Probation Domestic Abuse Programmes:

A study of probation domestic abuse perpetrator programmes: interactive dynamics and personal perspectives.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the group dynamics of two Probation domestic abuse perpetrator programmes; the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme and Building Better Relationships, drawing on participant observation and semi structured interviews with participants and facilitators.

It is argued that perpetrator programmes involve dynamic group interactions involving emotions, interpretation and the negotiation of collective understandings of gender and identity. These processes are central in the experiences of men who attend perpetrator programmes and those who deliver them. However, they are overlooked in academic and policy discussions, which tend to focus on programme design and measures of impact.

The study suggests that men who are directed to attend domestic abuse perpetrator programmes initially perceive their attendance as a threat to their masculine identities. Consequently, they display resistance and hostility; challenging the legitimacy of their referral. However, as the programmes progress members display increasingly positive orientations. They create bonds through collective emotions and shared understandings, expressed through affection, support and humour. The research suggests that emotions are key in understanding the development, expression and impact of perpetrator group experiences.

Men's accounts show that the processes within the groups; specifically, the support provided by other participants and facilitators; enables a critical reflection of past behaviours, relationships and gendered identities. This calls for a greater consideration of 'how' interventions are delivered, and how environments that foster change can be enhanced.

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Chapter 1 Setting the scene

Introduction

This thesis is based on a qualitative study of two probation domestic abuse perpetrator intervention programmes, using participant observation (as a facilitator), and semi structured interviews. It explores how participants and facilitators interact with each other and make sense of their experiences. The dynamic processes of interaction and interpretation, by those attending and facilitating these groups, have not been subject to much attention. Most academic and policy discussions of domestic abuse perpetrator programmes have been based on re offending, changes in attitude, or interviews with partners (Bowen 2011; Bloomfield and Dixon 2015; Kelly and Westmarland 2016). Considerable debate has also revolved around the theoretical underpinning of domestic abuse programmes and 'What works?' (Gondolf 2007; Dutton 2006; Hughes 2017). These considerations are important in developing an understanding of best practice for domestic abuse programmes but do not capture the complexities of interventions as they are experienced by those who attend them or are directly involved in delivery.

Rather than attempting to examine the impact of programmes based on specific outcomes, an interpretive and constructionist approach is used to explore how meanings and understandings are produced and negotiated by participants and facilitators of domestic abuse programmes. It is argued that facilitators and participants actively create group experiences through interactions with each other, forming mutual understandings and collective identities. The groups are therefore referred to as ecologies with their own social order, consisting of informal rules which constrain and govern those who are subject to them. Drawing on the work of Randall Collins (2004; 2008) group experiences and interactions are understood as having rich emotional content. During the participant observations, the groups

emerged as sites of emotional exchanges, and shared emotional experiences. Similarly, emotions were central in the accounts of facilitators and participants during semi structured interviews; it was through emotions that people understood and gave meaning to their experiences.

The interactive processes within groups do not take place in isolation. Rather they are affected by the biographies of those involved and broader ideas about gender and domestic abuse. As such the rules underpinning group interactions are highly gendered, involving the performance and negotiation of gendered roles and beliefs (Connell 2005). The group experience is also understood as being affected by the organisational culture in which programmes are delivered and by the programme design. Nevertheless, it is argued that the dynamic relational factors are of central importance and these have been neglected in understandings of group-based programmes generally, and domestic abuse perpetrators programmes specifically. It is through examining these aspects of domestic abuse programmes that this thesis contributes to criminological and sociological knowledge. More specifically, it is emphasised that attention to the dynamics of group delivery has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of domestic abuse programmes in their capacity to achieve their fundamental aims of reducing violence and abuse towards women and children. As such, there are implications for the delivery and design of domestic abuse programmes, and the training and support of facilitators. Fundamentally, it is asserted the programme effectiveness is dependent on facilitators being skilled in navigating the defensive practices, resistance and shame, typically exhibited by participants. Through this, participants are more likely to be enabled to explore the masculine identities, behaviours and difficulties, associated with abuse. Additionally, it is hoped that this thesis draws attention the importance of practitioners being attentive to the complex emotional experiences of participants, in

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order to promote positive engagement, on which programme effectiveness depends.

In the remainder of this introductory chapter, the overall contours of the thesis are set out.

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This introductory chapter sets out the overall contours of the thesis. It describes my personal interest in perpetrator programmes and the overarching aims. The two programmes on which the research is based are introduced and the structure of the thesis is described.

Background to the study

This thesis reflects a long-standing interest and involvement in the delivery of probation domestic abuse programmes. This commenced in 2004 when I trained to be a facilitator for the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme, shortly after qualifying as a Probation Officer, and early after its roll out as a Home Office approved intervention (Bloomfield and Dixon 2015). I have continued to be involved in the facilitation of programmes since 2004, despite ceasing permanent employment within the probation service in 2012, when I began working as a lecturer at London Metropolitan University.

Through involvement in the delivery of perpetrator programmes, I became interested in the way that men interacted with each other and engaged in presentational management (Goffman 1956). It struck me that the exchanges between men were important, complex and full of meaning, although had not received much academic exploration. I also noticed that men's pathways through the programmes they were attending, tended to follow similar patterns. Typically, they would demonstrate hostility at the start, but quickly develop more positive orientations, to the extent that they indicated that the programmes had significantly enhanced their relationships and broader lives. Additionally, I noticed that the men

engaged in on-going expressions and negotiations of masculine identities, which reflected theoretical discussions on gender and gendered performance (Connell 2005; West and Zimmerman 1987).

My involvement in the delivery of domestic abuse programmes spanned IDAP being phased out (amid criticism of its effectiveness and theoretical underpinning) and replaced with Building Better Relationships. I observed that the patterns noted above were consistent across both programmes, despite their divergent content and theoretical premises (Hughes 2017). This suggested that situational and interactive factors were at least as important as the content. This contrasts with broader debates about the most appropriate programme design for working with perpetrators. These observations reflected my previous research interests, which revolved around relationships between probation staff and those that they supervise (Hughes 2012; 2014).

Aims

As discussed later in chapter 3, the research process was inductive. It was not structured through a rigid set of research questions or objectives. Instead, the direction of the thesis was determined by the data that emerged during the research. Nevertheless, I identified several overarching aims to focus the collection of data and situate it within academic discussion.

- To explore the perspectives and emotions that men experience at the start of probation domestic abuse perpetrator programmes
- To examine how group interactions and processes impact on the experiences of men on perpetrator programmes

- To explore how ideas about gender impact on the perceptions of men attending perpetrator programmes
- To explore the perspectives of facilitators and the strategies they develop to manage programmes
- To explore how group-based programmes can foster change in attitudes towards masculine identities, behaviour and relationships

The Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme and Building Better Relationships

The research is based on the Integrated Domestic Abuse programme (IDAP) and Building Better Relationships (BBR), with the latter replacing the former in 2013 (Bloomfield and Dixon 2015). Both programmes were approved by the Home Office through an accreditation process (Raynor and Rex 2007) and designed to promote change in heterosexual men with histories of violence towards intimate partners.

IDAP was accredited by the Home Office in 2004 and delivered in probation services across England and Wales, until it was phased out in 2013, and replaced with BBR. IDAP was based on the influential Duluth perpetrator programme (Bowen 2011; Harne and Radford 2008; Westmarland 2015). As such, it was informed by an explicitly feminist theoretical base which views domestic violence as bound up with patriarchy and male entitlement (Pence and Paymar 1993). Domestic abuse is understood as consisting of a range of strategies used by men to exert control over intimate partners. These are represented on the influential power and control wheel (appendix 1), which is based on evidence from support groups for women who have been subject to intimate partner violence. Within this framework strategies of control include emotional abuse, intimidation, isolation, using children as tools of manipulation, and use of male privilege. These behaviours are understood as being reinforced by physical and sexual violence. These may not occur frequently but are

used to re assert control when male authority is challenged. The beliefs that underpin violence in relationships are understood as learned and reflected in misogynistic ideas regarding innate gender differences and the legitimacy of gendered roles. Abusive behaviours and the beliefs that support them are challenged in the programme during the completion of modules related to each section of the wheel. Participants are encouraged to recognise the intentionality of their behaviour and its association with learnt beliefs about gender. They are also encouraged to recognise that their controlling behaviour undermines positive relationships, based on intimacy and equality. Additionally, the participants learn strategies to avoid and de-escalate situations in which abuse can occur. For example, ‘time outs’ and ‘positive self-talk’ are discussed and practised within sessions.

The Duluth model places emphasis on the tendency of perpetrators to create narratives which play down the significance of their behaviours and their responsibility. Reflecting a large body of practice and academic analysis of domestic abuse perpetrators, the Duluth programme gives attention to the way that men deny, minimise, and justify their behaviour (Pence and Paymar 1993; Kelly and Westmarland 2016; Harne and Radford 2008). Men on the groups will typically reject the accounts of those that have been subjected to their abuse and use words like ‘only’ and ‘just’ to portray their conduct as benign. They often externalise responsibility by emphasising what they perceive as provocation, or by describing their actions as self-defence, even in circumstances where substantial injuries have been caused to their partners or ex partners. These patterns are understood as part of a pattern of control and are therefore given explicit attention. Duluth style programmes therefore challenge men’s narratives of violence and the beliefs which underpin them, while attempting to foster responsibility.

Reflecting the Duluth model, IDAP consisted of nine core modules, each reflecting a section of the wheel, with the addition of a module on sexual respect. Each module consisted of three session. The first introduced the form of abuse being examined, the second required men to provide examples of when they had demonstrated this form of abuse, and the third introduced non-abusive strategies.

While IDAP was based on the Duluth perpetrator programme, it was also a clear product of the 'What works' initiative, which significantly influenced probation practice in England and Wales during the first decade of the 21st century (Canton and Dominey 2018). This development marked a shift away from previous pessimism about the capacity of rehabilitative programmes to have any discernible impact on re offending, associated with Martinson's (1974) influential review. This was often presented as suggesting that 'nothing works' (although Martinson was far less categorical than this phrase suggests). The 'What works' initiative reflected evidence acquired through meta analytical reviews of a substantial number of programmes. It suggested that interventions could be effective where they include several elements. Specifically, effective programmes were identified as being underpinned by cognitive behavioural psychology. This approach views deviance as located within the individual, with behaviour being understood as learnt and reinforced by thoughts and feelings (McGuire 2000). Programmes underpinned by this approach therefore target the thoughts that reinforce deviance.

Other key elements identified within the 'What works' literature emphasise that the intensity of the intervention should reflect the level of risk posed, and that factors that are evidentially linked to offending are targeted, as opposed to the issues which are a priority for those subject to interventions. Effective programmes were also identified as having a high degree of 'programme integrity'. This has been described as ensuring that programmes are delivered in accordance with their design, and do not deviate based on the preferences of facilitators or the priorities of the

participants (Chapman and Hough 1998; Underdown 1998). However, ‘What works’ research also emphasised that effectiveness is dependent on being ‘responsive’ to the specific circumstances and learning styles of participants. This created tensions with the emphasis on integrity, and its association with standardisation (Phillips 2015; Hughes 2014).

IDAP can be understood as an attempt to incorporate a feminist approach into probation practice, alongside meeting the requirements of the ‘What works’ initiative. These frameworks can be understood as involving contradictions and tensions (Bowen 2011). Specifically, the Duluth programme locates domestic violence within a gendered social and cultural context, which contrasts with the emphasis placed on individual dysfunction within other ‘What works’ programmes (Laursen and Henriksen 2018).

