarchy (Jewkes et al., 2015a; Casey et al., 2018). Speaking in the context of his work with fathers as part of child protection arrangements, Stuart provides an account of the gendered discourses he regards as constitutive of the pressures men and boys face:

“I think there's societal pressure, I think there's peer pressure, I think there's internal pressure from men themselves to feel as though they have to be somebody, they have to be (...) um (...) they have to be worthwhile, they have to have some level of worth. And I think that very quickly and easily (...) translates or evolves into power and control. You know, position of authority, position of respect [...] and I don't think and feel that a lot of men really [...] would then consider that being potentially unhealthy and inappropriate. They'd actually see it the other way around. [...] You know, if I'm totally honest, I can recognise that I've gone through that all my working life. [...] That sort of insecurity, kind of scaffold that we put around ourselves, you know? Being with a peer group [...] it does bolster people's self-esteem. It does (...) provide a scaffold around people's wellbeing and worth and self-esteem” (PG3).

Stuart is a white, heterosexual man in his forties with several years’ experience working in statutory services. Here he maps out the demands placed on men and boys to maintain or restore the dominant gender order; socially embedded, the demands are inculcated by multiple social actors. Crucially the requirement to “be somebody” can, according to Stuart, “evolve” into manifestations of

power and control. The resources made available to men to disrupt gender norms, and to locate alternative means to cultivate a sense of self-worth are perceived as lacking or absent, and instead, are construed as reflective of the rational (patriarchal) order of things. Indeed, 'traditional' masculinities and gender role stereotypes serve as a form of sanctuary, a "security blanket" as Stuart refers to elsewhere in his interview. But somewhat paradoxically provide for the construction of men's self-worth, as well as occasionally constituting the grounds for harmful behaviours towards intimate partners.

Considered in the social context in which Stuart is speaking, it is also possible to regard these discussions as the product of a classed narrative of (neoliberal) masculinities (Gill, 2014), as Stuart elaborates:

"I'm not coming from any particular level of insight in terms of 'modern men'. But I think, having grown up in a mining community, [...] that was a very small, secular community that was affected massively by the mining strike. But that was, that was the end of (..) the end of the kind of, 'working man' so to speak, when there was an industry and there was an opportunity for men to be the main breadwinner, and they had a sense of identity, and they had a sense of (..) self-esteem and worth" (PG3).

The construction of labour participation as a principle identity-making resource for men is highly salient in the narrative Stuart deploys in this extract. It is also redolent of a discourse of a 'masculinity in crisis' (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Cover, 2015), in the wake of economic shifts which have left many men, particularly white, poorer, working-class men, without the social or material resources historically relied upon to furnish their sense of "self-worth" and identity as "breadwinner" or 'head' of the household. Indeed, the parallel between the mining strikes of the 80s under Thatcher's Conservative government, and the present-day situation under the current Conservative government is notable, as many communities now face high unemployment rates, poverty and an increased reliance upon an ever-dwindling welfare state under the guise of austerity. But as O'Neill (2018, p.137) discusses, while the difficulties men such as those described by Stuart are certainly real and persistent in the current climate, a 'masculinity in crisis' discourse "encourages men to understand whatever difficulties they experience in gendered terms". This elides the underlying causes of those anxieties, which are more accurately attributed to a range of hierarchical and structural inequalities, and which extend far beyond that of gender. There is also a substantial body of research to indicate that austerity has impacted upon women far more significantly, particularly those from working class and BAME backgrounds⁸⁹.

A similar discursive frame which incorporates masculine identity construction within a gender framework is in evidence in Trevor's account as he describes his group work on a men's perpetrator program:

⁸⁹ See Chapters 3 and 6.

“[U]ltimately we're looking at; 'let's find a way of you stopping to use violence', [...] also looking at some deep-seated belief systems around gender which play into their behaviour and play into the way that they kind of function in the world as well. Um, but often it's as much about their ideas of themselves and what they feel they deserve in a relationship as well as the stereotypes they have about their partners” (PG3).

Trevor, a black man in a southern English county, works in a 'frontline' capacity for a domestic abuse specialist service, while also volunteering with an organisation to engage men and boys around gender-based issues. He elucidates here how socially embedded “belief systems” around gender and masculinities are mobilised in the work he does with perpetrators, in which the attendant matters of self-image and self-worth (“ideas of themselves”) are situated as key points of departure for interventions to disrupt the perpetration of the men's violence. The convergence of an individualised narrative of self-worth and a broader societal level discourse of gender socialisation provides a reasonably flexible framework for the theorisation and formulation of interventions for domestic abuse. It also resonates in part with the narratives of 'harmful masculinities' discussed earlier.

As such, Gary echoes Trevor's sentiment stating; “patriarchy sets men up to fail just as it crucifies women” (PG3). Cultivating the notion that men are similarly harmed by patriarchy through rigid or 'traditional' forms of masculinities provides additional leverage for the potential engagement of men and boys because according to this discursive frame, it is in their interest to do so. This coheres with the work of some masculinities scholars who have rationalised men's participation in anti-VAW on the same grounds (Flood, 2011; Carlson et al., 2015; 2015; Storer et al., 2016; Tolman et al., 2016). While potentially effective for initiating men's engagement, 'harms of masculinities' discourses risk obscuring men's role in the continuation of men's VAW and as Casey and colleagues (2017, p. 981) argue, (re)centre the concerns of men. It is, however, a discourse frequently deployed in the interviews, including by Trevor, Patrick and Gary, who all draw upon it in the context of the prominent sector-wide discourse of the “Man Box”; ‘a conceptual ‘tool’ attributed to American author, activist and educator Tony Porter (2010), as Trevor explains:

“The idea of a ‘Man Box’, and these stereotypes and expectations that are placed on men in a patriarchal society. Around how we are supposed to behave; how damaging they are to all the people they have relationships with, but also to men themselves, and what that means as far as asking for help, or, being vulnerable in any way” (PG3).

The discourse deployed here establishes (hetero) gender stereotypes as incubators for harmful forms of masculinities within a patriarchal society, which are ultimately detrimental to men too (Messner, 1997; Chapleau, 2015; Corboz et al., 2016). According to this frame, men and boys are consequently constructed as key stakeholders in the work to challenge these inflexible forms of masculinities which are seen to occupy a role in men's violence. However, Rob contrasts this perspective by offering an account in which gender role stereotypes are instead strategically instrumentalised in his organisation's approach to engaging young men and boys via their in-school programs:

“I'm gonna go down stereotyping roles here and say well yeah, get some sort of big (.) Rugby player to come in with me...and by on large it makes life in a classroom a bit

easier. Because people are much more interested in listening to them...’ah, you're cool, you've got the body of a god, we'll listen to you” (PG3).

Rob’s account coheres with those of other participants who assert that if VAW prevention campaigns are to be more effective in engaging men, they need to harness hetero-masculinities and stereotypical gender roles which in this case are regarded as fostering increased social credibility and by extension, make the message more audible (“we’ll listen to you”). The strength of these constructions, is also evidenced in Nigel’s account of a program he facilitates with serving prisoners:

“[W]e had three members who were nearly completed. They'd been in a long time. One was 10 year stretch prisoner, another one was a big hard man that had been in and out of prison all his life, and another was one an ex-boxer. So, I would say something about emotions and talk about that and [...] these three men would agree with me and support me. [...] So it's not just me doing it as a single man. It's a team of men doing it. [T]hen it makes [the other participants] think. If it was just me then they would just think, ‘oh he's just a gay so and so’, or something like that. And dismiss it. Because again (.) one of the things I'll get challenged constantly is, my masculinity. [...] [T]hey would simply just dismiss it if it were just me. But because there are other men nodding and agreeing (...) because they've already gone through that phase and realised that it benefits them, it then moves the other men forward” (PG3).

In this extract there is the notable convergence of a number of dominant gender discourses in which emotionality is constructed as a cogent threat to heterosexual identity and hetero-masculinity; in this frame, homophobia functions as a gender policing tool. The abjection of homosexuality here operates as a key logic of repudiation, which as Butler (1993) has argued, governs the widespread “normativisation” of heterosexuality. The assignation of being a “gay so and so” in this case is contested via the visible presence of a set of stereotypical male figures – the “10 year stretch prisoner”, the “big hard man”, “the boxer” – which instantiates the validity of the message concerning men’s emotions and indeed, makes it more palatable. In the absence of these male figures, Nigel believes the message will be dismissed, subsequently foreclosing the possibility of engaging other men. While the constraints these discursive frames impose upon understandings of domestic abuse perpetration and victimisation in public discussion are significant, they tap into another prominent discourse present in the theorisation of approaches to engage men. Namely, that men are most effectively reached by other men, discussed in the following section.

‘Men talking to men’

The leveraging of the social relationships between and among men, as a method to initiate men’s engagement, is widely discussed as a strategy in men’s VAW and DVA prevention work (Casey, 2010; Casey and Smith, 2010; Casey et al., 2018) and coheres with the contributions of several of the participants across all three PGs in this study. As Nigel explains when talking about his group work with men perpetrators: “if a woman says [it], because of their misogyny [...] they'll just think, ‘oh she's just being a woman, it's rubbish’. And dismiss it. Whereas a man doing it (.) it makes ‘em think a bit” (PG3). Gary coheres with Nigel stating: “the only time [men] get it is when other men spell it out” (PG3). Nigel and Gary’s beliefs around the elevated credibility and authority assigned to men’s voices

within this field exemplify the regimes of knowledge production put into motion via a discourse which argues men listen more readily to men, rather than women. It sustains a particular epistemic hierarchy in which the male voice is given primacy, as Lloyd attests when describing his own role; “I definitely got heard in a different way to my [female] predecessors [...] [s]ome of that was definitely about a man speaking around these things. And that was real a dilemma” (PG3).

Nigel, Gary and Lloyd’s claims not only corroborate assertions regarding the gendered power dynamics of being *heard* but also expose the routine ‘pedestalling’ (Macomber, 2015) of men in anti-VAW or DVA spaces (and indeed, outside of them). As Lloyd alludes to, the ‘pedestal effect’ can produce uneasiness among some men, as they experience an internalised cognitive dissonance characterised by positive feelings on the one hand, while also knowing that their “affirmation is in part an instantiation of the same gender inequality [they] reject” (Peretz, 2018a, l. 163). As Alcoff (1991) asserts, when a woman speaks “the presumption is against her” in contrast to the ways in which men’s contributions are routinely well received, particularly within the public domain. When read alongside Gary and Nigel’s contribution it is easy to envisage the potential for harm to women and other minoritised voices such as BAME speakers, not least because the ‘men talking to other men’ IR relies upon patriarchal social relations, as well the preservation of the dominant hierarchy. But Nigel, Gary and Trevor all discuss at length elsewhere in their interviews, that this approach is used to mitigate the risk of men’s disengagement or outright refusal to engage. This illustrates the fine line practitioners and activists working in this area are required to tread when it comes to the production and dissemination of knowledge and the task of challenging harmful discourses pertaining to gendered social relations, gendered power dynamics, and men’s VAW.

The instrumentalisation of the relationships among men is in evidence elsewhere in the interviews, but alternatively conceptualised as Trevor discusses:

“I guess like, for me men's role is as much like having conversations with other men, like I can't tell any woman how to be a woman, but I have some experience of being a man and it feels like I can have a conversation with another man if I see them behaving in a sexist way. I feel that it is my responsibility to do something. And, I guess like for me...it works on a very interpersonal level [...] Like I'm often the outsider, who will call stuff out, and be ostracised within the group of guys, rather it being the other way” (PG3).

Trevor’s treatment of the ‘men talking to other men’ IR provides a platform for the construction of men’s responsibility on a micro (“interpersonal”) level, in so far as it calls for men to hold other men to account, “when behaving in a sexist way”. This coheres with some of the contributions offered by the women participants, who felt that men should be more accountable rather than allowing the (emotional) labour of ‘calling out’ men to tirelessly fall upon the shoulders of women. As Trevor continues to explain elsewhere in our interview: “it definitely feels as though men's role starts ultimately with each individual, even though it's a wider collective social issue, it starts off with each individual thing. That, one of their buddies just calling them out when they say something that's not ok” (PG3). Trevor’s formulation accomplishes a link between actions undertaken on a micro level, with those on a meso level in order to produce a socio-cultural shift in attitudes towards women thereby aligning with a ‘pro-social’ bystander type model for violence reduction. Offering a similar formulation, is Nigel who describes ‘calling out’ other men:

“[I]f I were out with some old friends, say from work, from pit days, and they were talking in a derogatory way about a woman, or [she] had scantily clothing on. Or were drunk. I would definitely challenge that, and I would, because they're my friends, I would probably do it quite aggressively. Ok, I would say, ‘what would you think if it were your wife or your daughter...?’ [...] So, I'd hit ‘em in the vulnerable spot, and I'd say, ‘what if it were your daughter?’ [...] ‘Would you like a man talking about her like that?’ Because I know it would affect them. I wouldn't have any compulsion about that” (PG3).

Nigel's description of “aggressively” challenging his friends from the “pit days” upon noticing an incident is a requisite aspect of bystander interventions because it signals a willingness to assume responsibility for helping the woman concerned (Fenton et al., 2019, p. 220-21). Prior research indicates that perpetrators tend to overestimate social support for their behaviour (Neighbors et al., 2010; Deitch-Stackhouse et al., 2015), thus Nigel's act clearly communicates disapproval. While his actions may contribute to a gradual shift in social norms, including those circulating within his own community (Berkowitz, 2001; Fenton et al., 2019), they still rely upon the leveraging of men's peer relationships as the initial driver in the process of change. Men's own concerns are also made central in this construction, which I will discuss in a forthcoming section. Crucially, both Trevor and Nigel's accounts firmly substantiate Alcoff's (1991, p.12) assertion that “who is speaking to whom turns out to be as important for meaning and truth as what is said.” As the following section will address, one of the primary issues associated with the narrative that men are better engaged by other men, is the treatment of any display of emotion or sensitivity among men as “weak”. This signals the demotion and subordination of that which is effeminate, as Nigel states: “having feelings, having emotions is weak. It's only something a woman would do” (PG3). In the next section I discuss how men's emotionality is increasingly harnessed as a mechanism for violence prevention.

The power of men's emotions

A variety of discourses concerning men's emotions or so-called ‘emotional intelligence’ feature in the accounts of all three participant groups, set within the frame of DVA, as Stuart articulates:

“Men are not very good at expressing themselves, I think their emotional intelligence is limited. [...] I think women have a much greater sense of the (.) wider communications. The body language, the tone of voice, the (.) erm (.) the wider elements of communication. Rather than for men, I think it's much more about what's specifically said and not said. And I think that you know, some people don't have the ability to (.) communicate effectively and express their thoughts and mostly those frustrations come out in behaviours and come under other mechanisms of communication, which are much more off putting and intimidating” (PG3).

Stuart's account foregrounds an image of the emotionally disengaged male figure, reasserting men's perceived lack of ability to express emotions, which in this instance leads to the use of alternative modes of expression, including countenancing behaviours that could be regarded as “intimidating”. The concept of ‘emotional intelligence’ though is sociologically and scientifically contestable. When situated within a gendered framework it can be used to reinforce a biologically deterministic understanding of sex and gender. A key tenet of this theorisation is that women in comparison to

men excel at empathising, intuition and the expression of feeling, but lack in systemising skills, logic or reason, unlike their men counterparts. Feminist scientists have long contested the scientific basis for such assertions (Fine, 2010), but despite this, these discourses still remain fairly prominent. As Trevor asserts when discussing his work with men perpetrators:

“[I]t’s about encouraging men to fear, and to talk about emotion, which is something that we ask them to do [...] [T]he emotional vocabulary of a lot of the men we come across is...feels really limited so we are constantly working to expand some of that. And expand their empathy, and role model some of that in the room as well, as facilitators. I guess that’s an example of some of the ways that we encourage the men to embody things a bit more and to think about things on a physical and emotional level, not just a cognitive one” (PG3).

Trevor’s account reflects other participants’ accounts which similarly engage with a gender-emotion narrative which is used increasingly, not only to theorise issues such as domestic abuse, but also other key psychosocial issues affecting men, such as suicide and mental ill-health (hooks, 2004; de Boise and Hearn, 2017). Discourses of men’s emotions are therefore frequently discernible in the content of perpetrator programs such as those described here by Nigel and Trevor. They are also deployed in work with non-perpetrating men as described by Stuart, Dale, and Max. The latter deployment of the discourse seeks to educate men on how to respond emotionally to their partners and to their children; to engage with their own emotions; and to find alternatives to violence when feeling frustrated or angry, as Gary explains:

“[Men] struggle to work through their own emotional shit because that’s, that’s what needs to change. That’s where men...men do not do vulnerability [...] and I think it’s the way we bring our kids up, you know, so like ‘boys don’t cry’. That basic denial of vulnerability and the only emotion that is validated within men generally is anger. And when men do anger, they predominantly do it with violence to others, or violence to themselves. So, you know epidemic levels of suicide. [...] [L]ook at what were the rules you grew up with, about being a boy and what it was to be a ‘real man’. Whatever ‘real man’ is” (PG3).

Gary’s account traces particular tropes of gender socialisation, and maps these onto notions of gendered authenticity, in which there is the prohibition of any display of emotion other than anger, which further constitutes a valid or authentic gender presentation as a “real man”. The reference here to suicide alludes to the discourses around ‘harmful masculinities’, which run concurrently to those outlined in earlier extracts. This particular strand of thought is a pervasive discourse among men active in the field and relies upon a reductive notion of masculinity, in which men are credited with limited capacity to engage with their emotions or indeed, change behaviour, even outside of the context of the perpetration of violence. It is also a highly classed, and racialised discourse, as Segal (1997) has pointed out, not least because it espouses a type of masculinity typically preserved for white, working class heterosexual men which in some instances, runs counter to depictions of black masculinity, stereotypically characterised by increased emotionality. It is also the white working-class man who is more readily constructed as lacking these resources in comparison to that of white middle class young men (O’Neill, 2015).

But as Max states during his interview: “[c]learly, men are capable of taking on board these things and not behaving in oppressive [...] and violent ways. Then why shouldn't we expect that of all men?” (PG3). Indeed, this foregrounds a basic but fundamentally important question regarding the expectations society places upon men and boys regarding their—intrinsic or learned—capacity to confront harmful gender role stereotypes. With this in mind, I move onto the second half of this chapter in which I expand my analysis of the convergence of dominant gender discourses with hetero-masculinities via an interrogation of the role of feminism in men’s anti-VAW and DVA prevention work.

Discourses of feminism

The prevention of men’s violence towards women is set against the historical backdrop of the feminist movement and the women’s anti-violence movement rooted in the early 1970s women’s liberation movement⁹⁰. The study reveals a range of subject positions regarding the role afforded to feminism in contemporary framings of women and men’s participation in anti-VAW efforts, at times reigniting academic and activist confrontations regarding the nature of men’s sexist oppression. These date back to the feminist ‘sex wars’ of the 1970s and 80s which centred pivotal gendered issues including pornography, prostitution or sex-work, and reproductive rights. But, the task of understanding men’s efforts to reduce VAW should not be conflated with necessarily interrogating men’s role in, or relation to, feminism. Indeed, this same caveat applies to the work of women in this field, as I discuss in the next chapter. Instead, it is more useful to consider how feminism functions as a resource to account for women *and* men’s practice to address DVA or VAW. For some men in the study, the question of feminism remains a key part of their ideological and political positioning, with some aligning with a specifically (pro)feminist subjectivity and theoretical framework, as Max attests:

“Feminism does a huge amount to explain men's experiences, you know men's position in society. So, I feel like feminism has like a huge amount of relevance for men's lives and both individually and collectively. And so, when I was a teenager, you know, it really was helping to make a lot of sense to me about why it was that I felt kind of uncomfortable with you know, dominant ideas around masculinity, [...] and the pressures which young men face to conform to certain ideas” (PG3).

Max constructs feminism as a relevant framework for making sense of men’s collective lived experience, as subjects situated within, and constituted by, the dominant gender order. It also provides a useful lens for understanding his experience as a teenager uncomfortable with how he was implicated in the dominant order, called upon to behave in a way that cohered with the demands of hetero-masculinity. At the same time, Max acknowledges the historical roots of the movement, describing it elsewhere as, “a movement for women's liberation, [...] it's not really for us to kind of, as men, to try and shape the direction of [it]” (PG3). Max’s characterisation of the feminist movement

⁹⁰ See Chapter 2.

here imports one of the dominant IRs of 'men as followers' and thus speaks to concerns that women's interests may be marginalised or diluted through men's inclusion. Cameron makes a similar point:

“[F]eminist-informed means that we don't just like come along and say, we know what to do [...] it's recognising that feminists have been thinking about this, and being active about these issues for a long time, and I think a lot of guys...there's a danger that they'll come into this and not, not take on board all those things and then take over the stage” (PG3).

Cameron's account, like Max's, demonstrates an awareness of the aforementioned concerns articulated by women, as well as a nodding to the history that precedes the movement. This recognition is arguably a crucial aspect of work conducted to bridge the gap between (pro)feminist men and women in the field. Cameron deploys a self-aware discourse, as a man in the field, which in the context of models of 'allyship' discussed earlier, is key to understanding one's own positionality. The simultaneous recognition that men *could* take over, but choose not to, is understood as an act of restraint. But it could also point to the deeply entrenched, epistemic and social privileges enjoyed by men, which in this case, seemingly remain intact.

In contrast, Jacob displays a reluctance to acknowledge the relevance of feminism in his current role: “there are a lot of things I agree with feminists on, obviously, you know, but some things [...] I draw a line on. [...] (...) men can change. [Y]ou could have a man who used to be a wife beater or whatever and (.) now is you know...the one that's spear heading the campaign” (PG3). In this, we see the resurfacing of a discourse of feminism as excessive and occasionally misandrist (“some things I draw the line, men can change”). And while he gestures an awareness that line of argument may be perplexing, Jacob makes no accommodation for women's concerns nor considers the traumatic impact of DVA, which is particularly troubling given Jacob's decision making powers as regards to the provision of VAW services. While it is important to note that Jacob's opinions certainly make him an outlier in the sample, it is nonetheless imperative to recognise that his account is a reminder of the challenges associated with the (subtle) continuation of male privilege and sexism, under the guise of being a '(pro)feminist', or indeed an 'ally'. The fact that some men or 'allies' such as Jacob feel that they can delineate the boundaries of what is 'sayable' (Butler, 2004a) in this context, points to the currency of their views. It also corroborates a type of “discursive imperialism” (Alcoff, 1991, p.17) which denotes a direct corollary to the emergence of an anti-sex worker and trans-exclusionary rhetoric promoted by some men within this area of work, as I will now go on to discuss.

(Radical) feminism, sex and gender

In contrast to the more liberal, inclusive feminist-identified subject positions Max, Lloyd, Trevor and Cameron promote, some participants draw upon aspects of a discourse of 'radical' feminism. These discourses of feminism are addressed through the lens of commercial sex practices (understood here as sex-work, prostitution and or pornography) and transwomen's identity, under the rubric of men's violence towards women. As Patrick elaborates:

“As much as I can, I'll try and make it a microcosm of relevant sources of material with a heavy bent towards radical feminism. I'll make no bones about it, [but] I might not actually say that. [...] There are two things, in no particular order. One of them is the

abundance of men making overt statements about being feminists. Clearly to try and head off criticism of their ensuing behaviour. ‘I’ve told you, I’m a feminist therefore I must be right in what I do next’. And also, very kind of diluted, liberal third-wave, feminist view, that you know, that ends up not critiquing prostitution; ends up not critiquing pornography. And it’s positing this false notion of universal equal choice; ‘if people do things, it must be because they like doing it’” (PG3).

This extract makes visible the political fault lines demarcating work in this area. While Patrick resists the identity-label ‘feminist’, because as he states elsewhere in the interview, it is a “fake stance” for men, he explicitly aligns his work with a “radical feminist bent”. He echoes other participants’ assertions regarding some men’s incongruent feminist self-identification, including as a means to forestall their own harmful behaviours. Patrick positions “diluted liberal third-wave” feminism as a discourse antithetical to the protection of the rights of women involved in commercial sex practices. But the women implicated in, and constituted by, this discourse are obscured (Smith and Mac, 2018) as Patrick speaks *for* a cohort of women who are politically and socially denied a voice (Alcoff, 1991). Crucially, the structural conditions which underpin women’s involvement⁹¹ in commercial sex practices are simultaneously overlooked within this frame (Phipps, 2016; Smith and Mac, 2018). Gary mobilises a similar discourse for prompting men’s engagement:

“It hits [men] in a different way; the impact...it makes them look at... ‘Well, no course I wouldn’t want my daughter being a sex worker or being involved in porn or whatever’. So, if I wouldn’t want my daughter doing that or my son buying sex or whatever then if I can make that, that connection, then I can make potentially a connection to other women. Do you know what I mean?” (PG3)

Gary uses the figure of the woman involved in prostitution or pornography to reframe the issue of VAW as a ‘hard hitting’ discursive strategy to mobilise men in anti-VAW work. This is achieved through personalising the matter via an imagined “connection” between the men’s own daughters, wives, mothers, and the women involved in selling sex. In this hypothetical scenario, the women are imagined as equivalent subjects, catalysing empathy and in turn, producing attitudinal or behaviour change. This discursive formulation is common in public discourse more generally⁹² and it coheres with research on the efficacy of relationship-based approaches for men’s *initial* engagement in anti-VAW activity (Casey and Smith, 2010; Messner et al., 2015; Casey, E. et al., 2016; Casey et al., 2017).

But there is real potential for slippage here, as Gary and Patrick’s arguments are redolent of a discourse of patriarchal possession in which women and girls are considered the property of the father/husband (“I wouldn’t want *my* daughter being a sex worker”) (Kandiyoti, 1988) within the structures of the ‘private patriarchy’ of the household (Walby, 1994). The parallel discourses of classed respectability and gendered cultural shame (Skeggs, 1997) enmeshed with commercial sex

⁹¹ It is not my intention to examine here, the debates around commercial sex practices nor sex trafficking, although I briefly refer to the use of forced prostitution within the context of DVA, see Chapter 5.

⁹² The NHS ‘Friends and Family Test’ is a good example (NHS, 2013).

practices and indeed, sexual violence, are also discernible here (Phipps, 2009). These produce the responsabilisation of women for the preservation of a men's 'honour' (Kandiyoti, 1988) and it is the prospect of being implicated in the gendered shame of the woman that serves as a key driver for men's engagement in this context. Patrick and Gary's arguments collude with the patriarchal dispensation that women need protection (Hunnicut, 2009), but crucially, this protection is only afforded to *some*⁹³ women (Cohen, 1997).

The supposed immutability of gender and sex difference, which inheres in these discourses simultaneously shores up a transphobic rhetoric which efficaciously erases the experiences of transgender women as 'authentic' victims of men's violence, construed as analogous to transwomen's perceived 'inauthentic' gender presentation. As Gary explains:

"And there is that thing about, as a man I will see things differently from you as a woman, no matter almost, how informed I am because I'm not...I haven't got the lived experience of women. And I still think that pisses me off about the trans movement. [...] Men who are now the trans lobby, no platforming women, and saying, 'well we are women'. 'No you're not!' 'You're a bloke who's decided to transition; you have not got the lived experience of women'. It's...you're deluded to say that, you know. You may have issues around that, and I respect you as a trans person, but please don't tell me you've got the lived experiences of a woman. But that's what I'm saying, there is going to be these tensions. It's never going to be perfect in that respect" (PG3).

Signalling his awareness of the tensions extant in men's relationship with feminism and the wider women's movement, Gary provides an account which evinces what Butler calls the "foreclosure of alterity" or otherness in the name of the movement (Butler, 2004a, pp. 41-42). The discourse he deploys has the effect of constructing 'othered' bodies as politically and socially unrecognisable. Gary offers a disclaimer (Potter, 1996b) ("I respect you as a trans person, but..."), as he seeks to distance himself from his simultaneous pathologisation and negation of transwomen's legitimate identity, in favour of a discourse which implies the security of cisgender women's subjectivities.

Crucially, the anti-trans discourse validated within an epistemological framework rooted in biological sex, has broader applicability to the social problem of DVA and VAW and points to persistent divisions in a feminist discourse which centres notions of gendered 'authenticity'. It also foregrounds questions regarding what constitutes a 'laudable' motivation for men's participation in the anti-VAW or DVA movement. Men such as Patrick and Gary who are actively involved in the movement contribute to these divisions, deepening what is already a significant fracture. The anti-sex worker, trans-exclusionary discourses they espouse further a logic of strict gender binarism, often in contradiction to the social constructionist arguments employed elsewhere in the discourses used to account for their practice, such as in their treatment of gender socialisation or harmful masculinities. This practice

⁹³ The boundary lines delineating which women are worthy of protection corresponds with which groups are permitted to tell their stories and have them heard; see Chapter 5 and 6.

contributes to the maintenance of (white, colonial) patriarchal, privilege in its crudest and most damaging form (Segato, 2018), in which only *some* women's voices and lives 'count', if indeed, they 'count' at all, in the debates around men's violence towards women. In the next section I address the costs for men associated with work in anti-VAW activity.

Men's (dis)comfort

An examination of men's anti-VAW or DVA prevention work foregrounds the material consequences of doing the work, including when aligning with a feminist position, and the costs manifest differently for woman and men, as I discuss in the next chapter. It is also worth noting that while there were no predefined questions during the interviews, most of the men spoke spontaneously about feelings of personal discomfort or unease when operating in this field. This coheres with prior studies (Flood, 2011), as the men often find themselves in "the contradictory position of trying to challenge their own power and privilege" (Baily, 2014, p. 443). The determinative factors underpinning this discomfort are variously conceptualised across the men's sample, but are frequently fomented in a lack of clarity around where men "fit", as Stuart captures:

"I was, and still am, slightly unsure, and slightly uncomfortable, and unaware as to how I can fit and contribute to all of this agenda in some way. [...] And I think being honest with myself, there is at times a barrier, or there is, an element of 'uncomfortability' in terms of, is it credible for me to participate as a man?" (PG3).

Stuart's account signals the uncertainty some men feel as regards to their own role, credibility and positionality within the sector. While the latter potentially indicates an awareness of gender-power and privilege, it also speaks to the intolerability of men's discomfort, in contrast to that of women's discomfort, which is socially constructed as inevitable and wholly acceptable. The possibility of discomfort attached to realising one's own privilege is documented in research with anti-racism 'allies' (Case, 2012), and arguably stems from a recognition of one's own identification with an oppressive majority (Weedon, 2013).

Data substantiates how some 'engaged men' regard feelings of unease, as well as an awareness of acquired minoritised status, as imperative drivers for the work they do. In this sense, discomfort is understood as a quality to be "productively" instrumentalised, rather than to be overcome, as Trevor discusses:

"[L]ike it's great, if a guy hasn't used violence towards their partner but that doesn't change that the social structure exists and that women are still significantly more likely to experience in intimate relationships. [...] So, there's something about being able to sit with that, in the powerful group, and actually just hear those experiences, and hear about how it's something that everyone is colluding in, in allowing it to still be the case. And being able to sit with that. [...] It's...like when I hear stories or read about things happening...it's always...like I definitely have both those emotions. Guilt comes up. And anger comes up. But I can [...] I guess I can wallow in it or I can use it productively" (PG3).

Trevor conceptualises discomfort not only as necessary to understanding the reality of women's lives and to "hear those experiences", but also as an indicator of men's collusion, as the "powerful group", in the systems of privilege which contribute to the perpetration of VAW. The treatment of guilt and anger in this account recalls the unease and confrontation associated with the imperatives of feminist coalitional work⁹⁴ across boundary lines of race and class (Lorde, 1981; Johnson Reagon, 1983; Lugones, 2003; Mirza, 2015; Ahmed, 2019), as 'white guilt' maps onto men's guilt (Mirza, 2015). Indeed, anti-racism or anti-homophobia activism often relies upon an ability to tolerate feelings of guilt and discomfort when witnessing others' suffering or discrimination, which has itself been shown to increase 'pro-social' or 'allyship' type behaviour (Chabot et al., 2016). Taken together, these underscore the value in developing a critical self-awareness of how aspects of one's identity can potentially be complicit in the marginalisation of others. However, the framing of men's discomfort here strongly contrasts the relative ease with which they enter, and operate in, the field of DVA and anti-VAW, which at times culminates in their 'pedestalling' as I discuss in the next section.

Entrepreneurialism and men's 'pedestalling'

As discussed in Chapters 6, individualised entrepreneurialism (Bottrell, 2013) is firmly embedded in the story told about austerity but how it is practically and discursively mobilised by women and men in anti-VAW work is markedly different. As the forthcoming extracts illustrate, men are often able to capitalise upon an entrepreneurial discourse, quite literally, by becoming 'experts' in the DVA sector on men's violence. The 'pedestalling' of men in the workplace (Williams, 1992; Macomber, 2015), cultivates privileges which often produces their upward organisational mobility; in the roles men hold, the decision-making or strategic capacities attached to their roles, or in their financial remuneration (Messner et al., 2015; Peretz, 2018a). A cursory glance at the positions held by the men in this study, as well as their routes into the work, similarly corroborate this assertion, as the majority hold strategic, commissioner, managerial, or consultancy positions. Jacob, who describes himself in our interview as the "the 'go to guy'" (PG3) for DVA, maps out his pathway into the field as follows:

"I didn't even know what DV was, I just didn't want...I just didn't have any interest. And maybe that's part of, you know, the [..], the...the gender issues we have in society because [..] I was 21. I was only interested in (..) in guns and badges. Didn't really know what I want. Didn't know what I could really contribute to domestic violence. But they, [the organisation] pushed, and said, you know...Gave it a shot. And, ever since then, I haven't done anything other than, domestic violence, actually" (PG3).

Jacob's account cogently showcases the 'pedestalling' of men; further legitimised by the almost universal advantage afforded to men within the labour market. In operating as a minority in the women's sector, men acquire a unique form of gendered capital which turns on a neoliberal entrepreneurial logic (O'Neill, 2018). It converts into economic capital, as well as a prestige, often for doing the same work (more experienced) women have been doing for forty years (Williams, 1992;

⁹⁴ See Chapter 2.

Flood, 2011; Peretz, 2018a; Burrell and Flood, 2019). As Macomber (2015, p.15) argues, this illustrates the sometimes contradictory nature of men's participation in the sector, at once re-embedding their elevated social status. The professional upward mobility achieved by some men within the sector is reflected in the following spliced together extract from Patrick's interview:

“Because I've got a certain amount of profile within my professional network, I'm asked to do things. And also, on behalf of [organisation], I went to quite a few universities; we did five national conferences... [...]; t]he county have just asked me to write a program for teaching and youth staff across the county [...]; I've just started writing a book [...] and it will be a manual to pick up in a school, for say, talking to boys about porn” (PG3).

Patrick's account plots the material outcomes of “a certain amount of [professional] profile”, ostensibly bolstered by a progressive accumulation of what Connell terms “patriarchal dividends” (Connell, 1995). More recently, this eventuality is exacerbated by the disproportionate impact of austerity upon women⁹⁵. But this is not a comment on Patrick nor Jacob's professional ability but rather a claim on the assemblage of privileges afforded to men within the structures of social and gender inequalities such that their relative minority status in these spaces, comes to be read as exceptional, and consequently ‘worth’ more. As data reveals, men in these privileged positions can mobilise this status to further the interests of women (as well as other marginalised groups) or for their own entrepreneurial interests and those of other men (though the two are not mutually exclusive). Together they cultivate a ‘safe space’ for men as Max attests:

“Men in this field and certainly this has been my personal experience, receive as much in the way of praise and [...] which I think largely is unearned compared to the efforts of women, for speaking out on these kinds of topics [...] For example, I know female colleagues of mine, get a lot more abuse on Twitter, who are like less active than me, but I get nothing on Twitter to be honest. Well very little anyway. So, I think it's a lot easier for men in many ways to speak about these topics in the first place” (PG3).

Max's observation substantiates the extent to which men generally encounter movement spaces, including online (Ging and Siapera, 2018), as accepting of their presence. The latent discourse discernible here implies that men should therefore bear more of the burden for “speaking out”. Cameron, who describes his work in the field as a “joy” and “another privilege”, corroborates both these assertions, as he discusses the praise he received for enrolling on a gender studies course, saying “I think guys who tell you that it's difficult being a guy, and being a feminist ((laughs)), are wrong ((laughs)). In my opinion [...] you get additional praise for saying the exact same thing that women have been saying for a hundred years. So, I try and point that out” (PG3). Cameron's point succinctly captures most of the claims I make in this chapter and foregrounds the woeful lack of value attributed to women, and their labour, in a neoliberalised economy of patriarchal privilege.

⁹⁵ See Chapter 3 and 6.

Conclusion

Analysis of this group's contributions illustrates a consistent investment in the gender binary as a meaningful framework for understanding both prevention and early intervention approaches, which are carried out using a range of approaches. The routine deployment of an established set of IRs is clearly discernible, as men seek to foster coalitions or alliances with women, to work towards the longer term, shared aim of reducing VAW. As data reveals, this occurs on both an individual miso level through individual bystander-type interventions with peers; on a meso level via community engagement activities such as group work, as well as upon a macro, societal level through engagement with large-scale awareness raising campaigns, which engage with notions of allyship and call upon men to publicly promise their allegiance to the cause. Allyship practices are not universally endorsed by the participants though, with some cautioning against men's uncomplicated identification with the label 'ally' or 'feminist'. However, feminist *informed* practice or the incorporation of feminist thought are both discernible in several of the men's conceptualisations of their labour. In a minority of cases, the men self-align with a more 'radical' leaning feminist position, in which key feminist issues are brought into the frame as paradigmatically important concerns for men working in anti-VAW and DVA prevention. This position promotes an agenda which excludes specific groups of women (such as transwomen and cisgender women involved with commercial sex practices), while deepening existing factions within feminism and the broader anti-VAW movement. In the context of this study, this is significant because these women constitute some of the most vulnerable, 'at-risk' groups for DVA perpetrated by men.

Others account for their anti-VAW or DVA work by drawing upon dominant discourses of gender and instrumentalising them in order to reach other men. In this, the ways in which men typically resource their gendered self-identity is foregrounded. But the accounts also illustrate the extent to which this produces a reification of certain gender-role stereotypes. The preservation of the dominant gender order is perhaps most apparent in discourses of the transformative power of men's emotions which strongly imbricates with the parallel discourse of 'harmful masculinities'. It is a discourse discernible in almost all of the men's accounts, regardless of the ways in which they account for their anti-VAW practice. Analysis of the ways in which the men deploy this discourse reveals how, despite good intentions regarding the tackling of men's violence, men's own concerns and potential vulnerabilities are routinely made the focus of the discussion, albeit with some exceptions. An examination of men's accounts of their own 'pedestalling' within movement or occupational spaces reveals the strategies they use for the navigation of privilege, as well as their occasional internalised struggles with privilege. Indeed, as the data corroborates, one of the primary methods through which gender inequality is sustained socially, is through men's unearned privilege. That men involved in this work can, and do recognise their own privilege, brings to bear Peretz's (2018a, p.2) assertion that the question is not "can men see their own privilege?" but rather what happens when they recognise it? It is against this backdrop that I examine women practitioner and victim-survivors' perspectives on men's involvement in anti-violence work.

Chapter 9: Women's perspective on men's anti-VAW work

"If even you got talking with a man, you'd just see their fist, or whatever. Yeah, you just [...] that's all you're going to expect, do you know what I mean? Not a bunch of flowers, you know, a fist."

(Aileen, PG1)

"[The facilitator] is just one of us. It's when he leaves, he's a man again. In here, he's just one of us."

(Tanya, PG1, FG1)

"You can't say anything about women without somebody going, 'urgh here they are again! Feminists out in their droves' and... it's not about being a feminist."

(Erin, PG2, FG2).

Introduction

Extending the line of enquiry elaborated upon in the previous chapter, I again take up the **third research question regarding men's role in VAW and DVA prevention, intervention and activism**, but in this instance, centring the perspectives of women victim-survivors and practitioners. The paradigms governing work in this field have gradually shifted over time to incorporate men, including within the UK policy landscape, as the government has moved towards gender neutrality in its strategic approach to ending VAWG (Home Office, 2016; HM Government, 2019). This has occurred alongside a notable weakening or in some cases, troubling of the ideological and political linkages between the DVA movement and the feminist movement, despite their mutual historical roots. It is also reflected in the divergent identifications with feminism articulated by the women practitioners in this chapter. There is a body of work which charts women's perspectives on men in feminism, which as I have discussed⁹⁶ has a much longer, well-established history. But there is a real paucity of research which foregrounds women victim-survivors and practitioners' perspectives on the broadening of the DVA field, to include men. There is even less empirical work such as this, which is conducted with women who have worked in, or received DVA services delivered by men practitioners.

When considering men's participation and the role they should or could be ascribed, the women participants offered a variety of positions, mobilising intersecting discourses of gender, race and class within the broader narratives of men's responsibility and accountability. In this, they elucidate the ways in which men's visibility in the field, as well as a generalised lack of accountability for men's violence, complicate the question of men's role. The impact of more recent gender-neutral DVA policy frameworks is also discernible in the discursive manoeuvring displayed by the women when speaking about the question of men's role. Evident in this is an oscillation between a desire to hold men to account for men's violence, while at the same time, grappling with feelings of uncertainty and suspicion about men's motivations for engagement in the movement. Also, clearly in evidence are the

⁹⁶ See Chapters 2 and 8.

ways in which the personal stories and histories of trauma organise the women's perspectives on any future or imagined engagement with men in a professional, as well as personal capacity. Notwithstanding these preoccupations, some participants in both PG1 and PG2 readily welcome men's involvement in the sector and in the work of addressing men's violence – a position rationalised on the basic premise that men are unquestionably more likely to perpetrate DVA and therefore should take some responsibility for tackling it. Women victim-survivors who have received direct DVA support and intervention from men practitioners also spoke of the merits of working with them. In this, they deploy a discourse of repair and restoration such that their work with men practitioners serves to counter negative conceptualisations of men fomented in an experience of men's violence.

The chapter begins with an outline of how women DVA practitioners variously deploy discourses of feminism within their own practice, including an elaboration of the associated cost implications for women within both their workplaces as well as communities. The next part of the chapter focuses upon what the participants think about men's participation in DVA related activities. I begin with a discussion of the concerns women express regarding men's motivation and qualification for participation in either practice or campaigning, before moving on to a discussion of the barriers to men's engagement in these fields. Following this, I discuss the women's arguments in support of men's participation, in which I draw upon contributions from women who have themselves, worked with men practitioners. The third and final part of this chapter examines the ways in which women practitioners and victim-survivors construct or envisage a role for men in either 'frontline' intervention or campaigning. The data substantiates how they deploy iterations of the same IRs used by men to account for their anti-VAW and DVA prevention work, within the broader dominant discourses of engaging men.

Feminism and its costs

Analysis of all three participant groups reveals a variety of discourses of feminism in practitioners' meaning-making regarding their work, and in which the 'feminist' subject position is variously adopted, complicated or outright rejected. This perhaps signals the porosity of the definitional boundaries of feminist discourse, but in the case of the women practitioners specifically, is also indicative of the ideological dilemmas the women themselves experience, in respect of feminism and its relevance to their work (Billig, 1988; Wetherell, 1998). While for some women practitioners, feminism and the feminist genealogy of the DVA movement remain salient and provide a meaningful framework to make sense of their practice; for others, feminism is regarded as a redundant or inapplicable frame of reference. Analysis of the data also reveals the notably divergent costs and risks associated with a self-alignment with feminism for women in contrast to men, as the previous chapter shows (Conlin and Heesacker, 2017). Comparison of the data further indicates that in some cases men more easily and more readily align themselves with (pro)feminism – albeit they may not name themselves 'feminists' – while women practitioners' relationship with feminism is often a far more complicated one. The reasons for this are variously expressed by the participants, and they imbricate with the discourses of gender and class, which circulate within the occupational and community spaces the women inhabit, as I go on to discuss.

“I do what I do, but I’m not a feminist...”: contested feminist identities

The following extract from a focus group (FG) with a team of specialist women DVA practitioners working in a large northern city brings to the fore the problematic of identifying as ‘feminist’, particularly when working in the field of DVA:

Susan: “I don't think I'm a feminist you know. I know I do what I do, but I'm not a feminist...”

Erin: “It's not about being a feminist, it's just...yeah that's what I mean, it's just about being female and having an opinion, isn't it?”

Susan: [“.... I'm old school in a lot of ways. I'll go home and pick towels up for me son; make his tea and do his bed! You know, so...I don't know why people [don't] get that...?”]

Erin: “But that's what I mean, they, they can't handle the idea of...”

Susan: [“Put on the bandwagon, you know like...”]

Erin: “.... of a woman being strong, independent, being powerful....”

Susan: [“Yeah, and still being a mother. And doing the, the ‘womany’ things. Right. Crazy.”]

Erin: “They'd rather put you down and say, you're a feminist! As if it's something that's bad”.

Amber: “And yeah, that's it. This is why like...I personally have so little time for men. Because of that! ((everyone laughs)) No, but...you know, I'm like, I can't be bothered anymore!”
(PG2, FG2)

In this extract, there are a variety of discourses of feminism in operation, ostensibly sketching out the genealogical lines and tensions extant in the augmentation of feminism, during the course of the last three to four decades. They so closely imbricate with one another in this extract, that it is difficult to distinguish them at times. This is complicated further by the fact that all three speakers, despite occupying contrasting feminist subject-positions, undertake discursive work, to ensure that the disparities between each of their positions are minimised. This is accomplished through the women’s unified rejection of an externalised dominant cultural narrative which derides women and is signified by their importation of an ‘us/them’ dichotomised discourse. In it, external actors (“they”) are construed as intent on “put[ting] [women] down” (Erin), particularly when they identify as “feminists”, albeit according to different strands of feminist discourse. The most clearly discernible of which are; liberal feminism, postfeminism and neoliberal feminism. We see how the subject positions embedded in each discourse, are occupied, negotiated and resisted by the three practitioners speaking. The corresponding notions of gender embedded within each similarly produce a different version of the narrative of women’s progress (Rottenberg, 2018; Banet-Weiser et al., 2020). These animate the women’s understanding of the role of feminism in the DVA work they do but also the ways in which they identify with or repudiate feminism (Calder-Dawe and Gavey, 2016).

An analysis of Susan's account signals that she does not recognise herself as the 'woman' subject constituted in and by feminist discourse. Her treatment of feminism can therefore be read in a number of ways however on first reading she appears to foreground the tensions extant in a liberal feminist discourse. In this we see a rejection of the feminist identity label, as Susan reworks a commonly heard disclaimer in conversations regarding feminism (Quinn and Radtke, 2006): "I do what I do, but I'm not a feminist...", deployed to stave off any potential criticism (Potter, 1996b). In this instance it has the effect of severing Susan's DVA practice from its feminist aetiology. Further, Susan's self-narrative is framed by a set of gender role stereotypes salient to women's care work; to take-up a (liberal) feminist position would according to Susan's formulation, compromise her role as mother and wife, doing the "womany" things. In this, Susan orientates her account towards a specific working-class narrative in which there is no perceived 'place' for some women within a white, middle-class, feminism, even when working in the field of DVA (Skeggs, 1997).

Susan's reference to "[jumping] on the bandwagon" could also gesture an oblique rejection of a more recent and far more visible, (social) media-friendly, 'popular feminism'. Although more palatable than its liberal antecedents, it is often defanged of any critique of the patriarchal structures that contribute to men's violence towards women (Banet-Weiser, 2018). Though signalling that her dismissal of both liberal and popular feminism may be considered outdated ("I'm old school in a lot of ways"), Susan's account also arguably orientates towards a more contemporary neoliberal feminist discourse, in which the tensions she alludes to regarding the co-existence of discourses of women's care and domestic work alongside that of their economic reproduction, are resolved. Albeit, that the responsibility for both forms of labour remain the charge of women (Rottenberg, 2018). Indeed, Susan approximates precisely the neoliberal feminist ideal as a self-sufficient woman who achieves the 'work-life' balance between full-time employment and mothering. Erin also offers a discourse of contested feminist identification as I go on to discuss.

"It's just about being female and having an opinion": Postfeminist identification

In the above FG extract, Erin's discursive work to accommodate the feminist-subject position of her colleague Susan, alongside that of her own is clearly in evidence ("yeah that's what I mean, it's just about being female and having an opinion..."; "But that's what I mean..."), as she deploys a discourse redolent of a postfeminist sensibility (Gill, 2007; Gill and Scharff, 2011). In Erin's construction personal choice and freedom of expression are made central, but these qualities are depoliticised and disconnected from the feminist movement's liberationist gains. They instead serve both as signifiers for, and a validation of, women's progress and 'empowerment', providing grounds for claims that "it's not about being a feminist". This discourse turns on the postfeminist logic that feminist battles have now been fought and won (McRobbie, 2009), thereby rendering feminism a "worthy" but now "obsolete" frame of reference, including for DVA work in the current socio-political moment (Calder-Dawe and Gavey, 2016, p. 494).

However, Erin's assertion that "[t]hey'd rather put you down and say, you're a feminist! As if it's something that's bad", could be read as a way of "speaking feminism" without making an explicit identification with it (Skeggs, 1997, p. 142). As she later states: "you can't say anything about women without somebody going, 'urgh here they are again! Feminists out in their droves' and... it's not about being a feminist" (PG2, FG2). The risk of being labelled a 'feminist' appears to lead both Susan and

Erin to deny the most obvious site of politics salient to the field of DVA, which in and of itself foregrounds the real tensions women practitioners must continually negotiate when doing this work. It may also constitute part of the ‘safety work’ (Vera-Gray, 2018) the practitioners do to shield themselves from abuse, and to avoid being maligned for naming themselves a ‘feminist’. This extends to the online space, which Erin also discusses during the FG, where women are known to receive high levels of misogyny (Lewis et al., 2016b; Ging and Siapera, 2018).

Indeed, the actions of both Erin and Susan may denote their individualised safety practices, not only to avoid the culturally embedded pejorative connotations attached to feminism (Calder-Dawe and Gavey, 2016), but also to avoid those attached to DVA work more generally because it is an activity in which women’s concerns are centred. Amber, the third speaker in this FG and at twenty-two the youngest person in the sample, foregrounds this negative association and attributes it to the ways in which men have sought to quash women’s progress; a ‘feminist-backlash’ which for Amber, is enough to reject men’s participation in feminism and in the DVA field more broadly (“I personally have so little time for men”). For some participants, however, public disclosure of their work could render life in their own communities untenable, as Susan discusses during the same FG:

“I don't...I don't tell anybody what I do...I don't Jess. It's not...it's not...I mean, I sit on a Sunday afternoon with all't men int naughty room at me local club, with me fags and me pint of beer, effing it and jeffing it. And they haven't got a clue! And that's the way I like it! They would not have a... They'd hound me! They'd be like, "oh, you're one of them, int ya..." (PG2, FG2)

In this extract, Susan reveals an ideological dilemma as she outlines how knowledge about her work would literally negate the possibility of participating in certain cultural or community spaces. In evidence here is the same derogatory discourse about women alluded to earlier, which is validated within a broader, highly pervasive cultural discourse of misogyny and degradation of women (“oh you’re one of them”) (Lewis et al., 2016a). Given the wider discussion in which this extract is situated, being “one of them” could denote an affiliation with feminism and or DVA work. It also implies a disavowal of what might be understood as a more outmoded discourse of ‘puritanical’ or ‘radical’⁹⁷ type feminism in which notions of clear gender difference are preserved (Segal, 1987) and in which women are pejoratively constructed as virtuous and ‘man hating’ (Scharff, 2011). This same discourse is imported by others in the sample, such as children’s practitioner Ali, a white woman in her fifties, who states “I know a lot of people [...] who I work with, as colleagues (..) just think of [feminism] as a ‘dirty word’” (PG2). To avoid being designated “one of them”, Susan instead constructs a compartmentalised identity, in which she separates out her worker-identity, from that of her social-identity, discursively accomplished through her approximation of what might be viewed as a stereotypical man gender-role presentation. Compliant with the safety-work referred to earlier, it is a counter-discourse which provides a certain amount of security, and which permits the co-existence of

⁹⁷ This provides an interesting counter-point to the ways in which the men endorse a more ‘radical’ feminism, see Chapter 8.

both subject positions. Considered together, these accounts foreground how feminist discourses are taken up by practitioners in highly variegated ways, while also belying 'popular' feminist discourses that an identification with feminism is an unambiguously emboldening practice. In the following section I extend these discussions as I move onto a women's perspectives on men's engagement in the DVA field.

Women's perspectives on 'engaged men'

Debates around the mobilisation or participation of men in efforts to prevent VAW often incorporate the claim that helping in this context, is not a benign activity (Curtin and McGarty, 2016). Often the challenges of men's engagement in the field stem from the unavoidable relations of privilege and patriarchy, which as Macomber (2015, p. 21) argues "serve as constant reminders that gendered power differentials are deeply entrenched". This coalesces with the observation that in doing work that fundamentally challenges the dominant (gender) order, men are themselves contributing to the dismantling of the very system from which they routinely benefit. In the following sections I will elaborate upon these challenges, through the lens of the women's accounts.

Motivation for participation

Data points to a tension among women practitioners and women victim-survivors arising from concerns regarding the motivational factors for men's participation in work to address men's violence. Questions relating to men's motivation and qualification for working in the field are typically organised according to principles of trust and are undergirded in part by anxieties regarding the potential for malicious or spurious participation which ultimately may do more harm than good to women's work in the sector. Indeed, when considered alongside some of the contributions offered by men in this study, it is possible to see where these concerns have political and ideological salience. Angela, an experienced IDVA attests to these concerns in the context of a discussion regarding whether she believed men had a role in anti-VAW:

"It depends, depends on who they are, where they're from...Some [men] might be in it for the wrong reasons [...] I think you have to be very, very, very cautious. But I think that would be, that that would be me being politically incorrect in that, but I think...but I would, I would question why yeah..." (PG2).

In this extract, Angela's wariness of men's involvement is reinforced by the prosodic features of the account in which she emphasises "cautio[n]" and vigilance. Her contentions are reminiscent of earlier discourses of scepticism and uncertainty articulated in the 1990s amidst men's increasingly more visible participation in anti-VAW work and campaigning at time when women were still fighting for substantial political space and recognition (Hester, 1984; Dominelli, 1999). While Angela alludes to the fact her comments may be regarded as politically contentious her concerns of possible co-optation or malevolence are discernible in others' accounts, as Amber articulates:

"I think there is a fear, you know, with women, when men do start to come in, because...especially when you're fighting for something that is so gendered. You, sometimes,

might find it a bit difficult to trust these blokes that are involved, you know. We all know that there are men that pretend to be these...(.) 'right on' socialists, when actually it turns out they're just as...(.) you know, they're using it as a disguise. They might not even know, so...And there's a power behind a sisterhood, isn't there" (PG2, FG2).

IDVA Amber expresses a similar sentiment to Angela, while also embedding the importance of a "sisterhood" which engenders solidarity, and which may be inconsistent with the substantive inclusion of men. These practitioners' contentions represent some of the most significant challenges associated with men's participation and are underpinned by a concern that women's leadership and stewardship of DVA prevention and intervention work, "could be supplanted or diminished by men's participation" (Tolman et al., 2016, p. 3). These are also in many ways the most difficult to overcome when regarded in the context of a broader framework of gender (in)equality and systems of privilege. The concerns are further problematised when considered against a backdrop of a lived experience of DVA, as I discuss in a forthcoming section. The salience of embodied gender identity as a source of epistemic authority also serves as a key organising principle for some women victim-survivors' when considering the role of men, as I examine in the next section.

Gender and 'qualification' for participation

Preoccupations grounded in notions of embodied gender often surface as a primary stumbling block in relation to 'the man question' (Holmgren and Hearn, 2009) in this area of work, particularly if it involves engaging directly with women who have lived experience of men's violence and abuse. Often, challenges arise from the lack of experiential parity between (cis)women and (cis)men, based upon biological sex difference. For some women victim-survivors this precludes the possibility that (cisgender) men can fully understand their experiences, as the following extract from Melissa shows:

"It would be really awful to say that men didn't have insight because they were men (..) but I don't know if it's something that I would want (...) You know, if they were an art therapist for example, and they came in and they were doing therapy, [if] they were there for a function, or a yoga teacher, fine. Um (..) but I actually really think I benefited from it being gender specific, and I personally now, would choose not to do that [work with a man]" (PG1).

Melissa mobilises a discourse of gender sameness as a source of epistemic authority (Alcoff, 2014) which for her, scaffolds a person's suitability for a role working in domestic or sexual violence work. That most cisgender, heterosexual men do not routinely consider the likelihood of experiencing rape or sexual assault, shores up Melissa's argument. In contrast, (cis and trans) women habitually implement precautionary measures to avoid or reduce this very real possibility (Kelly, 1988). It is this kind of safety work (Vera-Gray, 2018) that functions to curtail women's freedoms, while bolstering some victim-survivors' concerns that (cisgender) men may not understand their lived realities to the degree necessary to meet their needs. A similar line of questioning is voiced by practitioner Ali, speaking in relation to a program for women victim-survivors:

"I'd be interested to see how the session on sexual abuse would go because [...] I know a lot of people who run it say that that session doesn't go very well, and women are very (.) closed up. [...] [S]o, I can't (.) imagine how that would go with a man running it. But (.)

that's just how I feel, but I... (.) um (...) but that doesn't mean that...it's all about individual workers" (PG2).

In this account, sexual abuse is a case in point, as Ali describes her reticence regarding men's suitability for running such a program. While acknowledging that some women's ability to articulate their experience or disclosure abuse is potentially inhibited by men's presence, the careful discursive manoeuvring done here by Ali as she offers a series of disclaimers, ensures that she does not completely disregard the possibility of men's participation in the field ("that's just how I feel"; "that doesn't mean that"; "it's all about individual workers"). Juggling the contending gender-political narratives at play, Ali simultaneously evinces a broader sociocultural tendency to ensure that men, as a homogenous group, are not discredited within this discursive frame. This requires a certain amount of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983), and arguably reproduces a key logic of "popular feminism" which persistently endeavours to accommodate men (Banet-Weiser, 2018). Routinely evidenced in program discourse geared towards engaging men in anti-VAW, the tendency to 'accommodate men' is symptomatic of attempts to avoid the (real or imagined) alienation⁹⁸ of men from talk of gender-based issues such as gender (in)equality, and men's violences towards women. Recently it has gained purchase amidst the changing policy backdrop of domestic abuse, which now routinely mobilises a discourse, which acknowledges and puts measures in place to serve men victim-survivors, alongside women. Consequently, these discourses are regularly discernible in the accounts of many of the women participants, as I discuss elsewhere in this chapter.

Another aspect of Ali's account which warrants attention is that it is structured through a heteronormative lens which operates on the presumed heterosexuality of all subjects. Indeed, the majority of UK intervention and prevention initiatives are structured according to this frame, which consequently excludes victim-survivors who don't cohere with a binarised and or heteronormative understanding of gender or sexuality. As Melissa, who identifies as a gender-fluid lesbian, discusses:

"Just because [...] some of the things you have to talk about are physical, as well. You know, you're talking about rape, you're talking about sexual health you know. It's bad enough having to talk to a straight woman about it, not being able to get any support, never mind it being male. But that sounds so hypocritical because if that person was self-identifying as female. So...it's quite a thing that needs to be explored, and I suppose the good thing is that society is moving toward a more 'gender fluid' attitude in the younger generations, and this categorisation that I've been brought up with, might not be seen as the norm anymore. And it might just get swept away anyway" (PG1).

In this extract we see the convergence of competing discourses which operate to foreground an increasingly visible narrative in circulation regarding gendered 'authenticity' and the politics of successful (gender) 'passing' (Butler, 1990; 1993; Hines, 2007); both can be traced in the men's accounts, discussed in the previous chapter. They are signalled here via Melissa's reference to gender

⁹⁸ See Chapter 3 and 8.

“self-identification”⁹⁹, which in this account is subsumed into her deliberations regarding the participation of men in women’s services. This discourse is reminiscent of the broader debates within feminism pertaining to the security of women-only spaces. Recalling anxieties related to the diversification of DVA provision, it is grounded in the perceived disruption transgender women, in particular, may pose to those spaces. This line of argument is redolent of a certain strand of more ‘radically’ aligned feminist thought which operates to exclude transgendered women in the name of the preservation of cisgender women and their spaces. Given ‘radical’ feminism’s framing of men, this formulation somewhat ironically coheres with the trans-exclusionary rhetoric expressed by some of the men in this study¹⁰⁰. Melissa’s discursive distancing is clear here though, as she works to set herself apart from a “hypocritical” discourse, while orientating the latter part of her account towards a discourse of “gender fluid[ity]”. This functions to establish the two discourses as competing truth claims in this account, constituting the discursive field Melissa “puzzles” with (Edley and Wetherell, 2001), as she is positioned in and by these discourses.

The account Melissa offers, along with the others discussed in forthcoming sections, point to how women victim-survivors and practitioners’ notions of men’s participation are often fragmented, complex and heterogeneous. In this, there is the corresponding mobilisation of an intricate array of positioning of self, operationalised in a variety of rhetorical directions (Edley and Wetherell, 2001) as women negotiate how personal experience informs their perceptions of, and feelings on ‘engaged men’. This process is further problematised in the context of an experience of domestic abuse, which as I discuss in Chapter 5, fundamentally undermines a victim-survivor’s sense of personal safety and self-identity. As I elaborate in the next section, these concerns are not purely epistemic; they have a significant impact upon some women’s ability to engage or relate to or with men.

Trauma as a barrier

Aileen, a woman in her late 50s who had experienced challenges with mental health and substance use, was one of the many women participants who had not received support in a professional capacity from a man practitioner, notwithstanding her intermittent, sometimes fractious engagement with the police and the CJS. In the following extract, she discusses the long-term ramifications of having lived with severe and sustained abuse perpetrated by men as far back as her earliest childhood memories:

“I can't really go on a train, me. I can't go on a bus, I'm scared. It's men. Yeah, scared of men. Yeah, I get anxious. Yeah, I know taxi men [...] but I still sit in back. I don't like men even though I'm straight, but I don't like men. No, no. I mean [...] me daughter says ‘mum, one day you'll find somebody’ and I said, I don't want no one [...] I'm happy, I've got me, and me dog, my children, my grandchildren. I don't want...no, no, no... because you can't trust

⁹⁹ Melissa may also be alluding to the current debates around proposed reforms of the Gender Recognition Act (2004) which were taking place at the time of interview in late 2018.

¹⁰⁰ See Chapter 8.

again Jessica. You don't...all you feel...If even you got talking with a man, you'd just see their fist, or whatever, do you know what I mean? Yeah, you just...you just... that's all you're going to expect, do you know what I mean? Not a bunch of flowers, you know, a fist, do you know what I mean?" (PG1)

This account of Aileen's day to day existence vividly exemplifies a series of complex trauma reactions as a result of the abuse she has experienced (Humphreys and Joseph, 2004). Aileen's anxiety is heightened upon encountering a man, including during routine activities such as travelling on public transport. The extent and depth of her distress is reflected in her fragmented account, which for Aileen, forecloses the possibility of "trust[ing]" a man again, including in a professional capacity. Deploying a traditional commonplace signifier for love or romance between partners ("a bunch of flowers"), Aileen illustrates the extent to which certain symbols of a heteronormative relationship have come to organise her understanding of a non-harmful or 'healthy' relationship. She offers a painful counterpoint to this dominant cultural narrative, which has itself been disrupted in her imaginary, permanently altering that which she can or will expect from a man in the reality of her own life. It is symbolised in her account by the image of a single "fist", understood here as illustrative of Aileen's past abuse. For Aileen, simply seeing or encountering a man acts as a stimulus or 'trigger' for the "reawakening" of her trauma (Paper Dolls Research Group, 2019). Her account therefore emphasises the real risk of (re)traumatisation attached to work with men for some women victim-survivors.