IDAP and the broader Duluth programme have been subject to criticisms based on their feminist theoretical base, style of delivery and limited impact (Dutton 2006; Dutton and Corvo 2006; Dutton and White 2013). The focus on control within Duluth style programmes has been associated with a failure to recognise or respond to the complex and diverse factors which underpin domestic abuse. Critics of Duluth have asserted that abusive behaviour might reflect trauma, poor childhood attachments, insecurities, substance misuse and fear, rather than male entitlement (Morran 2013). Men may express patriarchal attitudes, but this does not mean that these are the fundamental cause of the behaviour. Within this understanding, the denial, minimisation and blame exhibited by perpetrators is likely to be associated with ‘shame’ and cognitive dissonance in response to the harms that they have caused, rather than reflecting beliefs that support the acceptability of abuse. Related to these concerns, the Duluth programme was criticised for being too confrontational, rather than therapeutic, and for failing to acknowledge personal difficulties experienced by participants.

These criticisms emerged within more general cynicism about the potential value of programmes delivered under the 'What works' initiative. Many commentators, including some who had been proponents of early cognitive behavioural programmes, emphasised their failure to actively engage participants or reflect their individual circumstances. These arguments were used to explain high levels of programme attrition and their limited impact on offending (Porporino 2010). These criticisms led to revisions in practice guidance and programme designs. The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) developed and implemented the 'Offender Engagement Programme' (Rex 2012) which attempted to respond to criticisms and incorporate into practice, academic attention to 'desistance'. This emphasises the role of individualised relationships between practitioners and service users, encouraging service users to take ownership of interventions, and developing a positive identity which is not linked to offending or destructive behaviour (Maruna 2001; McNeill 2006). These ideas posed substantial challenges to previous themes in probation practice, which emphasised the content of interventions over relationships, and standardisation over individualised practice. The implementation of these strands of thinking required practitioners to make professional judgements to meet the needs of individuals under supervision and foster positive relationships.

Initially the Offender Engagement programme was targeted at staff who held offender management responsibilities over those subject to statutory supervision. However, its influence soon extended to programmes of intervention, which were consequently subject to revisions (Travers 2012). Within this context, BBR was accredited in 2013 and replaced IDAP as the default intervention for domestic abuse perpetrator programmes within English and Welsh probation services. BBR purported to incorporate ideas from literature on desistance and demonstrated a shift away from feminist informed practice. Rather than being based on a model of

power and control, BBR uses the 'General Aggression Model' (Anderson and Bushman 2002) as a framework to help men understand their histories of violence within relationships. This situates violence within a complex set of factors including learning history, personality, situational factors and substance abuse. Reflecting the on-going influence of cognitive behavioural approaches, BBR also explores the thoughts and emotions associated with violence. BBR involves the promotion of 'mindfulness' as a method of improving emotional management: exercises within each session aim to develop this skill. BBR incorporates ideas about the promotion of a positive identity through requiring participants to create 'identity maps' within sessions, which encourage an awareness of different aspects of their identity and their relationships with others. BBR is far less direct in challenging the participants, and unlike IDAP and Duluth, has a very limited focus on previous instances of abuse.

BBR consists of four core modules, each consisting of six sessions. The first involves an introduction to the key concepts of the programme. The second focuses on thinking patterns, the third on emotions, and the fourth looks explicitly at relationships.

Who was studied?

This thesis attempts to consider the perspectives and interactions of both those who are directed to attend the group, and those who facilitate them, through participant observation and semi structured interviews. The term 'participants' is used to designate the men who are directed to attend, and the term 'facilitators' is used to refer to the staff who are employed to deliver the programmes. This separation is used for clarity; however, it obscures the complexity of groups processes. The facilitators are also participants and the separation of roles is dynamic and negotiated within the group room, rather than fixed.

Most of the participants were directed to attend the programmes by the court as part of a condition of a Community Order, or Suspended Sentence of Imprisonment. Some attended as a condition of their licence, following release from a custodial sentence. Of the latter, only those who had received a lengthy prison sentence, with a substantial period of supervision under licence following release, were eligible for the programmes. This is because of the length of time required to complete either BBR or IDAP. The men had been convicted of a range of offences including assault, harassment, threats and breaches of restraining orders. A significant proportion of the men's offences involved threats via text message or social media platforms. Some had convictions for serious physical violence including attempted strangulation, rape and assault occasioning grievous bodily harm. There was a diversity in the quantity of offences among the men, as well as the type. Several had substantial lists of previous convictions, while for others their referral to the programme had followed their first appearance in court. It is important to note however, that while convictions were used as an indication of risk, they cannot be taken as a clear representation of the histories of behaviour among domestic abuse perpetrators. Reflecting a global picture instances of abuse tend not to be reported (Gadd 2017; Garcia-Morena et al 2005; Westmarland 2015). Even when they are reported, they do not lead consistently to conviction, and the category of offence is often reduced by the Crown Prosecution Service (Hughes and Jenner 2018; Bowen 2011).

Most of the facilitators were employed by the supervising probation agency within a 'programmes team'. They were required to deliver a portfolio of group-based interventions for different offender groups. Each programme required specific training, during which facilitators had to demonstrate their competence against set criteria. None of the staff in the programmes team held specific professional qualifications. However, some of the staff who I interviewed and observed

facilitating programmes were primarily employed within other roles within the probation service. These included an offender manager, a court officer and a sex offender specialist. These members of staff delivered abuse programmes sessionally rather than as part of the programmes team.

Structure of the thesis

Chapter 2 sets the theoretical perimeters of the thesis and situates it within wider literature, theory and academic discussion. This study sits within a cross section of various strands of academic discussion, including domestic abuse, probation practice and gender. Rather than attempting to provide a comprehensive examination of all relevant literature, the contours of theory, literature and policy debates are discussed to frame the analysis. The chapter starts by exploring the symbolic interactionist linage, with specific discussion of the work of Erving Goffman (1956; 1963) and Randall Collins (2004; 2008). Goffman's use of the notion of stigma is used to frame the sense of shame that men experience following their referral to domestic abuse programmes, and the threat that it poses to their sense of self. His discussion of the 'presentation of self' is also utilised to illustrate the social performances involved within perpetrator programmes. Collin's notions of 'mutual focus' and 'emotional energy' are identified as a way of making sense of the way that hostility within group interactions reduces as the programmes progress. This framework is used to understand the groups as sites of emotional exchange, which often involve bonds and collective emotional experiences. The chapter then moves on to outline the centrality of academic and theoretical discussions of gender in understanding male programmes (Connell 2005; Messerschmidt 2018). The historical and organisational context of the two perpetrator programmes is further explored and it is noted that they cannot be understood without reference to feminist literature and policy initiatives. Finally, changes in probation practice are briefly

explored, with discussion of the 'What works' literature and the desistance paradigm.

Chapter 3 explores the methodological approach and discusses the challenges involved in the collection and analysis of data. The research is underpinned by an inductive approach to the generation of knowledge; informed by Glasser and Straus's influential notion of 'grounded theory' (1967). As such the data collection did not aim to test a clear theory and there was an attempt to avoid assumptions in the collection of data. The epistemological and ontological positions are set out as interpretive and constructionist, reflecting the symbolic interactionist and feminist frameworks employed.

The chapter moves on to describe why participant observation and semi structured interviews were employed as methods of research and discusses how practical and ethical dilemmas were considered and addressed.

Chapter 4 introduces and explores the resistance that the men attending probation domestic violence groups express. It emphasises that men attending programmes typically experience a powerful sense of shame. Referral to domestic abuse perpetrator programmes is presented as a threat to the masculine identities that the men wish to convey. This interpretation is explored alongside the strategies of resistance employed by the participants. Goffman's (1963) discussions of 'stigma' and 'the presentation of self' (1956) are employed as are theoretical discussions about gender (Connell 2005) to illuminate why the programme is experienced as a threat to the gendered identity of participants.

Chapter 5 explores how the participants typically reduce their hostility and start to demonstrate positive orientations to the programmes, the other men and the facilitators. The men form bonds and display more relaxed behaviours during interactions within group sessions. This chapter draws on Randall Collins' (2004)

use of ‘mutual focus’ and ‘emotional energy’ to understand how the participants develop shared understandings and collective emotions, through which they can manage the perceived threat to their identities. It is emphasised that the group can be understood as a gendered ecology, which influences and restrains the conduct, emotions and understandings of participants. Ideas about gender are treated as central in understanding how the men interact with each other and negotiate collective understandings.

Chapter 6 explores the role of facilitators within the programmes, from the perspectives of facilitators themselves and participants. It is emphasised that as with the participants, facilitators are engaged in an interactive process through which understandings and identities are negotiated and performed. Effective facilitators understand the importance of relationships, have an awareness of the resistance the men are likely to exhibit, and support men in developing positive self-identities. The accounts of participants give a clear sense that their relationships with facilitators is key in enabling them to engage with and benefit from programme attendance.

Chapter 7 explores the potential of the programmes being studied, and similar interventions, to foster longer-term changes in behaviour. It is acknowledged that although this thesis is more about the process than impact, an analysis of perpetrator programmes should not be separated entirely from its capacity to foster change. The participants understood the programme as having a substantial effect on their sense of themselves and their orientations towards intimate partners and other people who they encounter. Whilst these accounts should not be treated as reliable indicators, men’s perspectives are useful in understanding how they make sense of and understand change.

The thesis concludes by emphasising that domestic abuse perpetrator programmes need to be understood as dynamic sites of interaction, where understandings,

relationships and emotions are central in enabling participants to reflect on their behaviour, relationships and identities. Successful perpetrator programmes must recognise the importance of the interpretations of participants and the threat that participation poses. The key themes identified by facilitators and participants were the relationships between participants, changes in emotional responses to situations and reflections on gendered identities. These appeared to be more significant than the specific content of the programmes.

Chapter 2 Situating the research

Introduction

This thesis offers an understanding of the interpersonal dynamics of probation domestic abuse perpetrator programmes; specifically, IDAP and BBR. Discussions of domestic abuse programmes, and other probation interventions, have tended to focus on their impact, through follow up evaluations based on re offending or interviews with participants. Additionally, the content, design and theoretical underpinnings of domestic abuse programmes has been subject to debate. There has been a lack of attention given to dynamic processes within group-based programmes, or how individuals make sense of their experiences. Consequently, participants in probation programmes are implicitly represented as 'objects', who are susceptible to change if they are given the correct dose of treatment in the required manner (Gondolf 2007; Morran 2013). Such methodological approaches overlook their 'agency' and active interpretations are overlooked (Morran 2013). Rather than being the passive recipients of interventions, group participants are understood here as active in making sense of, interpreting and creating, a group experience. It is this caveat in academic literature and research that this thesis aims to address.

This chapter situates the thesis within broader literature and discussion. It starts by locating the study's overall theoretical framework within an interactionist and interpretivist sociological tradition. Specifically, Randall Collins' (2004) attention to the emotional content of interactions and the role of 'mutual focus' is outlined. This reflects a broader strand of literature which has emphasised the significance of emotion in understanding deviance and reactions to it (Katz 1988; Canton 2015; Jacobsen and Walklate 2019).

The chapter moves on to discuss the background and theoretical premises of the programmes being studied. It argues that an analysis of domestic abuse perpetrator work is incomplete without an acknowledgement of feminist thinking and campaigning, which has established domestic abuse and associated interventions as issues of social, political and academic interest. Feminist approaches continue to be of central relevance in understanding domestic abuse, and related responses through highlighting 'gender' as a fundamental aspect of social identity. Reflecting this, academic attention to ideas surrounding masculinity are pivotal in making sense of the interpretations and interactions which take place within group- based programmes (Connell 2005; Messerschmidt 1993; West and Zimmerman 1987).

The broad theoretical strands which inform this thesis are followed by more specific discussion of the policy, political and research context of probation domestic abuse programmes. The influence of the 'What works' agenda and the 'desistance paradigm' are considered. The work of Shadd Maruna (2001) and Fergus McNeill (2006), among others, is identified as fruitful for understanding processes of desistance and how service users make sense of change. It is noted that probation domestic abuse programmes are influenced by the organisational structure and culture of the probation service as well as by dominant ideas surrounding effective practice.

While there are some clear theoretical strands underpinning this thesis, the research has followed an inductive process in which the theory has followed the data as it has emerged. As such, while there is an overall theoretical orientation, a patchwork approach has been required, in which various strands are utilised to illuminate the data (Julie Laursen 2018 personal communication).

A symbolic interactionist framework

As stated, this thesis is located within a symbolic interactionist framework, which has a lineage to the ideas of Mead and Blumer (cited in Collins 2004). This tradition draws attention to how individuals make sense of their experiences and interact with others through the exchange of 'symbols', including language, words and gestures. Through this process of interaction, individuals are understood as developing and acting out a social identity. This contrasts with other understandings of the 'self' which view identity as emerging from within the individual.

This thesis is also influenced by Emile Durkheim (1972). Many interpretations of Durkheim would suggest that this would contradict the symbolic interactionist standpoint adopted, since his work is often associated with broad macro level social patterns, rather than micro level interactions: sociological positivism, rather than interpretivism. However, the subtleties of Durkheim's analysis are fruitful for developing an understanding of how social interactions, which are the focus of this study, are underpinned by structures. Durkheim (1972) provides a framework for understanding how social interactions are mediated by symbolic rituals, which express and create shared beliefs and collective identities. His emphasis on the distinction between 'the sacred' and 'the profane' in articulating shared beliefs is pertinent. In keeping with Durkheim's analysis, the groups which are the focus of study here are understood as involving collective expressions of identity and shared values, but in this instance, they are understood as operating in small scale interactions. Erving Goffman (1956), who himself identified as a Durkheimian, is a major influence on this thesis. Goffman draws attention to the way in which interactions between individuals are structured by informal social rules. These social rules do not have an inherent reality. Instead they are understood as being created

and negotiated during interactions between individuals. Within these social interactions, individual identities and roles are constructed and performed. A focus on the way in which identity is actively played out during group-based interactions, and especially interventions for domestic abusers, has been absent in research to date. Goffman's analysis of self -presentation is particularly pertinent for developing a theoretical framework within which these interactions might be understood.

> *When an individual is in the presence of others, there will usually be some reason for him to mobilise his activity so that it will convey an impression to others, which is in his interests to convey* (1956: 15-16).

Goffman's front and back stage identities

Goffman develops a dramaturgical analogy (1956), in which he presents a dualistic nature of the self. In this analysis, '*performers*' move between '*back stage'* and '*front stage'* arenas. This framework draws attention to how social actors plan impression management while they are in back stage spaces. This involves concealing certain aspects of the self and drawing attention to other aspects. This is pertinent for understanding the processes of group work delivery. Facilitators are likely to present a version of themselves to group participants, which may be inconsistent with their presentations 'back stage'. For example, there may be tacit acceptance of the perspectives of participants during programme delivery. When the facilitators are 'back stage', they may be more critical, cynical or derogatory. Similarly, the perpetrators present themselves differently depending on the arena. When they engage with facilitators in the group room, they may be guarded or careful to avoid statements which could be taken as contrary to the perceived expectations of the group requirements. However, they may hold discussions of a different nature in the waiting room or in other contexts.

As discussed in subsequent chapters, the group participants and facilitators were observed during this research engaging in 'back stage' planning, which contradicted 'front stage' performances. For facilitators, this included mundane aspects like how to ensure that the group does not carry on too long, as well as more profound considerations like how to manage the men on the programme and increase effectiveness. For perpetrators, the waiting room was a site where advice could be shared about what should or should not be disclosed in the group. There were often interjections by group members during sessions, when 'back stage' information was leaked. For example, when disclosures were made which were perceived as incriminating, or which might lead to negative assessments by facilitators, the participants operated as a 'team' (Goffman 1956) where members prompted each other about their 'lines'.

Several factors make '*front stage'* management particularly challenging for participants. Facilitators have access to confidential records and information from other sources, which contradict and undermine the presentations being given by participants. Therefore, participants are likely to have a sense that their self-presentation has been damaged or undermined. Goffman's notions of 'stigma' and 'spoiled identities' (1963) are therefore of central relevance. As discussed in later chapters, a core aspect of the men's experience of the programmes was that they perceived a profound sense of shame associated with attending programmes for domestic abusers. They had been referred to programmes designed for men who had been violent towards women, and experienced pressure to disclose aspects of their personal lives that were at odds with the identities that they wished to present. Consequently, the men deployed defensive practices, at first individually and then collectively, to resist the perceived threat posed by programme attendance.

Similarly, facilitators are understood as engaging in active presentational work. Facilitators face a complex task of presenting themselves as individuals, as professionals and representatives of the intervention being delivered, while balancing programme requirements and the defensive practices of participants (Hughes 2014). There are several reasons why this is particularly challenging. Men participating in perpetrator programmes are often defensive and critical of the facilitators. The facilitators are required to demonstrate positive responses to participants and inculcate engagement with the programme. They are additionally expected to avoid of collusion, retain an awareness of past abusive behaviour, and consider the likelihood of further harms being inflicted on others. They must also manage their own personal emotions and thoughts to ensure that negative reactions do not prompt further defensive behaviours from the participants.

Randall Collins on group formation and process

Building on the symbolic interactionist themes introduced above, the thesis draws explicitly on Randall Collins' (2004) interrelated notions of 'interaction ritual chains', 'emotional energy', and 'mutual focus'. Collins suggests that while Goffman's contribution to understanding the structure of interactions is enormous, the individual actor is misrepresented as primarily 'Machiavellian' (Collins 2004: 21) and rational; calculating his or her actions to maximise personal advantage. Collins argues that only some elements of interactions are rational and conscious, with a great deal of exchanges being emotional and subconscious. He suggests that within successful interactions, individuals develop an 'intersubjective', or 'mutual' focus in which emotions and understandings are shared. In these instances, individuals have a common interpretation of a situation. Drawing on the symbolic interactionist framework, and Durkheimian attention to structures, Collins emphasises that shared understandings are embedded and sustained through ritualised practices, which enhance and intensify shared emotions, leading to the

generation of ‘emotional energy’. One of the most original aspects of Collins’ analysis is that he explores how emotions within groups are shared at the physiological level when there is a collective focus and a shared understanding of an event or situation:

> *The central mechanism of interaction ritual theory is that occasions that combine a high degree of mutual focus of attention, that is, a high degree of intersubjectivity, together with a high degree of emotional entrainment - through bodily synchronisation, mutual stimulation / arousal of participant’s nervous systems - result in feelings of membership* (2004: 42).

Collins (2004) makes some central observations about group processes, which are at the core of this thesis. He argues that humans are fundamentally orientated towards cooperation and solidarity. He describes this as something which individuals are ‘hard wired’ for, using language and concepts which are normally outside of the field of the social scientists’ vocabulary. He discusses the role of ‘emotional energy’, and the Durkheimian notion of the ‘collective effervescence’, which both emanate from positive group interactions and involve the emergence of ‘combined’ or ‘shared bodily rhythms’, where individuals are carried along with the group. These resonate with the experiences of those who have participated in group-based programmes with abusive men. When commenting on the group experience, both within the group, and during accounts after completion, participants will often refer to groups as having ‘positive energy’, or ‘ a good feeling’ and will comment on the impact of these on their emotional states of being; more so than referring to changes in attitude or thinking which are the more common indexes against which interventions are measured. Expressions of feeling energised and positive were common following the completion of groups sessions. These were often expressed physically through leaps in the air, back slaps, ‘high fives’ and hugs.

As anticipated by Collins' (2004) theory of interactions, the key observation from the data is the sense of collective identity and shared emotions which tended to emerge in the group-based interventions. For those not involved in group work with abusive men, this may appear as surprising. There may be an expectation that the groups would be characterised by hostility, competition and aggression. Such an assumption would be reasonable given the histories of the men involved, their reluctance to attend and the personal difficulties they often experience. However, the display of aggression or hostility or even negative orientations was rare within the group environment. Related to this, participants employed careful strategies to avoid conflict and resolve it quickly without escalation when it occurred.

Interactions are not always characterised by mutual focus and 'emotional energy'. Many interactions 'fall flat' (Collins 2004). Within such exchanges, individuals feel drained and experience a desire to escape, rather than feeling energised by shared 'emotional energy'. Collins suggests that this is especially likely within 'forced interactions' where the rituals do not have meaning for all of those involved. This has clear resonances for domestic violence perpetrator groups where the members are directed to attend. Consequently, individual actors will be more intentional and self-conscious in their interactions, rather than natural and unconscious. The draining experience of trying to inject 'energy' into interactions is something which facilitators are familiar with. Not all groups will involve positive or shared meanings, with associated 'emotional energy'. Many group events will be experienced as draining. Expressions of fatigue, feeling 'flat' expressed through ritualistic sighs and face clutching were also common.

Randall Collins: violence and self-presentation

Collins (2004 and 2008) comments specifically on representations of violence within interactions. Given that the men on the programmes have been defined as 'violent' this is of central relevance. Collins argues that violence requires a 'narrative', to be

constructed as ‘acceptable’. Violence is culturally expected to be justified, appropriate and carried out between evenly matched actors. The participants therefore tend to present their violence within this narrative of acceptability and to support a presentation of themselves as having behaved honourably and justifiably. These understandings are supported by other literature which explores how narratives of violence are constructed (Laursen 2017). Additionally, it reflects a large body of literature which refers to perpetrators denying, minimising and justifying their behaviour (Westmarland 2015; Harne and Radford 2008; Dobash and Dobash 1992; Morran 2013; Kelly and Westmarland 2016). Men may refer to ‘the surprising strength’ of the partners who they assaulted, their own victimisation and the provocation they experienced. They will also play down or minimise their behaviour (Westmarland 2015; Rommito 2008). Violent incidents are presented not as assaults or attacks, but as physical conflicts in which both parties were, to a degree, willing participants, or in which violence was an unavoidable consequence of the situation (Laursen and Henriksen 2018).

There are clear overlaps here with Goffman’s (1956) analysis of self - presentation, and the attempt by social actors to provide audiences with a favourable definition of situations, to manage associated shame and stigma (1963). While participants will often try to present their actions as justifiable, reasonable or in self- defence, this understanding conflicts with the narrative of the programmes, which defines perpetrators as responsible for their actions, as bullying, flawed, controlling and as abusive (Laursen and Henriksen 2018). Participants in the groups studied had been arrested for an assault against a victim and then charged in a court of law. They are compelled to attend a group which is for men who have been violent towards women and are presented with material which invites them to consider the inappropriate, exploitative and harmful nature of their violence. They must therefore

navigate the threat posed to their preferred definition of their actions and the subsequent threat to their sense of self.

Gender, masculinities, domestic violence and domestic violence groups

The symbolic interactionist perspectives described above are distinctly lacking in the attention they give to gender, which is understood here as a fundamental strand of identity and social performance. Similarly, the influence of social expectations and beliefs about race, class, power and other dimensions of identity are missing. Although of central importance, these considerations are largely beyond the scope of this thesis. However, gender is fundamental in understanding interactions between heterosexual men who are placed on groups and asked to reflect on their relationships and their masculinity. Recent decades have witnessed a substantial growth of attention to maleness, masculinity and gendered identities (Connell 2005; Messerschmidt 2018; McFarlane 2013). Attention has also been given to how masculinity is performed or acted out in small scale interactions against a backdrop of cultural beliefs about gender (Edley and Wetherell 1997; West and Zimmerman 1987).