Jean draws upon a similar discourse to that of Aileen when talking about the participation of men in the DVA field, in this instance orientated towards the value vested in women's shared gender experience. Jean also struggled with substance use and mental health issues throughout her adult life and like Aileen, her professional or formal engagement with men was limited to the police and the CJS:

"I don't think...no....I don't think that would be very good, because...a woman wants to talk to another woman. Not a man. Do you know what I mean? They'll feel more easy with it being a woman...specially some of them men, what...the abuse that men have gone to. Do you know what I mean? I think they'd rather talk to women. Could think um...the man that you're speaking to is abusing his wife at home. [...] I mean, people are good at putting up a front. And that's...that's my only thing about it, that. And, you don't know whether...it might be easier to talk to another woman, not a man" (PG1).

The discourse mobilised here is reminiscent of a broader cultural logic within feminism which argues for the unique epistemic understanding between and among women, based upon a shared experience of oppression (Stanley and Wise, 1993)¹⁰¹. For Jean, collective experience is bifurcated along gender lines and cultivates the possibility of relatability, mutual understanding, and crucially, a sense of safety, particularly in the context of DVA. It is an interlocution otherwise imagined as difficult

¹⁰¹ Also discussed in Chapter 4.

or less “easy” if between a woman and a man. A preoccupation with men’s ‘true’ motivations or intentions are equally salient in this account, which for Jean originates from a possible dissonance between behaviours at home, in contrast to the workplace (“people are good at putting up a front”).

Jean and Aileen’s concerns are in no small part informed by their personal experiences of DVA and chronic trauma, which have undoubtedly contributed to a legitimate sense of uncertainty, fear and distrust in men. As Herman writes (1992), an essential aspect of the healing process following a traumatic experience such as DVA – in addition to specialist, individualised support – is a social context which affirms and protects the victim-survivor, and which “brings testimony to their experiences” (Humphreys and Joseph, 2004, p.562). The stories of women like Aileen and Jean should therefore not be marginalised in the debates regarding the diversification of the sector to include men. Rather, their experiences should be centred in work to support victim-survivors (Hague et al., 2003), in which the role and impact of trauma is explicitly acknowledged. In the next section, I will address the concerns expressed by some regarding the potential de-centring of women’s concerns, including in the context of the debates around men victim-survivors.

The risk of decentralisation of women’s interests

Some practitioners’ concerns around men’s participation in the sector are catalysed by the use of gender-neutral discourses of domestic abuse in policy frameworks (Burrell, 2016), which have led to the emergence of a ‘men are victims too’ discourse. As I alluded to in Chapter 5, the framings of victimisation referred to in this context are often bolstered by neoliberal and neoconservative engagements with radical feminism which promote individualism and a political defensiveness as Phipps (2014) has documented. Amber provides an example of how this discourse plays out:

“Every time I’ve spoken to a male friend of mine, or a man in general, in a bar [...] when they find out what I do, the first thing...It happened to me yesterday on my way, on my walk up from work...Bloke started talking to me, and he asked me what I did. Told him what I did. And he said to me; ‘oh, I had a friend who was in an abusive relationship, but he was being abused by her’. Every single time I mention what I do, to a bloke, they instantly start telling me...oh what a about if a woman [abuses a man]” (PG2, FG2).

Drawing upon an anecdotal example, Amber articulates what is a common experience among professionals working in the women’s or DVA sector, and one I can attest to, having personally experienced this on several occasions both while working in these sectors but also while conducting this study. The underpinning rationale for a counter-discourse offered by some men when confronted with the reality of VAWG in today’s society, is rooted in an apparent self-protective stance, which constitutes a key logic in the specious framing of DVA as ‘gender-symmetrical’ (Dobash et al., 1992; Stark, 2010). This is reminiscent of a recent set of (in)equality discourses precipitating exhortations of “all lives matter” in response to “black lives matter”, or “straight pride” in response to “gay pride”. But the broadening of the goals and scope of either of these movements to include those who represent the “advantaged out-group”, not only risks reducing the impact of the movement but decentralises the concerns of the disadvantaged or minority “in-group” (Droogendyk et al., 2016).

As Amber goes on to say, “there's something wrong, in my opinion. [...] Because if someone mentions racism to me, I don't start going, “well that's not me, because I'm not racist!” (PG2, FG2). Discourses of men’s equivalent victimisation are a product of attempts to broaden the movement’s identity, but they risk obfuscating the uniquely gendered dimension of women’s DVA experience, much like discourses of “all lives matter” constitute an epistemic and ontological negation of BAME people’s lived experience of racism. The material consequences of failing to *name* women’s DVA victimhood as specifically gendered are voiced here by IDVA Debbie:

“[W]e have to name it. We have to say, you know, on the whole, violence against anybody, but violence against women, is committed by men (..) [N]ow, we say people because we have to be all inclusive, we have to (..) almost say it's a bit of a 50[/50]...to try and get the men in – because of the male victims – to me (..) somehow we've had to lessen the impact on women (..) And I think (..) we should be able to be inclusive to men and make male - support for male victims - (...) and make support for female victims. But...(.) to me, because we don't name male violence against women and girls, (..) if we don't name it, we can't deal with it. [...] And I think, it can't be beyond the wit of any of us, to be able to acknowledge as adults, that yes it does happen to a small percentage of men, but on the whole (..)...it's still male violence against (..) wherever it's directed. It's still male violence” (PG2)

In this extract Debbie rebukes a widely circulating public story about DVA, in which it is framed as a gender-neutral social problem which relies upon its concomitant construction as gender symmetrical (Venäläinen, 2020). Debbie alludes to the ways in which gender-symmetry is often constructed as an irrefutable fact, accomplished here through her mobilisation of quantification technique (“it’s a bit of a 50/50”) (Potter et al., 1991). The challenges of this discourse as a basis to introduce a more “inclusive” victim-survivor group identity, are foregrounded here, which in the context of men’s violence towards women, amount to the discursive “lessen[ing]” of women’s experience. Refuting claims of gender-symmetry, Debbie goes on to deploy the same strategy of factualisation, to highlight the flawed logic of a discourse (“yes it does happen to a small percentage of men”), which functions to foreclose a critical analysis of DVA as a gendered social problem. Indeed, in mutualising victimisation, the discourse simply tolerates and sustains enduring patriarchal structural norms. In this we see how the workings of privilege are made visible in relation to which voices are heard, and who is permitted to engage in agenda setting in relation to DVA and VAW (Phipps, 2014; 2016). By way of contrast, I now go on to outline some of the arguments in support of men’s participation in the field.

In support of men’s participation

Analysis reveals how arguments in favour of men’s participation in the field of DVA or anti-VAW prevention often incorporate a strategic motivation for their involvement, to alleviate the burden of responsibility routinely placed upon women for addressing DVA, as well as for doing the work of confronting men who collude with harmful gender norms. These arguments coalesce with the disquiet communicated by women regarding the general lack of men in visible or publicly facing roles, in efforts to tackle men’s violence towards women. For victim-survivors who have first-hand experience of working with men practitioners, the work challenges negative perceptions of men more generally, as I will now go on to discuss, before addressing the imperative of men’s participation.

“He restores your faith in men”: repair and restoration discourses

Data from one of the focus groups (FGs) implies that an experience of DVA does not completely impede the prospect of working with men. It was an FG conducted with one of the few women’s DVA victim-survivor groups in the country co-facilitated by a woman and a man (both of whom took part in this study in PG2 and PG3, respectively). The overarching feeling regarding the man facilitator, Dale (PG3), is epitomised in the following extract from Kirsten, a white woman in her thirties with two children:

“I think he restores [...] your faith in men. You realise that not every man is an arsehole basically. And that there is genuine men out there. But he does...because he's quite laid back as well, you do feel that you can talk about anything with him, yeah. There [...] was a few nitty gritty things where we thought, ah we're gonna make him squirm, but...he doesn't” (PG1, FG1).

Kirsten imports a discourse of repair and restoration here, in which the construction of men as a homogenous group of perpetrators is destabilised by Dale and his work with the group. At the same time, in making a case for Dale, Kirsten registers the concerns voiced by some victim-survivors, around addressing certain “nitty gritty things” that may be too painful to discuss with a man, after having experienced abuse by a man. This same discourse is in evidence elsewhere in interviews, such as in the following extract from IDVA Gemma who worked in the same city:

“I think [men working in the sector is] really positive. I wish there were more male workers. I understand why women would prefer to see a female worker initially, but I think again in terms of breaking that cycle, they also need to see what a... have positive male role models. And it's not thinking that all men are bastards, you know, there are actually nice [ones]” (PG2).

In this account we see the resurfacing of the figure of the “positive male role model”, reminiscent of some of the men’s formulations discussed in the chapter prior, and in the same way as in Kirsten’s account. This orientates both accounts towards a collective rather than individualised response to domestic abuse. It also draws upon the same IRs referred to in the previous chapter (‘men talking to other men’, ‘men calling out other men’). The discourse of men’s participation in work to address men’s violence is expanded here though, construed as a tool to repair the negative narratives of men provoked by a lived experience of abuse. The women’s formulations in this instance are disconnected from a broader societal discourse of gender or patriarchal social relations, as men’s participation is instead constructed as an aspect of victim-survivor recovery; an intervention to “break [the] cycle”.

A similar sentiment is discernible in the following extract from the same FG, but Dale’s character traits feature here as key factors in the groups’ ability to engage with him:

Hannah: “You don't even notice the fact that he's a man”

All: ((in agreement; everyone laughs))

Tanya: “He's just one of us. It's when he leaves, he's a man again, in here, he's just one of us” (PG1, FG1).

In this extract we see a reworking of the discourse deployed by Gemma and Kirsten before her, in which the visibility of one man is reparative, and functions to displace a discourse of homogeneity (“all men are arseholes”, “bastards”), in favour of a discourse of exceptionalism (“you don’t even notice the fact that he’s a man”). Thus, while the FG discussion initially implies an uncomplicated acceptance of men’s participation within this arena, upon closer analysis, it is possible to see how the women, despite fully endorsing the *specific* man they worked with, are cognisant of the contentions his identity status as a man brings with it. Their discursive framing of the facilitator’s participation indicates a type of identity work that establishes a temporary equivalence between the women and the facilitator (“he’s just one of us”). The facilitator’s provisional identity suspension within the confines of the closed group space aids the women’s engagement with him and establishes a climate of trust and safety. The trust afforded to the facilitator is proven in his words and actions, because as Tanya later says; “he doesn't at any point, try and stick up for men or.... Nothing. Doesn't judge ya, doesn't...he's...he's really good” (PG1, FG1). Tanya alludes to a discourse of men’s collective culpability as she resituates the discussion within the realms of a more expansive gender narrative. In this the facilitator’s non-judgemental, uncompromising recognition of the harm caused to them is read as a display of allegiance to them (Butler, 2004a), which in turn cultivates a space in which the women’s experience of DVA is not only heard but also affirmed (Herman, 1992).

That the facilitator has lived experience of DVA himself, having both experienced abuse and witnessed the abuse of his mother as a child is also notable here. Dale disclosed his personal experience during his work with the group, which he outlines to me during his interview:

“[D]omestic violence had [...] a huge impact. And throughout my er, entire life, and particularly as a child, growing up, growing up through my teens, and then the impact from my teenage years through to my early twenties. [...] I kind of disappeared for a little while and it forced me to, you know (.) realise that impact. And then made me realise that actually this, this...if that's impacting me, the children and the young people I'm working with, it's impacting them. And I've got a story...I've got something I can use to possibly help them” (PG3).

Dale’s disclosure was an important part of the intervention work done with the women and is testament to the negotiation of self-narrative the facilitator himself engages in (Jensen, 2016) and which cultivates a rapport with the women. This points to the significance of a shared experience of DVA as a foundation for men’s involvement in the field, while also challenging the need for gender identity sameness. In the next section I will address the strategic imperative of men’s involvement voiced by some participants.

The imperative of holding men to account

Despite the challenges of diversifying the field to incorporate men, for some women participants, there is a clear imperative to include men, given the specifically gendered nature of DVA. In the

following extract from the same FG discussed earlier, the women discuss the role of men in anti-VAW and DVA work more generally:

Hannah: "I think [men's involvement is] kinda important, really".

Tanya: "It is".

Hannah: "Making men more aware".

All: ((in agreement))

JW: And why do you think that it is?

Hannah: "Because...I don't know..."

Kirsten: "Still goes back to years ago doesn't it ..."

Tanya: ["Male abusers..."]

Kirsten: "Male domination –"

Hannah: "It's their behaviour that needs to change. You know...their behaviour, [if they were] more aware [...], then a lot of these [things] that are happening to victims, wouldn't happen, you know..." (PG1, FG1).

When offering their thoughts regarding men's *collective* role, the women situate their response within a discourse of DVA as a gendered social problem, structurally rooted in men's historically embedded, long-standing ("goes back to years ago") oppression of women. This correspondingly constructs men's responsibility to act and implement behaviour change among other men, in order to produce broad-based systems change. Also present though is the recourse that men are simply not "aware" of the problem, and that in cultivating awareness among them, so the problem will subside. This argument can to some extent be traced in the dominant discourses deployed within larger-scale men's anti-VAW awareness raising campaigns (WRC, 2017), which seem to presume ignorance on the part of men as regards issues of gender-based violence and gender inequality. The problematic of this discourse is particularly evident when evaluating men's motivation for participating in the field of anti-VAW work, because it does not account for the gains for men, associated with maintaining the dominant gender order. In the following section, I elaborate upon some of these points as I explore how men's role is conceptualised by the women participants.

Constructing a role for men

Competing discourses are apparent in the contributions from the women I spoke to regarding the expectations they have for men's engagement, as well as the role men could or should occupy in VAW or DVA work, particularly when conducted within political or public settings. Data reveals how the

women participants regularly draw upon the same set of dominant discourses and IRs that the men deploy when accounting for their work in this area, but they mobilise them in different ways. Notions of men's responsibility and accountability are also made more complicated, when considered against the backdrop of epistemological questions regarding *who* should be *doing* the speaking to men, and *how*, as I go on to discuss.

“Far too much onus is put on women”: men speaking out

Both women practitioners and victim-survivors regularly draw upon a discourse of responsibility which derives from the fact that the majority of perpetrators are men. As Aileen states; “[w]ell they do [have a role] don't they, because it's them that's doing it. [...] I mean they need to [...] speak out, don't they?” (PG1). Despite feeling unable to work with a man in a professional capacity, as I discussed earlier in this chapter, Aileen believes there remains a case for men's participation in work to address men's violence towards women. Aileen's account emphasises an imperative distinction when carving out a role for men, particularly when considering the traumatic impact of DVA, which in this case sees the role partitioned according to work conducted on a societal (macro) or community (meso) level, and work conducted on an individual or personal level (micro), such as one-to-one support work and intervention. Echoing this sentiment, is Marion:

“The message [for] me, should be (..) that the onus...far too much onus is put on women, through this experience, this journey, and the perpetrator – and I know it's not all women, I know its men as well [who are victims] – (.) the perpetrator seems to, not learn anything” (PG1).

Marion captures here one of the key organising principles for men's responsabilisation through participation in the DVA field: that far too little attention is placed upon perpetrators, while the “onus” determinedly resides with women victim-survivors to address the issue, as well as to recover from it. Discernible in Marion's account are traces of the narratives of responsibility extant in DVA programs to support victim-survivors following a relationship with an abusive partner. They are also present in preventative education programs orientated towards equipping women to end future abuse or avoid entering another relationship with an abusive man (Dix, 2018), while the perpetrators do “not learn anything”. Also, notable, and reminiscent of my earlier discussion regarding the propensity to ‘accommodate men’, Marion engages in a careful process of discursive manoeuvring here as she offers a disclaimer (“and I know it's not all women...”) against any accusations that men are overlooked as potential victims too within this frame.

But while there is some consensus among the women participants regarding the urgent need to hold men to account for the reasons provided by Marion, how this is operationalised in practice, is far less clear in the data. According to some frames of analysis advanced by the women, as discussed in the previous chapter too, men are best engaged by other men. In this instance, constructing them as responsible for doing the engagement work, as Marion goes on to discuss:

“I don't think there are, again, any male role models that are out there, saying (..) let's make you [perpetrators] feel bad, rather than actually (..) ‘you know, you can do this, walk in a court and walk back out again (.) and it's alright’; the message isn't strong enough. So yeah

(...) Yeah (...) I just think, men equally aren't...what, what message are men giving to men; the non-violent men giving to the violent men? They're not giving any really, are they? But it's a very male dominated society as well. So... (...) I don't get it" (PG1).

Marion foregrounds the disparities in women and men's respective visibility in public efforts to address VAW, as two key IRs ('men calling out other men', 'men talking to other men') are brought into relation with one another. Within this frame, men are construed as communicating a "message" to other men through their behaviour. Crucially, the responsibility for modelling non-violence is situated with non-perpetrating men, which has the effect of implying a collective responsibility attributed to *all* men. Similar to accounts analysed earlier, the figure of the "male role model" again re-emerges in this account. But Marion's account is distinct from that of the men's because the role models do not align with stereotypical representations of gender. Indeed, the reference to a "very male dominated society" instead implies that established gender norms occupy a central role in the perpetration of DVA, fomented in the increased responsabilisation of women in contrast to men perpetrators whose behaviour is often left unchecked.

Also reproducing the IR of 'men talking to other men' within the dominant discourse of men's responsibility, is Felicity, an experienced IDVA:

"[Men] need to talk about it, they need to talk about it. But they don't do they. [...] You know, know when I'm discussing other couples to my partner, he's a typical you know, 'Alpha male', big hairy male like, doesn't talk about his feelings, that kind of thing (.) erm, when I discuss other things with him, about you know, his friends, he's like 'we don't, we don't discuss that; that's off limits (.) That's none of my business'. So that needs to stop, you know, people saying 'it's none of my business'. Men saying; 'it's none of my business, he's my mate, that's just him' (.) It shouldn't be acceptable, should it? (...)" (PG2).

Felicity argues here for the urgent and necessary disruption of the dominant discourse typically used to pattern men's individualised responses to DVA as something which is "off limits" and "none of [their] business". It is a discourse which is legitimised and made coherent via an appeal to an outmoded framing of DVA as a phenomenon isolated to the private realm. Felicity's account is orientated towards heteronormative constructions of gender and masculinities ("Alpha male", "big hairy male"), in which we see the emergence of the discourse of men's (lack of) emotions. The key driver for the abandonment of these discourses is men's peer to peer engagement ('men talking to other men'), thereby aligning Felicity's account with those of Marion and Aileen above.

But the notion that men should be talking to and listening to other men, brings with it ideological and epistemological challenges when operationalised in practice. Indicative of these, some practitioners communicate disappointment about the way in which men's engagement has taken shape, tapping into the concerns of tokenism. Practitioner Erin provides an account which bears this out when speaking about a prominent national campaign to engage men around VAW, implemented in the local authority she works in:

"[There were] loads of male heads within the council posed with this [cardboard cut-out], and it's just really tokenistic, like, it doesn't...what's that really going to achieve? The

money that they spent on that campaign and spending all that time going around the heads of the council, could have been much better spent doing a few workshops in a school, or something else anyway. Just sometimes feels a little like, 'oh we've ticked that box now, the public can see that we're against domestic violence, now let's crack on with something more important'..." (PG2, FG2).

Erin speaks critically here of what she regards as a purely symbolic engagement with a men's anti-VAW campaign, part of a 'tick-box' exercise which serves purely as a means to visibilise the men leading on the campaign. This echoes comments made by other women practitioners such as Angela who expresses her scepticism around men's increased engagement, particularly when it entails public visibility: "I can't see them doing anything else other than [...] the bit that makes them look really good and 'up there' in their suits" (PG2). Also noteworthy is the concealed discourse of austerity underlying Erin's account, alluding to the already hostile funding environment in which women's services find themselves in, jockeying for an ever-decreasing pot of money. Against this backdrop, Erin believes the money would be better spent elsewhere, while also establishing a link with the routine de-prioritisation of women's issues in favour of "something more important". The tension Erin establishes in this extract speaks to the practical difficulties associated with operationalising men's accountability and responsibility at a time when women's domestic abuse services have faced ten years of budget cuts. It also begs the question of where the additional resources will come from if men are to be included in substantive work to reduce or prevent DVA.

In contrast to colleagues before her, Mudiwa offers an alternative framing of the 'men talking to other men' IR. A community based IDVA with vast experience, Mudiwa is a black, heterosexual woman in her late thirties. Working for a large women's organisation in a community-based team in a northern city, Mudiwa offers the following during an FG:

"I think men can be followers. I think sometimes if they have another man that they respect talking about stuff, they sometimes pay attention to it. If you had a woman preaching at you, telling you about gender-based violence, you'd be like, what? What are you on about woman?" (PG2, FG2)

Mudiwa harnesses here two of the central IRs widely circulated as mechanisms for men's engagement and recruitment in the men's anti-VAW ('men as 'followers', 'men talking to other men'), which she merges in an act of discursive manoeuvring. In her formulation, the significance of the underpinning gender politics and power relations are ostensibly deemphasized. The new combined repertoire gains legitimacy according to Mudiwa's construction precisely because of the perceived derogatory male lens through women are conceptualised as "preaching" subjects. According to this framing, women's voices are dismissed as unworthy of equal respect within the cacophony of voices in circulation. Mudiwa arguably makes a "patriarchal bargain" (Kandiyoti, 1988) here, by acknowledging the strategic benefit of engaging men, despite the fact that it may function to preserve men's (epistemic) privilege within that particular space. The 'trade-off' is that men may begin to "pay attention" to issues such as "gender-based violence", which is a strategy extolled in prior research in this area, particularly with men who are far removed from these types of issues (Messner et al., 2015; Casey et al., 2017). It nonetheless sustains a gender hierarchy in which men's perspectives are privileged over women's (Alcoff, 1991; O'Neill, 2018). The mobilisation of this discourse therefore

jeopardizes setting a regressive trend towards the reestablishment of gendered knowledge hierarchies within certain anti-VAW movement and practice spaces, if left unchecked. By way of contrast, Amber provides a counter narrative in response to her colleague Mudiwa, during the same FG:

“That's the problem [for] me. If you're a man that can't do that [...]; that can't listen to a woman and listen to her authority. Her real experiences and believe and trust and have an emotive response to that. If it takes a man to hear it from another man, for him to be engaged, then he shouldn't even be...be engaging” (PG2, FG2).

Amber's account denotes the risks of reproducing a particular cultural discourse that is highly dismissive of women's contributions, simply because they are women. As such, Amber typifies the attendant politics of postulating that 'men should be talking to men' because it is organised by, and reliant upon sustained structural gender inequality. Amber correspondingly signals an important point regarding men's ability (or lack of) to “listen” to a woman's experiences of violence and abuse, and to acknowledge her epistemic authority regarding her own experience. While for Amber this entirely discredits the validity of such an approach, it does highlight the internal divisions among women active in the sector regarding men's participation in women's spaces and DVA prevention and intervention work, even within the strictures of the same staff team.

Offering another counter-narrative to the one presented by Amber, as well as Mudiwa, is Susan, who cites generational difference as legitimate grounds for men's (in)ability to listen to women, or engage with these issues:

“It's different generations. I mean, I've got a partner who's a lot older than me. I've got my parents. They've got a very different view about domestic violence than what I've got. "You've made your bed, and you lie in it", you know? And that's how it was. And I don't discuss what I do with my partner because I'd end up killing him. Because he just doesn't get it. Because he's from, not to say that he condones it, but he's from a different era. And thank god generations now are more educated and there is more out there, more information, because I'd hate to think that we're all growing up now, like we did in [my old] man's day with the abuse that they had!” (PG2, FG2)

This extract from Susan recalls a historicised discourse of DVA, structured as the problem of individual women and men, to be managed within the confines of the home, akin to the discourse imported by Felicity earlier when describing her partner. Although presenting this as a framing of the past, rather than the present (“thank god generations are now more educated”) Susan notes that some men are simply unwilling to respond to this paradigmatic and societal shift because they hail from “a different era”, prohibiting a renewed or contemporary understanding of the issue. Rather than challenging this, Susan evades discussing the issue with her partner, despite signalling her obvious dissatisfaction (“I'd end up killing him”). This response is characterised by an “epistemology of ignorance” (McGoey, 2012); a form of ‘unknowing’ that often scaffolds inequality (Mills, 1997; Sullivan and Tuana, 2007). The salience of strategic unknowns (Hamnett, 2003) in the discursive frame provided by Susan has wider applicability to men's engagement with the issues of DVA and VAWG more broadly. Within the frame of DVA prevention, ignorance functions as a productive asset to preserve and sustain dominant

power relations between the genders (Waugh, 1989). In the next section, I continue to examine these notions of gender but as they intersect with discourses of class and race, in the context of 'engaged men'.

Intersections of class and race

Gender is a no doubt a crucial axis of victim-survivor experiences of DVA. However, as the data shows, it is not the only axis, but rather one amongst a series grounded in structural inequalities, and predominantly modulated by class, race, sexuality, religion and citizenship status. These intersections are analogous to the key organising principles of prevention and intervention approaches, within which the 'engaged man' is envisaged and constructed¹⁰². Abigail describes her thoughts on 'engaged men':

"We don't have enough men standing up. And I think also because of the way society is, the men who do stand up, they tend to be seen as a bit, like 'hippy do-gooder types'. And we could do with more rugby player, football, butch, muscly men, you know. Who work out in the gym and all this, just to be in the front going, 'no that's the wrong way'. This is how you are a man, you know, and working with it. And I think it's important for men to see that in other men. Because if you've got, if you've got a bloke like my ex; he's a typical football-loving, beer drinking bloke, who walks round in football shirts in the summer, with really horrible shorts and stuff. Just making crap jokes all the time and talking about the M25, you know, he's a 'bloke, bloke'" (PG1).

In keeping with other participants' contributions, Abigail's account evokes the IR of 'men talking to other men'. However, in this instance, it turns on the perceived 'hegemonic' gender presentation of the men concerned (real or imaginary). Abigail provides a vivid characterisation as she draws upon her own experiences, positioning her "bloke, bloke" ex-partner with whom she had a 15 year relationship, as antithetical to the "hippy do-gooder" types she imagines typically engage in this type of work. We see the construction here of 'traditional' masculinities as the rightful target for anti-violence intervention, as well as the type of man *needed* in anti-VAW work; his identity performatively configured through a range of sociocultural practices (playing sport, "work[ing] out in the gym", "drinking beer", "talking about the M25"). While shining a light on the strength of these masculine identities, Abigail also advances a description of the 'engaged man' as occupying a left leaning, white middle class identity which is understood here, as incompatible with the task of engaging men like her abusive ex-partner. A similar discourse can be detected in the following account offered by IDVA Felicity:

"I think we're [...] challenging (.) sexism, patriarchy. You know, the village I live in (.) honestly, it's like a league of gentlemen. It's very old fashioned, you've got a lot of bigots, you know, racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic; everything – 'ic'. [...] I do, I do challenge and I'm

¹⁰² This corresponds with notions of the 'authentic' victim-survivor, as I discuss in Chapter 4.

not popular for it (.) 'Oh look at the hairy toed, Guardian reading (.) hippy there!' ((laughs)) So I just call 'em a fascist pig! So, it's very challenging because er (..) people's beliefs...it's taken me years to convince my partner (.) that he doesn't realise that he's got white (.) male (.) privilege (.) He's like, 'how dare you, [...]. I had nothing!' But slowly, slowly, slowly, I've been chipping away at that, and now he's quite humble about it. (...) Because people in that position, don't realise they've got it, do they?" (PG2)

Felicity reproduces a similar classed and racialised narrative in which she is interpellated by the work that she does, as "the hairy toed Guardian reading hippy", signalling a particular white middle-class identity. This is assigned to her because she "challeng[es] sexism [and] patriarchy" which in this formulation are the implied domain of the middle classes, and which consequently sets her in ideological and political opposition to both her community and her partner. Felicity's account correlates with earlier discussions regarding some women practitioner's non-disclosure of their work so that they can 'fit in' within their local communities. As she oscillates between the discursive fields set up through her discourse of home life and partner on the one hand, and her community or social life on the other, Felicity gestures a type of power struggle. Her reference to "white male privilege" also signals her reproduction of a dominant discourse in which the reworking of men's privilege is a fundamental component of the work to address DVA, as the previous chapter elaborated upon. The salience of heteronormative gender roles is also notable in the following account from practitioner Debbie, also working in a small northern town:

"And then not gendering boys to be strong, not in touch with their emotions; that when they're angry [we say]; 'oh, boys will be boys! Cause we keep saying that, don't we, our whole lives, you know. I do know, sometimes in my life, when I've let men off (.) I've made them into children. And, and I think men play into it...Can't do washing can they, cause don't know how washers work, and yet they're all fine engineers, and it were men that put men on moon...But they can't work a washer? (.) So we've still...culturally, we let them off don't we [...]. And they feed into that, 'cause they end up not having to do a lot of the work. Sort of...the shared work." (PG2)

Debbie draws attention to gender socialisation practices, which institute the commonplace construction of men and boys as emotionally disengaged¹⁰³. In this, the reasonably low expectations generally placed upon men and boys to engage with alternative gender role presentations are brought to the fore, as certain behaviours are disregarded as merely the product of boys' nature ("boys will be boys") thereby foreclosing any critical or intellectual interrogation of their behaviours. Also warranting attention is the way in which Debbie highlights the incongruity of two widely circulating narratives regarding men's roles¹⁰⁴ in the home in comparison to outside of it. Curiously, despite the clear incompatibility of the two discourses, allowances are routinely made in order to accommodate for them in the social imaginary, often left unscrutinised and under analysed. IDVA

¹⁰³ See Chapter 8.

¹⁰⁴ Also discussed by some of the men participants, see Chapter 8.

Gemma echoes this same sentiment when referring to her triple role as mother, wife and domestic abuse practitioner:

“You know, unfortunately I am in the same cycle as my mum, where my husband could be a lot better than he is, around the house and helping with childcare. But you know, I want my boy to grow up to know how to cook, how to clean, how to iron and how to look after himself and not to expect that from his mother or relationship as he gets older. That's the ideal. Whether or not it will happen is another matter ((laughs))” (PG2).

The generational enculturation of binarised, stereotypical gendered roles, combined with the preservation of a patriarchal distribution of household labour, are both in evidence here as Gemma aligns her self-narrative with that of her mother's. These generational discourses are discernible across the data produced with all three groups and they incorporate both a future-orientated optimism (“I want my boy to...”, “that's the ideal”), as well as a certain amount of sadness and resignation activated by the retrospective observation that family practices have in fact remained the same for several generations.

Cohering with Debbie's assertions, the expectations Gemma places upon her own son are fairly low (“whether or not it will happen is another matter”); an observation typified by the very nature of the tasks expected (cooking, cleaning, ironing). Remarkably, these same low expectations are discernible in men's own aspirations for other men and boys, which as I discussed in the previous chapter, are often somewhat paradoxically mobilised as drivers for social change. Principally, change is implemented on the basis of the social and class capital of a select few – prominent male figures such as sports players, celebrities and so on – because as Abigail discussed elsewhere in our interview; “they're the blokes, the [perpetrators] idolize. [...] [A]nd if you've got their heroes turning around going, ‘no you don't do that’ [...] that's going to get them thinking” (PG1).

Conclusion

Data analysed in this chapter reveals the complexities of men's involvement in the field of DVA and VAW. The women offer a range of positions on the matter, revealing how discourses of feminism are variously deployed, if at all. Indeed, despite the fact that the linkages between feminism and DVA practice may in some cases be weakened, data reveals feminism continues to play an important role for some practitioners when conceptualising DVA work as well as men's role within it. Also notable are the ways in which women engage with a range of subtly distinct discourses of feminism, which have evolved over time to reflect the changing priorities of women within the broader context of a neoliberal society. Data reveals how both feminism and anti-VAW work are subject to an equivalent discourse of repudiation, which reflects a pervasive discourse of misogyny and sexism. As such, the costs of working in the field of DVA are more pronounced for women in contrast to their men counterparts. This leads some women to deny the feminist politics of their work, or to avoid disclosing it all together, thereby constituting part of a broader regime of gendered safety-work undertaken by women practitioners. The misogynistic discourse referred to here is arguably further bolstered by a neoliberal ideology which centres notions of individual choice and aspiration within the context of a postfeminist sensibility. This is despite the apparent concomitant shift towards a more ‘popular

feminism' (Banet-Weiser et al., 2020), alluded to by one of the participants and discernible in widely circulating public discourses of 'me too'¹⁰⁵.