The way that gender is performed in micro interactions reflects a strand of literature which has emphasised the role of gender socialisation in establishing dominant and normative ideas about masculinity, which include: physical toughness; authority; the ability to provide financially for one's family; independence; economic or career success; not being pushed around; dominance; and heterosexuality (Connell 2005; Messerschmidt 1993; 2018). Connell (2005) has emphasised that these characteristics are actively recreated as part of a gendered global order, in which hegemonic forms of masculinity subjugate femininity and other forms of masculinity (Hammerton 1992; Gadd 2017). Within this analysis, it might be sensibly assumed that domestically abusive men are acting out a dominant form of masculinity.

However, as McFarlane (2013) has suggested, this obscures complexity. Hegemonic masculinity requires that success and dominance are achieved legitimately and within defined social rules of gender relations. Where masculinity is expressed through law breaking or the breaking of social conventions, it is understood as constituting a potential threat to men's sense of themselves. Similarly, violence against women has a complex relationship with hegemonic masculinity. Those who express masculinity and domination over women through violence experience stigma and shame (Hughes 2017).

This backdrop of ideas about masculinity is drawn on extensively in this thesis. These notions have clear resonance for understanding the dynamic interactions of groups of men; the way in which male identities are negotiated and biographical stories are presented.

Connell (2005) and Messerschmidt (2018), among others, have made substantial contributions to understanding male behaviour and interactions through a lens which highlights the significance of gender. This has been lacking in criminological response to deviance. However, criminological and sociological studies have explored collective male behaviour, albeit implicitly rather than explicitly, and as such have influenced this thesis. Notably, Albert Cohen's (1955) classic work 'Delinquent boys' includes many observations which overlap with the analysis provided here. Cohen's research participants experienced a sense of 'shame' following a perceived failure to achieve socially approved masculine goals. These goals were bound up with a failure to achieve a positive social identity, leading to '*status frustration'*. Cohen's participants negotiated collective responses to sustain an acceptable sense of themselves. The behaviours displayed by the young men in Cohen's study have many similarities to the men who are the focus of this thesis, despite being separated by several decades and living in a different continent.

Specifically, both groups of men placed value on physical toughness, invulnerability, fearlessness, sexual prowess and a resentment of authority. Paul Willis' (1977) study of working-class boys in state education also has resonances. Willis' analysis refers to the boy's use of humour, 'larking about', and collective identity as means of expressing resistance to authority and coping with poor achievement, boredom and negative judgements by others. These themes are very much in evidence in subsequent chapters and reflect more recent attention given to humour as a form of 'soft resistance' to authority and the threat to self, posed by criminal justice interventions (Laursen 2017; Sandburg and Tutenges 2018).

A brief history of domestic abuse interventions

The emergence of academic and political attention to domestic abuse is a relatively recent development. The story of its emergence as a public concern cannot be told without reference to broader discussions regarding the historical marginalisation of women, and gendered power relations, both within intimate relationships and in society generally.

Feminist scholars such as Dobash and Dobash (2000) have emphasised that women's position within marriage and relationships has been influenced by social, political and legal factors, which have served to ignore, condone or even encourage domestic violence.

> *Within marriage and the family, the use of physical force and violence has traditionally been a prerogative of men who were given authority over and granted the right to control all members of the household by a variety of means, including the use of force and violence….men were punished only*

when the violence was excessive, a flagrant outrage and /or a public nuisance (2000: 189).

Dobash and Dobash, along with other feminist scholars (Stanko 1985; Kelly 1988; Garcia-Moreno et al 2013) emphasise that in most societies, men have been able to use violence to enforce gendered expectations regarding domestic work and authority within the family. Where domestic abuse has been reported to the police, the practice has been not to prosecute. Domestic abuse has been perceived as behaviour which was not within the legitimate sphere of police intervention. Rather, the tendency was to dismiss such incidents as trivial or a private matter and often to adopt a dismissive approach towards the victim, in which her credibility and reliability were called into question (Smith 1989; Hester 2006). Where incidents of domestic abuse were brought before the court, there is substantial evidence indicating that a dismissive approach was usually adopted (Conley 1991; Dobash and Dobash 1992; Dobash and Dobash 2000; Hester 2006; Harwin 2006).

Other feminist literature has suggested that the reluctance for state intervention in domestic abuse has been sustained by idealised and simplified representations of 'the family' and 'marriage', which obscure their potential as sites of abuse and violence. The main threats to women's safety have repeatedly been identified as being outside the home and posed by strangers, despite the strength of evidence suggesting the contrary (Dobash and Dobash 1992). In contrast, the home and the family have been constructed and represented as a place of tranquillity, safety and care, which enables children to thrive and is mutually beneficial (Gordon 1989) Therefore, the tendency of state interventions, until recently has arguably been to prioritise keeping families together over protecting victims (Saraga 2001; Hiese and Garcia–Moreno 2002). This representation of the family, has continued to influence social and political discourses, as illustrated by the following extract from the British Conservative Party's 2010 manifesto:

Strong families are the bedrock of a strong society. They provide the stability and love we need to flourish as human beings, and the relationships they foster are the foundation on which society is built. The warmth of a child's parenting is as important to their life chances as the wealth of their upbringing. (Conservative Party 2010: 41).

Significantly, these ideas were articulated by perpetrators during this piece of research, who regularly expressed what they perceived as inappropriate professional interventions into their private family lives.

Challenges to the dismissive approach to domestic and family violence emerged during the 1970's and 1980's. 'Feminist'[1] ideas have been pivotal in demanding recognition for women subjected to domestic abuse and recognising the family as a site of potential of violence from men to women, (Dobash and Dobash 1992; 2000; Kelly 1988; Stanko 1985). In contrast to the idealised view of the family, some commentators, such as Hotaling and Straus (1980) who do not approach the subject from a particularly feminist standpoint have described it as the most common setting for violence, to the extent that it is best seen as a typical feature of family life.

Feminist campaigners also created resources to support women who have experienced domestic violence, such as refuges and support groups (Zedner 2002). By the end of the 1990s, there were several policy initiatives within the UK, and in other countries, which had made clear statements of intent to reduce domestic violence (Hughes and Jenner 2018). Such statements were often explicitly

[1] 'Feminism' is noted as a problematic term, because it suggests a uniform body of thought and action. It is noted that there is a diversity of perspectives which are referred to as 'feminist' (Gelsthorpe 2002)

orientated towards protecting those subjected to such violence (see for example Home Office 1995; 1999; Westmarland 2015).

In conjunction with the growth of resources and political attention there has been a steady growth of academic interest which has aimed to identify and highlight the prevalence and nature of domestic abuse (Westmarland 2015; Hughes and Jenner 2018; Bowen 2011). Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that the development of awareness and resources regarding domestic abuse has by no means been a straight forward process. Rather, there has been considerable resistance to developing and implementing criminal justice responses (Hester 2006; Harne and Radford 2008). While governments have sought to demonstrate a commitment to tackling domestic abuse and violence, they have been criticised for failing to sufficiently invest in resources for the protection of women (Westmarland 2015), Arguably, violence and abuse in a domestic context remains an area that is not given a level of attention, either academically or politically that is proportionate to its qualitative and quantitative association with serious physical and emotional harm.

Some feminist thinkers have suggested that a significant obstacle in sustaining commitment to addressing violence against women in intimate relationships, has been the emergence of a discourse which suggests that there is 'gender symmetry' (Straus 2010) in domestic abuse.

> *…while it has become fashionable in current 'equality discourses' to simply represent violence in lesbian and gay relationships as similar and occurring at the same rate as violence in heterosexual relationships, there is no credible evidence that this is the case. As with claims that women are equally violent as men in heterosexual relationships, such representations often serve to disguise the main occurrence of domestic violence as a 'gendered problem'* (Harne and Radford 2008:17)

Developing responses to domestic abuse which recognises its complexity, while equally acknowledging the relevance of gender and the significance of gendered violence is a challenge which requires careful academic and professional engagement (Gadd 2017).

Work with male domestic abuse perpetrators

Work with perpetrators has become a central strategy in tackling domestic abuse. Responses to perpetrators have been diverse in style and based on a range of theoretical premises. Interventions have included couple's relationship counselling and family therapy, which identify the cause of domestic violence and abuse as stemming from the relationship or family, rather than locating responsibility with a perpetrator. Such models focus on improving communications skills within the family and developing negotiation strategies. Within this approach, the parties involved are not separated into perpetrators and victims. Instead, all parties are identified as having a role in family conflict and violence (see, for example, Shupe et al 1987). This style of intervention may seem intuitive, and for practitioners who are keen to avoid making judgements and casting blame, it may be a comfortable response. However, critics have pointed out that such responses do not address the gendered nature of domestic abuse, and that they implicitly blame victims (Dobash et al 2000; Harne and Radford 2008). Such interventions can therefore reinforce the justifications which perpetrators use for their violence (ibid). Nevertheless, some commentators have argued that such interventions may be helpful for some couples and families who are experiencing complex difficulties. Additionally, some authors have argued that there is an absence of clear evidence for claims that relationship counselling, or interventions targeting family communications are counterproductive in all cases (Cavanaugh and Gilles 2005).

Other responses have been premised on the belief that violence in relationships is a consequence of personal difficulties experienced by the perpetrator. For example, it may be associated with mental health, personal trauma, substance abuse or anger management (Dutton 2006; Morran 2013; Gadd 2017). These approaches seek to explore and address the factors within the perpetrator, related to a tendency for violence. Again, this understanding appears to be intuitively sensible and there are specific issues and risk factors relevant for individual cases (Gadd 2017). However, critics have argued that in isolation, such interventions fail to encourage perpetrators to take responsibility for their behaviour and may reinforce its externalisation. As with family-based interventions, this style of intervention locates the causes of domestic abuse as largely beyond the control of the perpetrators and neglect its intentional nature (Dobash and Dobash 2000; Gondolf 2007). Nevertheless, recognising the diversity of circumstances which perpetrators experience, sensitivity to individual factors and the specific factors underpinning violence remains important (Cavanaugh and Gelles 2005; Morran 2013; Gadd 2017)

Feminist perpetrator interventions

Perpetrator interventions that aimed to address domestic violence as a gendered issue emerged during the 1980s. 'The Duluth project' has been enormously influential in establishing a model of intervention based on feminist principles, with elements of social learning theory (Pence and Paymar 1993; Morran 2013; Herne and Radford 2008; Dobash and Dobash 2000). This model has had a substantial international influence on the development of perpetrator intervention programmes (Bowen 2011). As its name suggests, this project has its origins in Duluth, Minnesota, where it was created by Ellen Pence and Michael Paymar. It is explicitly feminist in its theoretical underpinning and views violence against women as being

the outcome of patriarchal beliefs about male entitlement. Domestic abuse is understood as consisting of a range of behaviours, all of which are intentionally used by men to assert control over women. The programme is closely associated with the 'Power and control wheel' (appendix 1). This was developed within the project, drawing on the accounts of victims and is used to demonstrate the interrelated behaviours which are experienced in an abusive relationship

The Duluth perpetrator programme is usually delivered in a group context, with two facilitators, one male and one female, and several perpetrators. The participants are required to complete programme modules relating to each aspect of controlling behaviour on the wheel (appendix 2). They are required to identify examples where they have used abusive behaviour, through the completion of 'control logs' and are encouraged to recognise such behaviour as a means of intentionally exerting control over intimate partners. This is a significant challenge for many of the men who attend perpetrator programmes. Research indicates that abusive men often deny their behaviour, deny its seriousness, or deny that they are responsible (Harne and Radford 2008; Dobash and Dobash 1992; Morran 2013; Kelly and Westmarland 2016). Men participating in perpetrator groups will often externalise their behaviour by associating it with perceived provocation from their partners; they may refer to their violence as self-defence (even in the context of significant physical injury to their partners); they may attribute their behaviour to alcohol or emotional distress; men will create narratives which minimise their behaviour through the use of words such as 'only', and 'just' (Kelly and Westmarland 2016) and may refer to their abuse as isolated instances. In some cases, instances of physical violence may be relatively infrequent. However, they are used to reinforce other methods of control by asserting the threat of violence if requests and demands are not met. For many individuals subjected to sustained patterns of abuse, 'denial and blame' form part of

an experience of control and harm (Dobash et al 2000), and as such they justifiably explored and challenged within Duluth influenced perpetrator programmes.

The Duluth model explores the beliefs underpinning violence and abuse. According to the theoretical premise of the Duluth model, men with patterns of abuse often hold beliefs and perspectives which reinforce, justify and to some extent encourage the use of violence against partners. For example, men who use violence in relationships often hold beliefs which are explicitly misogynistic or are grounded in notions of innate gender differences and the legitimacy of gendered roles. Such discourses are understood as reinforcing and justifying male power and the abuse that follows challenges to male authority (Pence and Paymar 1993; Dobash et al 2000)

Importantly, the Duluth model is explicit in emphasising that perpetrator programmes will not be effective (and could exacerbate abusive behaviour) if they are not situated within a broader set of community and criminal justice responses, where the primary aim is the safety of potential victims (Pence and McDonnell 2000) In particular, those who drove the establishment of the model, created agreements with a number of other agencies including the police, probation services and support services for women. Such agreements endeavoured to ensure consistency of practice in holding perpetrators to account for their abuse, treating their behaviour as a criminal offence, recognising the potential risks and avoiding collusion with perpetrators where they seek to externalise or justify their behaviour.

Perpetrator programmes in the probation service and the 'What works' paradigm

The emergence of the 'What works' or 'Effective practice' initiative in probation was significant in the development of interventions targeting perpetrators of domestic abuse. These frameworks occurred within a broader context of renewed academic

and political optimism about the potential of criminal justice interventions to produce a discernible impact on rates of re offending (Bottoms, Gelsthorpe and Rex 2001; Canton 2011; McGuire 1995). This followed a period characterised by pessimism about the efficacy of rehabilitative strategies, closely associated with a review by Martinson (1974), which was often (although inaccurately) referred to as suggesting that 'nothing works'. Based on large scale meta-analytic studies conducted in North America, the 'What works' literature suggested that interventions were likely to have a significant impact where they included key elements (McGuire 2005; Chapman and Hough 1998; Underdown 1998). Specifically, interventions based on cognitive behavioural psychology were seen to be effective (Canton and Dominey 2018).

Within the theoretical framework of cognitive behaviourism, deviant behaviour is seen as learnt in a social context and understood as supported and reinforced by the thoughts, feelings and beliefs (McGuire 2000). Challenging the existing thoughts and beliefs, and encouraging pro social attitudes are therefore seen as a means of effecting changes in behaviour (Canton 2011; Canton and Dominey 2017). Other key elements identified in the 'What works' literature suggested that interventions are effective when they are delivered by staff who have been trained in 'Pro social modelling' (Trotter 1999), that the intensity of the intervention should reflect the level of risk posed, and that they should target factors that are evidentially related to offending behaviour (Chapman and Hough 1998; Underdown 1998). This contrasts with targeting factors which the individual service user may experience as most pressing. Additionally, effective programmes were identified as having a substantial degree of programme integrity. This is understood as ensuring that programmes of intervention are delivered in accordance with their design, and do not digress according to the theoretical or practical preferences of the practitioners, or because of the agendas or priorities of participants. Importantly, and perhaps an area which has prompted most confusion, effective programmes were identified as being

'responsive' to the specific needs and preferred learning styles of service users. This has posed a substantial challenge when seen in the context of the emphasis placed on integrity, standardisation and a focus only on areas which are validated by research as related to offending (Phillips 2015).

Several group-based interventions were developed and delivered within the probation and prison services of England and Wales, during the first decade of the 21st Century, under an accreditation processes which aimed to ensure that key principles of effective practice were met (Raynor and Rex 2007). Initially, general offending programmes were delivered. These were followed by more offence specific programmes, including those for drug users, for individuals convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol, for sex offenders, and offenders with anger management problems. Eventually, specific programmes emerged which aimed to address domestic abuse. The Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP) (appendix 2) became a core community justice intervention for those convicted of domestic abuse. Like other accredited programmes, IDAP was based on cognitive behavioural principles, it was delivered by facilitators who were required to pass an assessment process, and sessions were expected to be quality assured. However, IDAP was distinct from other accredited cognitive behaviour programmes. It was informed by a feminist understanding of domestic abuse and based on the Duluth model (Bulluck et al 2010). Within this framework, violence was not only located within the individual but is understood as reflective of broader social and cultural factors associated with gender, patriarchy and oppression. The programme was supported by a 'women's safety worker' who was required to liaise with partners of the programme regarding its content and offer support. As with the Duluth programme, most participants attended at the direction of the court as a condition of a community sentence, while some attended as a condition of their licence following release from custody.

The legal compulsion of participants to attend poses challenges for facilitators who are responsible for engaging them in a process of change. In the context of domestic abuse, engaging men is a challenge in any event (Morran 2013). Offenders subject to probation supervision are aware of the risk management function of the probation service, and the associated possibility of information sharing with other enforcement agencies (Hughes 2014). These factors are likely to have an impact on the willingness of participants to disclose on-going abuse or to participate in an open discussion of their circumstances.

A paradigm shift: 'offender engagement' and the 'desistance model'

Since their roll out, standardised programmes, such as the Duluth model, and those developed and delivered within the 'What works' era have been criticised for their lack of flexibility and for failing to sufficiently engage service users or respond to their individual understandings, motivations and treatment needs. A substantial reduction of optimism regarding the potential impact of cognitive behaviour programmes emerged fairly quickly after their emergence (Mair 2004). Frank Porporino, who had been an advocate of the 'What works' initiative, has eloquently and convincingly summarised his revision of thinking in this respect:

> *… we run the risk of pissing them off (therein explaining high programme attrition) since our methods seem not to match what they see as their primary needs (and most pressing goals)* (2010: 78).

These criticisms prompted a revision of practice guidance, which emphasised the importance of 'engaging' service users. The National Offender Management Service (NOMS), produced an 'Offender Engagement Programme' which highlighted the importance of service user 'buy-in' (Rex 2012). Ostensibly, this was a shift away from the previous emphasis placed on standardisation. This change of focus was

influenced by broader literature and research which suggested that ‘desistance’ from offending is a process rather than a single event, involving the emergence of a non-offending identity and a sense of personal agency. Within this understanding, interventions should be sensitive to the specific motivations and goals of the individual, rather than being standardised or imposed. A central role is given to relationships between the service user and the practitioner in facilitating engagement and personal commitment. As such, the role of professional judgement is highlighted as a means of developing individualised responses to service users (Maruna 2001; McNeill 2006). In many ways the theoretical paradigm of the offender engagement programme conflicted with the principles of the ‘What works’ agenda, which prioritised the pre-determined content of interventions, with limited attention to professional relationships, or the perspectives of service users. A further point of conflict relates to the promotion of a non-offending identity. Within some understandings, this suggests avoiding an exploration of previous offending or harm, to promote a positive self-image (Burnett, Baker and Roberts 2007).

The Duluth model, and by association IDAP, have been subject to specific criticisms, based on a perception that they are limited in their capacity to ‘engage’ service users or recognise the complex circumstances underpinning domestic abuse. For some commentators, these criticisms explain why research evaluations indicate that Duluth programmes lack impact (Dutton and White 2013). Duluth style programmes have been criticised for having a rigid feminist theoretical premise, which from the perspective of its critics, suggests that intimate partner violence is exclusively related to patriarchy; perpetrators being understood as a homogenous group. Some commentators have argued that the dominance of this premise in research and policy has failed to give enough weight to violence perpetrated by women and has been harmful to the development of nuanced and individualised practice (Morran 2013; Dutton and White 2013; Gadd 2017). Within this perspective,

the domination of feminist perspectives is seen to have prevented recognition of the individualised difficulties, perceptions and understandings of perpetrators (Dutton 2006; Dutton and White 2013). Arguably recognition of these considerations is essential for developing a personalised approach which engages perpetrators in a process of change and targets the specific factors that are related to further abuse in each individual case. From the perspective of many critics, the Duluth model identifies 'control' as the central motivation for abusive behaviours. Consequently, it excludes other explanations, and fails to recognise some of the complex circumstances which can underlie controlling behaviour (Cavanaugh and Gelles 2005; Dutton and White 2013; Moran 2013; Gadd 2017). For example, controlling behaviours may be associated with personal trauma such as poor attachments in childhood, fear of abandonment and low self-esteem, rather than simply reflecting patriarchal attitudes (Morran 2013). Men may invest in patriarchal beliefs, to justify their abusive behaviours, but this does not necessarily mean that patriarchal beliefs are the fundamental cause in every case.

An understanding of domestic violence based on these considerations, suggests that not only should core programmes be more responsive to the circumstance and perspectives of individual men, but they should also, in some cases, sit alongside more therapeutic interventions which seek to explore and address the underlying difficulties which many men experience. Efforts to develop interventions incorporating these themes have been described as being in juxtaposition to the feminist principles on which the Duluth model is based.

> *In brief, the Duluth model programme regards men's violence and oppression largely as a consequence of patriarchal conditioning. It is not greatly concerned with men's underlying issues; indeed it's protagonists are, arguably*

at logger heads with those (particularly in the USA) who advocate the need for more therapeutic interventions with men (Morran 2013: 307)

The development of perpetrator programmes that place emphasis on the service user's understandings and agendas, and which highlight the importance of relationships with staff, poses specific challenges to domestic abuse perpetrators programmes. In this instance, the agendas, and perspectives of perpetrators, may reflect on-going abuse (Dobash et al 2000). Giving attention and value to the perspectives of perpetrators regarding their needs and difficulties carries a theoretical risk of implicit collusion, reinforcing the justifications for abuse, or distracting attention from the fundamental factors underpinning violence in relationships and personal responsibility (Morran 2013; Hughes 2017).

The criticism of interventions developed under the principles of 'What works', (such as IDAP in the context of domestic abuse) have been contested. Although some commentators have emphasised the modest impact of such interventions, Rosie Travers (2012) has argued that it is difficult to argue against the consistent evidence of effectiveness. The extent to which previous programmes have been delivered in an unresponsive manner is specifically contested (McGuire 2005). Whilst there has been a drive towards standardisation, there remains considerable space within structured group-based programmes for the individual delivery styles of the facilitators to be of significance in engaging service users. The critics who suggest that 'What works' programmes are unresponsive fail to take into consideration the way facilitators interpret and deliver the material in a manner that seeks to engage those attending, using a complex skill set. Facilitators, as well as participants bring narratives and personalised understandings to programmes. Discussions of the relative merits of different approaches to working with service users in groups, tend to implicitly depict staff as fixed variables who deliver interventions in a standardised

and autonomic manner. As such the dynamic interactions between service users and facilitators are also overlooked. There is evidence that these interactions, and the nature of the relationships between service user and practitioner, are more important than the content of any intervention (Hughes 2014; McNeil 2006; Maruna 2001). Seen in this context, the Duluth style programmes can be part of a therapeutic approach in which men are encouraged to explore their individual thoughts, feelings and concerns. They are not simply confronted or challenged in a counter-productive way (Gondolf 2007).