Turning to the question of 'engaged men', the data indicates that the primary preoccupation is around what role men should occupy rather than if they should be involved. The women engaged in this study all have diverse experiences of DVA, but their accounts indicate that an experience of men's violence or abuse does not necessarily preclude their involvement anti-VAW or DVA prevention activities. The accounts of women who voiced real concerns regarding their individual ability to work with men, reveal that there is a subtle yet important difference, when considering the role attributed to men, which can be drawn along the lines of individual intervention versus collective action. As such, when seeking to delineate the role men occupy, individual histories of trauma must be considered, and it is these that should inform any decisions around whether to broaden the scope or goals of the work being done to include men. Contributions from victim-survivors who have worked with men, also indicate that their willingness to engage with men practitioners often resides with the personality traits of individual men. And while others felt unable to work with men on an individual basis, or indeed, may be unable to share particular spaces with them – such as refuge accommodation, or group-therapy spaces – this does not mean that men should be excluded from the activities to raise awareness about, or to prevent men's violence towards women. Indeed, overwhelmingly, the women participants indicate that they want men to be held to account, and they want men to share in the work of challenging other men when they uphold harmful gender norms or engage in abusive behaviours.

¹⁰⁵ See Chapters 1 and 2.

Chapter 10: Conclusions

During the course of this thesis, I have sought to interrogate the dominant discourses of gender and gender relations constituted in and by DVA, so that outcomes for victim-survivors of DVA may be improved through better prevention and intervention. The research was conducted against the political backdrop of welfare austerity and the shifting gender and policy landscape I described in the opening chapters. These came to constitute fundamental considerations when unpicking the interrelated but often divergent narratives of the victim-survivors, practitioners and activists involved in this study. All of the analysis has been filtered through the prism of the victim-survivors' experience and the epistemological authority of their voices. Their 'situated knowledges' (Haraway, 1988) offer a privileged insight into the workings of power and the dominant paradigms governing DVA, revealing real opportunities for the reconceptualisation of DVA policy and practice discourses. This was not however to the exclusion of the contributions of the other participant groups, which, as I've demonstrated, constitute key components in thinking beyond the boundaries constraining dominant DVA discourses while also exposing where and how power is constituted (St.Pierre and Pillow, 2000).

As I set out at the beginning of this work, I was not seeking to expose a set of objective truths from a 'god's eye' perspective (Haraway, 1988). Indeed, there is no "news from nowhere" (Woodiwiss et al., 2017) and no doubt there will be competing or alternative readings of my analysis. In keeping with the principles of my feminist research praxis and ethics, I remain accountable for the claims I have made. I hope though, that I have been able to do justice to the stories of all the participants. And while I am at times critical of dominant practice or institutional discourses governing the different 'worlds' of DVA, I have strived to elucidate where and how master narratives may be productively reworked to enable an alternative vision of how DVA is addressed, so that the burden of responsibility for addressing this issue is shared across society. In the remainder of this concluding chapter, I will attempt to summarise the research and the main outcomes emerging from the study, as I draw together a triangulated analysis of all three groups' contributions. I will then offer some thoughts regarding the possible implications of this study for policy and 'frontline' practice, before discussing the limitations of the study, as well as possible avenues for future research. I close this thesis with some concluding remarks which centre the ways in which we may move forward in the ongoing work to eliminate domestic abuse and men's violence towards women.

Summarising the research

This study reveals some of the most significant and prominent dominant discourses in circulation across four key domains of DVA victimhood, perpetration, intervention and prevention, which in turn map onto the study's research questions. The domains consisted of; (i) women's narratives of DVA experience (Chapter 5), (ii) DVA during times of austerity and welfare reform (Chapters 5-9), (iii) families with children, in which DVA is a feature (Chapter 7) and (iv) the participation of men in efforts to address men's violence (Chapters 7, 8 and 9). In Chapters 1-3 of this work I provided an overview of the complex political and sociological landscape this work is set against, in which I discussed key policy frameworks shaping dominant discourses of DVA. In this, the historical, political and social construction of DVA as a 'woman's issue' is repeatedly made apparent, construed as a gendered

social problem for which women are solely responsible. Women's varied and expansive responsibility in this context plays out in the four aforementioned domains in complex ways, as responsibility interacts with discourses of gender and gender relations.

A primary aim of this work was to understand how normative approaches to DVA might be diversified to improve responses to VAW and DVA, through the augmentation and disruption of these gender discourses. A task which required a critical analysis of how pervasive victim-blaming discourses might too be shifted. This hinged upon the question of men's participation in DVA and the ways in which they should or could be involved in its prevention. As discussed in Chapter 4, the study was conducted using a feminist theoretical framework, with the belief that the feminist genealogy of DVA work should not be lost, but rather, should inform future work to address men's violence, regardless of whether it is conducted by women, men or non-binary people. Indeed, in analysing the narrative accounts offered by the participants, the often-complex relationship between men and the movement, as well as feminism was made clear. The methodology employed entailed working with three participant groups, including; women with lived experience of DVA (PG1), women 'frontline' practitioners (PG2), and 'engaged men' (PG3). All took part in a face-to-face interview and or focus group, providing an incredibly rich body of data, as I go on to discuss in the forthcoming analysis summaries, beginning with Chapter 5 which was the first of the analysis chapters.

The analysis documented in Chapter 5 reveals the gender discourses in operation chiefly through the lens of victim-survivors' experience-narratives. They reveal the intractability of discourses of 'authentic' victimhood, which correlate with an overly narrow definitional understanding of DVA and those harmed by it. Indeed, discourses of 'real victims' permeate all four domains I examined in this work and can be traced in both the victim-survivors' accounts, as well as in practitioner narratives. The ubiquity of 'authentic' victimhood discourses evidently brings material and epistemological consequences for those living through and with DVA, and they shore up the parallel victim-blaming discourses referred to throughout this work. As data shows, together these discourses invisibilise many women's experiences of DVA, while also foreclosing opportunities for disclosure, help-seeking and leave-seeking. Indeed, people are constrained by the narrative frameworks available to them (Woodiwiss et al., 2017), as well as by their access to a 'suitable' discourse through which to articulate their experience.

Patriarchal social relations and gender norm discourses foster the conditions for perpetration of coercive control. But, as this and prior studies show, discourses of DVA which fail to incorporate recognition of the psychological impacts of coercive control, work to strip away victim-survivors' sense of self-worth, and their (metaphorical and literal) capacity to speak. In the absence of discourse or in the spaces between normative discourses, the accounts revealed the ways in which victim-survivors harness alternative strategies to communicate their experience and to recuperate a sense of self, following the abuse. Neoliberalised notions of self and subjectivity circulating in a gendered economy of self-help present additional barriers to some victim-survivors as they presuppose a pre-existent self which is often unavailable to women victim-survivors who have lived through repeated and intergenerational patterns of trauma and abuse. This underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which historical self-narrative, self and personhood articulate with help-seeking and disclosure, when living with and through domestic abuse.

Data from PG1 points to the resistance practices undertaken by victim-survivors even in the most highly constrained environments. The accounts the women provide of their participation in domestic abuse support groups in particular, demonstrate how dominant understandings of activism often do not capture the transformative capacity of such spaces. In these spaces small-scale, everyday acts can contribute to longer term political transformation, even if it is limited to the community spaces the women inhabit. Indeed, central to these encounters are the everyday, personal, affective bonds which cultivate care, reciprocity and which ultimately constitute a 'quiet' activism which contributes to broader social change. Crucially, data expounded the ways in which group participation contributed to the women's own mental health and recovery, functioning to restore their ability to relate to, and trust people, as well as to forge connections with their communities, thereby countering one of the most damaging effects of trauma. The acts of resistance and quiet activism displayed by women living in highly constrained conditions should therefore be understood as fundamental, not only to the women's survival, but also instrumental in bringing about wider social change as regards to dominant understandings of domestic abuse as a social problem.

As I set out in Chapter 6, state imposed austerity measures often collude with the responsabilisation of victim-survivors, as the choices victim-survivors have available to them have become more limited, in line with a broader cost-saving agenda in which the needs and interests of women are routinely deprioritised. Welfare austerity incorporates the neoliberal ideals of self-reliance and personal responsibility, which in the case of DVA function to construct victim-survivors as responsible for their own well-being in ways that are heavily classed, racialised and gendered. The accounts of victim-survivors highlight the significance of telling the 'right story' when accessing formalised assistance from the state, but also crucially, how the 'right story' competes with, or is destabilised by, the everyday survival practices victim-survivors develop to manage living with an abusive partner. Data demonstrated how reforms are forcing victim-survivors to grapple with a range of impossible choices, as they seek to make themselves and any dependent children safe amidst a landscape of dwindling and 'stretched' provision.

In some cases, austerity has functioned to shut down or destabilise 'traditional' avenues for help-seeking all together, as the systems that have historically been in place to facilitate a departure from an abusive partner have been gradually removed. Consequently, responsibility for managing the wide-ranging impacts of DVA is displaced from the state, and onto individual victim-survivors, prompting both victim-survivors and practitioners to devise solutions to 'plug' gaps in provision. This has the effect of cultivating alternative discourses of the DVA victim-survivor, challenging their framing as inherently passive. But it also leaves victim-survivors facing a 'resilience trap', as victim-survivor resourcefulness provides justification for the continued withdrawal of state provision. In this climate, practitioners are often left unable to fulfil the key objectives of their role and in some cases, they are called upon to collude with the harmful surveillance and monitoring activities of the state. Despite huge challenges, practitioners work to adapt and respond to the ongoing reduction in funding as well as the progressive roll-back of welfare provision. Indeed, while the DVA and women's sectors may be able to sustain change and diversification as regards to the identity of the movement or practice remit, as I go on to discuss, they simply cannot sustain further cuts to budgets and resources.

Notions of personal responsibility and individual blame are perhaps made no more obvious than when considered in the context of families who come to the attention of social services, which

constitutes the third domain addressed in this work. All four of the study's research questions are interrogated in the context of the family, as I outline in Chapter 7. Data consistently substantiates the ways in which mothers are routinely held to account for the management of risk and the behaviours of violent men, such that the earlier discussed victim-blaming narratives persist in this context. The starkest example of this is the court-mandated removal of children into state care. The stories of the mothers who have experienced this trauma repeatedly substantiated the urgent need for, but currently almost entirely absent, post-removal support for mothers to deal with the devastating consequences of this eventuality.

The domain of the family represents another key area in which men's role and responsibility needs to be expanded. Accounts in this context illustrated how far domestic abuse arises from and is situated within a network of structural inequalities which often render women unable to navigate or compete with a system that routinely disadvantages them and in which dominant gender role stereotypes are normalised and upheld. Indeed, the accounts offered by practitioners and victim-survivors indicate the extent to which gendered relations and unequal power dynamics play out within the context of the DVA 'planets' of child protection and child contact, in which the gendered realities of domestic abuse are routinely obscured in favour of a discourse which privileges 'contact' at all costs, as well as the rights of fathers. While there was some evidence of efforts to hold perpetrator-fathers to account, potentially reworking the victim-blaming discourse, efforts did not go far enough (even when setting aside the problems with resourcing and funding). A lack of resources and workforce capacity also meant that despite the best intentions on the part of organisations and local authorities to broaden the scope of responsibility in the case of DVA to include men – particularly fathers who use violence – they routinely reverted back to responsabilising the mother because they simply did not have the requisite resources to implement meaningful organisational culture or paradigm change.

The third research question relating to the role of men is addressed across all four domains in this thesis however Chapters 8 and 9 focused specifically upon men's roles in relation to anti-VAW activism and DVA prevention activities. In these chapters, I elaborate upon the thoughts of women victim-survivors and practitioners on the question of men's participation, as well as upon men's own conceptualisation of their role and responsibility in preventing men's violence towards women. Analysis clearly pointed to a clear set of dominant discourses and IRs deployed by both women (in PG1 and PG2), and men, to account for men's work in this area. The most prominent of which was that of 'allyship', albeit variously conceptualised. Several practitioners in PG2 and PG3 also mobilised discourses of feminism in their practice. In evidence in the men's group (PG3) particularly, was the occasional strategic appropriation of *aspects* of feminist thought. An example being some men practitioners' mobilisation of more radical feminist thought but only in respect of issues such as pornography, prostitution and sex work. A comparison across the groups' contributions indicated the women experience the 'costs' of a feminist identification far more harshly than men. This was also the case for work in the field more generally; men tended to encounter the space as more welcoming in contrast to women who often experienced gender based discrimination and misogyny as a result of working in the field of DVA. This is in part due to a societal tendency to 'pedestal' men as a minority in the field of DVA or anti-VAW campaigning but is also reminiscent of the ubiquity of misogyny and sexism women are routinely subjected to, often for doing the very same work men are doing. Data indicated how this produces safety-work practices among women practitioners which included

declining to disclose what work they did, as well as a concomitant rejection in some cases, of the DVA movement's aetiological foundations.

While men's individual accounts of their work sometimes gestured a personal reflexivity and awareness of the workings of men's unearned privilege, it remained the case that pervasive gender hierarchies persisted, and were scaffolded by an appeal to dominant gender-role stereotypes. This was often achieved through the repeated mobilisation of a highly reductive conceptualisation of masculinities in which men are construed as emotionally inept or incapable of readily engaging in more gender equitable relations. Indeed, several of the IRs used to account for work in this area relied upon the maintenance of the dominant gender order, rather than dismantling it. The men's accounts also demonstrated a consistent (re)centring of men's concerns within the context of work to address men's violence towards women, despite laudable intentions on the part of the men practitioners to address issues of privilege within certain spaces. Thus, while this study coheres with existing research that supports the leveraging of men's interests to get them 'in the door', as well as to avoid guilt-laden conceptualisations of men's violence, most of the discourses deployed in this context do little to allay the concerns of obfuscation voiced by women from within the anti-VAW and feminist movements and DVA sector.

Notwithstanding the epistemological as well as material challenges associated with the gender discourses which govern DVA and anti-VAW practice, data from all three of the groups substantiated the claim that men *do* and *should* have a role in addressing men's violence towards women. But this assertion is accompanied by specific caveats, and divergent opinions regarding *how* this should happen in practice. The contributions from the women participants in PG1 and PG2 discussed in Chapter 9 indicate that there remains a compelling case and feminist rationale for incorporating men in VAW and DVA prevention, not only to reduce prevalence rates but more importantly, to reconceptualise the issue of DVA as one for which there is a *collective* responsibility to address. In this, men's participation is orientated towards a discourse of men as equally responsible subjects for the eradication of violence and abuse against women, queer, non-binary and transgender people. As the women themselves articulate, this is a crucial part of the efforts to challenge a dominant victim-blaming narrative, as well as to hold men to account for men's violence towards women. Analysis of data in PG1 and PG2 further evidenced the emotional labour and sometimes risk associated with the task of engaging men around issues of DVA and VAW, particularly those men not receptive to women's voices. This raises a central question regarding the extent to which women should undertake this task, if at all.

But, as the data shows, if women are excluded from this work, there is the risk of simply replicating the dominant patriarchal gender order and the continued obfuscation of women's voices in key decision-making spaces. Indeed, there are two competing discourses in operation here: on the one hand, women should be permitted to set the agenda regarding the intervention and prevention of men's violence towards women and be provided the space to determine the dominant story told. But on the other hand, women *do not want* to be held (solely) responsible for the shifting of wider societal opinion, cultural change, or for men's (re)education around these issues. This represents a significant ideological and political tension extant in work to prevent and intervene in men's violence against women. However, overwhelmingly women articulated the imperative for men to take some of the burden of shifting a dominant victim-blaming narrative; to take on the responsibility of

challenging their male peers, while also supporting the right of women to speak freely about these issues without fear of retribution or misogyny. The UK government's policy on VAWG undoubtedly makes some positive in-roads in the work to address the social problem of DVA via its unambiguous framing of the issue as "everybody's problem" (Home Office, 2016). And there is even greater potential vested in the forthcoming Domestic Abuse Bill 2020 (Home Office, 2020a). But the government's mobilisation of gender-neutral discourse within DVA policy, combined with the continued deep cuts to budgets for vital services, severely and fundamentally undermines any commitments made by the government to seriously tackle the problem of DVA.

Implications for policy and practice

At the policy and practice levels this research entails a range of implications in relation to the domains addressed. It is important to acknowledge though that the onus for practice or culture change does not reside only with 'frontline' work, particularly given the real constraints imposed upon practitioners, as a result of government policy and the continued reduction in resources made available to them. Analysis undoubtedly underscores the need for whole systems change – in relation to policy, practice and culture – but the implications for practice discussed here require recognition of a collective capacity and shared responsibility to effect change, across the full range of services and people working to address the needs and interests of adults, children and families experiencing DVA. As Ahmed (2019) has argued it is not enough to simply alter policies and procedures alone; a change in formal policy does not equate to a change in practice, attitude or culture. Indeed, often a policy change serves instead as a mechanism for the continuation of harmful or discriminatory practices, including in more hidden and insidious ways than prior to the implementation of new policy. While several of the implications outlined here refer to attitudinal change grounded in a reformulated conceptualisation of gender and the gender relations extant in DVA perpetration, victimhood, intervention and prevention, many rely upon the allocation of resources. This underscores the absolutely fundamental need on the part of government to dedicate adequate funds to address DVA, not least to fulfil the promises it has made repeatedly in policy to tackle VAW.

Analysis substantiates the importance of recognising the diversity of DVA experience in practice responses to support victim-survivors. Dominant understandings of DVA should be untethered from narrow definitions of what constitutes a 'legitimate' or 'authentic' experience of DVA, particularly in relation to women who present with co-occurring, multiple or complex needs such as substance use, involvement in commercial sex practices, mental health challenges, or involvement in the CJS. Recognition of the complex strategic and rational decision-making processes women undertake when living with DVA provides an important baseline from which to formulate safety-planning and risk management activities. This extends to some women's decision to remain in a relationship, based on an informed and rational cost-benefit analysis, which considers the presence of children, as well as financial dependence upon the perpetrator (Meyer, 2012). 'Staying' may therefore sometimes represent the *least unsafe* option and potentially the more financially secure route to managing DVA, at least temporarily.

Participants also demonstrate how, even in the most constrained and unsafe environments, they engage in strategic decision-making and acts of resistance in order to increase their safety (and that

of any child(ren)). Analysis of the resistance work undertaken by victim-survivors provides important insights for how best to create spaces and opportunities for victim-survivor disclosure of abuse, safe enquiry, as well as help-seeking. This could include utilising, where possible, the limited 'windows of opportunity' presented via women's everyday encounters with people outside of their homes, such as those associated with childcare, given that these often provide some of the few occasions for victim-survivor free movement. Formal acknowledgement of women's resistance work at a practice level could also play a key role in supporting victim-survivors, extending to its incorporation into safety planning discussions, where it is safe to do so. Data also substantiated the need to create and nurture spaces for victim-survivor group work. The consequences of trauma mean that often relationships and connections with others are damaged; group work provides a vital space to recover from the trauma of DVA and enables women to forge connections with others and to rebuild relations of trust. Group work as well as trauma-informed therapeutic intervention should also constitute the core components of longer-term post-separation support programs. Crucially, there is a clear lack of longer-term support available to victim-survivors following the point of separation from the abusive partner so that victim-survivors can build the personal resources and skills they need to (re)establish themselves after leaving the relationship.

Turning to issues of welfare assistance; the current welfare benefit system often exacerbates the challenges victim-survivors already face when leaving a violent partner, as well as those encountered after the DVA has ended. Cuts to resources have meant that typical pathways to leave-seeking have been closed down because the structures are no longer in place to resource a viable exit. I therefore echo calls from various women's organisations for welfare reforms to be reversed and crisis and emergency funds (formerly the DWP Social Fund) to be reinstated and made available for victim-survivors (Women's Budget Group, 2015b; Howard, 2019). The DVA exemption rule discussed in Chapter 6 should not rely upon victim-survivor disclosure and the provision of evidence, particularly given the 'hidden' nature of coercive control, as well as the difficulties some victim-survivors have with communicating or naming what they have experienced, as I discuss in Chapter 5.

Victim-survivors would greatly benefit from an allocated 'named worker' situated within the JobCentre, who works with them throughout their welfare benefits journey to avoid the need to repeat their stories and the associated re-traumatisation this potentially causes. Alteration in the current benefit eligibility assessment process to recognise the psychological impacts of DVA and coercive control would also go some way to (re)working the welfare system as a supportive mechanism in victim-survivors' recovery journey, rather than disruptive of it. An intersectional approach to addressing DVA incorporates the recognition of the specific needs of more marginalised women including; refugees, migrant, BAME, disabled and LGBTQ women. In practice, this requires the ring-fencing of funds by government for these groups as well as ensuring that their specific needs and interests are built into work carried out with them and services designed for them. Consideration of these groups' specific requirements should be incorporated into the formal assessments carried out by welfare benefits workers and be reflected in the delivery of welfare assistance programs (Davidge et al., 2020).

Implications for policy and practice within the domains of child protection and child contact include first and foremost, that greater efforts are made to hold fathers who perpetrate DVA to account for their behaviour, including in the context of child protection proceedings. Focus should, as a practice

standard, be on the perpetrators' behaviour rather than upon the victim-survivors', so that the responsibility is shifted for ensuring that risk is minimised, or perpetrator behaviour contained. The work of locating fathers should also become a practice expectation, a norm, rather than the exception. However, this requires increased resources so that practitioners have the time and capacity to do this work, coupled with practitioner persistence, curiosity and creativity (Featherstone, 2017). It also necessitates the interrogation of dominant conceptualisations of gender relations, as well as gender-role stereotypes as they manifest among families.

Data from this study strongly substantiated that mothers *want* fathers to be included in child protection proceedings, and it is work that could be done in tandem with risk management procedures to reduce the possibility of the perpetration of further DVA. In circumstances where it is not safe to include perpetrators in the same meeting as that of the victim-survivor, steps could be taken to ensure that separate meetings are conducted with the perpetrator, and in cases where there are concerns regarding the safety of the workers present, community policing should be involved. Other practical steps could be taken, such as ensuring that all child protection meetings commence with a discussion of the perpetrator's behaviour first and foremost, addressing his levels of engagement, and the practical steps taken by services to monitor or intervene in the perpetrators activities. Contrasting with current practice in which focus is routinely placed upon mothers in these meetings, this functions to communicate a message to victim-survivors that steps are being taken to hold perpetrators to account. It also indicates that what victim-survivor mothers are experiencing is *recognised*.

As data demonstrates, coercive control often extends beyond the context of the relationship and correspondingly plays out in institutional spaces such as statutory child protection meetings as well as in the family courtroom. Acknowledging and monitoring this, as well as assessing fathers' compliance and the steps taken by them to engage with services against the standards of behaviour expected of *mothers* (rather than the typically low standards of behaviour expected of men in this context) would go some way to avoiding the inadvertent 'pedestalling' of fathers who *do* engage. Finally, as data repeatedly exposes here, the application of the 'presumption of contact' is damaging in the case of DVA and creates risk for both mothers and children. Data suggest that application of the presumption of account is done so without considering the gendered nature of DVA as well as perpetrators' use of coercive control, instead often reifying existing unequal gendered power dynamics. I would therefore echo the concerns and recommendations made by (feminist) legal experts (Hunter et al., 2020) working in the field of DVA to urgently review the way in which the presumption of contact is applied in the case of child contact arrangements in families in which DVA is a feature.

The inclusion and participation of men, outside of the domain of child protection and whole family interventions, entails a consideration of the role of men in prevention and early intervention activities. Data suggests the significance of drawing a distinction between micro, meso and macro level actions taken by men to address men's violence towards women. In this a distinction is drawn between men's participation on a practice, one-to-one level, which may present a barrier for some women victim-survivors, and men's participation on a community or broader societal level in the context of campaigning or activism to address men's violence. I would also caution against the employment of men in senior management or board roles, responsible for women's DVA provision, without meaningful consultation with women leaders. This is due to the concerns around the

obfuscation of women's voices within key decision-making spaces; this does not however preclude men from occupying other roles in order to support the work of women leaders and decision-makers. This position coheres with policies implemented by some large women's specialist DVA organisations (such as Scottish Women's Aid), who do not exclude men, but precludes them from roles on the board.

This type of policy approach would go some way to practically reworking and responding to established gender hierarchies within organisational spaces. Indeed, men's participation in this area of work brings clear challenges for gendered spaces. However, data in this study indicates that these are not insurmountable and there is a clear rationale for engaging men if we are to succeed in shifting dominant narratives so that the responsibility for eliminating DVA is collectively shared. In seeking to determine the exact role men play in this task, we must speak to victim-survivors; data suggests there is no uniform or singular way of understanding men's participation. As I outline in Chapter 9, for some women the trauma of an experience of DVA at the hands of a man simply precludes the possibility of working with men. For others, it serves as a positive source of meaning-making, as they construct paths away from their histories of abuse and use their engagement with men to challenge negative conceptualisations of them. This emphasises the imperative of a personalised, nuanced approach to the task of broadening the identity of the DVA movement and practice remit to include men.

Limitations and future research

The limitations of this study primarily rest with methodological considerations, as well as with the scope and reach of the study. Unpacking these in order then; I used participatory methods in the data production phase and maintained the feminist political objective of FPAR to contribute to meaningful social change by elevating the voices of a more marginalised group. But I was not successful in fully mobilising participatory-action based methods to the extent that I had hoped. This manifested in a failure to secure input from the victim-survivors during the analysis stages, as well as the only partial implementation of the PAG. The former was chiefly due to time and resource constraints; however, I believe the nature of the research as 'sensitive', combined with the aforementioned time and resource limitations, contributed to the latter. I believe that with more time, as well as more financial resources so that I could run a series of fully funded group meetings for example, I may have been able to address this issue. Any future research activities emanating from this study would greatly benefit from victim-survivor input in any secondary analysis of the data, and would I believe prove an incredibly valuable exercise.

The methods of data production – unstructured and in-depth narrative interviewing – also presented some personal challenges. This method of interviewing meant that participants shared their stories with me, unencumbered and often with a painful honesty and rawness. As I discussed in Chapter 4, my positionality within this work and the continuities with my own self-narrative and history, did at times restrict my ability to engage with some of the data, particularly in the case of the victim-survivors' accounts. An example being data charting past childhood experiences of DVA. This represents a limitation (and indeed, probably another area for future research) but one I had to permit in order to secure some distance between the data and I, so that I was able to conduct the

analysis more broadly. A more structured interview format may have enabled me to manage these issues more easily, but also may have presented barriers for the participants in terms of their ability to tell their stories freely. I also believe that the data was far richer, given that participants were not restricted by pre-defined questions or expectations.

The analysis presented in this thesis unlocks a number of potential areas for future research. The interviews and focus groups conducted with all three participant groups produced a substantial body of data, and I could not have possibly addressed all of the emergent discourses and themes in the data, within the relatively limited time period of this thesis. Topics I believe would warrant further investigation primarily crystallise around the topic of trauma, including; the role of complex and co-occurring needs (substance use, mental health, involvement in the CJS, sex work/prostitution etc.) in women's experience of DVA; the intra- and inter-generational narratives of DVA and complex trauma; practitioners' personal histories of trauma and DVA and the ways in which these discourses structure their practice; and an analysis of trauma in women victim-survivors' post-separation and longer term recovery journeys, particularly in circumstances when women have children removed into state care. In relation to the men's sample; a more in-depth analysis of their initial or catalysing motivations for working in the field of DVA or VAWG would be a productive site for future research, particularly as regards to the intersections with early (pro)feminist organising and campaigning. In addressing the limitations in terms of scope and reach, the most glaringly obvious omission in this study is the limited number of contributions from BAME people across all three participant groups, combined with the complete lack of transgender peoples' voices. The inclusion of the voices of children is also a clear 'gap' but was beyond the scope of this study.

Many of the claims made during the course of this study are unfortunately not unique in so far as feminist activists and researchers have long been saying many of the things I have said as regards to DVA and the roles structural gender inequality occupies in its perpetration. However, the unique contribution of this study rests with the fact that I have provided a triangulated account of three diverse participant groups, but which has been structured according to the perspective of the most marginalised speakers involved. The study is also unique in so far as it platforms women victim-survivor and practitioners' perspectives on the diversification of the DVA sector to include men. In this we see how the progressively more prevalent gender-neutral discourse of DVA features in the ways victim-survivors account for their experiences of DVA, but also how practitioners, campaigners and activists account for their practice.

Concluding remarks: building bridges and moving forward

In concluding this thesis, I want to underscore again the importance of *earnestly listening* to the voices of the victim-survivors above all else. It is a task which requires the creation of spaces for their stories to be told and for their experiences of abuse to be recognised and affirmed. While I have foregrounded the deeply painful and traumatic experiences of the victim-survivors who took part in this study – both in the victim-survivor group as well as in the practitioner groups – their accounts of pain, wounding and struggle should not overshadow the other parts of their subjectivities.

Participants wanted their stories to be heard so that they would be used to inform broader systems and culture change regarding how we think about DVA, and above all else, to help other women with

similar experiences. I am in no doubt that they would want to be defined, not by the extent of their DVA or pain, but for their strength, determination and abilities to resist and overcome the immense challenges they faced, often against all odds.

Data demonstrates how far practitioners and victim-survivors routinely adapt to the difficulties presented to them with a creative resourcefulness and determination. The term 'resilience' is firmly embedded in everyday discourse as people are increasingly called upon to utilise their personal reserves in order 'to keep going'. Resilience has become a nomenclature for a range of emotive and physical responses to adverse conditions, which has unsurprisingly fused to neoliberal ideals of self-sufficiency and self-reliance. While these are not inherently problematic qualities, when considered in the context of the current social and political moment, there is a danger that those most at risk are left to fend for themselves and made responsible for the violence and abuse they face. To this end, data clearly substantiates how far the system that has been set up to support society's most vulnerable is often failing them. With this in mind, it is vitally important that we locate ways in which to acknowledge and respect women's resistance practices in the face of DVA, without lapsing into a neoliberal, depoliticised celebration of resilience.

This study has also provided an insight into the inadequacies of a feminist discourse that does not centre, or accommodate for, the experiences of the most marginalised within its frame (Phipps, 2019). This same sentiment applies to the DVA sector and statutory services, which should strive to centre the needs of the most marginalised, those who exist on the peripheries, and those who trouble entrenched notions of 'authentic' victimhood. Gaining validity through an appeal to a discourse of gendered 'authenticity', exclusionary discourses of DVA and men's violence are testament to the routine and systematic subjugation of all feminised bodies, including both cis and trans women. This presents a significant challenge for the anti-VAW sector more generally and constitutes the present-day horizon against which the project of contemporary feminism and the prevention of men's violence towards *all* women, must be (re)considered. Imperative to this work is the avoidance of a divisive, factional rhetoric, which operates to exclude some women because ultimately this will facilitate the maintenance of a much deeper, more insidious patriarchal dominance.

Afterword

As I write this in March 2020, the nation is in complete ‘lockdown’ as we deal with the spread of the Coronavirus (Covid19), which is rapidly moving across the globe. Public health measures implemented to curb the spread of the virus have inadvertently led to a surge in domestic abuse rates, as victim-survivors now find themselves quarantined and isolated in the homes they share with perpetrators, with highly restricted access to help. The decision to leave a relationship with an abusive partner is complex. However, in the current environment, it is complicated further due to concerns around the availability of, and access to, vital services, which are already struggling after years of deep cuts to budgets under the guise of austerity. Despite operating with reduced staffing levels and resources, specialist domestic abuse organisations continue to work immensely hard to respond to the increase in demand during this outbreak, but they are calling upon government as I write, to urgently release more funds to support the delivery of services during these unprecedented times.