Although they may not be suitable for all perpetrators, there is considerable evidence indicating that Duluth style programmes can be effective, where they are delivered by skilled facilitators who are able to engage perpetrators. For example, Dobash et al (2000) conducted a three-year review of two feminist perpetrator programmes in the UK. The findings suggested that where these were managed with care and sensitivity, they were more effective than other forms of criminal justice interventions in terms of reducing abusive behaviour.

A more recent evaluation of feminist style perpetrator programmes focussed on the impact of such programmes, when participants are not referred through the criminal justice system (Kelly and Westermarland, 2015). The research employed a multi-layered approach, involving data collection from several stake holders, including men who attended the programmes and women who had been subjected to abuse. Additionally, the research sought to include the perspectives of women whose partners were attending the programme within measures of success. This not only included ending violence, but also measures such as respectful communication and space to act independently. As such a more nuanced understanding of effectiveness and impact was employed, and traditional concepts of whether an intervention is ‘effective’, or ‘not’ is problematised. Additionally, the perpetrator

programmes were considered in the context of the broader community responses in which they took place, with the acknowledgement that male perpetrator programmes do not act independently. While the authors are tentative, the findings indicate a positive impact across nearly all the measures employed, and some of measures being marked by substantial improvements.

Building Better Relationships

The perceived limitations of existing accredited programmes generally, and Duluth style programmes specifically (notwithstanding the evidence suggesting their potential) led to the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) replacing IDAP with Building Better Relationships (BBR), in 2013 (Bloomfield and Dixon 2015). Arguably, this reflected a reactive shift away from feminist ideas in wider culture and academic discourses, in which the promotion of gender equality or challenges to patriarchy are dismissed as 'ideological'. Within this context, the Duluth programme has been referred to disparagingly as 'ideological and not empirical' (Dutton 2006; Dutton and Corvo 2006). It is the author's position that these responses simplify and misrepresent feminist discourses and practices, while failing to acknowledge the ideological aspects of alternative perspectives (Hughes 2017; Gondolf 2007).

BBR is structured around four core modules, each consisting of six sessions (appendix 3). The first of these is the foundation module and introduces the participants to the key concepts of the programme. The next three modules are titled 'my thinking', 'my emotions' and 'my relationships'. BBR ostensibly aims to respond to the criticisms levied at IDAP and the wider Duluth model, and marks a shift away from feminist informed practice, which locates men's understandings of gender and patriarchy as essential targets of intervention. Rather than focussing on encouraging men to understand their behaviour as intentional and motived by control, BBR utilises an amended version of Anderson and Bushman's (2002)

‘General Aggression Model’ to encourage participants to understand violence and aggression as the product of complex and interrelated situational and personal factors. These include attention to ‘learning history’, personality, current emotions and current thoughts. Alcohol and substance misuse are introduced as primary targets of intervention, in direct contrast to IDAP and Duluth.

BBR incorporates ‘mindfulness’ strategies, where the participants are shown techniques to develop and practice, which aim to root them to the present, and thereby manage anxieties and negative thoughts and emotions about the past and future. The programme seeks to draw on theoretical developments about the importance of establishing a positive non-offending identity (Maruna 2001; McNeill 2006) by requiring participants to complete ‘identity maps’. These involve exploring diverse aspects of lives and identities, which contrast with focussing on themselves as domestic abusers. Related to this, BBR is notably less confrontational in its design, with far less explicit attention given to past abuse or violence. BBR also encourages the establishment of professional relationships through a requirement for a designated facilitator for each participant, who should take the lead in one-to-one review meetings for that individual (Hughes 2017).

BBR can be understood as an attempt to operationalise the themes highlighted in the desistance literature. These include giving attention to the pathways people take out of offending, rather than focussing on initial causes or perceived deficits. The development of perpetrator programmes that place emphasis on the service user’s understandings and agendas, poses specific challenges in relation to domestic violence. In the context of domestic abuse, the agendas, and perspectives of perpetrators, may reflect on-going abuse (Dobash et al 2000). As such giving attention and value to the perspectives of perpetrators regarding their needs and difficulties carries a risk of collusion, reinforcing the justifications for abuse, or

distracting attention from personal responsibility. The focus on the promotion of a non-offending identity for domestic abusers is also problematic. While the argument presented throughout this thesis is that the participants experience a sense of shame, some commentators suggest that perpetrators of domestic violence do not hold a 'deviant' identity and are instead regarded as engaging in socially and culturally approved practices to control women (Dobash and Dobash 1979; Harne and Radford 2008).

The organisational context of probation

While it is not the key focus of this thesis, the seemingly ever-changing organisational culture and structure of the probation service impacts enormously on the delivery of programmes, and the experiences of those who facilitate and attend them. There is a rich body of literature that has explored the changes that the probation service and its staff have been subjected to (Canton 2011; Canton and Dominey 2018). Most notably, during the completion of this research, there was a substantial re organisation under the policy directive of 'transforming rehabilitation' (Ministry of Justice, 2015). Within this process, a large proportion of probation work was transferred to the private sector and administered by Community Rehabilitation Companies. The management of cases designated as high risk, court assessments and work with sex offenders has remained in the newly formed and public National Probation Service. Work designated as low and medium risk, including the delivery of accredited domestic abuse programmes has been located within the private sector. Arguably, this reflects a failure to respond to domestic violence in accordance with its potential for harm (Gilbert 2013).

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This has intensified staffing differences with most staff holding probation officer

This has intensified staffing differences with most staff holding probation officer status working within the National Probation Service. This reflects a longer-

term pattern in which there has been substantial decrease in the overall number of staff members who hold probation officer status (Canton and Dominey 2018). At the time of writing, it appears that the probation service is likely to be renationalised amid indisputable criticism (Grierson, 2019).

Themes of 'engagement' and 'individualised practice' have emerged within probation (Rex 2012) against a backdrop of on-going organisational priorities such as public protection, risk, staff accountability, and targets, which continue to dominate probation practice (Gilbert 2013). These priorities are hard to reconcile with interventions focussed on the needs of service users. Similarly, interventions continue to be premised on the assumption that programme content is primary. Issues of agency and interpretation remain side-lined in evaluations of probation programmes generally, and domestic abuse programmes specifically.

Summary and conclusion

The above discussion has attempted to draw attention to some of the complexities surrounding the delivery of interventions for groups of domestically abusive men within a probation setting. The chapter has endeavoured to illustrate how probation domestic abuse programmes can be understood as emerging out of discourses of 'effective practice', and broader debates about the factors underpinning domestic abuse.

This chapter situates this thesis in a symbolic interactionist tradition to inform and understand interactions within probation domestic abuse groups. In view of the focus of the study, theoretical attention to gender and masculinity were explored, and their significance highlighted.

The chapter explained the policy and research context within which the two domestic abuse programmes explored in this study emerged. To date research,

policy and theoretical discussions of interventions and their relative merits have tended to focus on content and design at the expense of the processes of interventions. The ‘how’ of interventions, and the active interactions and interpretations of facilitators and participants has been neglected. These considerations are at the core of this thesis.

Chapter 3 Methods: Trying to capture and make sense of a lot of stuff going on

Introduction

This thesis aims to develop an insight into the interactional dynamics of two criminal justice group-based interventions for heterosexual men who have been violent within intimate relationships. It gives attention to neglected aspects of domestic abuse intervention programmes, and criminal justice interventions more generally, by examining the processes, social interactions and participant understandings of group experiences. The research strategy was qualitative, employing participant observation, through work as a group facilitator, alongside semi structured interviews. This chapter starts by establishing how methodological theory has guided the research process. It then moves on to discuss how I have attempted ensure a rigorous and transparent approach to data collection, by examining how the research methods were employed. Discussion of the approach to analysis is then given attention. Finally, explicit attention is given to how an ethical framework was incorporated and sustained within the research. Particular attention is given to the principle of informed consent, which is usually regarded as fundamental for ethical research practice. It is acknowledged that this study deviates from this, and instead relies on the notion of avoidance of harm, as a basis for preserving the dignity and rights of research participants. The rationale for this deviation is explained, and an invitation for a wider discussion of ethical research frameworks is made.

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The study involves a small number of participants and the groups took place in a one geographical region of the United Kingdom. The methods employed, and the sample used, are not understood as representative and extrapolations are made with caution. Instead, the research is exploratory and aims to look in detail at the understandings of the participants and the processes of interaction, which to date have been largely neglected.

The relationship between theory and research

This study adopts an inductive approach to knowledge creation; as such it is not structured through a rigid theoretical premise, hypothesis or set of research questions. Reflecting an interest in the perspectives of participants, and group processes, there was an early commitment to avoid assumptions or theoretical constraints, so that theory and concepts could emerge dynamically as the research progressed. This approach to theory generation is informed by Glaser and Strauss's (1967) formative notion of 'grounded theory'. It is acknowledged that there is considerable complexity and disagreement about how this should be employed and formulated (Bryman 2012). Nevertheless, it has served as a useful framework to guide the collection and analysis of data.

The epistemological position is interpretive, drawing on a symbolic interactionist tradition stemming from Mead and Blumer (cited in Collins 2004), and the phenomenological work of Schutz (1962). More directly, it draws on Randall Collins' (2004; 2008) micro social theory of 'interaction rituals'. Collins (2004) emphasises the value of the researcher observing and interpreting interactions as they take place, rather than relying solely on retrospective accounts of participants. Drawing on this theoretical backdrop, this thesis explores how participants interacted with each other, interpreted and attached meaning to their experiences. It also explores

how interactions within the programmes impacted on the self-identities of the individuals who attended the groups being studied. Addressing these issues required using qualitative methods. To this end the research employed participant observations of a substantial number of group sessions. These were followed by semi-structured interviews. These did not produce radically different data to the observations and were less central to the core contribution of this thesis, which focuses on the interactive dynamics of domestic abuse programmes. Nevertheless, there were some differences in the issues emphasised between the participant observation and interview strands of the research. In the interview, there was a greater willingness among participants and facilitators to be critical of the others with whom they had attended and facilitated groups. The interviews also enabled facilitators and participants to share their thoughts and feelings about group attendance and delivery, in a reflective manner, which included considerations of the impact of the groups after their completion. These methods enabled a detailed exploration of the workings of the groups and the perceptions of participants.

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The ontological position is constructionist: premised on the notion that the participants were actively involved in the production of their own experiences and understandings. The groups operate on what I refer to as a 'social order', which influenced and constrained the actions and experiences of group members. This order is understood as influenced by broad social ideas about gender (Connell 2005). However, this 'order' is neither fixed nor has an independent external reality. Instead it is actively produced and interpreted during the interactions of group members. Additionally, the research process itself is understood to be one in which knowledge about the focus of study is actively constructed by the researcher, who brings their own subjective understandings to the interpretation of data. Therefore, some reflections on my own biography and identity are offered.

The research strategy

As noted above, the research draws on participant observation of two group-based probation interventions for men with a history of abusive behaviour in relationships: IDAP (Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme) and BBR (Building Better Relationships). In addition, ten participants and eight facilitators, (who had delivered one or both programmes), were interviewed. The next sections provide a discussion of the research practice and dilemmas surrounding each of the strands.

Issues of Access

Access to Probation domestic violence groups is challenging for researchers. The probation service is required to operate a strict policy of confidentiality, and the management of offenders with convictions for domestic abuse is particularly sensitive. The probation service has undergone substantial reorganisation, during which it has been divided between the National Probation Service, which remains in the public sector, and Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs), located in the private sector. CRCs have responsibility for delivering domestic abuse programmes and supervising most domestic abuse perpetrators. This is part of a broader 'transforming rehabilitation' agenda in which the provision of rehabilitation services is diversified (Canton and Dominey, 2018). Therefore, various organisations may seek to deliver interventions with offenders, and there is no clear expectation that any single agency holds a monopoly. Consequently, it is likely that senior managers within the CRC's are more cautious about sharing information, records or practice. Direct access to probation programmes carries further challenges. They are governed by strict rules about how they are delivered, which leads to caution on the part of relevant managers in allowing observers.

Access was made possible due to having well established links with the probation authority where the research took place. Prior to the research, I had worked in the

area as a Probation Officer, and then practice teacher, for several years. Following qualification as an IDAP facilitator I continued to deliver this programme as a sessional member of staff, and then received training to deliver BBR. During delivery, I became aware that I was being exposed to valuable and rich data about the dynamics of perpetrator programmes. I could observe the way the participants felt about attending, how they responded to the material, to each other and to the facilitators. Recognising that the work I was engaged with was a rich source of insight, I contacted a relevant senior manager at the CRC and sought approval to use my experiences as a facilitator, combined with interviews, for research purposes. He supported the project at a senior management meeting, and approval was subsequently granted. I then requested a sustained period of employment in delivering programmes. In keeping with some of the themes which emerged in the research, success was based on the relationships which had been established.

While the above describes formal access and permission to carry out research, this was distinct from gaining practical access to all aspects of the research as planned. The CRC approved my request to use data from the groups as a facilitator for research purposes, but this did not ensure access to facilitators and participants for interview. Prospective interviewees were contacted by letter, and then followed up with telephone calls. The complexities of this are described in a subsequent section which looks specifically at the sample.

Participant Observation and Ethnography

Ethnographic approaches and participant observation have a well-established tradition in criminology and sociology. They have made considerable contributions to understanding the lives and experiences of people who are often marginalised or hard to reach. As Bryman pertinently points out (2012), there has been a tendency to refer to ‘participant observation’ and ‘ethnography’ interchangeably, with

‘ethnography’ increasingly the preferred term. However, it is argued that a distinction between these terms is appropriate, and for reasons set out below, the approach adopted is designated as ‘participant observation’. That said, this study is informed by ethnographic principles.

Ethnography has its roots in anthropology, and involves researchers immersing themselves in a community or group, observing behaviour directly and listening to conversations (see, for example Malinowski 1922). The aim is to develop a rich and detailed understanding of the social rules and beliefs of the group or community being studied. Ethnographic studies may involve interviews or conversations with key members of the group as well as other methods of data collection. These may include examining documents and noting the physical and environmental facets of the setting. The term ‘ethnography’ is often used to refer to the process of data collection and the outcome, with many researchers referring to having written ‘an ethnography’ (see, for example, Taylor 1993).

The focus here, on interactive dynamics, rituals, and meanings within the gendered ‘social order’ of perpetrator groups, combined with an interest in the understandings of participants, makes ethnographic principles highly relevant for this thesis. The reluctance to adopt the term ‘ethnography’, is based on two caveats: firstly, the limits on the level of immersion I had as a researcher in the lives of those I was studying, and secondly; the extent to which the groups could be regarded as a coherent cultural entity, in which members held shared understandings and beliefs or a held a common identity. These issues are complex, and not absolute. One of the key themes discussed in later chapters is that during the delivery of perpetrator programmes, a distinct group identity emerges. However, the men were together for a maximum of twenty-four sessions in the case of the Building Better Relationships programme, and twenty-seven sessions for the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme. Each session was approximately two hours long. For IDAP, the group

membership typically changed every fourth session, because of the rolling format of the programme, which impacts on the extent to which membership could be understood as a sufficiently coherent entity to be treated as the subject of an 'ethnography'. Similarly, facilitators had other aspects of their professional and personal lives which I was not exposed to. Inbetween group sessions and at the completion of the programmes, the participants and the facilitators were not in regular contact with each other. The relationships within the groups were, therefore, dependent on and limited to, one social context, within a specific timeframe (Adam 1995). Whilst all ethnographic studies are subject to some of these considerations, in that the researcher is only likely to be exposed to some aspects of the participants' lives and identities, the distinction between ethnography and participant observation I am using emphasises that involvement with group members was limited to one social arena. Although this is not a distinction often mentioned in research methods literature, it is used here to point to the limited reach of this study into the wider lives of participants.

Participant observation was selected in this study to observe the dynamics of group participation directly. This reflected an interest in understanding how participants experienced the programme they were attending and how group-based programmes are ordered by informal rules, which are negotiated both explicitly and implicitly. Unlike retrospective interviews, this approach was not dependent on recollections. To some extent this method addressed the tendency for interviewees to present a version of events that they were comfortable with, rather than events as they took place. Additionally, it provided me with an opportunity to hear and document the perspectives and experiences of individuals who were either unable or unwilling to be interviewed (Coy 2006). As previously mentioned, domestic abuse is associated with shame and stigma, which can generate a reluctance to participate in research programmes. This study suggests that it is usually the most motivated

who are willing to engage with research interviews [2]. A sole reliance on retrospective interviews would have resulted in voices being lost. It is also noted that the use of participant observation in the study of perpetrator programmes has been distinctly lacking.

Researcher identity: non-participant and participant observation

A key set of dilemmas for participant observation generally, and for my research specifically, is the identity that the researcher assumes, and the impact that this has on the collection and interpretation of data. There were several options I considered. Probation programmes are expected to be video recorded for auditing and quality assurance purposes. Access to the recordings was granted, but on examination they did not capture the interactions within the groups. The recordings, at best, showed the conduct of facilitators, and some of the verbal comments of perpetrators (see also, Philips 2015). For many sessions, the recording quality was poor and content hard to follow. The nuances of interactions, including facial expressions, body language and subtle communications were lost. Additionally, while working as a facilitator I became aware that judgements were made about which sessions would be recorded. Comments, such as '*I don't think the recording will work for tonight's session'* were expressed, often because there was an anticipation that sessions would deviate from the manual or the organisational specifications. It was precisely these less scripted sessions which had the potential to reveal the informal social rules of the groups.

I considered the role of non-participant observer and tested this approach as a method of data collection, by attending four sessions where other facilitators delivered programmes. There was evidently value in this approach. It made it easier

[2] This was evidently the case with this research, although caution is required on making generalisations based on the small sample size.

for me to focus on the interactions between group members without being distracted by the responsibilities of a facilitator. Arguably, I was less likely to allow my own perspectives to impact on the data through participation, or to inadvertently influence the behaviour and interactions of the members of the groups. However, there were limitations. Firstly, I perceived that the group members were influenced by my presence in the room. My lack of involvement inhibited the development of trust which enabled people to be open and relaxed, and disrupted the usual operation of the social order of the group. Secondly, and more importantly, as an observer, my immersion was not enough to allow for the collection of the rich and detailed data that I was interested in. In the sessions I observed as a non-participant, I was an outsider looking in and this position did not foster a full understanding of the dynamics of the groups. While in many ways this would have made for a more straightforward process of data collection, my understanding of the group dynamics was more limited when I was not participating. As an active participant, I could collect data without these kinds of disruption (Lawton 2001). However, this is not to suggest that I did not impact on the group as a participant observer. It can be argued that the participant observer is potentially more disruptive than the non- participant, since they are actively influencing events through their own behaviour and language. Nevertheless, through participating in the sessions, my relationship with others in the groups was closer and I was considerably more exposed to the rules of the groups and the individual perspectives of the participants. I could follow up on points of interest that emerged and explore themes. Group members also demonstrated a greater willingness to talk to me before, and after the sessions, about their current concerns and experiences of the programme.

At the theoretical level, there were several roles that I could have adopted as a participant observer. Occasionally, volunteers attended programmes, with the remit

of assisting participants who have literacy difficulties or other specific needs. However, individuals operating within this capacity have a very specific set of tasks and focus only on supporting the individual they are attached to. The scope to develop relationships with facilitators or participants or follow up on themes would have been limited. Hypothetically, it was an option to participate under the masquerade of having been directed to attend the programmes following a conviction for an offence involving domestic violence. Though this would no doubt yield some interesting results, it would involve significant deception and would not have been justified by the aims of the research. It would also place limits on the number of sessions I could participate in, as the men would inevitably question why I was never able to complete the programme. I determined that the most appropriate role was to participate as a group facilitator. As noted above, I was already working in this role intermittently; making access relatively straightforward. There were however constraints on using this position to collect data. I was not entirely free to discuss the perspectives of the perpetrators or the themes which interested me as a researcher. As a facilitator I was required to deliver the programme in accordance with the requirements of the supervising probation agency, and my primary duty was promoting change and reducing risk. Arguably these requirements sit uncomfortably with the aims of academic research. Coy (2006) expresses related tensions between the role of researcher and practitioner, in research she conducted as an outreach worker, providing support to women in the sex industry. Coy emphasises that her obligations to support the women involved in her study often took precedence over her research aims, which resulted in the voices of the most vulnerable being lost. Despite these challenges, through participant observation within the role of a programme facilitator, I was able to ask exploratory questions of the group participants, observe interactions and reflect on my own awareness of group membership.

Overt or covert participant observation

The next decision was whether to disclose to the group that I had a dual role as both researcher and facilitator. After considerable reflection I determined that it was best not to disclose that I was conducting research (at least to the perpetrators). This approach reflects what is often referred to as 'covert', as opposed to 'overt' (Bell, 1969), albeit that this distinction obscures complexity (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). The facilitators, for example, were aware that I was conducting research for a PhD and gathering data. Equally, during the programmes, participants became aware that I was not a full-time member of probation staff, and that my primary employment was at a university. I made no active attempt to deceive the group members but did not discuss my research objectives. In the semi structured interview strand of my research, I interviewed some of the participants who had attended groups I had facilitated. At this point I was open about my research. Interestingly, this did not prompt any negative reaction. The participants, in each case, stated that they were happy to help, and hoped that in doing so they could enhance the experiences of others. At this point a degree of trust had been established, and research participants expressed confidence that I would not do anything that was damaging. Nevertheless, maintaining awareness of the impact of power differences was important. Some of the implications of these judgements are discussed in the ethics section later in this chapter.

During the completion of the research, I was mindful of becoming too immersed in the group being studied. This has been identified as a central concern in participant observation and ethnography (Silverman 2013) because it inhibits a reflective awareness of the constructed nature of the rules, beliefs and practices of the group. Where there is over involvement, it becomes hard to recognise or deconstruct perspectives or patterns of behaviour. There are parts of my own biography which

compounded these issues. As described earlier, I had previously been employed as a Probation Officer, having qualified in 2004, and following this I worked as a practice assessor and staff trainer. Additionally, I had delivered probation programmes for domestic violence perpetrators intermittently over a ten-year period, qualifying as an IDAP tutor in 2004. Work within the probation service with domestically violent men had become a central part of my identity. The assumptions I held created difficulty developing the perspective of an open-minded researcher with enough distance to recognise taken for granted practices and implicit rules.

I endeavoured to address the issues of my influence over the groups and excessive immersion by sustaining reflective awareness. Strategies which assisted me in this were completing a journal[3], keeping detailed field notes and discussing my research with supervisors and academic colleagues. Having supervisors with differing theoretical positions has been challenging, but equally has fostered a continuous, and sometimes disconcerting and confusing process of self-questioning. Engaging with academic literature was also helpful in encouraging me to be aware of, and call into question, many of the assumptions I held. Nevertheless, it is hard to dispute that because of my long-standing involvement in the delivery of programmes, and my participation in them during the research, many of the rituals that take place were likely to have been invisible to me. Equally, there were others that were visible to me because I was an insider.