When this pandemic first reached our shores at the end of February 2020, the Chancellor announced a £330 billion financial bailout in the form of government backed loans and more than £20 billion in tax cuts, equivalent to 15% of the UK’s national GDP (HM Treasury, 2020). This huge financial package was unveiled to mitigate the impact of the Coronavirus upon the British economy, but it has at the same time, confirmed that austerity was undoubtedly a *political choice*, rather than a *necessity*. Punitive welfare policy measures against the country’s working-class, and surveillance and hostile environment policies are now all laid bare in the current crisis. Indeed, the global health pandemic we now face has exposed the deep flaws in the current political system as the people whose lives have been consigned as ‘disposable’ or ‘ungrievable’ (Butler, 2020) (marginalised, BAME, poor, working-class people) – those who have suffered most under the last ten years of crippling austerity – are now the very people saving lives during this outbreak and dying as a result of their work. They are the people on the ‘frontline’ of health and social care, the majority of whom are women. The fallacy and injustice of a government rhetoric that routinely segregates the ‘deserving’ from the ‘undeserving’ poor is consequently brought into sharp relief in the current moment. *This* is the paradox revealed by the Coronavirus pandemic, and it is one that we must urgently respond to.

Society’s profound interdependency has perhaps never been so apparent, as communities work to respond to this health emergency in the spirit of true solidarity, confirming beyond doubt, that no person is an island, but more crucially, that every person is valuable. How we care for and protect those that are most vulnerable and at risk, is a measure of the society we live in. This outbreak provides us with a real opportunity to do things differently; to change the dominant narrative, and to create real and lasting change regarding how we respond to key social issues such as domestic abuse (as well as homelessness and the care of older people). We cannot go back to where we were before this all began; the pandemic has shown that we *can* do things differently, and we *must* now do things differently in order to create real and sustainable change.

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Appendix

1. Ethical review form
2. Fieldwork assessment form
3. Lone working risk assessment form
4. Websites screenshots
5. Recruitment email templates
6. Sample recruitment poster
7. Participant information sheets (PG1, PG2 and PG3)
8. Consent form
9. Question schedules
10. Coding framework
11. List of study participants
12. Transcription convention

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE APPLICATION FORM ¹

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Please read each question carefully, taking note of instructions and completing all parts. If a question is not applicable please indicate so. The superscripted numbers (eg⁸) refer to sections of the guidance notes, available at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/uolethicsapplication>. Where a question asks for information which you have previously provided in answer to another question, please just refer to your earlier answer rather than repeating information. Research ethics training courses: <http://www.sddu.leeds.ac.uk/research-innovation/research-ethics-training-and-guidance>

To help us process your application enter the following reference numbers, if known and if applicable:

Ethics reference number:	
Student number and/ or grant reference:	200985194

PART A: Summary**A.1 Which Faculty Research Ethics Committee would you like to consider this application?²**

- Arts, Humanities and Cultures (PVAR)
 Biological Sciences (BIOSCI)
 ESSL/ Environment/ LUBS (AREA)
 MaPS and Engineering (MEEC)
 Medicine and Health (Please specify a subcommittee):
 - School of Dentistry (DREC)
 - School of Healthcare (SHREC)
 - School of Medicine (SoMREC)
 - School of Psychology (SoPREC)

A.2 Title of the research³

Understanding men's negotiation of individual privilege when operating within the context of feminist women-led domestic abuse interventions and discourse.

A.3 Principal investigator's contact details⁴

Name (<i>Title, first name, surname</i>)	Ms Jessica Wild
Position	PhD candidate
Department/ School/ Institute	Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies, School of Sociology & Social Policy
Faculty	Social Sciences
Work address (<i>including postcode</i>)	Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies, School of Sociology & Social Policy, University of Leeds, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS2 9JT
Telephone number	07790793716
University of Leeds email address	j.l.wild@leeds.ac.uk

A.4 Purpose of the research:⁵ (Tick as appropriate)

- Research
- Educational qualification: **Please specify:** _____
- Educational Research & Evaluation⁶
- Medical Audit or Health Service Evaluation⁷
- Other

A.5 Select from the list below to describe your research: (You may select more than one)

- Research on or with human participants
- Research which has potential adverse [environmental impact](#).⁸ **If yes, please give details:**

- Research working with data of human participants
 - New data collected by qualitative methods
 - New data collected by quantitative methods
 - New data collected from observing individuals or populations
 - Routinely collected data or secondary data
 - Research working with aggregated or population data
 - Research using already published data or data in the public domain
- Research working with human tissue samples (*Please inform the relevant [Persons Designate](#) if the research will involve human tissue*)⁹

A.6 Will the research involve NHS staff recruited as potential research participants (by virtue of their professional role) or NHS premises/ facilities?

- Yes No

If yes, ethical approval must be sought from the University of Leeds. Note that [approval](#) from the NHS Health Research Authority may also be needed, please contact FMHUniEthics@leeds.ac.uk for advice.

A.7 Will the research involve any of the following:¹⁰ (You may select more than one)

*If your project is classified as [research](#) rather than service evaluation or audit and involves any of the following an application must be made to the [NHS Health Research Authority](#) via IRAS www.myresearchproject.org.uk as NHS ethics approval will be required. **There is no need to complete any more of this form.** Further information is available at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/NHSethicalreview> and at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/HRAapproval>. You may also contact governance-ethics@leeds.ac.uk for advice.*

- Patients and users of the NHS (including NHS patients treated in the private sector)¹¹
- Individuals identified as potential participants because of their status as relatives or carers of patients and users of the NHS
- Research involving adults in Scotland, Wales or England who lack the capacity to consent for themselves¹²
- A prison or a young offender institution in England and Wales (and is health related)¹⁴
- Clinical trial of a medicinal product or medical device¹⁵
- Access to data, organs or other bodily material of past and present NHS patients⁹
- Use of human tissue (including non-NHS sources) where the collection is not covered by a Human Tissue Authority licence⁹

- Foetal material and IVF involving NHS patients
- The recently deceased under NHS care
- None of the above

You must inform the Research Ethics Administrator of your NHS REC reference and approval date once approval has been obtained.

The HRA decision tool to help determine the type of approval required is available at <http://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/ethics>. If the University of Leeds is not the Lead Institution, or approval has been granted elsewhere (e.g. NHS) then you should contact the local Research Ethics Committee for guidance. The UoL Ethics Committee needs to be assured that any relevant local ethical issues have been addressed.

A.8 Will the participants be from any of the following groups? (Tick as appropriate)

- Children under 16¹⁶ **Specify age group:** _____
- Adults with learning disabilities¹²
- Adults with other forms of mental incapacity or mental illness
- Adults in emergency situations
- Prisoners or young offenders¹⁴
- Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator, eg members of staff, students¹⁷
- Other vulnerable groups
- No participants from any of the above groups

Please justify the inclusion of the above groups, explaining why the research cannot be conducted on non-vulnerable groups.

This study will involve work with three separate participant groups, comprising of; (i) women* victim-survivors of domestic abuse or intimate partner violence (DIPV) who may or may not be in receipt of support services (Group 1), (ii) workers/practitioners in frontline domestic abuse services delivering support/intervention to victim-survivors (Group 2), and (iii) men* who occupy a role within the anti-violence against women (VAW) sector, and/or who define themselves as activists or interested parties, working in VAW prevention or consciousness-raising work (PCR) (Group 3). Groups 2 and 3 are not considered 'vulnerable' however group 1 is considered to be a 'vulnerable' group. The study requires the participation of this group in order to obtain their perspectives and opinions regarding the potential inclusion of (non-perpetrating) men in PCR efforts, geared towards addressing VAW and/or DIPV. In cases where participants are also in receipt of services, the research will seek to obtain their perspective on service provision, and about how they could be improved, taking into account the inclusion of men.

Given that this research entails examining individual experiences of violence and abuse, it is also considered 'sensitive'. Owing to this sensitivity, contributions of individuals such as those in Group 1 are often excluded due to legitimate concerns pertaining to the potential harm as a result of participation. Measures will therefore be put in place (discussed in forthcoming sections as well as in the fieldwork risk assessment form) from the outset in order to respond to and manage these potential risks. These concerns will be balanced with a recognition of the significant value that the inclusion of this group brings, not least because it enables victim-survivors to have a say in the development and shaping of policy and services they access, and which affect their lives.

The research will entail conducting one-to-one interviews with participant group 1 to explore how they regard the (potential) inclusion of men* in PCR efforts to address VAW and DIPV. The research will specifically explore the extent to which the inclusion of men may alter or impact upon women* victim-survivors' experience of, and access to, domestic abuse services. It will also examine the women's individual sense of safety when in an environment in which men are engaged in work to address violence. Finally, this group will be asked to discuss their opinions as regards to how effective or impactful they believe men's participation might be in reducing incidences or prevalence of VAW and DIPV. In addition, I will also obtain the perspectives of Group 2 and 3 as regards to the participation of men in PCR efforts, given the impact their contributions could have upon wider policy and service level decision making in this area. These groups will be engaged using one to one interviews, as well as focus groups at the second stage of the interview process, in the case of group 2. To this end, the research will seek to understand how both frontline

practitioners (Group 2) and activist / 'interested' men (Group 3) regard the possible diversification of current approaches to PCR work in order to combat VAW.

The three groups will be engaged separately, and in no circumstance will the participant groups be interviewed alongside one another. This is primarily to mitigate any risk posed to Group 1 which may stem from feeling intimidated in mixed group settings. Separation between groups will also be maintained in order to ensure that information pertaining to Group 1 is not disclosed to outside parties, including alleged perpetrators of abuse (APOA). Steps will also be taken in order to ensure that the interviews and focus groups are conducted inclusively, ensuring that any perceived barriers to access or inclusion are taken into account from the outset (specific measures detailed below). A research advisory group (RAG) will also be recruited and engaged at all stages of the research process. This group will have an advisory and consultative function and will consist of women victim-survivors. This group will have a separate function to that of the three participant groups and will primarily provide advice and consultation as regards to the relevance and applicability of the research. This group is discussed further in [C2](#) below.

Definition of key terms:

Domestic abuse and/or intimate partner violence (DIPV) in the context of this research is defined as both physical and non-physical violence and abuse, including coercive control, physical abuse, psychological/emotional abuse, financial abuse, harassment, sexual abuse, and/or stalking. It specifically refers to behaviour or a pattern of behaviours perpetrated by an individual to assert power and control over another person within the context of an intimate, familial or partner type relationship. This definition coheres with that of the Women's Aid definition of domestic abuse, as well as that of the UK Government (2012).

'Frontline' domestic abuse services, in the context of this study are defined as non-statutory and statutory services operating to provide face-to-face support, advocacy and/or practical intervention to victim-survivors of violence and abuse including DIPV, as well as other forms of VAW. In some cases, these services will also provide refuge or respite accommodation services, which will entail the direct engagement with service-users leaving violent or abusive situations, normally their own homes.

'Vulnerable' in the context of this research is understood to refer to those individuals who have present or past experiences of domestic abuse and/or intimate partner violence (DIPV), and who may also be in receipt of statutory or non-statutory support services or intervention. Individuals within this group may also present with multiple and in some cases complex and co-occurring support needs. This could include, but is not limited to, needs stemming from substance misuse (alcohol, heroin, crack, benzodiazepines etc.), mental health needs including personality disorder, as well as physical disability or physical health needs, and/or other presentations which may impede the participant's ability to engage in the research, or which may affect participants' ability to safeguard themselves from harm. It is also worth noting that there is a high rate of (complex) trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and anxiety issues among this participant population, which often arise as a direct consequence of the violence and abuse individuals have experienced. In the case of this research, it is also likely that some participants will be in an emergency situation owing to the fact that they have recently fled a domestically violent or abusive situation (typically their own home) and will be housed in temporary refuge accommodation. This will therefore also mean that they will be in receipt of crisis intervention support from the service provider operating within the temporary accommodation they reside in.

DBS Check: The researcher has an up to date enhanced DBS certificate in place, and has been subject to enhanced DBS checks approximately every 2 years since 2004.

It is the researcher's responsibility to check whether a DBS check (or equivalent) is required and to obtain one if it is needed. See also <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/agencies-public-bodies/dbs> and http://store.leeds.ac.uk/browse/extra_info.asp?modid=1&prodid=2162&deptid=34&compid=1&prodvarid=0&catid=243.

A.9 Give a short summary of the research¹⁸

*This section must be completed in **language comprehensible to the lay person**. Do not simply reproduce or refer to the protocol, although the protocol can also be submitted to provide any technical information that you think the ethics committee may require. This section should cover the main parts of the proposal.*

In recent years there has been a paradigmatic shift in the conceptualisation and development of PCR raising efforts to address DIPV and VAW, in the UK. Underpinning this is an emergent recognition that VAW is a social problem for which there is a shared social responsibility, reflected most recently in the UK government's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (2016-2020) which characterises VAWG as "everyone's business" (Home Office, 2016). While this sentiment has long been articulated by actors within the feminist anti-VAW movement and the women's movement of the 1960s, it has not been broadly accepted in society more generally, nor have PCR efforts routinely engaged men. Instead, the responsibility for addressing the issue of domestic abuse has been situated solely with women and/or victim-survivors. This study therefore examines (non-perpetrating) men's participation in anti-VAW PCR work, as well as their inclusion within feminism, and the broader (feminist) social movement to address VAW. It will examine the impact the participation of men in this type of work may have, specifically identifying the implications of their inclusion for what has always been a typically women-led movement, and for women only spaces, as well as

the impact upon individual victim-survivors. The study will also explore pathways to men's mobilisation and engagement in this type work. In seeking to understand these pathways, the research brings to the fore some of the concerns that many women have regarding the inclusion of men as well as the challenges associated with the potential co-optation of the movement, the obfuscation of the feminist message, and misrepresentation of the reality of women's experience of violence in everyday life, relative to that of men.

The research will use feminist participatory action research (FPAR) methods and will be conducted in such a way as to privilege the contributions of women participants with experiences of DIPV (group 1) so that their perspectives are incorporated into the development of PCR efforts as well as service design, and policy decision making. This approach is underpinned by the belief that people are experts in their own lives and therefore should have the opportunity to voice their opinions as regards to the services they receive, and the policies that govern them. At the same time there is also recognition of the fact that the inclusion of men in this type of work, and within women only spaces/movements, has significant implications for the women's sector, and for practitioners in particular, who are already operating within a constrained and challenging financial and political environment. As such, the diversification of approaches to DIPV prevention and awareness raising to include men could also be regarded as a threat for service providers (as well as for victim-survivors). It is for this reason that practitioners are also included in the study. Finally, men are included to understand the extent to which the challenges pertaining to (male) privilege and co-optation could be managed, considering how men negotiate these issues in women only and feminist paces. Inclusion of this group will also provide insight into how men conceptualise their role. Incorporation of the three groups, using a loose conceptualisation of triangulation, will also allow for each of the groups respective contributions to be brought into relation with one another, allowing for gaps and alignments to be explored within a participatory, co-produced model, which foregrounds victim-survivor's contributions and which is informed by a feminist theoretical and epistemological framework.

Primary research question:

1. To what extent is it possible to overcome the challenges associated with men's participation in anti-VAW PCR efforts, in the current socio-political climate?

Secondary research questions:

2. To what extent is it possible to develop victim-survivor defined approaches to PCR and policy, while also meaningfully including men in this work?
3. How does the participation of men in feminist or women only spaces within the anti-VAW movement impact upon these spaces and the women therein?
4. How is male privilege reproduced or challenged within the context of feminist spaces and PCR activities, and how do actors within these spaces negotiate these tensions?

A.10 What are the main ethical issues with the research and how will these be addressed?¹⁹

Indicate any issues on which you would welcome advice from the ethics committee.

The most significant ethical concerns associated with this study arise from the fact that the research is deemed 'sensitive' and engages with members of what is often regarded a 'vulnerable' population, in which individuals' experience of violence and abuse will be discussed. In some cases participants may also be at continued risk of violence and will be in a state of flux and transition, residing in emergency refuge accommodation. While it is acknowledged that the terms 'sensitive' and 'vulnerable' are often contested within the context of research, the specific ethical implications of these categorisations remains significant and pertinent to this study. It is also these implications that inform from whom ethical approval and access permission will be sought in order to proceed with the study. These include the University Ethics Committee, Senior Management teams and Contract Managers with responsibility and oversight for the gatekeeper organisations participant in the study, and service or group managers or leaders responsible for any men-led activist groups, campaigns or services engaged in the study.

For the purposes of clarification, this study operates with the understanding that 'sensitive' research may generate an emotional response in participants; entail a "cost" as a result of participation; or pose a "threat" or risk of harm to those that participate. This type of research raises specific methodological and ethical considerations, associated not only with the complexity of the lives being researched, but also as regards to risk management and adult and child safeguarding. Mitigating any harm to participants, most importantly those in Group 1, represents the primary ethical consideration for this research, and for this reason rigorous ethical vetting and risk assessment procedures will be carried out in order to reduce the potential for harm. In no circumstance will the research be conducted at the expense of any of the individuals participant in the study. Furthermore, measures will be put in place to ensure that the gatekeeper organisations engaged in the study are able to guarantee the safety of their service users within the parameters of expected or normative risk associated with these types of services. I will also ensure that in all cases the research is conducted in accordance with the localised risk management protocols and procedures governing the services in which I am operating. The ethical protocols governing this study will be developed and implemented in accordance with existing British Sociological Association ethical guidelines (BSA, 2017), and will align with adult safeguarding procedures as set out in The Care Act, 2014 (Home Office).

The primary ethical considerations for this study are as follows;

1. **Vicarious or secondary trauma:** A primary ethical concern arises from the potential risk of harm posed to participants due to psychological impact and/or the risk of (re)traumatization as a result of participation, because the research is exploring individual experiences of violence or abuse. There is a concern that the research has the potential to 'trigger' participants causing them psychological or emotional upset or trauma, often referred as vicarious trauma. This will primarily be managed through the establishment of relationships with service providers who are in a position to provide intervention and support to individuals who require it; in the event that participants express concerns regarding their psychological or emotional wellbeing, or if they present in a manner which indicates that they are not coping with participation, they will be signposted to these services for support. In all cases this would be discussed with participants prior to the study commencing and no signposting would be done without their explicit consent. In cases where the participants are already engaged with services, such as if they are resident in a refuge, they will be referred to a member of staff within those services, with their consent. The participants will be made aware of the nature of the research prior to commencing and will be informed that they may withdraw at any point, without explanation.

It should also be acknowledged that the three participant groups are not mutually exclusive and there is a high probability that members of Group 2 (practitioners) in particular, may also have lived experience of violence and abuse. Indeed, this is borne out in prior qualitative research that has demonstrated that often those that work in domestic abuse services, do themselves have experiences of violence and abuse. In addition, members of Group 3 (men) may similarly have experiences of violence and abuse therefore specific links will be established with organisations who specialise in the provision of support for male victims of DIPV, so that there is an established pathway for signposting where necessary. It is however also acknowledged that there is limited provision for male victims in general, which may limit this referral pathway.

2. **Working in gatekeeper organisations / services:** Much of the study will be conducted within organisational premises, which could include services delivering support and intervention to victim-survivors, such as refuge accommodation. These are busy and demanding environments in which staff are operating under pressure with limited resources and significant time constraints. This needs to be taken into account when conducting the research and all reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that the study is not invasive and that the time spent in services is proportionate. In addition, the presence of the researcher should not impact upon the work being done. In all cases, times/locations etc. for interviews and focus groups which take place on service premises will be determined in collaboration with the service managers.

In addition, prior to the study commencing an agreed procedure will be put in place with gatekeeper organisations pertaining to the signposting of individual participants, availability of support for individual participants (where this is required), and terms of participation. When/if there are any concerns regarding the organisation's ability to respond to any client's additional support needs as a result of participation in the study, alternative arrangements will be made with another appropriate organisation in order to provide support to participants. This would be determined in consort with the gatekeeper organisation. The study would be ethically compromised in the event it placed additional and/or undue strain on the gatekeeper organisations as a result of the study being conducted in the service. This will be mitigated as far as possible through prior discussions with managers in gatekeeper organisations, in order to determine terms of participation, taking in account the particular needs/requirements of the service and the staff and service users therein.

3. **Consent and possible coercion to participate:** In no circumstance is the consent to participate in the study on the part of the gatekeeper organisation indicative of the participation of individual service users, and consent from each individual participant will be explicitly sought. Where possible, participants will be approached independently of their support workers or managers of services in order to avoid any risk of (inadvertent) coercion to participate. This includes participants feeling like they have to participate and/or feeling that there may be negative consequences for them if they do not participate, particularly if they believe the relationship with the service provider / support worker etc., may be compromised if they do not participate. The power relationships which exist between researcher/participant, as well as participant (service user)/member of staff should therefore also be acknowledged as relevant in this context, and steps will be taken to ensure that this hierarchy is both taken into account, but also challenged during the data production and analysis phases respectively.

Furthermore, this particular ethical concern will be heightened in cases where the interviews are conducted within refuge services, as it is where the participants live, therefore measures will be implemented in order to ensure that participants are provided enough time and space to decide whether or not they would like to participate, independent of the researcher being present, and ideally independent of a member of staff being present (unless they require support to read documents etc.). Participant information sheets will be distributed well in advance of interviews/focus groups commencing with time/dates of each being determined according to the needs of participants and services (when applicable), as far as possible.

4. **Informed consent:** In addition to the above, there are also ethical implications associated with consent in cases where participants may lack full capacity to consent to participation or in cases where there may be a temporary impediment to the person's ability to participate in the study. This includes individuals who may have additional support needs arising from

alcohol or drug use, or in cases where the participant may have mental health support needs which may impact upon their capacity to consent to participate. In these cases, reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that not only does the participant understand the nature and purposes of the study prior to agreeing to participate, but also in cases where it is suspected that the person may not be fully engaged or may not fully understand, consent may be sought again. In this respect, consent is regarded as dynamic process which should be reviewed and affirmed on an ongoing basis, particularly with more vulnerable participants.

The consent process entails the signing of a written document however the problems associated with this, and the extent to which this format presents a barrier to inclusion for some participants, particularly the most vulnerable, is also taken into account. Barriers to access could arise from the fact that some participants may have limited literacy, limited English skills, and/or other learning difficulties which make engagement with a written consent form difficult. Different versions of the consent form will therefore be devised, including an easy read / accessible version, as well as translation into other key languages, where there is an identifiable need for this. In addition, the consent form as well as participant information sheets will be read to participants, where this is beneficial, and verbal checking of a person's understanding will also be carried out. Where there are concerns that the person has not fully understood the purposes of the study, or what it is entailed, the interview may not be conducted, until understanding can be established. This is to ensure that participants are fully aware of what they are engaging in. It must however be noted that as far as possible, all those who wish to be part of the study, should be included and their specific needs met, because often the most vulnerable people in this population are excluded.

- 5. Adult or child Safeguarding concerns:** There are also considerations pertaining to the safeguarding of vulnerable adults (and children where relevant), which refer to the statutory duty support and advocacy staff have regarding the protection of their clients from potential or actual abuse. Only participant group 1 will be regarded as statutorily vulnerable. In the event that any of the participants disclose information during the course of the research which indicates that either they are at risk of harm or abuse, or another service user or child is at risk, and it had not been raised with the relevant bodies already, I would have a responsibility to disclose this to the manager of the service concerned. In the absence of service involvement, concerns would be raised with the local adult or child safeguarding team, and where necessary, the police. This same procedure would be followed in the event that a participant discloses suicidal ideation and/or discloses intentions to harm themselves or another person.

The safeguarding responsibilities both of the participants and the researcher would be made clear from the outset, prior to the data production phase commencing. It is of the utmost importance that the integrity of the study is maintained therefore circumstances in which there are safeguarding concerns pertaining to the abuse of a vulnerable adult or child, or suicidal ideation, are the only circumstance in which the confidentiality of the participant would be broken. In the event that safeguarding concerns need to be passed on to another person or agency, this would be communicated to the participant concerned in advance of it happening. In cases where there are safeguarding concerns, and there is no service or agency engaged with the person, the concerns would either be communicated to the local Adult Safeguarding team, and/or the police where necessary.

- 6. Participant safety and confidentiality:** There is some risk posed to participants in group 1 in particular, and potentially group 2 and 3, in the event that their participation in the study was disclosed. This is primarily due to the risk posed by known perpetrators of abuse, particularly in the case of interviews conducted within confidential refuge settings with group 2. Therefore, there are ethical concerns regarding the appropriate anonymisation of participant information, as well as identifiable data which could be traced back to either the participant or the service provider. In addition, it is important that information is not disclosed between participant groups, as well as ensuring that the data protection and disclosure protocols relevant to the stakeholders are also adhered to. Risk discussed further in [C17](#) below and anonymisation process in [C19](#) below.
- 7. Managing expectations:** It is important to manage the expectations of all the participants as well as any organisations involved in the study from the outset. This includes ensuring that any benefits and negative consequences of participation are clearly documented in participant information sheets, which should also include a clear explanation of the withdrawal process from the research, as well as an explanation as to how data will be managed. This documentation will also include an outline of the process for reimbursement of expenses incurred due to participation (such as transport costs). As regards to gatekeeper organisations specifically, this process will also involve ensuring that there is fair return for their participation and support of the study. This will include the appropriate dissemination of findings, with a longer aim of improving practice on the frontline as well as the development of different research output documents (one for service users which is accessible, one for providers which is appropriate to the sector etc.).
- 8. Cultural sensitivities and participant support needs:** The study will engage a diverse group of participants and there may be specific cultural and/or language needs, which will need to be addressed during the course of the study in order to ensure barriers to access are reduced as far as possible and to ensure that the study is as inclusive as possible. Individual support needs of participants will also need to be taken into account during the course of the research. There are also some ethical and risk concerns as regards to the (potential) interaction between participant groups as well as the interaction between

participant groups and the RAG. This will need to be managed appropriately by the researcher, taking into account the additional risk that RAG members only, may come into contact with men who may pose an (unknown) risk them. Responding to specific cultural or learning needs is discussed in [C15](#) & [C15](#) below; risk discussed further in [C17](#).

PART B: About the research team

B.1 To be completed by students only²⁰

Qualification working towards (eg Masters, PhD)	PhD
Supervisor's name (Title, first name, surname)	Dr Karen Throsby, Director of Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies
Department/ School/ Institute	School of Sociology & Social Policy
Faculty	Social Sciences
Work address (including postcode)	11.25, Social Sciences Building, University of Leeds, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS2 9JT
Supervisor's telephone number	
Supervisor's email address	k.throsby@leeds.ac.uk
Module name and number (if applicable)	

B.2 Other members of the research team (eg co-investigators, co-supervisors)²¹

Name (Title, first name, surname)	Dr Sally Hines
Position	Associate professor of Sociology
Department/ School/ Institute	School of Sociology & Social Policy
Faculty	Social Sciences
Work address (including postcode)	12.05, Social Sciences Building, University of Leeds, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS2 9JT
Telephone number	
Email address	s.hines@leeds.ac.uk

Part C: The research

C.1 What are the aims of the study?²² (Must be in language comprehensible to a lay person.)

There has been no determinable cessation in the rates of violence against women in the UK (or indeed worldwide), despite sustained and ongoing efforts by women's organisations to combat what is a significant, pervasive and ongoing social problem. With this in mind, the primary aim of this study is to determine how prevention and consciousness raising efforts can be improved in order to reduce prevalence rates and improve policy level decision making, through the inclusion and participation of men as social justice allies. In acknowledging that men have a role to play however, the study will also aim to understand to what extent the challenges men's participation brings can be overcome, while operating within a feminist framework which foregrounds the contributions and insights of women victim-survivors, using victim-survivor defined participatory and co-produced methods and approaches at all stages of the research.

C.2 Describe the design of the research. Qualitative methods as well as quantitative methods should be included. (Must be in language comprehensible to a lay person.)

It is important that the study can provide information about the aims that it intends to address. If a study cannot answer the questions/ add to the knowledge base that it intends to, due to the way that it is designed, then wasting participants' time could be an ethical issue.

The study will use Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) methods and will engage participants using a multi-methodological, multi-stage approach. It will be conducted according to the principles of 'co-production', an approach which has gained particular prominence in the health and social care sector in recent years. It entails the genuine and meaningful involvement of service users in the design and delivery of the services they use and is driven by the basic premise that people are experts in their own lives, and that the voices of more vulnerable groups are as valuable as those in positions of authority when determining what is best for service users. Primary data will therefore be produced with three distinct and differently positioned groups of participants (as outlined below). The manner in which the data will be produced will differ according to each group, and will be informed by a feminist theoretical framework. Within this framework the women will be situated as "leaders", and the researcher as "navigator" or "enabler", supporting participants to engage in the process in a meaningful way, taking into account their specific support needs during this process. The practitioner and men groups, as groups with comparatively advantaged status, will occupy non-leadership roles within the research. The research has been designed in this way, using a loosely triangulated approach, in order to acknowledge the existing hierarchies and institutional power structures in place as regards to knowledge production, which often function to silence some voices particularly women victim-survivors. The research is therefore designed to create an environment in which women VS are 'empowered', in which there is genuine reciprocity, and in which women "gain" something through meaningful participation. This study is also designed with the underpinning recognition that the inclusion of the people who use 'frontline' services is integral to the ongoing work to meet the needs of victim-survivors. In addition to this, victim-survivor involvement in organisational and agency decision-making and problem-solving, both acknowledges and strengthens individual participant's capacity to bring about change.

I will use three primary methods for data production including (i) one-to-one interviews, (ii) focus groups, and (iii) skype interviews. I will also employ ethnographic methods in the form of a fieldwork diary which will be used in order to support my ongoing reflexivity regarding the research process, and will also enable me to document any emergent ethical or risk issues, during the course of the study.

Participant groups will include the following individuals:

- **PG 1:** Women with present or past experiences of DIPV
- **PG 2:** Practitioners / professionals working in the domestic violence / anti-violence against women sector, in support and advocacy roles.
- **PG 3:** Men engaged in or with a specific interest in work or activism in the domestic violence / anti-violence against women sector.

Data will be produced using the following methods:

- (i) **PG1:** Purposive sampling via 'gatekeepers' and via leafletting in community locations such as GP surgeries, children's centres, gyms, libraries, etc., leading to one-to-one narrative interviews (stage 1) and semi-structured interviews (stage 2) and participant observation
- (ii) **PG2:** 'Snowball' sampling via activist and/or professional networks and listservs, leading to one-to-one or Skype interviews.
- (iii) **PG3:** 'Snowball' sampling via activist and/or professional networks and listservs as well as via leafletting in community locations such as GP surgeries, gyms, community centres etc., leading to one-to-one interviews (stage 1) and focus groups (stage 2).

Research advisory group (RAG):

Use of a RAG will be employed throughout the study, and enables me to proceed with the study in a genuinely participatory manner, as well as ensuring that the study is as co-produced and inclusive as possible. The group will comprise of women victim-survivors will be established during the early stages of the study, prior to the data production phase. The RAG will have a consultative or advisory function, and in the case of this study will have a role distinct from that of the three participant groups involved in the interviews and focus groups respectively. As such, the group will work in consort with the researcher acting as a "guide" to the research, from initial research design to the dissemination of research outputs to those engaged or interested in the research. This process will include involvement with the construction of research questions, as well as analysis. As part of their advisory function, the group will also be encouraged to act as consultants on particular aspects of the research during the data production phase, with the overarching purpose of advising as to whether the nature or content of the research is relevant to participants' own lives and experiences, as well as advising as to whether the outcomes stemming from the research are appropriate and representative of the participant groups. There are challenges associated with the use of this type of methodological tool, such as difficulties in recruitment and maintenance of members, as well as training and resource issues for

those participant in the group, however the benefits of obtaining the perspectives of the members far outweigh the challenges.

The RAG will be recruited prior to the three participant groups, with specific eligibility criteria for application, and with distinct objectives pertaining to participation. This would be done through 'gatekeepers' as well as via online platforms, so that possible candidates could apply, independent of a particular service with whom she may work. The nature and purpose of the RAG would remain confidential, and all recruitment advertising would be sensitively managed in order to ensure that no person's safety is compromised as a result of application to participate. This point similarly holds for the recruitment of participants across all three groups which does not take place via 'gatekeepers' and therefore will not be as secure as recruitment through gatekeeper services in which there is further capacity to implement risk management measures as well as mechanisms to ensure data confidentiality and non-disclosure.

Data Analysis:

Data will be analysed using narrative analysis, with the focus on how participants discursively construct their experiences through the use of narrative. Narrative analysis specifically focuses upon an investigation of the story or narrative itself, bringing to the fore how a narrative is constructed and how the speaker rhetorically creates it to make particular points, or to make sense of their experiences of abuse or violence. Use of a narrative analysis is undergirded by the research questions which are specifically concerned with the experiences of three distinct groups which assemble and intersect under the broader category of domestic abuse. In seeking to understand the discursive work done in the narratives particular to each group, it may be possible to understand how far the epistemological and ontological challenges associated with men in women's spaces, as relatively advantaged group members, can be overcome.

Where possible the participants themselves will be involved at the data analysis stage as well as the data production phase, taking into account the principals of collaborative writing between participants and researcher, in the case of the women participants. Analysis of the data will entail using a type of triangulated approach whereby all three groups' contributions will be taken into account, underpinned by the recognition that each has a distinct, but different contribution to make, to the study. In keeping with the principals of feminist participatory methods, it is important to offer the possibility of multiple perspectives on the telling of events, and in turn, allow multiple voices to construct these events. In this, it is important to recognise that all voices are epistemologically valuable, but that normative structural conditions may preclude particular voices from being heard. Therefore, in some cases, steps will be taken in order to ensure that more marginalised voices, are "amplified" and taken into account in a meaningful way, in light of the complexities associated with the surfacing of under-represented narratives.

Dissemination plan:

In order to maintain the participatory and collaborative principles espoused in the research design and data production phase, the study will produce two primary research outputs. One will take the more typical form of an academic piece of writing, aimed at an academic audience and/or policy makers. The second will be written in a more accessible format, so that those participant in the research, can engage with and utilise the outcomes of the research. The utility and applicability of the research is central to this study and represents a core aspect of FPAR methodology, therefore it is imperative that the outputs are indicative of this, not least because it is hoped that the research will address some of the implications for policy and practice, stemming from this type of research.

C.3 What will participants be asked to do in the study?²³ (e.g. number of visits, time, travel required, interviews)

Participants will be asked to answer questions in individual settings, and in the case of group 2 group settings as well. Individual interviews will be conducted in a confidential space such as a keyworking or interview room. Focus groups will be conducted confidentially in service provider premises or similar. Online Skype interviews will be conducted while on university premises, during office hours as far as possible. Participant group 1 will be engaged through individual face-to-face narrative interview in order to understand participants' perspective and opinions regarding the participation of men in PCR efforts to address VAW at stage 1. Discussions of abuse and trauma will also be explored during this interviews. Second stage interviews will have a semi-structured format. This is because narrative interviews do not lend themselves to the comparison of specific data across a group of participants. The interviews will consist of discussions of participants' experiences of violence and abuse, as well as their experience of service provision (in the event they have been in receipt of services).

Participant group 2 will be asked in both individual one-to-one settings, as well as in focus groups, to discuss the inclusion of men in PCR, based upon their experiences of working in the sector. One-to-one interviews will have a narrative interview format, and will entail an exploration of how this group believe the challenges such as co-optation, which are associated with the participation of men in women only movement spaces may be overcome, particularly in light of the current socio-political climate, in which there is already limited resources and a lack of funds. Focus groups with group 2 will be conducted using a semi-structured format, and will be lead as far as possible by the participants. Focus groups have been selected because it is recognised that practitioners may not have the time to commit to one-to-one interviews, therefore a focus group would allow me to interview multiple practitioners at one time, thereby reducing the time commitment required.

Participant group 3 will be asked to discuss how they conceptualise men's role in PCR activities aimed at addressing VAW. They will also be asked to discuss their motivations for participation in anti-VAW, as well as to identify their routes into this type of work or activism. When discussing motivation for participation, it is possible that disclosures of abuse or trauma may be made by some participants, as previous research has shown that this often serves as a factor for men's participation in the DIPV movement. Participants in this group will be engaged via online Skype interviews; this method has been chosen out of recognition of the fact that this is a more disparate group, and participants may not be situated within the same geographical location. Therefore, through use of Skype interviews, it is hoped that more participants in this group can be reached.

Participants will be reimbursed for any costs incurred as a result of participation, and as far as possible the interviews will be conducted at a time / location determined by, and convenient for, the participants. The study will be conducted as flexibly as possible in order to accommodate for the workload and time constraints participant group 2 manage on a daily basis. Furthermore, any specific requirements arising from the participants' individual support needs or access requirements will be taken into account during the data production phase. This includes accommodating specific cognition needs arising from issues such as short attention span owing to substance dependency, difficulty engaging due to mental health need such as post-traumatic stress disorder which can lead to problems around engagement and (dis)association, etc. which may impact upon the participant's capacity to engage. In addition to this, any culturally specific or language needs will also be accommodated for as far as possible. This will include translating participant information sheets into the primary languages spoken and if it is not possible to translate the sheets, resources such as telephone translating services will be used.

C.4 Does the research involve an international collaborator or research conducted overseas:²⁴

(Tick as appropriate)

Yes No

If yes, describe any ethical review procedures that you will need to comply with in that country:

Describe the measures you have taken to comply with these:

Include copies of any ethical approval letters/ certificates with your application.

C.5 Proposed study dates and duration

Research start date (DD/MM/YY): _01/10/2016_____ Research end date (DD/MM/YY): _01/10/2019_____

Fieldwork start date (DD/MM/YY): _01/01/2018_____ Fieldwork end date (DD/MM/YY): _01/09/2018_____

C.6. Where will the research be undertaken? (i.e. in the street, on UoL premises, in schools)²⁵

Research with groups 1 and 2 will be conducted in and around London boroughs and will include non-statutory services and organisations conducting work related to DIPV. The exact locations of the services and organisations will remain confidential in order to protect the identity both of the services as well as any individuals accessing them. In cases where participants in group 1 are not engaged with services, interviews will be conducted either in a community location, or in the participant's own home, but only in the event that it is deemed safe to do so. In all, cases lone working protocols and procedures will be adhered to (see separate *Personal Safety and Lone working* risk assessments in Fieldwork risk assessment section).

In the case of participant group 3, interviews will take place via the online platform Skype, as far as this is possible. In these cases, the research will be conducted on University of Leeds offices. In the event that Skype interviews are not possible or appropriate, face-to-face interviews will be conducted in a confidential space in a community location and lone working protocols will be adhered to.

RECRUITMENT & CONSENT PROCESSES

How participants are recruited is important to ensure that they are not induced or coerced into participation. The way participants are identified may have a bearing on whether the results can be generalised. Explain each point and give details for subgroups separately if appropriate.

C.7 How will potential participants in the study be: (i) Identified? (ii) Approached? (iii) Recruited?²⁶

Participants in all three groups will be identified, approached and recruited through channels particular to each. Given the nature of the study a limited amount of detail will be provided regarding the type and nature of the study during the recruitment stage, in order to reduce any risk posed to the participants, particularly those in participant groups 1 and 2.

- **Participant group 1:** Recruitment will be conducted via **gatekeepers**, if engaged with services and/or **community locations** such as CAB, GP surgeries, gyms, toilets in pubs or restaurants, or **activist spaces**, or advocacy organisations in cases where individuals are not engaged w/services; AND/OR, via **online platforms** (forums etc).

Interested parties will be provided a telephone number and email address to use, in the event they wish to participate or to receive additional information. During the identification stage, interested parties will be screened for eligibility according to a set of criteria to be determined prior to the study. If they meet the criteria, they will be asked to identify the safest means of communication. I will then contact them directly using their chosen method of communication. No information pertaining to the study would be disclosed until it is confirmed that it is safe to do so.

Once contact is made with potential participants, steps will be taken to ensure that they are safe and that they are not placed at increased risk through participation. In the event that the participant is not located in a service, and rather is in the community, measures such as code words to be used on the phone will be established, in order to signal if/when there is any risk posed to participant during the course of any telephone calls / email communication.

Interview arrangements will be determined according to what is most appropriate for the person concerned, taking into account their specific needs and requirements. In the event that interviews take place 'on-site' at a service, additional access arrangements will also need to be made with staff at that service. All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that there is limited amount of disruption caused to the running of services.

- **Participant group 2:** Recruitment will be conducted by **approaching directly** through existing organisational / provider contacts, AND/OR, through existing relationships with organisations or individual practitioners, including via Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) networks in operation in local authorities. Interested parties will be provided a telephone number and email address to use, in the event they wish to participate or to receive additional information. During the identification stage, interested parties will be screened for eligibility according to a set of criteria to be determined prior to the study. If they meet the criteria they will be asked to identify the best method of communication going forward (eg. work email address, personal email address, telephone number etc.). Once contact has been established the terms upon which the interviews will take place will be determined between researcher and participant in order to ensure the least amount of disruption is caused to the services with which they work.
- **Participant group 3:** Recruitment will be conducted via **gatekeepers**, if engaged with a service or **community spaces** such as CAB, GP surgeries, gyms, university campuses, toilets in pubs and restaurants, and **activist spaces** and organisations AND/OR via **online platforms** (forums and/or social media). Interested parties will be provided a telephone number and email address to use, in the event they wish to participate or to receive additional information. During the identification stage, interested parties will be screened for eligibility according to a set of criteria to be determined prior to the study. If they meet the criteria they will be asked to identify the best method of communication going forward (eg. work email address, personal email address, telephone number etc.). No information regarding the study will be disclosed until it can be verified, through the screening process, that it is safe to do so. They will then be invited to participate in a Skype interview providing this is something they are able to engage with. In the event that it is not appropriate to use Skype, but the person still wishes to participate in the study, steps will be taken to conduct a face-to-face interview, notwithstanding any limitations imposed by geographical location.
- **Research advisory group (RAG):** Members of this group will be recruited via **gatekeeper** organisations, as well as through **online platforms**. This could include snowball sampling through members of participant group 2 who may know/have worked with individuals who may be interested in sitting in the group. Confidentiality protocols would be adhered to, as in the case of the other groups. Recruitment into the RAG would be according to a specific set of eligibility criteria, determined prior to the study commencing. Given the nature of the study, it is acknowledged that in some cases, particularly when I am situated in refuge services, I may be approached by service users or members of staff who may want to participate and/or offer their contributions to the study. In cases such as these, ad hoc consent would need to be obtained.

C.8 Will you be excluding any groups of people, and if so what is the rationale for that?²⁷

Excluding certain groups of people, intentionally or unintentionally may be unethical in some circumstances. It may be wholly appropriate to exclude groups of people in other cases

In the case of **participant group 1**; men identified victim-survivors, including transmen, will not be included. This is because the factors that contribute to men's experience of violence and abuse are distinct to that of women's experiences of abuse therefore it is beyond the scope of this study to interview men victim-survivors as well. In addition to this, abuse and violence perpetrated against men does not arise from the same socially and culturally constructed conditions which lead to violence against women, nor is it rooted in a history of patriarchal oppression. To conflate the experiences of these two groups would fail to recognise the specific and complex needs of each group, and could lead to a false homogenisation of what is a complex social problem which requires distinct and contrasting responses. The theoretical and epistemological framework underpinning this study is also

relevant in this case because I am particularly interested in the power dynamics and systems of privilege that operate in the context of men's participation in women's spaces.

In addition, I am aware that most of the women participant in this group who engage in the study, will be those that are in receipt of services such as refuge accommodation or IDVA support and advocacy. While steps will be taken to reach those that are not in receipt of services and/or are in the community, it must also be acknowledged that this not only brings additional challenges associated with risk (from perpetrators etc.), but also that this is a much harder to reach group and it may not be in their interest to participate in the study. In cases where there are concerns regarding the wellbeing of the participant, they may be excluded however this will be determined on a case by case basis.

In the case of **participant group 3**; any man who is believed to be previous or present perpetrator of DIPV will be excluded, as/when this becomes apparent or if there are concerns that this may be the case. The possibility of this occurring is fairly limited but not beyond the realms of possibility. I have experience working with both victim-survivors and perpetrators therefore I will rely upon professional experience in order to determine whether or not this is a concern, and take the necessary steps to exclude them from the study.

As regards to **general exclusion from the study**; where it is not possible to verify if the participant is able to provide informed consent to participation, they will be excluded from the study. In cases of intoxication due to alcohol or drugs however, the participant will be provided more than one opportunity to discuss participation and/or provide consent to participate. Where appropriate, the participant could also be given support from their support worker in order to engage in this process. As far as possible, steps will be taken to ensure that participants are able to engage with the study on their own terms, with their specific support needs being taken into account, and access issues addressed. Furthermore, I recognise that individuals with experiences of abuse who also present complex support needs or challenging behaviours, are often excluded from participation in research because the risks are considered too high. However while it is acknowledged that there are ethical and risk issues that need to be managed in this context, measures will be taken as far as possible to include these individuals on their own terms, providing no coercion take places, and providing no risk is posed to them. In a limited amount of cases, some individuals may ultimately be precluded from participation in the event that the risk posed to them is too high, or it is not possible to determine whether or not they can safeguard themselves. Such decisions will be made in consort with the people concerned and any service/organisation involved in that person's support (where applicable). In the event that any participant presents with aggressive or threatening behaviour during interview, they will be excluded from the study if it is believed that the risk cannot be appropriately managed and/or the residual risk is deemed to be too high. In addition to this, if any participant is deemed to pose a risk to another participant during the course of the study, they will be excluded from focus group participation however this does not necessarily preclude them from individual interview participation.

C.9 How many participants will be recruited and how was the number decided upon?²⁸

It is important to ensure that enough participants are recruited to be able to answer the aims of the research.

If you have a formal power calculation please replicate it here.

Participant group 1: Approximately 15 - 20 interviews will be conducted with women victim-survivors, however the number of interviews conducted will largely depend upon how many people choose to engage in the research. It is also acknowledged that this group is a 'hard to reach' group and that it will inevitably be the least vulnerable members of this population that will consent to participation. As far as possible steps will be taken to obtain a representative group of victim-survivors, providing participation does not compromise the wellbeing of any of the participants, therefore ideally 15 interviews as a minimum would be beneficial.

Participant group 2: Approximately 10 – 15 interviews will be conducted with the practitioner group. In the event there is a larger number of participants in this group or if timeframes lapse, then only focus groups will be held with this group, rather than interviews, in order to maximise the amount of practitioners reached. In this case, focus groups can easily be conducted with a larger number of participants, and may exceed 10. It is however also acknowledged that often specialist DIPV services are relatively small, and operate with small staff teams, therefore in order to reach this number of participants, a reasonably large number of services may need to be engaged; this may present a barrier to access, and could therefore also limit the number of participants in this group.

Participant group 3: Approximately 15 – 20 interviews will be conducted with this group. These will be conducted primarily via online platforms so that I am not be limited by location in the case of this group. It is hoped therefore that I will be able to reach this number of participants however it is also acknowledged that individuals in this group may be hard to recruit and/or identify therefore the number may be lower. Priority will be given to participants who are already engaged in some form of activism and/or PCR work in the UK. This number should accommodate for drop-out during the data production phase.

RAG: The research advisory group will ideally consist of at least 3 – 8 individuals who have experience of the issues being

discussed, and who have the time to be part of the study for its duration. At least 3 should ensure that there is scope for debate and dialogue within the group, as well as offer up a diversity of opinion as to operational aspects of the study. In the event there is greater uptake for participation in this group, the numbers could be increased. The maximum number will be set at 8. This is to ensure that it is possible to meaningfully consider all of the contributions of those in the RAG.

Remember to include all advertising material (posters, emails etc) as part of your application

C10 Will the research involve any element of deception?²⁹

If yes, please describe why this is necessary and whether participants will be informed at the end of the study.

There will be no element of deception entailed in this research.

C.11 Will informed consent be obtained from the research participants?³⁰

Yes No

If yes, give details of how it will be done. Give details of any particular steps to provide information (in addition to a written information sheet) e.g. videos, interactive material. If you are not going to be obtaining informed consent you will need to justify this.

The consent process will entail the signing of a written document however alternative formats will be use in order to overcome barriers to participation and inclusion for some participants, particularly the most vulnerable. These could include limited literacy, limited English skills, and/or other learning difficulties which make engagement with a written consent form difficult. Alternative consent formats will include an easy read / accessible version using simple and accessible language as well as pictorial representations. In addition, where possible the consent and participant information sheet will be translated into key languages spoken within the boroughs the study is being conducted, where these is an identifiable need for this.

In addition, the consent form as well as participant information sheets will be read to participants, where this is beneficial, and verbal checking of a person's understanding will also be carried out. Where there are concerns that the person has not fully understood the purposes of the study, or what it is entailed, the interview may not be conducted until understanding can be established. This is to ensure that participants are fully aware of what they are engaging in. It must however be noted that as far as possible, all those who wish to be part of the study, should be included and their specific needs met, because often the most vulnerable people in this population are excluded. Where necessary the process will be broken down into stages, and could also include the support of a support worker or key worker, when/if the participant is engaged with support services and requests this support. This would only be implemented in the event the participant requests this specifically, in order to avoid any risk of coercion to participate.

Consent will not be sought from participants who are considered to lack mental capacity to make sound judgements and decisions independently. In the majority of cases, if there are instances where participants lack capacity to provide consent, this is likely to be temporary due to substance misuse. In the event there are any concerns regarding a participant's capacity to make sound decisions, they will not be included, and/or participation will be revisited at a later stage. In this sense it is acknowledged that the consent process is dynamic rather than static, and participants may change their position on whether or not they wish to participate, and in the same way, may also change their mind as to what information they are willing to disclose during the course of the study.

If participants are to be recruited from any of potentially vulnerable groups, give details of extra steps taken to assure their protection. Describe any arrangements to be made for obtaining consent from a legal representative.

Copies of any written consent form, written information and all other explanatory material should accompany this application. The information sheet should make explicit that participants can withdraw from the research at any time, if the research design permits. Remember to use meaningful file names and version control to make it easier to [keep track of your documents](#).

Sample information sheets and consent forms are available from the University ethical review webpage at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/InvolvingResearchParticipants>.

C.12 Describe whether participants will be able to withdraw from the study, and up to what point (eg if data is to be anonymised). If withdrawal is not possible, explain why not.

Any limits to withdrawal, eg once the results have been written up or published, should be made clear to participants in advance, preferably by specifying a date after which withdrawal would not be possible. Make sure that the information provided to participants (eg information sheets, consent forms) is consistent with the answer to C12.

Participants will be able to withdraw from the study at any point, and they will not be required to provide any explanation or reason. This will be made explicit from the outset. Possible withdrawal from the study at various stages is expected to a certain

extent, primarily due to issues such as time or resource constraints which make continued participation untenable. This could include if a practitioner/worker's workload is too high such that they no longer have the time to participate, or if a victim-survivor participant gets to the stage where she has too many competing tasks and issues to deal with, such that participation becomes too difficult or unsustainable. In addition, some participants may withdraw in the event that continued participation poses a risk to their safety or that of anyone else involved in the study, for e.g., if a person's violent partner discovers that she is participating, or if there is an ongoing threat of violence. In cases such as these, steps will be taken to ensure that the person has access to the necessary support in order to manage the situation, as far as possible. Consent will be sought again when/if anyone asks to be withdrawn from the study to use any data already produced, providing there are no safety concerns. A date will be provided to all participants after which withdrawal will not be possible. This will be after the data production phase has been completed.

C.13 How long will the participant have to decide whether to take part in the research?³¹

It may be appropriate to recruit participants on the spot for low risk research; however consideration is usually necessary for riskier projects.

In most cases, the participants will have at least a week to decide whether they wish to participate, dependent upon their availability and availability of the service providers (where applicable). In all cases, at least a few days will elapse between the participant making contact with the researcher to register interest, and the researcher arranging a time to meet with or speak to the participant. In the event that any participants require a longer period of time to think about participation, this will be accommodated for.

C.14 What arrangements have been made for participants who might have difficulties understanding verbal explanations or written information, or who have particular communication needs that should be taken into account to facilitate their involvement in the research?³² *Different populations will have different information needs, different communication abilities and different levels of understanding of the research topic. Reasonable efforts should be made to include potential participants who could otherwise be prevented from participating due to disabilities or language barriers.*

Alternative participant information sheets will be devised in order to cater for any participants who face additional barriers to inclusion or participation in the study. This will include an easy read / accessible version using simple and accessible language as well as pictorial representations. In addition, where possible the participant information sheet will be translated into key languages spoken within the boroughs the study is being conducted, where there is an identifiable need for this. The participant information sheets will be read to participants, where this is beneficial, and verbal checking of a person's understanding will also be carried out. During the course of the study, additional checks will be made in order to ensure that the participant understands the study, while partaking in interviews and/or focus groups, where there are any concerns regarding their understanding.

Where there are concerns that the person has not fully understood the purposes of the study, or what it entails, the interview may not be conducted until understanding can be established. This is to ensure that participants are fully aware of what they are engaging in. It must however be noted that as far as possible, all those who wish to be part of the study, should be included and their specific needs met, because often the most vulnerable people in this population are excluded. Where necessary the process will be broken down into stages, and could also include the support of a support worker or key worker, when/if the participant is engaged with support services and requests this support. This would only be implemented in the event the participant requests this specifically, in order to avoid any risk of coercion to participate.

C.15 Will individual or group interviews/ questionnaires discuss any topics or issues that might be sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting, or is it possible that criminal or other disclosures requiring action could take place during the study (e.g. during interviews or group discussions)?³³ *The [information sheet](#) should explain under what circumstances action may be taken.*

Yes No *If yes, give details of procedures in place to deal with these issues.*

Yes, the research will discuss topics or issues that are considered sensitive, primarily pertaining to experiences of violence and abuse, which could include histories of severe and sustained violence and abuse. There is also the possibility that some participants (in group 1) will still be in a state of crisis and/or facing an ongoing risk violence although at the point of interview will be in a place of safety. In addition, some participants in group 1 particularly, may also have support needs stemming from substance use, as well as mental health need (particularly trauma, PTSD and anxiety issues) which may be discussed during the course of the study. There is also the possibility that participants may make adult or child safeguarding disclosures, or make reference to incidents or cases in which there are safeguarding concerns.

I have experience working in the social sector for a number of years, which included work with highly vulnerable adults and young people with complex and co-occurring support needs, and capacity issues. I will therefore utilise skills gained during this time

when conducting interviews which broach sensitive issues. Given my experience I should be able to determine whether or not a person is able to continue to participate in the study. I am also able to respond effectively to any safeguarding concerns and am familiar with adult and child safeguarding procedures as well as multi-agency risk management processes and would feel able to discuss these issues with the relevant service provider if/when this was necessary. .

I have outlined below additional measures regarding how these issues will be managed and responded to:

- **Distress during interview:** This will primarily be managed through relationships with service providers who are in a position to provide intervention and support to individuals who express a need for it; in the event that participants express concerns regarding their psychological or emotional well being, or if they present in a manner which indicates that they are not coping with participation, they will be signposted to these services for support. In all cases this would be discussed with participants prior to the study commencing and no signposting would be done without their explicit consent. In cases where the participants are already engaged with services, such as if they are resident in a refuge, they will be referred to a member of staff within those services, with their consent. The participants will be made aware of the nature of the research prior to commencing and will be informed that they may withdraw at any point, without explanation.
- **Adult or child Safeguarding concerns:** There are also considerations pertaining to the safeguarding of vulnerable adults, which refer to the statutory duty support and advocacy staff have, in regards to protecting their clients from potential or actual abuse. In the event that any of the respondents disclose information during the course of the research which indicates that either they are at risk of harm or abuse, or another service user or child was at risk, and it had not been responded to appropriately, I would have a responsibility to disclose this to the manager of the service concerned.

The safeguarding responsibilities both of the participants and the researcher would be made clear from the outset and will be documented in the participant information sheet as well as the consent form. It is of the utmost importance that the integrity of the study maintain therefore this is the only circumstance in which the confidentiality of the participant would be broken. In the event that safeguarding concerns need to be passed on to another person or agency, this would be communicated to the participant concerned in advance of it happening. In cases where there are safeguarding concerns, and there is no service or agency engaged with the person, the concerns would either be communicated to the local Adult Safeguarding team, and/or the police where necessary.

C.16 Will individual research participants receive any payments, fees, reimbursement of expenses or any other incentives or benefits for taking part in this research?³⁴

Yes No

If Yes, please describe the amount, number and size of incentives and on what basis this was decided.

Participants will be reimbursed any costs incurred through participation such as travel costs. Participants in group 1 will also be provided a shopping voucher as a thank you for participation. This has been decided on the basis that this group in particular experience social exclusion and often have limited access to financial and other material resources given that they have often left violent situations and are resident in temporary/emergency accommodation. This group is also being asked to specifically discuss their experiences of violence and abuse, therefore it is considered reasonable that they should be thanked for their contributions.

RISKS OF THE STUDY

C.17 What are the potential benefits and/ or risks for research participants in both the short and medium-term?³⁵

Potential benefits: There are no immediate or direct benefits of participation in this study. In the medium to long term however, the contributions of participants during the study, may be used in policy decision making which would lead to improved policies and PCR work in the UK, in order to combat VAW. This could be construed as an indirect benefit or reason at least, for participation. In addition, study outcomes will be disseminated in multiple formats, at the end of the study. This will include outputs suitable for use among service providers, and an accessible output suitable for service users. These will both be produced in collaboration with the RAG (mentioned earlier) as well as participants. These will be in addition to the primary output for academic purposes. These outputs may also be construed as a longer term benefit.

Potential harms: The potential harms associated with this study arise in the followings areas (there is some overlap with the ethical concerns discussed in section [A10](#) above):

1. **Safety concerns and (physical) risk to participants:** There are specific ethical and risk considerations regarding research pertaining to violence and abuse which need to be attended to in order to ensure that the physical safety of the women and children living in the gatekeeper organisation, or within the community (if not engaged with services), are protected at all times. These primarily stem from issues of data protection and confidentiality, and the potential risk posed to participants by

virtue of their participation. The most significant of these being that the location of either the participant or an organisation (particularly if refuges) is disclosed to a perpetrator. In the event that a perpetrator located the service or participant, the safety of both, as well as anyone else in the service, would be severely compromised. As such, the anonymity of the participants will need to be maintained throughout, as well as the anonymity of the organisations engaged in the study. Details such as addresses etc. of refuges are also not made publicly available and are only available to staff and the police. In addition, all identifiable data of individual service users will be removed or changed, if and when participants disclose information that may lead to their identification, or the identification or location of the service, and/or another participant, staff member etc. In addition, during interviews no information regarding other participants (particularly in the other participant groups) will be discussed or disclosed in order to ensure that individual anonymity is maintained.

2. **Vicarious or secondary trauma:** There is a medium risk of potential harm posed to participants due to psychological impact and/or the risk of (re)traumatization as a result of participation, because the research is exploring individual experiences of violence or abuse. There is a concern that this has the potential to 'trigger' participants causing them psychological or emotional upset or trauma, often referred as vicarious trauma. This will primarily be managed through the establishment of relationships with service providers who are in a position to provide intervention and support to individuals who express a need for it; in the event that participants express concerns regarding their psychological or emotional, or if they present in a manner which indicates that they are not coping with participation, they will be signposted to these services for support. In all cases this would be discussed with participants prior to the study commencing and no signposting would be done without their explicit consent. In cases where the participants are already engaged with services, such as if they are resident in a refuge, they will be referred to a member of staff within those services, with their consent. The participants will be made aware of the nature of the research prior to commencing and will be informed that they may withdraw at any point, without explanation. It should also be acknowledged that however the three participant groups are not mutually exclusive and there is a high probability that members of Group 2 in particular, may also have lived experience of violence and abuse. Indeed, this is borne out in prior research that often those that work in domestic abuse services, do themselves have experiences of violence and abuse. In addition, members of Group 3 may similarly have had experiences of violence and abuse therefore specific links will be established with organisations who specialise in the provision of support for male victims of DIPV, so that there is an established pathway for signposting where necessary. It is however also acknowledged that there is limited provision for male victim-survivors in general.

C.18 Does the research involve any risks to the researchers themselves, or people not directly involved in the research? Eg lone working³⁶

Yes No

If yes, please describe:

Risks posed to the researcher in this study arise from lone work and personal safety concerns, and the risk of vicarious or secondary trauma as a result of conducting the study.

1. **Lone working and personal safety:** In cases where interviews are conducted on a lone working basis, measures will be put in place to ensure that safety of the researcher as far as possible, and in accordance with the lone working and personal safety risk assessment (see attachment). This includes informing supervisors of the interview schedule, detailing times and locations of each interview, with an agreed call in/out procedure, as well as agreed terms upon which the supervisor will make contact with the researcher and/or the police called in the event there are concerns regarding the researcher's safety. See Lone Working risk assessment for full details of lone working procedures.
2. **Risk posed by those not directly involved in the research:** There is a low risk posed by those not directly involved in the study, namely alleged perpetrators of abuse (APOA), who may present at the premises of services in which the researcher is conducting the research, or at the homes of participants, not resident in refuges. This is an occupational risk typically associated with refuge services, given the nature of the work that is being conducted however it is mitigated primarily through localised risk management procedures and protocols, of which the researcher will be required to adhere to at all times. In the event that there was a breach of security and a perpetrator located or presented at the service, appropriate steps would be taken by the staff on site and the researcher would be required to act in accordance with these procedures. In addition, the address or location of the services is not made public. In the case of interviews conducted at participants' homes or in community locations, lone working procedures will be adhered to at all times, which addresses this particular risk.
3. **Risk stemming from participants who present with challenging or aggressive behaviour:** There is a low risk that some risk may be posed to the researcher by participants who present with challenging or aggressive behaviour. In the event that a participant begins to present with these types of behaviours when in a lone working setting, the interview will be terminated and the resumed at a more appropriate time. Any concerns regarding challenging behaviour will also be discussed with the

service managers concerned, where the participant is engaged with services. In the case of participants who are not engaged with services, interviews will not be conducted in lone working settings, and instead will take place in public spaces. Standard lone working procedures will be adhered to in these cases as well (as outlined in the lone working risk assessment).

4. **Risk of secondary or vicarious trauma:** There is a very limited risk of secondary trauma as a result of conducting this research. This is primarily because the researcher has lived experience of DIPV and because the study will entail repeated and sometimes prolonged exposure to accounts and stories of very difficult and traumatic life histories, thus conducting this study will be emotionally challenging at times. This risk is mitigated however by the fact that the researcher has also worked in this sector for a number of years, delivering support and intervention to victim-survivors as well as perpetrators, and also managing and supporting keyworkers to deliver support to vulnerable adults. The researcher has also conducted extensive training as regards to this area, and has also completed counselling qualifications in order to manage this risk within the context of a professional setting. The researcher will continue to engage with supervisors, as well as personal support networks, in order to manage any residual emotional issues this study may give rise to. In the event that the researcher feels unable to manage she will communicate this to the study supervisors, so that additional support can be sought.

Is a **risk assessment** necessary for this research?

Yes No If yes, please include a copy of your risk assessment form with your application.

****See attached lone working and personal safety risk assessments, as well as fieldwork risk assessment addressing overall risks associated with the study.****

NB: Risk assessments are a University requirement for all fieldwork taking place off campus. For guidance contact your Faculty Health and Safety Manager or visit <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/HealthAndSafetyAdvice>.

RESEARCH DATA

C.19 Explain what measures will be put in place to protect personal data. E.g. anonymisation procedures, secure storage and coding of data. Any potential for re-identification should be made clear to participants in advance.³⁷ Refer to <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/ConfidentialityAnonymisation> and <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/ResearchDataManagement> for guidance.

The research data will be systematically and completely anonymised in order to protect the identity of all those participants in the research; this will be done at all stages of the study. As such, during the data production phase interviews and focus groups will be digitally recorded using basic recording equipment. Consent will be obtained from all participants prior to any recordings being made during interviews and focus groups and they will be informed as to the process of anonymisation. All participants will be given a pseudonym and will be invited to determine what pseudonym is used for them. In the cases of services / gatekeeper organisation, these will not be named and only the type of service will be detailed. Locations will not be disclosed, only the country in which they are located. A coding system will be developed in order to identify the type of service and location, for all those engaged in the study. Handwritten notes will be taken in a fieldwork diary during interviews and focus groups, which will also be anonymised and care will be taken to ensure that there are no direct or indirect identifiers relating to participants and/or the location of the interview or focus group. Any information that could be used to determine connections between individual participants and the organisations or service providers will also be changed in order to prevent information being disclosed indirectly. Information regarding pseudonyms and coding systems will be stored in a separate encrypted file and will be uploaded to the University M drive with its password protected. This information will be removed from my laptop using appropriate data destruction software.

C.20 How will you make your research data available to others in line with: the University's, funding bodies' and publishers' policies on making the results of publicly funded research publicly available. Explain the extent to which anonymity will be maintained. (max 200 words) Refer to <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/ConfidentialityAnonymisation> and <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/ResearchDataManagement> for guidance.

Given the nature of the research and the risk associated with participant or service details being disclosed, in no circumstance can research data contain information that may lead to their identification. In accordance with the ESRC funding requirements, the data will be made available via the Research Data Repository, as well as in the UK data archive. The information will however only be made available at least three years after the data collection phase, as an additional measure to protect those involved in the research. In the case of any publication, similar steps will be taken, and when/if necessary, particular identifying signifiers will be altered in order to mitigate any risk.

C.21 Will the research involve any of the following activities at any stage (including identification of potential research participants)? (Tick as appropriate)

Examination of personal records by those who would not normally have access

- Access to research data on individuals by people from outside the research team
 - Electronic surveys, please specify survey tool: _____ ([further guidance](#))
 - Other electronic transfer of data
 - Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, e-mails or telephone numbers
 - Use of audio/ visual recording devices (NB this should usually be mentioned in the information for participants)
 - FLASH memory or other portable storage devices
- Storage of personal data on, or including, any of the following:
- University approved cloud computing services ([Microsoft Office 365 for email](#) (Exchange online) and [Microsoft OneDrive for Business](#))
 - Other cloud computing services
 - Manual files
 - Private company computers
 - Laptop computers
 - Home or other personal computers (not recommended; data should be stored on a University of Leeds server such as your M: or N: drive where it is secure and backed up regularly: <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/ResearchDataManagement>.)

C.22 How do you intend to share the research data? (Indicate with an 'X') Refer to <http://library.leeds.ac.uk/research-data-deposit> for guidance.

- Exporting data outside the European Union
- Sharing data with other organisations
- Publication of direct quotations from respondents
- Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals to be identified
- Submitting to a journal to support a publication
- Depositing in a self-archiving system or an institutional repository
- Dissemination via a project or institutional website
- Informal peer-to-peer exchange
- Depositing in a specialist data centre or archive
- Other, please state: _____.
- No plans to report or disseminate the data

C.23 How do you intend to report and disseminate the results of the study? (Indicate with an 'X') Refer to <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/ResearchDissemination> and <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/Publication> for guidance.

- Conference presentation
- Peer reviewed journals
- Publication as an eThesis in the Institutional repository
- Publication on website

- Other publication or report, please state: ___Stakeholder / service provider guidance derived from results of study ___
- Submission to regulatory authorities
- Other, please state: _____.
- No plans to report or disseminate the results

C.24 For how long will data from the study be stored? Please explain why this length of time has been chosen.³⁸ Refer to the [RCUK Common Principles on Data Policy](http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/info/71/good_research_practice/106/research_data_guidance/5) and http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/info/71/good_research_practice/106/research_data_guidance/5.

Students: *It would be reasonable to retain data for at least 2 years after publication or three years after the end of data collection, whichever is longer.*

___3___ years, _____ months

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

C.25 Will any of the researchers or their institutions receive any other benefits or incentives for taking part in this research over and above normal salary or the costs of undertaking the research?³⁹

- Yes No

If yes, indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided

C.26 Is there scope for any other conflict of interest?⁴⁰ *For example, could the research findings affect the any ongoing relationship between any of the individuals or organisations involved and the researcher(s)? Will the research funder have control of publication of research findings? Refer to <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/ConflictsOfInterest>.*

- Yes No

If so, please describe this potential conflict of interest, and outline what measures will be taken to address any ethical issues that might arise from the research.

There is a very small possibility of a conflict of interest arising from instances in which I have used professional contacts in order to access organisations or providers who may could participate in the study. The conflict of interest could arise if organisational or service managers feel compelled to agree to participate in the study, simply because they have been approached by someone who has a prior knowledge of the organisation. This will be mitigated by approaching senior managers first who can then contact managers in individual services in order to avoid them feeling as if they need to agree to participation. Given the time and resource constraints services are already facing, I would not want service managers to agree to participation under these conditions as it may compromise the service and/or service users.

In no circumstance will interviews be conducted with service users who are known to me, and/or with whom I have previously worked as this would present a conflict of interest. There is a small possibility of this occurring given I worked in the sector for a number of years and often service users remain in or move through services within a given locality for a number of years. In the event that a participant wishes to be part of the study, but they are known to me, they will be excluded and the reasons explained fully.

C.27 Does the research involve external funding? (Tick as appropriate)

- Yes No ***If yes, what is the source of this funding?*** ___ESRC Funding _____

NB: *If this research will be financially supported by the US Department of Health and Human Services or any of its divisions, agencies or programmes please ensure the additional funder requirements are complied with. Further guidance is available at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/FWAcpliance> and you may also contact your [FRIO](#) for advice.*

PART D: Declarations**Declaration by Chief Investigators**

1. The information in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.
2. I undertake to abide by the University's ethical and health & safety guidelines, and the ethical principles underlying good practice guidelines appropriate to my discipline.
3. If the research is approved I undertake to adhere to the study protocol, the terms of this application and any conditions set out by the Research Ethics Committee.
4. I undertake to seek an ethical opinion from the REC before implementing substantial amendments to the protocol.
5. I undertake to submit progress reports if required.
6. I am aware of my responsibility to be up to date and comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of patient or other personal data, including the need to register when necessary with the University's Data Protection Controller (further information available via <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/ResearchDataManagement>).
7. I understand that research records/ data may be subject to inspection for audit purposes if required in future.
8. I understand that personal data about me as a researcher in this application will be held by the relevant RECs and that this will be managed according to the principles established in the Data Protection Act.
9. I understand that the Ethics Committee may choose to audit this project at any point after approval.

Sharing information for training purposes: Optional – please tick as appropriate:

- I would be content for members of other Research Ethics Committees to have access to the information in the application in confidence for training purposes. All personal identifiers and references to researchers, funders and research units would be removed.

Principal Investigator


Signature of Principal Investigator:
 (This needs to be an actual signature rather than just typed. Electronic signatures are acceptable)

Print name:Jessica Wild Date: (dd/mm/yyyy):07/07/2017.....

Supervisor of student research: I have read, edited and agree with the form above.


Supervisor's signature: .. (This needs to be an actual signature rather than just typed. Electronic signatures are acceptable)

Print name:Karen Throsby..... Date: (dd/mm/yyyy):09/07/2017.....

Please submit your form **by email** to researchethics@leeds.ac.uk or if you are in the Faculty of Medicine and Health FMHUniEthics@leeds.ac.uk. **Remember to include any supporting material** such as your participant information sheet, consent form, interview questions and recruitment material with your application.



ESSL Fieldwork Assessment Form (Medium Risk Activities)

Fieldwork Project Details	
ESSL - School	Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies, School of Sociology and Social Policy
Location/s of Fieldwork <i>(Include address, area, specific location and map where applicable).</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Location 1: Domestic violence refuges and/or confidential community locations and/or participant homes (Participant group (PG) 1) Location 2: Charity / service premises including offices (PGs 1/2) Location 3: Online spaces and/or confidential community locations (PGs 2/3)
Is the location/s subject to Foreign & Commonwealth Office advice against 'all but essential or all travel'?	<p>YES NO</p> <p style="text-align: right;">X</p> <p><i>If Yes refer to Travel against FCO advice procedure AND use the (High Risk Fieldwork form)</i></p>
Purpose of Fieldwork <i>Brief outline of topic, aims, objectives, include ethical application if relevant</i>	<p>Brief outline:</p> <p>There has been no determinable cessation in the rates of violence against women in the UK (or indeed worldwide), despite sustained and ongoing efforts by women's organisations to combat what is a significant, pervasive and ongoing social problem. With this in mind, the primary aim of this study is to determine how prevention and consciousness raising efforts can be improved in order to reduce prevalence rates and improve policy level decision making, through the inclusion and participation of men as social justice allies. In acknowledging that men have a role to play however, the study will also aim to understand to what extent the challenges men's participation brings can be overcome, while operating within a feminist framework which foregrounds the contributions and insights of women victim-survivors, using victim-survivor defined participatory and co-produced methods and approaches at all stages of the research.</p> <p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To understand how men can be meaningfully included in prevention and consciousness-raising activities addressing domestic abuse, while operating within a feminist framework. - To understand how victim-survivors of domestic abuse regard the (possible) inclusion of men* in domestic abuse prevention and consciousness-raising activities. - To understand how both practitioners and activist / 'interested' men regard the possible diversification of the discourse that currently underpins domestic abuse prevention.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To understand how domestic abuse prevention efforts can be improved, with the above aim in mind. - To understand the impact the above may have upon women only spaces and the women's movement more generally, as well as upon victim-survivors of DIPV. <p>Qualitative research with three Participant Groups (PG), using a combination of three different methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 121 interviews (PG1/2/3) - focus groups (PGs 2) - online interviews (PGs 3) <p>Participant groups will include the following individuals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PG 1: Women with present or past experiences of domestic violence - PG 2: Practitioners / professionals working in the domestic violence / anti-violence against women sector, in support and advocacy roles. - PG 3: Men engaged in work or activism (voluntary or paid) in the domestic violence / anti-violence against women sector, in activist or support roles.
Nature of fieldwork <i>Lone research, group research - staff, postgraduate, undergraduate,</i>	Lone research, doctoral research
Fieldwork Dates <i>(or proposed dates if not known) To and From</i>	Proposed dates: September 2017 – April 2018
Fieldwork itinerary <i>E.g. flight details, hotel address, down time and personal time.</i>	TBC
University Travel Insurance Policy Number See Insurance Information	100003814GPA
School Departmental Co-ordinator	Contact details: <i>Name, Email, Telephone</i>
Fieldwork Organiser / Course Leader/ Supervisor/ PI	Jessica Wild (Fieldwork organiser) j.lwild@leeds.ac.uk / 07790793716
Participant/s Details <i>Staff PGR, individuals or teams Lone researchers may also be the "Fieldwork</i>	Contact details: <i>Name, Email, Telephone</i> Fieldwork organiser



Participant details TBC

ESSL Fieldwork Assessment Form (Medium Risk Activities)

HAZARD IDENTIFICATION

Identify all hazards specific to fieldwork trip and activities, describe existing control measures and identify any further measures required.

HAZARD(S)

Identify all Hazards specific to the Fieldwork / activities

CONTROL MEASURES

Describe existing control measures and any further measures to reduce the risk

Nature of the site/ setting

School, college, university, remote area, laboratory, office, workshop, construction site, domestic premises, restricted access locations – prison, hospitals, detention centres etc.

Location 1:

- DV refuges housing women (and their children, if any) who have recently exited domestically abusive/violent relationships.
- Accommodation provision is multiple occupancy/shared, women only, temporary/short term, and provides crisis intervention and a place of safety.
- The location/address of DV refuges are completely confidential.

Location 1:

- Exact location and address of refuges are not disclosed or made publically accessible to any person or organisation, excluding the police. This is to protect and maintain the safety of individuals living, and staff working, in these services. (Exact addresses for services will be provided to Supervisor for risk management purposes.)
- Researcher (and Supervisor) will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to obtaining the exact address of the refuges.
- Researcher will adhere to service localised lone working protocols when carrying out interviews, which will include arranging interviews in advance, documenting the time of interviews, informing staff on site when they are commencing / finishing, and carrying a mobile phone on her person at all times.
- Refuge services have established service level agreements in place with the police and local safer neighbourhood teams and the location and nature of the service is known to the police.
- The buildings will have fire safety procedures in place, and each will have an up to date fire risk assessment. While on the premises the researcher will adhere to all fire safety procedures in accordance with service policy and procedure.

Location 2:

- Victim-survivors' homes in the cases of those participants who are not engaged with services and/or are not resident in refuge accommodation.

Location 2:

- Participants homes will be located at various community locations and will only be visited in cases where they are not resident in a refuge.
- In all cases, participants' homes will only be visited if there is no potential risk from perpetrators; in the event that a

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	<p>perpetrator is still in contact with the participant, or is still living with the participant, interviews will not be conducted at the home. Instead participants will be asked to meet in a confidential community location.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In cases where there may be concerns regarding substance use at the premises, interviews will not be hold at home, or in cases where the participant has a known history of violence or aggression. - Lone working procedures will be adhered to at all times. <p>** See Lone working risk assessment for a full description of risk management procedures. **</p>
<p>Location 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organisational premises of charitable / activist spaces will be located at different addresses in the community. - These spaces are publically accessible to service users, staff working at these locations, as well as members of the public. 	<p>Location 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Researcher will adhere to organisational lone working protocols when carrying out interviews or focus groups on organisational premises. This will include arranging interviews or focus groups in advance, documenting the time/date/location of each, informing staff on site when they are commencing / finishing, and carrying a mobile phone on her person at all times. - No focus groups or interviews will be conducted on these premises without at least one member of staff being present. - The buildings will have fire safety procedures in place, and each will have an up to date fire risk assessment. While on the premises the researcher will adhere to all fire safety procedures in accordance with service policy and procedure.
<p>Location 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where it is not possible to conduct interviews with men from group 3 online via Skype, interviews will take place in a confidential community location. - These locations will be in the community or publically accessible space and will be determined on an ad hoc basis, as/when required. 	<p>Location 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where interviews need to take place in the community, they will be conducted in easily accessible locations, where there is frequent footfall etc. - No interviews will take place in locations where there is a possibility of the researcher being isolated and/or alone in a remote location with a participant. - The names and details of all participants will be known in advance of the interviews taking place, and they will be communicated to the supervisor. - The date/time/location of the interviews will be documented and communicated to the supervisor in advance of them taking place.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The researcher will carry a mobile phone on her person at all times. - In the event that there are any concerns regarding safety, the researcher will terminate the interview early and make contact with a trusted person such as her supervisor or colleague. <p>** See Lone working risk assessment for a full description of risk management procedures. **</p>
Environmental conditions <i>Extremes of temperature, altitude, exposure to sunlight, potential weather conditions, natural phenomena, earthquake, flood, volcano</i>	There are no anticipated environmental risks associated with this fieldwork.
Site specific conditions <i>e.g. cliffs, scree, bogs, featureless landscapes, local endemic infectious diseases, zoonoses rural, urban, city, inner city, isolated</i>	Please see ' <u>Violence</u> ' section below.
Location 1: Given the nature of the service(s) in which interviews will be conducted, there is some risk of violence or harm. This risk stems from work with human participants, and is not associated with the physical site itself.	
Process <i>Operating machinery, electrical equipment, driving vehicles</i>	Not applicable to this study.
Transport <i>Mode of transport while on site, to and from site, car, taxi, bus, train, plane, ship etc.</i>	There are no unique risks associated with transport, and/or risks beyond those risks associated with everyday travel.
Public transport and/or researcher's own car will be used to move between sites.	
Equipment <i>Manual handling risks, operation of machinery, tools, use of specialist equipment IT laptop / peripherals etc.</i>	There are no unique risks associated with the equipment being used in this study.

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ESSL Fieldwork Assessment Form (Medium Risk Activities)	
HAZARD(S) <i>Identify all Hazards specific to the Fieldwork / activities</i>	CONTROL MEASURES <i>Describe existing control measures and any further measures to reduce the risk</i>
<p>Violence <i>Potential for violence in location, political and social unrest; against participants, research topic, subject matter, environment, lone working, interviewing in people's homes</i></p> <p>Risk of location confidentiality breach (location 1): Given the nature of the service(s) in which interviews and focus groups will take place with PG 1, there is a risk of violence or harm arising from;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risk of breach in confidentiality leading to the disclosure of the location of the refuge. This elevates the risk of perpetrators coming to these locations, which would put both the service users / those resident in the refuge, as well as staff, at risk. The potential for this to occur is low, but not beyond possibility. <p>Risk of violence stemming from challenging behaviour during 121 interviews (PGs 1, 2&3): There is a <u>low level</u> of risk of violence or harm during 121 interviews with PGs 1 & 3, arising from;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants who present with challenging behaviours during interview due to additional support needs arising from the impact of trauma, personality disorder, and/or substance use, which may inhibit their ability to manage behaviour. - In the case of PG 1 & 3, there is some risk that participant in the research are themselves (present or former) perpetrators of domestic violence or abuse. 	<p>Risk of location confidentiality breach (location 1):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All domestic violence refuges have strict protocols and procedures in place in order to manage potential breaches of confidentiality and all staff are trained in managing and responding to these types of incidents, in the event that they occur. - All service users are required to sign confidentiality agreements upon entering the refuges, and the importance of non-disclosure of the location of the refuge is discussed. - The researcher would be required to adhere to the existing protocols and procedures in place, and the location of the refuge would not be made publically available nor would it be disclosed to any party within the university apart from the study Supervisors. - In the event that the location was disclosed and an APOA located the refuge, the police would be contacted immediately by staff within the service, and the relevant risk management measures would be implemented. - In all cases, local police units are aware of the location and nature of the refuge services, and are required to prioritise attendance at the service in the event police assistance is required. <p>Risk of violence stemming from challenging behaviour during 121 interviews (PGs 1 & 3):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All interviews will be conducted in a room in which the researcher has easy access in and out of the space, in case of an incident. The time and location of each interview will be shared with the manager of the service and/or study supervisors (where appropriate), in order to ensure that each interview can be monitored appropriately. Any concerns regarding potential risk will be discussed prior to each interview, where this is appropriate, and providing confidentiality protocols are adhered to (see additional measures in Appendix 2). - The researcher has extensive training and experience working with individuals with challenging behaviours as well as with those who have additional support needs such as substance use and mental health needs. This includes training in de-escalation techniques and positive relational risk management techniques.

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<p>- In the case of PG 1 & 3, there is a <u>low level</u> of risk that some participants may behave aggressively during interviews, however this risk is no higher than the risk posed during every day interaction with members of the public.</p>	<p>- In the event that a participant attends an interview and presents as being unable to appropriately engage with the process due to intoxication of substances, the interview would be suspended temporarily until the participant is able to better engage. This would reduce the risk of there being any complications during the interview, including of challenging behaviour.</p> <p>- In the case of PG 3; interviews will be conducted via Skype as far as possible which will reduce the risk of physical harm, however this does not reduce the risk of inadvertently interviewing an individual who is actually a (present or former) perpetrator of abuse.</p> <p>In relation to both PG 1 & 3; the researcher has experience working with perpetrators as well as victims, and is usually able to determine whether someone is a perpetrator of abuse, through particular questioning techniques.</p> <p>- In the event that it is believed that the participant is actually a perpetrator, the interview will be terminated. The exact reason for termination will not be communicated to the participant, and instead factors extrinsic to the interview will be given. This is to ensure the safety both of the researcher and any victims is maintained.</p> <p>- In the event that interviews take place in person, as opposed to Skype, lone working procedures will be adhered to, as outlined in the <i>Lone Working</i> risk assessment.</p>
<p>Staff / PGR Personal <i>Medical condition(s), young, inexperienced, disabilities etc.</i></p> <p>PGR Personal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher has professional experience working in this field, as well as other related fields in the social sector. • Researcher has lived experience of DIPV. 	<p>- Researcher is experienced working in and managing frontline women's, complex needs and homelessness service provision therefore is familiar with existing working practices and protocols as well as risk factors associated with this area of work.</p> <p>- Researcher has lived experience of research topic/issues facing participants within PG1 which may impact upon study; researcher cognisant of this and protective factors are in place, such as ensuring that there is sufficient opportunity for debriefing following interviews, and regular contact with Supervisors in order to discuss any specific concerns. Personal support networks are also in place.</p>
<p>Cultural Considerations <i>Specific to the activity or participants.</i></p> <p>Cultural diversity within participant groups</p>	<p>- Given the anticipated cultural diversity within all three participant groups, the study will be conducted with cultural sensitivity at all stages. Where culturally specific needs arise, the researcher will alter the manner in which the study is being conducted, as far as possible in order to meet those needs.</p>

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<p>The participants within all three participant groups will come from a broad range of cultural backgrounds.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An example would be, in the event that the researcher is conducting interviews on a Friday, steps will be taken to ensure that interviews are not planned for the afternoon, in order to avoid coinciding with Friday prayers of which some Muslim participants may be attending.
<p>Other Persons <i>Consider hazards relating to other parties involved e.g. risk to survey participants/ helpers/ partners</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All participants will be provided advance information, so that they can make an informed decision regarding their participation, taking into account any perceived impact it may have upon them.



Participant group 1

(victim-survivors of DIPV):

- Participants will have a variety of individual support needs, some of which may be complex support needs, including class 'A' substance dependence, alcohol dependence, severe and enduring mental health need, and/or involvement in prostitution.
- Participants in this group are regarded as statutorily vulnerable and will be owed a safeguarding duty.
- In light of the above, there is a risk of secondary trauma re-traumatisation as a result of participation. This risk could be exacerbated by a lack of available resources and support to address the impact of research, and/or due to a lack of engagement with services, on the part of the participant.
- Safety of participants could be compromised if an APOA finds out about their participation, or if they find out where the refuge is located.
- Inability to participate due to concerns regarding safety from APOAs / fear of being located or fear of involvement in study being disclosed to APOA.
- Participants may have exhibit challenging or inappropriate behaviours towards the researcher, or fellow participants.
- Some participants who volunteer to participate may themselves be perpetrators of abuse or domestic violence. This could potentially place researcher, and/or other participants at risk.

- A relationship will be established with a relevant support organisation, prior to the study commencing. In the event that participants are affected by participation, they will be signposted to a relevant support agency for support, in the event they are not already engaged with support and/or living in a refuge.
- Each participant will have a support plan and risk management plan in place to address their individual support needs, which has been conducted by their respective support workers. Any risks that may impact upon the individual concerned and/or the researcher, will be identified by the staff involved in the case, while also adhering to organisational data disclosure protocols (e.g. the staff in the organisation would need to ask the individual concerned for consent to disclose information, prior to doing so).
- In the event that a participant appeared to be unable to engage in the interview process, the researcher would terminate the interview, and provide information around how they can reengage with the process, if they wish to do so.
- Lone working risk management procedures (as outlined above) will also be used to address issues of challenging behaviour. In addition, the researcher is trained in management of challenging behaviour as well as in positive relational management, which could be applied to incidents of this type.
- The researcher will operate in accordance with safeguarding policies and procedures throughout the study. As such, if any safeguarding concerns or disclosures are made during the study, these will be communicated to the manager of the service, and/or the police where no organisation is involved. Participants will be informed of the researcher's safeguarding responsibilities at the beginning of the interview/focus group; this includes ensuring that participants are aware that confidentiality will be adhered to in all circumstances, apart from in cases of safeguarding disclosures.
- All reasonable steps are taken to ensure that participation is not disclosed to any person outside of the study, except for staff operating within the services the study is taking place. This is to ensure that APOAs do not find out who is participating, or where the study is taking place.
- It is not always possible to determine whether some participants are not genuine and/or if they have histories of perpetration however initial screening questions will be asked during the recruitment stage, in order to gauge this as far as possible. The researcher has also worked in this area and should be able to gauge this, during the interview process. In the event that it is determined that a participant is not genuine, they will be



<p>Participant group 2 (professionals/practitioners):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants will have varying degrees of skills and experience in this field of work. • Participants will potentially have lived experience of DIPV, therefore the above mentioned risks of possible re-traumatisation are pertinent to this group as well, albeit less likely. • Safety of participants could be compromised if an APOA finds out about their participation or if they find out where the refuge is located. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All staff will have undergone core organisational training regarding key aspects of their roles including data protection, confidentiality, lone working, risk management planning, and adult and child safeguarding. - Regardless of role or experience, all participants will be required to adhere to their statutory adult and child safeguarding responsibilities. - Participants are not classed as statutorily vulnerable therefore any lived experience should already have been deemed appropriate and manageable within the context of their professional roles. - Any residual (emotional) impact of study on participants, particularly those with lived experience of the issues discussed, will be managed through existing service protocols and procedures, such as staff supervision with line managers, reflective practice sessions and clinical supervision.
<p>Participant group 3 (non-perpetrating / 'interested' men):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of the men who engage with the study may have personal experience of DIPV. Participation could therefore lead to re-traumatisation (as discussed in relation to PG 1). Also, given that the study is not looking at the experiences of male victim-survivors, it may be ill equipped to deal with any men participants who report victimisation through DIPV. • Some participants who volunteer to participate may themselves be perpetrators of abuse or domestic violence. This could potentially place researcher, and/or other participants at risk. • Participants may have exhibit challenging or inappropriate behaviours towards the researcher, or fellow participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Links will be established with appropriate organisations for male victim-survivors of DIPV, in advance of the study commencing, so that any men participants who report being negatively affected by participation can be sign-posted for support. - It is not always possible to determine whether some participants are not genuine and/or if they have histories of perpetration however initial screening questions will be asked during the recruitment stage, in order to gauge this as far as possible. The researcher has also worked in this area and should be able to gauge this, during the interview process. In the event that it is determined that a participant is not genuine, they will be withdrawn from the study. - In order to mitigate any risk to other participants no details regarding where the study is being conducted, and/or as regards to who else is participating, will be revealed to the participants. - Lone working risk management procedures (as per attached) will also be used to address issues of challenging behaviour. In addition, the researcher is trained in management of challenging behaviour as well as in positive relational management, which could be applied to incidents of this type.

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Work Pattern <i>Time and location e.g. shift work, work at night. personal time, down time, travelling time etc.</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Core hours typically run from 9.00 – 17.00. Some services may operate an out of hours service; if fieldwork is conducted outside of core hours lone working protocols will be adhered to (as outlined in <i>Personal Safety and Lone Working Risk Assessment</i>, see Appendix 2). - Full service risk assessments regarding the safety of workers will be in place. Researcher will be briefed on these protocols and adhere to the normal working practices of the staff on site, in order to ensure minimal disruption and to ensure that any risk is minimised. - Focus groups or interviews take place outside of normal working hours, this time will be ‘taken back’ out of the next working week, in order to avoid burn out and ensure that there is a sufficient amount of time away from the research, and the environments in which the research is being conducted. - No interviews or focus groups will be conducted at night, without prior arrangement. In the event that this occurs, lone working procedures will be put in place, such as notifying a supervisor or colleague as to the researcher’s whereabouts, expected time of completion etc.
<p>Interviews and focus groups will be conducted during working hours, unless service(s) specifically request that interviews or focus groups take place outside of these hours.</p>		
Permissions Required <i>Contact details, visas, and letters of permission, restrictions and other details of permissions.</i>		<p>Permissions will be required from gatekeeper organisations in order to access the service, as well as users of those services (where applicable).</p> <p>These permissions will be obtained prior to the fieldwork commencing, and will entail obtaining permission from managers in order to access services, and work with participants. In some cases, this may require obtaining permission from senior management in addition to service manager level.</p>
<p>Gatekeeper organisations (such as domestic violence refuges and support and advocacy organisations)</p>		
Other Specific Risk Assessments necessary? <i>E.g. Manual Handling, Lone Working if so what is identified in these assessments? Are there training requirements? (attach) Copy of other Organisation’s risk assessment attached?</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lone Working risk assessment
ESSL Fieldwork Assessment Form (Medium Risk Activities)		
Details of Additional Control Measures		

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<p>FCO advice <i>For any travel outside the UK staff must refer to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) web-site, provide an overview of key hazards relevant to their activities and explain how they will mitigate the risks.</i></p>	<p>If the location/s is subject to Foreign & Commonwealth Office advice against 'all but essential or all travel'? Then the High Risk Fieldwork Assessment Form must be completed.</p> <p>Not applicable to this study</p>
<p>Travel Health <i>For any travel outside the UK staff must refer to the TravelHealthPro web-site, provide an overview of any health risks relevant to their destination and explain how they will mitigate the risks e.g. any vaccinations/ certifications required, prophylaxis treatment for malaria etc.</i></p>	<p>Not applicable to this study</p>
<p>Personal Health <i>If you have any health problems / medical conditions it is important that this is factored into this assessment. A medical health questionnaire/ surveillance may be required in some circumstances.</i></p>	<p>Not applicable to this study</p>
<p>First Aid provision <i>Consider access to first aid, medical assistance/ proximity of hospitals.</i></p>	<p>Not applicable to this study</p>
<p>Emergency Plan <i>Consider and identify the plans you may need to have in place in the event of emergency e.g. medical emergency.</i></p>	<p>In case of emergency, the emergency plan in place within the service/organisation the researcher is in, will be adhered to. No additional emergency plan is required.</p>
<p>Training & Skills <i>Identify any additional training instruction required consider experience of workers, researchers, skills, knowledge</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Researcher has professional experience of, and has received training in, the following areas pertinent to this study and the risks entailed therein; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Adult/child statutory safeguarding o Consent, data protection and disclosure o Risk management and assessment within social work settings o Lone working and personal safety o First aid training o Managing and responding to challenging behaviour o Domestic abuse interventions and responses o Support planning, individual risk management planning, and interview techniques incl. motivational interviewing techniques o Supporting vulnerable adults with complex and multiple occurring needs o Positive Relational risk management (NHS framework) o Risk management in psychologically Informed Environments (PIE) o Managing psychologically informed environments (PIE)

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) coordination, referral and attendance ○ Trauma informed care and intervention ○ Qualitative/quantitative research methods (University of Leeds)
Pre-departure Briefing <i>E.g. with Supervisor/ PI / Line Manager/ Course Leader Carried out and attended.</i>		
Supervision <i>Identify level of supervision required e.g. full time, Periodic telephone/radio contact.</i>		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Periodic supervision meetings to take place w/supervisors; to take place on at least a fortnightly basis. - Ad hoc email contact to be maintained throughout study. - Any concerns to be raised w/supervisor as/when required. - Supervisor to be notified of any incidents which take place during the course of the study. Incidents to be documented and escalated where appropriate.
Other Controls <i>e.g. background checks for site visits, embassy registration,</i>		
ESSL Fieldwork Assessment Form (Medium Risk Activities)		



Additional Information <i>Please use this space to provide any additional relevant information.</i>	<p>The researcher worked in the Social and Women's sector for a number of years prior to commencing this research; this includes the contract and service management of women's rough-sleeper and homeless hostels, services for women with complex needs, and domestic violence refuges, with overall responsibility for operations and risk management within these services. She is therefore familiar with the protocols and procedures in place in these types of services, as well as the requirements and expectations associated with risk management and safeguarding, in order to ensure the safety of service users and staff.</p> <p>The study will be conducted in such a way as to ensure that data production phases align with existing gatekeeper organisational procedures and protocols, with minimum disruption or intrusion caused to the services/organisations in which the research is being conducted. Where possible, the research process will be adapted in order to accommodate the specific needs of the participants and/or gatekeeper organisations, providing these can be accommodated for within the parameters set out in the research design and ethics plan.</p> <p>The above professional experience has also enabled the researcher to develop professional relationships within the sector, which will in some cases be used to access particular participants within services, in accordance with the terms set out in the ethical approval documentation. In all cases, where there is any potential conflict of interest, arising from these relationships, this will be communicated to the study supervisors to ensure that the necessary measures have been put in place in order to manage this risk.</p>
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Residual Risk <i>Is the residual risk acceptable with the identified controls?</i>	Yes	X
	No	

Approval and Sign Off

Fieldwork Activity Organiser /Assessment carried out by: <i>e.g. PI, Course leader, Academic Supervisor, PGR, Staff, Student</i>	Name/ Position:	Jessica Wild (PGR)
	Signature:	
	Date:	24/04/2017
	Name/ Position:	

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Names of person(s) involved in Fieldwork <i>N.B: This can take the form of a signed class register when large group work</i>	Signature:	
	Date:	
Approval / Sign off by: Head of School (or their Nominee <i>e.g. Course Leader, PI, Academic Supervisor, Line Manager etc.)</i>	Name/ Position:	
	Signature:	
	Date:	
Copy (& supporting documents) forwarded to:- essffieldwork@leeds.ac.uk <i>(By the Co-ordinator or Organiser)</i>	BY: Name/ Position:	
	Signature:	
	Date:	

In the Event of an Emergency see overleaf:

For minor emergencies – make contact with your local School

For more serious emergencies refer to information below and if possible inform your School

[Insurance Information as at August 2016](#)

Policy Number: 100003814GPA

AVIVA - Emergency Medical Assistance Number

+44 (0) 1243 621066

Claims Number for all non-medical claims whilst travelling

+44 (0) 1243 621416

Security Consultants – Political Evacuation, Life Threatening, Hijack, Kidnap and Ransom - RED24

+44 (0) 207 741 2074

Advice before you travel

+44 (0) 1243 621556

Emergency Cash Advance

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Lone working risk assessment

School / Service	School of Sociology and Social Policy
Location	Various locations in West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and Derbyshire
Brief Description of Lone Work Activity	
<p>One-to-one interviews conducted with participants in the following locations;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - participant homes (participant group 1 ONLY) - key-work interview spaces on service provider sites / community organisation premises (all participant groups) <p>In all cases efforts will be made for interviews to take place in public settings; interviews will only be conducted at participant homes in the event that it is not possible to conduct them at a community / public location.</p>	
Hazard Identification	
<i>Identify all hazards specific to lone working activity, describe existing control measures and identify any further measures required.</i>	
HAZARD(S)	CONTROL MEASURES <i>(e.g. alternative work methods, training, supervision, protective equipment)</i>
Workplace and Conditions; <i>remote area, laboratory, confined space, workshop, Safe means of entry, exit, adequate illumination, heating etc.</i>	Participant home locations situated in and around Leeds, West Yorkshire; exact locations to be provided to supervisory team prior to interviews commencing in all case.
Process; <i>work with electrical systems, cryogenic gases etc.</i>	1-2-1 interviews conducted in person
Equipment; <i>manual handling risks, operation of emergency controls etc.</i>	N/A

Violence;

potential for violence (previous incidents etc.)

Risk of violence and/or challenging behaviour which may put researcher at risk:

There is a low risk of violence associated with this activity; risk posed by the following parties:

- Known perpetrators of abuse associated with participants in group 1
- Participants from participant groups 1 and 3 who present with challenging behaviour

This risk primarily arises from the risk of known perpetrators of violence (associated with participants in group 1) presenting at the property at which the interview is taking place. There is also a very minimal risk of violence from the participant c/o challenging behaviour during interview.

Measures in place to manage this risk are as follows:

- Prior to the interview taking place, the following actions will be carried out:
 - o Contact** will be made with the participant prior to the interview being conducted in order to verify whether it is still safe to conduct the interview at her home. This will include ensuring that there are no new concerns regarding the perpetrator presenting at the property, as well as confirm that the interview will not place the participant at increased risk (participant group 1 ONLY).
 - o In all cases a door-step risk assessment will be conducted by the researcher upon arrival, prior to entering the property. In the event there are any safety or risk concerns / the participant discloses safety concerns / the participant presents in a way to arouse concerns such as if she is intoxicated etc., the interview will not be conducted and instead rescheduled (participant group 1 ONLY).
- During the interview the following measures will be put in place;
 - o Interviewer will sit as close to the room exit as possible
 - o The door will not be locked in order to ensure quick exit
 - o Interviewer will carry a mobile phone with her at all times
 - o Interviews will not take place if there is a risk of the perpetrator coming to the location at which the interview is taking place.
 - o Interviews will not be conducted if the participant is intoxicated/under the influence of drugs/alcohol
 - o Interviews will not be conducted if the participant presents as overtly distressed, confused, or unable to engage meaningfully with the process.
- Lone working procedure to be put in place during every interview, as per procedure detailed in *Supervision* section below.
- **[**All communication with the participants will be conducted according to the agreed terms of communication. This includes using the agreed safest method of communication, using 'safe words' during communication in order to ensure that the participant is not placed at any increased risk. Participant group 1 ONLY].**

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Individual;

medical condition, female, young, inexperienced, disabilities, expectant mothers etc.

There is a low risk of discrimination, harassment or abuse from some participants, owing to the researcher's gender (and possibly age). This risk is no more elevated than it is in daily life.

Measures to manage this risk will be the same as those applied during everyday interactions with unknown members of the public.

Work Pattern;

time (alone all day/out of hours?) and location (isolated/remote).

Interviews will only take place during working hours in order to reduce any risk by virtue of the fact that there will be more services available to support in the event that there is an issue.

If it is necessary to conduct interviews outside of working hours, additional measures will be put in place in order to manage any elevated risk. This will include ensuring that a personal emergency contact is available throughout the interview and that the interview does not take place in a remote or isolated location.

Other;

In cases where the interviews take place on the premises of service providers / community organisations, the researcher will adhere to all on-site localised risk management and personal safety procedures and will following the guidance of the manager and/or any staff on site. This includes adhering to localised risk management procedures governing incidences of security breach in the case of refuge accommodation.

Additional Control Measures:**Training:****Identify level and extent of information; instruction and training required consider experience of workers**

Researcher has received training in de-escalation techniques, managing challenging behaviour, lone working and risk management procedures.

Supervision:**Identify level of supervision required**

Periodic telephone/radio etc. contact or site visits to lone workers/buddy system

Y

Automatic warning devices e.g. sensors etc.

N/A

Manual warning devices e.g. panic alarms etc.

N/A

Other:**Lone working procedure to be implemented prior and during interviews:**

- Interviewer will provide a plan of interview start and finish times/locations/name of participants to the study supervisors prior to the interviews taking place.
- All interviews will be inputted onto the researcher's Outlook calendar detailing the above information, which will be made accessible to the research supervisory team. Pseudonyms for participants will be used in this case in order to maintain their confidentiality; supervisors will however have full details of the participants in case there are any safety or risk concerns.
- A text message/phone call will be sent at the beginning/end of each interview. In the event that contact is not made within 15 minutes of the agreed finish time, supervisor will contact the researcher.
- In the event that contact cannot be made, police will be contacted.
- An agreed safety word will be agreed between supervisor and researcher; in the event that there is a problem or concerns for the researcher's safety during the interview, the researcher will contact the supervisor and relay the agreed word, so that the police can be contacted.
- Procedure to be documented and stored electronically in a location that is accessible to both members of the supervisory team, as well as the researcher's primary emergency contact.

Post interview procedure:

- Researcher will participate in regular supervision meetings with the study supervisory team. These meetings will include an opportunity to 'debrief' following the interviews that have taken place. In the event that the researcher requires additional support as a result of conducting the interviews, additional pastoral support will be sought either from the university student support services, or externally if necessary. The researcher also has support in place from personal networks, of which she will use in the event that it is necessary.

Identify Persons at Risk:

This may include more individuals than the lone worker e.g. if Estates Security Services become involved Consider lone worker, core services (maintenance/cleaning staff etc.), contractors, students, visitors

- Researcher (lone worker)
- Participants in cases of risk posed by known perpetrators of abuse and/or due to distress caused due to participation in a limited amount of cases
- Staff members working at services and/or community organisations

Additional Information:

relevant to the one working activity including existing control measures; information instruction and training received, supervision, security, increased lighting, emergency procedures, first aid provision etc.

Title:	Lone Working Risk Assessment Form	Number:	PRSG22.4 v2	Issue date:	24 Nov 2015	Page Number:	Page 4 of 5
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Researcher has extensive experience working with individuals with challenging behaviour; this includes extensive lone working in often rapidly changing and volatile environments.

Assessment carried out by	Name:	Jessica Wild
	Signature:	
	Date:	07/06/2017
Names of person(s) involved in lone working	Name:	Jessica Wild
	Signature:	
	Date:	07/06/2017
Name of responsible officer e.g. PI, Safety Supervisor, etc.	Name:	
	Signature:	
	Date:	

[ABOUT THE PROJECT](#)
[PROJECT AIMS](#)
[HOW TO TAKE PART](#)
[ABOUT YOUR DATA](#)
[PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP](#)
[CONTACT](#)

Project websites

<https://thebridgesforwomenproject.wordpress.com/> (PG1 and PG2)

THE BRIDGES FOR WOMEN PROJECT

ABOUT THE PROJECT PROJECT AIMS HOW TO TAKE PART ABOUT YOUR DATA
PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP CONTACT

NOW RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS & PROJECT ADVISORS

About the project

The Bridges for Women Project is a participatory study examining work in the UK aimed at awareness about violence against women, with a specific focus on domestic abuse. Through speaking to those who have personal experience of violence or abuse, as well as those who are involved in professional work, activism or campaigning, the project aims to understand how prevention efforts can be improved in order to reduce prevalence rates. It is a PhD project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and is based at the University of Leeds.

[EXIT SITE NOW](#)

TAKING PART IN THE STUDY

[Information for victim-survivors](#)
[Information for professionals](#)
[Information for Project Advisors](#)
[CLICK TO PARTICIPATE](#)

<https://thebridgesprojectblog.wordpress.com/> (PG3)

THE BRIDGES PROJECT

ABOUT THE PROJECT PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

NOW RECRUITING STUDY PARTICIPANTS

About the project

The Bridges Project is a participatory study examining work in the UK aimed at preventing or raising awareness about violence against women, with a specific focus on domestic abuse. Through speaking to those who have experience of violence or abuse, as well as those who are involved in 'frontline' intervention work, activism or campaigning, the project aims to understand how prevention efforts can be improved in order to reduce prevalence rates. It is a PhD project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and is based at the University of Leeds.

PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP

Would you be willing to share your ideas and opinions about how the project is run? Are you interested in being part of a research study or project planning?

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

From: Jessica Wild [<mailto:J.L.Wild@leeds.ac.uk>]
Sent:
To:
Subject: Domestic abuse prevention study (PG1 & PG2)

Dear xxx

I hope you're well; I am contacting about a study I am conducting. I am a PhD researcher with a professional background working in women's specialist services and I conducting a study regarding domestic prevention and reduction. The study uses feminist approaches and is survivor-led as far as possible and will therefore entail speaking to victim-survivors themselves, as well as frontline practitioners/staff, in order to obtain their perspectives and opinions regarding prevention and support interventions, as well as regarding individual experience. I therefore wondered whether this is something your service may be interested in being a part of.

In brief, participation would include;

- Women service users taking part in an informal, confidential interview and/or focus group
- Staff members participating in an informal, confidential interview and/or focus group

I am also looking for women victim-survivors/service users who may be interested in being a project advisor on the study; this would entail attending about 4 informal meetings to discuss the planning and running of the project, as well an opportunity to be part of the analysis and final write up.

I know things are very busy so in all cases, I will work as flexibly as possible to accommodate any specific service or individual participant needs, and I will try to minimise the amount of disruption caused to the service, service-users and/or staff. All participants will have also any costs reimbursed. Further details of the study can be found on the project website: www.thebridgesforwomenproject.wordpress.com.

I look forward to hearing from you,

All the best

Jessica

Jessica Wild

Doctoral Researcher
Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies (CIGS)
School of Sociology & Social Policy
University of Leeds
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS2 9JT

From: Jessica Wild [<mailto:J.L.Wild@leeds.ac.uk>]

Sent:

To:

Subject: Domestic abuse study (PG3)

Dear xxx

RE: The Bridges Project

I am a PhD researcher with professional experience of working in the social and VAWG sector in London and I conducting a study regarding women/men alliance building and domestic abuse in the UK. I am specifically interested in the strategic and practical participation of men in violence against women prevention and awareness raising activities. I am therefore very keen to talk to people such as yourself in order to obtain your perspective regarding this type of work. I wondered therefore whether this is something you may be willing to participate in, given your significant work in this area?

Participation would include participation in either a one-off interview and/or focus group. Interviews can take place via Skype or similar if preferable, and I can be as flexible as possible in order to accommodate organisational/project specific needs. Further information regarding the study can be found on the project website as follows: www.thebridgesprojectblog.wordpress.com.

Please also feel free to contact me with any queries or concerns you may have.

I look forward to hearing from you,

All the best

Jessica

Jessica Wild

Doctoral Researcher
Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies (CIGS)
School of Sociology & Social Policy
University of Leeds
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS2 9JT
Tel: 07948498081



WOMEN INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY

We are currently looking for women 18 and over, from all backgrounds, with personal experience of domestic abuse/violence, who would be willing to take part in an informal 60-90 minute interview.

Have you experienced abuse or violence from an intimate partner?

Would you be willing to share your story in a confidential setting with a female university researcher with professional and personal experience of domestic abuse?

If you are interested in taking part, or if you would like more information please go to the project website

www.thebridgesforwomenproject.wordpress.com

✉ thebridgesproject@protonmail.com OR call/text*: 07790793716

Feel free to send a text message with your details requesting a call from the researcher. The researcher will then call you back at a time convenient for you.

All contributions will remain completely confidential and your identity will be kept anonymous. You will be compensated for your time and any travel and childcare costs will be reimbursed.



THE BRIDGES FOR WOMEN PROJECT

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this study. This sheet contains information about the project and what taking part will involve. Please take the time to read this information before deciding to participate and inform Jessica Wild (researcher and study organiser) if you have any questions, or if you would like more information.

About the study and purpose of the research

The Bridges for Women Project is a survivor-led study which examines work in the UK aimed at preventing or raising awareness about violence against women, with a focus on domestic abuse. The project aims to understand how prevention efforts can be improved to reduce prevalence rates, particularly through the inclusion of (non-perpetrating) men as 'allies' or partners, in this type of work. The study uses feminist approaches and is underpinned by the belief that violence against women is a widespread social problem for which there is a collective responsibility to address. The study will last for approximately 1 year, with expected completion in September 2018.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been invited to take part because you have disclosed some personal experience of domestic abuse. The researcher is interested in the opinions and perspectives of women who have experienced domestic abuse/violence because they are best placed to provide an insight into how prevention efforts could be improved. They are also well placed to talk about the impact men's participation in prevention work may have for victim-survivors and the services they use. Approximately 25 women victim-survivors will be included in the study.

What will taking part involve?

Participation will involve taking part in one or two informal interviews with an experienced female university researcher, and or a focus group with other women who have similar experiences. The interviews and focus groups will last approximately 60-90 minutes. You can choose which activities you participate in. The first interview will use a narrative style and will be opportunity for you to talk about your experiences without interruption, although the researcher can help you identify the things you most want to talk about. The researcher is interested in hearing about anything you think is important regarding your personal experiences. The second interview or focus group will entail a series of simple open ended questions about your experiences including how you think we can best tackle domestic abuse. There is no 'right' answer to the questions and you are encouraged to talk about the things that are important and relevant to you. Your contributions will be used to improve violence against women prevention, develop support services for other victim-survivors, and/or policy in the UK.

Are there any disadvantages or advantages of taking part?

There are no expected disadvantages associated with taking part in this study however given the nature of the study and your experiences, your safety and security (as well as that of any children in your care), is considered paramount and all reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that there is no risk posed to you (or any children). If you are distressed at any stage, as a result of taking part, please let the researcher know, who will help you to access further support. While there are no immediate benefits from participating in the study, it will provide you an opportunity to voice your opinions which will shape this study and could lead to better prevention work in the UK.

Am I required to take part?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are not required to participate if you do not wish to. You may withdraw from the study at any time and you do not have to explain why.



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Consent & confidentiality

If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign a separate consent form, outlining the terms of your consent. Everything you share will remain confidential and your identity will be kept anonymous.

Information that could be used to identify you, another participant and/or a service you are working with, will be changed and anonymised to protect your identity and ensure your safety.

Safeguarding

If you disclose information during the interview which indicates; (i) you intend to harm yourself or another person, or (ii) that a vulnerable adult/child is at risk of harm which has not been acted upon, the researcher will report these concerns to the service manager or other relevant authority, so that the necessary safeguarding steps can be taken. If this happens the researcher will discuss this with you first. There are no other circumstances in which confidentiality will be broken.

About your data

The information you provide will be made available to you during all stages of the study so that you can check that it is an accurate representation of your contributions. There will also be a victim-survivor project advisory group in place; this group will have an advisory role throughout the study.

Data storage

The data produced during this study will be stored and used in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998), the Human Rights Act, as well as the University of Leeds code of practice on Data Protection. The anonymised data will not be shared with anyone apart from the study supervisor (listed at the end of this document) and the final thesis is not intended for publication. In the event that all or part of the research is made publically available, you will be informed.

Will I be recorded and how will the recordings be used?

The interviews will be audio recorded using basic recording equipment. You will be asked for your consent to be recorded, before the interview begins. The audio recordings made during this study will only be used for analysis. They will not be used in any other way without your prior consent, and no-one outside of this project will have access to the original recordings.

What if I change my mind or want to withdraw from the study?

If you wish to withdraw your contributions after you have participated in an interview, you may do so at any stage, up until 01/07/2018. After this date, it will may not be possible to withdraw your data.

Ethics approval and study funding

This study has been reviewed by the ESSL, Environment and LUBS (AREA) Faculty Research Ethics Committee and has received favourable ethical opinion as of 04th October 2017. It is a PhD project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and sponsored by the University of Leeds.

Study organisers and contact details for further information

Jessica Wild (doctoral researcher)

✉: j.l.wild@leeds.ac.uk or
thebridgesproject@protonmail.com

☎ Phone: 07790793716

www.thebridgesforwomenproject.wordpress.com

Dr Karen Throsby (Study Supervisor)

Email: k.throsby@leeds.ac.uk

Address: Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies, School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, West Yorkshire

Thank you for taking the time to read this information



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS





THE BRIDGES FOR WOMEN PROJECT

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

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About the study and purpose of the research

The Bridges for Women Project is a survivor-led study which examines work in the UK aimed at preventing or raising awareness about violence against women, with a focus on domestic abuse. Through speaking to victim-survivors as well as those working to prevent violence against women, the project aims to understand how prevention efforts can be improved to reduce prevalence rates, particularly through the inclusion of (non-perpetrating) men as 'allies' or partners, in this type of work. The study uses feminist approaches and is underpinned by the belief that violence against women is a widespread social problem for which there is a collective responsibility to address. The study will last for approximately 1 year, with expected completion in September 2018.

Why have I been invited to participate?

The study is interested in the opinions and perspectives of 'frontline' workers and practitioners supporting victim-survivors therefore you have been invited to participate in this study because you work with people who have present or past experiences of domestic violence or other forms of violence against women. Approximately 25 workers/practitioners will be invited to participate in the study, all of whom will be working in similar types of women's services and organisations aimed at addressing violence against women.

What will taking part involve?

Participation will involve taking part in one/two informal interviews with an experienced female university researcher, and or a focus group with other women working in similar types of services or organisations supporting people with experiences of domestic abuse or violence. The interviews and focus groups will last approximately 60-90 minutes. You can choose which activities you participate in. The first interview will use a narrative style and will be opportunity for you to talk about your experiences without interruption, although the researcher can help you identify the things you most want to talk about. The researcher is interested in hearing about anything you think is important regarding your experience or work. The second interview or focus group will entail a series of simple open ended questions about your experiences including how you think we can best tackle domestic abuse. There is no 'right' answer to the questions and you are encouraged to talk about the things that are important and relevant to you. Your contributions will be used to improve violence against women prevention, develop support services for other victim-survivors, and/or policy development in the UK.

Are there any disadvantages or advantages of taking part?

There are no foreseeable disadvantages associated with taking part in this study however given the nature of the study and the service you work in, the safety and security of both you, and your clients, is considered paramount. All reasonable steps will be taken in order to ensure that there is no risk posed to you or the clients accessing your service or organisation. While there are no immediate benefits from participating in the study, it will provide you an opportunity to voice your opinions which could lead to better prevention work in the UK as well as better outcomes for victim-survivors.

Am I required to take part?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are not required to participate if you do not wish to. You may withdraw from the study at any time and you do not have to explain why.



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Consent & confidentiality

If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign a separate consent form, outlining the terms of your consent. Everything you share will remain confidential and your identity will be kept anonymous.

Information that could be used to identify you, another participant, client and/or a service you are working with, will be changed and anonymised to protect your identity and ensure your safety.

Safeguarding

If you disclose information during the interview which indicates; (i) you intend to harm yourself or another person, or (ii) that a vulnerable adult/child is at risk of harm which has not been acted upon, the researcher will report these concerns to the service manager or other relevant authority, so that the necessary safeguarding steps can be taken. If this happens the researcher will discuss this with you first. There are no other circumstances in which confidentiality will be broken.

About your data

The information you provide will be made available to you during all stages of the study so that you can check that it is an accurate representation of your contributions. There will also be a victim-survivor project advisory group in place; this group will have an advisory role throughout the study.

Data storage

The data produced during this study will be stored and used in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998), the Human Rights Act, as well as the University of Leeds code of practice on Data Protection. The anonymised data will not be shared with anyone apart from the study supervisor (listed at the end of this document) and the final thesis is not intended for publication. In the event that all or part of the research is made publically available, you will be informed.

Will I be recorded and how will the recordings be used?

The interviews will be audio recorded using basic recording equipment. You will be asked for your consent to be recorded, before the interview begins. The audio recordings made during this study will only be used for analysis. They will not be used in any other way without your prior consent, and no-one outside of this project will have access to the original recordings.

What if I change my mind or want to withdraw from the study?

If you wish to withdraw your contributions after you have participated in an interview, you may do so at any stage, up until 01/07/2018. After this date, it will may not be possible to withdraw your data.

Ethics approval and study funding

This study has been reviewed by the ESSL, Environment and LUBS (AREA) Faculty Research Ethics Committee and has received favourable ethical opinion as of 04th October 2017. It is a PhD project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and sponsored by the University of Leeds.

Study organisers and contact details for further information

Jessica Wild (doctoral researcher)

✉: j.l.wild@leeds.ac.uk or
thebridgesproject@protonmail.com

☎ Phone: 07790793716

www.thebridgesprojectblog.wordpress.com

Dr Karen Throsby (Study Supervisor)

Email: k.throsby@leeds.ac.uk

Address: Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies, School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, West Yorkshire

Thank you for taking the time to read this information



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS



THE BRIDGES FOR WOMEN PROJECT

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The Bridges for Women Project is a survivor-led study which examines work in the UK aimed at preventing or raising awareness about violence against women, with a focus on domestic abuse. Through speaking to victim-survivors as well as those actively working to prevent violence against women, the project aims to understand how prevention efforts can be improved to reduce prevalence rates, particularly through the participation of (non-perpetrating) men in this type of work. The study uses feminist approaches and is underpinned by the belief that violence against women is a widespread social problem for which there is a collective responsibility to address. The study will last for approximately 1 year, with expected completion in September 2018.

Why have I been invited to participate?

The study explores the concept of coalition building between women and men to address violence against women, with men positioned as social justice partners or 'allies'. The researcher would therefore like to hear the opinions and perspectives of those men who are actively involved in work, activism or campaigning aimed at preventing or raising awareness about violence against women. Approximately 10-15 men will be invited to take part.

What will taking part involve?

Participation will involve taking part in one/two informal interviews with an experienced female university researcher, and or a focus group with other likeminded men, involved in similar types of work or activism. The interviews and focus groups will last approximately 60-90 minutes. You can choose which activities you participate in. During the interview/focus group, you will be asked a series of open ended questions about your experiences and motivation for doing this type of work. There is no 'right' answer to the questions and you are encouraged to talk about the things that are important and relevant to you. Your contributions will be used to improve violence against women prevention in the UK.

Are there any disadvantages or advantages of taking part?

There are no foreseeable disadvantages associated with taking part in this study however given the nature of the study and the work you are involved in, the safety and security of you and other participants, is considered paramount and all reasonable steps will be taken in order to ensure that there is no risk posed to you. While there are no immediate benefits from participating in the study, it will provide you an opportunity to voice your opinions which could lead to better prevention work in the UK.

Am I required to take part?

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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

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☎ Phone: 07790793716

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Dr Karen Throsby (Study Supervisor)

Email: k.throsby@leeds.ac.uk

Address: Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies, School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, West Yorkshire

Thank you for taking the time to read this information



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS


The Bridges Project

Add your initials next to the statement if you agree

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
I understand that I do not have to answer any particular question or questions, if I do not wish to do so, and can instead simply decline without explanation.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and any negative consequences. I understand that I may withdraw my data up until 01/07/2018; after this date it will not be possible to withdraw from the study.	
I understand I may contact Jessica Wild (j.l.wild@leeds.ac.uk) in order to withdraw from the study. In the event that I withdraw, all data already produced will not be used in the study, and will be destroyed.	
I give permission for members of the research team, including the Project Advisory Group, to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report(s) that result from the research. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential.	
I agree for the data produced with me to be stored and used in relevant future publications or research, in an anonymised format.	
I understand that other researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	
I understand that relevant sections of the data collected during the study may be looked at by auditors from the University of Leeds or from regulatory authorities where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records.	
I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the lead researcher should my contact details change.	
I agree to my data being used for secondary analysis in accordance with the above mentioned terms and conditions, as part of other studies carried out by the lead researcher Jessica Wild.	

Name of participant	
Participant signature	
Date	
Jessica Wild (lead researcher)	
Signature	
Date*	

*To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant.

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be kept with the project's main documents which must be kept in a secure location.

Project title	Document type	Version #	Date
The Bridges for Women Project	Participant consent form	5	22/05/2018

Question schedules

Narrative interviews

- a) Opening prompt (a version of one of the following):
1. Can you tell me about the circumstances leading up today?
 2. Can you tell me about the circumstances leading up to your involvement with [DVA service]/living in refuge?
 3. Can you tell me about yourself and your experiences of DVA?
- b) Closing questions:
1. Is there anything you haven't yet mentioned, that you'd like me to know before we close?
 2. Before we close, can you tell me about something you're looking forward to?
 3. Do you know where to get support or is there anything I can do to support you to access support? *

* This question was asked if I was concerned that the person is not linked in with support.

Focus group schedule

Format informed by the work of Puchta and Potter (2004) and Liljestrom (2010).

- a) Introduction questions:
1. What did you think when you heard I was coming to speak to you? (PG1 and PG2)
 2. Who else would you want in the room to hear what you have to say? Eg. Your friends, local MP, the Prime Minister, the manager of the refuge...? (PG1 and PG2)
- b) Transition questions:
1. Think about a time you received good support from someone – what did that look like? Why was it good? (PG1)
 2. Can you tell me about a case you recently worked with in which you achieved a really good outcome? (PG2)
- c) Key questions:
1. How do you feel about working with a man on this DVA program? (if applicable) (PG1)
 3. What message do you think we should be sending to people in our community about domestic abuse? (PG1 and PG2)
 2. Can you tell me about some of the priority issues for your service? Why are these important? (PG2)
 3. What would you like policy makers or the government to know about your work? (PG2)
 4. *Follow on questions asked on the basis of what the women told me.*
- d) Summary questions:
After a recap of the topics covered...
1. Is there anything we haven't discussed that you think it is important that I know?

Coding framework

Node name with sub-categories (-)	Node name with sub-categories (-)
Awareness raising & prevention	Victim-survivors (VS):
- Education	- 'authentic' / 'real' victims
Benefits, work, welfare reform & austerity	Departure & leaving-seeking
Class and/or race	(Loss of) control & self-determination
Costs, risks & discomfort	Identity
Families	Long term consequences of DA
- Children	- Understanding (types of) abuse
- Fathers	- Support (incl. social services)
- Mothers	- Survival & women's responses to DA
Feminism & Women's Movement	VS specific or complex needs issues:
- #metoo, activism, Social Justice movements	- BAME women
- Spaces & turf wars	- CJS, CPS & police involvement
Gender	- disability
- Binary & (hetero)normative gender representations	- LGBT
- Gender role stereotypes	- Mental health
Men & masculinities	- multiple barriers to inclusion
- Entrepreneurialism	- Prostitution and/or sex work
- Emotions	- Religion
- Men's role	- Substance use
- Men talking to other men	- Young women
- Motivating factors	
- Privilege & power	
- Responsibility & accountability	
- VS & women practitioner perspectives on 'engaged men'	
- 'Man saviour' & sector competitiveness	
Perpetrators	
Resistance & resilience	
Telling one's story	
- Body as signifier	
- Everyday objects as symbols	

Study participants

Please note, participants were not obligated to share all demographic information, and in some cases, it was not disclosed (indicated on the table with 'ND'). Geographical locations have been made deliberately broad to protect participant anonymity.

Participant Group 1: Women with experience of DVA						
	Name	Ethnicity	Age group	Sexuality	Disability	Location
1	Abigail	White	50-54	Lesbian	Yes	North
2	Alexis	White	35-39	Heterosexual	ND	North East
3	Anita	White	40-44	Heterosexual	ND	North
4	Ashley	White	25-29	ND	ND	North East
5	Dawn	White	45-49	Heterosexual	Yes	North
6	Fay	White	35-39	Heterosexual	ND	North
7	Heidi	White	50-54	Heterosexual	ND	North
8	Jacqueline	White	35-39	ND	ND	North
9	Jean	White	45-49	Heterosexual	ND	North
10	Kirsten	White	35-39	ND	ND	North East
11	Leah	White	35-39	Heterosexual	ND	North East
12	Louise	White	25-29	Heterosexual	ND	Midlands
13	Marie	White	55-59	Heterosexual	ND	North
14	Marion	White	55-59	ND	ND	North
15	Melanie	White	40-44	Heterosexual	ND	North
16	Melissa	White	40-44	Lesbian	ND	North
17	Pamela	White	45-49	Heterosexual	Yes	North
18	Saima	Asian	30-34	ND	ND	North
19	Sandra	White	40-44	ND	ND	North
20	Steph	White	40-44	Heterosexual	ND	North East
21	Sylvia	White	70-74	ND	ND	North East
22	Tammy	White	35-39	Heterosexual	ND	North East
23	Tanya	White	25-29	Heterosexual	ND	North East
24	Tracey	White	40-44	ND	ND	North

Participant group 2: Women 'frontline' DVA practitioners						
	Name	Ethnicity	Age Group	Sexuality	Disability	Location
1	Ali	White	50-54	ND	ND	North East
2	Amber	White	18-24	Heterosexual	ND	North
3	Angela	White	40-44	Heterosexual	ND	North East
4	Charlene	White	40-44	Heterosexual	ND	North
5	Debbie	White	50-54	Heterosexual	ND	North
6	Erin	White	ND	ND	ND	North
7	Farhana	Asian	30-34	Heterosexual	ND	North
8	Felicity	White	40-44	Heterosexual	ND	North
9	Fran	White	30-34	Heterosexual	ND	North East
10	Gemma	White	35-39	Heterosexual	ND	North East
11	Isobel	White	ND	ND	ND	North
12	Kayla	White	25-29	Heterosexual	ND	North
13	Lyndsey	White	35-39	Heterosexual	ND	North

14	Mudiwa	Black	35-39	Heterosexual	ND	North
15	Rose	White	25-29	Heterosexual	ND	North
16	Tessa	White	45-49	ND	ND	North East
17	Susan	White	50-54	Heterosexual	ND	North
18	Zara	Black	50-54	Heterosexual	ND	North

Participant group 3: 'Engaged' men incl. practitioners and campaigners (12)						
	Name	Ethnicity	Age	Sexuality	Disability	Location
1	Anton	Black	ND	ND	ND	North
2	Cameron	White	30-34	Heterosexual	ND	South East
3	Dale	White	45-49	Heterosexual	ND	North East
4	Gary	White	55-59	Heterosexual	ND	North East
5	Jacob	Black	30-34	Heterosexual	ND	South
6	Lloyd	White	35-39	Gay	ND	South
7	Nigel	White	60-64	Heterosexual	ND	North
8	Patrick	White	50-54	Heterosexual	ND	Midlands
9	Phil	White	25-29	ND	ND	North East
10	Rob	White	60-64	ND	ND	North
11	Stuart	White	40-44	Heterosexual	ND	North East
12	Trevor	Black	35-39	ND	ND	South

Transcription convention

Below is an abridged version of Jefferson's transcription notation (Jefferson, 1984), used in this research:

Symbol	Name	Use
[text on separate lines]	Square brackets	Indicates the start and end points of overlapping speech.
(.)	Micropause	A brief pause, usually less than 2 seconds.
(...)	Extended pause	A pause, lasting for at least 5 seconds or more.
ALL CAPS	Capitalized text	Indicates shouted or increased volume speech.
<u>underline</u>	Underlined text	Indicates the speaker is emphasising or stressing the speech.
(text)	Parentheses	Speech which is unclear or in doubt in the transcript.
((text))	Double Parentheses	Annotation of non-verbal activity
(?)	Question mark	Talk too obscure to transcribe