[3] Keeping a detailed and anonymous reflective journal was a practice I had been in the habit of doing, courtesy of my practice teacher, Kate Harvey, who trained me to be a Probation Officer, between 2002 and 2004. She emphasised that this was a method of being able to recognise poor practice, learn about myself, and manage emotional demands.

Keeping up with the data: field notes within participant observation

Taking notes while acting as a participant observer involves obstacles. These have been well documented by other researchers who have employed this method (see, for example, Atkinson 1981). Trying to document conversations, statements, body language, expressions, pauses, gestures, and sometimes intangible qualities such as tension or humour can be difficult even when the researcher is not a participant. Silverman (2013) uses a reference to *Saturday* by Ian McEwan, to relay the challenges experienced in this kind of research. While this was not a novel that I particularly enjoyed at the time of reading, it resonated with my sense of being overwhelmed when trying to document events in my field notes. In *Saturday*, the entire novel is based on the events of a single day in the life of the protagonist. McEwan illustrates that when we look at events in detail, without the usual screening out of aspects of social interaction which are taken for granted, or discarded as irrelevant, there are a vast array of social occurrences taking place which are of interest. James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1992) has some overlaps, in which seemingly irrelevant and tedious events are scrutinised in detail. Joyce captures the contrast between events as they are experienced, and the way in which they are reconstructed within narratives. Both novels reflected the difficulty in attempting to capture everything.

One approach is to limit note taking to themes which have direct relevance for the research questions. However, as stated, my research was driven by an inductive strategy, in which I wanted the research themes to evolve as the research progressed and be informed by the perspectives of participants and the dynamics of the groups. This contrasts with an approach where the research questions are imposed, based on pre-existing assumptions. This meant I was eager, as far as possible, to document as much as I could. I was not clear, in the early stages, what was important, and what was not. Discarding events or occurrences based on what

I deemed as irrelevant appeared to be one of several avenues through which my own biases and assumptions could impact on this study. Documenting as much as possible was a means of identifying and problematising familiar patterns of behaviour. However, as other researchers who have employed similar methods have found, the lack of a clear focus resulted in a considerable quantity of notes (see, for example, Armstrong 1993).

Having determined that only focussing on specific themes was not a viable option (at least in the early stages) I was left with the problem of how to record as much of the content as possible. Others using participant observation or ethnography have discussed these issues, but generally acknowledged that there are no wholly satisfactory solutions. Rather, the tendency is to adopt a pragmatic approach. For example, in his innovative covert study of work place 'fiddling' in a bakery, Ditton (1977) found that he had to use any moment to document brief notes, often on toilet paper during short breaks. The frequency of these toilet breaks prompted some concern from workmates about his wellbeing. He acknowledges that these notes were limited, but at least offered an opportunity to retain observations that he would not be able to recall otherwise. Initially, my own approach was to scribble aide memoires as the sessions ran. I had some reservations about visibly taking notes during the group sessions, because of how this would be perceived. Facilitators who deliver probation programmes are expected to complete detailed records, which document the participation of group members, and information that may be of relevance for the management of risk. Throughout the programmes, facilitators were also cognisant of a requirement to complete detailed post programme reports. Many facilitators I worked with scribbled notes during sessions and were observed by participants writing as they spoke. Participants were made aware that there were limits to the confidentiality of the group at the outset of the programme, and explicitly advised of the responsibilities of the facilitators in the management of risk. This

backdrop was likely to impact on how note taking was understood, and how it affected the group dynamics. Comments from group members such as: '*look, you're in the shit, she is writing that down'*, or '*go on, write that down'*, are illustrative of participant awareness of note taking, and its identification as being of significance. When I acted as a facilitator, prior to the commencement of the research, I had generally tried to avoid taking notes, because of the negative impact on engagement. However, I became aware that a degree of note taking by facilitators was usual practice and therefore taking brief notes did not substantially impact on the participants. Furthermore, the practice of note taking itself emerged a substantive aspect of the group experience.

I tried to write down additional comments and thoughts at breaks, and immediately after sessions. However, this was not always viable. It was often at these times that interesting developments and occurrences took place. To use Erving Goffman's (1956) terminology, 'back stage' behaviours were in evidence, where group members would make statements which contrasted with what they had said while the group was running. These would illustrate their understanding of the informal group rules, and group expectations, as well as the way in which identities and roles were actively negotiated and presented.

After travelling home, I would spend considerable time writing up more detailed notes. Often, this process would prompt further recollections of the session, which I was then able to expand upon. The completed field notes were consequently lengthy. In total, my field notes consisted of 196 pages of text covering 86 sessions. However, my notes were not comprehensive and to some extent they were selective. Subtle exchanges were hard to capture in words. I missed many aspects of the group sessions and my own biases inevitably impacted on what I thought was worthy of recording. Additionally, there were some occasions where family circumstances, tiredness and meeting other work commitments interrupted writing

up notes. '*I am too tired'*, '*bloody marking'*, and '*I can't face write anything tonight'*, were all that I recorded on three separate occasions. Nevertheless, my field notes captured interactions across a substantial number of programme sessions, which enabled me to interpret and document patterns of experience. My approach to analysing the data is described later within this chapter.

Semi structured interviews

As stated above, the overall research strategy employed semi-structured interviews, to complement and triangulate the data gathered within the participant observation strand of the research. As mentioned, the interviews did not produce data that was inconsistent with the observations. Nevertheless, they enabled the facilitators and group participants to explore how they made sense of their programme experiences and invited them to express views and perspectives that may not have been perceived as appropriate within the group context. I was eager to glean whether the statements and perspectives observed within group environments were consistent with those expressed individually. As with elsewhere in this thesis, I was influenced by Goffman's (1956) notation of 'front' and 'back stage' arenas. Arguably, the programme sessions were the equivalent to *'front stage'* arenas and interviews on a one to one basis allowed me '*back stage'*. However, it is important to acknowledge participant's interactions with me during interviews might similarly be regarded as a performance. Notwithstanding this, the interviews with participants revealed that the men were willing to make disclosures about their experiences on the group, about the other men, and about their personal biographies that they had not shared during group attendance. Similarly, the facilitators offered perspectives which were not inhibited by the professional roles they were occupying while delivering programme material, or in the presence of co facilitators. These accounts did not contradict the

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perspectives and behaviours within the groups, though did provide richer and more reflective and personal narratives.

Reflecting the inductive approach to data collection, I adopted a flexible approach to the interviews. I did however have some sense of the themes I wanted to explore, so commenced with a standard list of questions, but allowed, and encouraged, participants to digress onto issues that they felt were important. I prompted participants to expand on issues which emerged with probing questions and reflective techniques. The volume of data that this approach fostered made analysis more challenging, but nevertheless, it helped establish trust and led to rich and thick accounts deeply embedded with meaning and emotional content.

The interview strand of the research also enabled me to explore if the programmes fostered any enduring shifts in identity, or whether the men perceived other changes through attendance. While the emphasis of this thesis is on the process of interactions within domestic violence programmes, rather than an evaluation of outcomes, I wanted to consider how the programmes could inculcate change beyond the time frame of group participation. These issues are explored in Chapter 7.

Interviews took place at various locations. I had stated in the initial contact letters that I would undertake meetings in accordance with preferences of research participants. Although I was mindful of the possibility that some suggestions could have been inappropriate, I wanted to show that the meetings were clearly distinct from probation supervision, where attendance was as directed by the supervising officer. I intended to convey that their interactions with me as a researcher did not involve the same imbalances of power which characterise interactions with probation staff. Four group participants asked to be interviewed at local probation offices, two requested to be interviewed at their homes, one at his work place and two in coffee shops. The locations selected yielded interesting data. For some, the

locations were selected as places of convenience, but for others they appeared to be part of the presentational work the participants were engaged in. For example, one of the men was very eager for me to meet him at his place of work: to demonstrate the relationships he had with colleagues and the skilled aspects of his employment. One of the men, who I met at his home, was eager to introduce me to his partner and child, and seemed to want to demonstrate the happy family life that he now occupied.

Each of the interviews lasted more than one hour, and several lasted over two hours. While there had been some reluctance on the part of group participants to engage with the research process, once a degree of trust had been established the men presented as eager to discuss their experiences and share intimate perspectives about the programmes, their relationships and their biographies. Substantial training and experience in therapeutic roles and working with sensitive issues provided transferrable skills for the interviews. Delivering interventions and carrying out assessments over many years has established my skills in asking questions in an open and non- judgemental manner and prompting elaboration. Nevertheless, I was aware of the potential tension between the roles of researcher and practitioner (Coy 2006). While there are helpful overlaps, the two roles are distinct and have different goals. It is likely that the participants recognised similarities with professional staff they had worked with through subtle aspects of my presentation, and this has implications for the data which emerged. Whether these roles can, or should be, entirely separated is not entirely resolved (Coy 2006).

For the facilitators, six were interviewed at their work place, one was interviewed at her home, and one in a public house. The latter two interviewees specifically requested that they were interviewed away from their offices so that they could ‘express themselves freely’.

All interviews were recorded using a voice recorder. Participants were asked if this was acceptable and I emphasised that I was happy to take notes, if this was their preference. However, everyone who was interviewed was happy to be recorded. This enabled me to give my full attention to the research participants and ask further questions which occurred to me during interviews. Interviews were later transcribed in full. Given that there were eighteen interviews, which generally lasted for more than an hour, this was a very time-consuming process. This was made more demanding because I was eager to record inflections, pauses and nonverbal noises. Transcription aided the process of anonymity, because the recordings were subsequently deleted. It also aided a process of analysis; reflection on the themes and patterns within the data were made while transcribing.

Whose voice: An overview of the sample

This section aims to provide clarity about the participants who were involved. It is emphasised that the sampling strategy was purposeful and that claims of generalisability or representativeness are limited.

The tables below list, anonymously, the participants and facilitators involved in this study. Detail is provided on whether each participant was observed within the participant observation strand, interviewed, or both. The programme they had experience of attending or delivering (IDAP, BBR or both) is also included. Pseudonyms were used as identifiers to preserve anonymity. I experimented with the use of alphabetic and numerical signifiers, but these labels felt too impersonal given the focus on the individual understandings involved, and my knowledge of them as people.

Table 3.1 Group participants in the study

Pseudonym	Role in research	Programme involvement	Interview date (if applicable)	Location of interviews (if applicable)
Trevor	Group participant: interviewed only	IDAP	7th May 2016	Interviewee's home
Jack	Group participant: interviewed only	BBR	12th May 2016	Morrison's café.
Callum	Group participant: interviewed only	BBR	19th May 2016	Probation office
Morris	Group participant: interviewed only	BBR	10th May 2016	Probation office
Arthur	Group participant: observed and interviewed	IDAP	11th May 2016	Probation office
Dave	Group participant: observed and interviewed	IDAP	22nd October 2015	Interviewee's workplace.
Chris	Group participant: Observed and interviewed	IDAP	20th November 2015	LMU
Adam	Group participant: Observed and interviewed.	BBR	13th October 2016	Highstreet Café

Paul	Group Participant: observed and interviewed	IDAP	15th May 2016	Interviewee's home
Mickey	Group participant: observed and interviewed	BBR	20th November 2016	Probation office
Ryan	Group participant: observed only	IDAP		
Gary	Group participant: observed only	IDAP		
Greg	Group participant: observed only	IDAP		
Alfie	Group participant: observed only	IDAP		
Ben	Group participant: observed only	BBR		
Harry	Group participant: observed only	IDAP		
Danny	Group participant: observed only	BBR		
Darren	Group participant: observed only	IDAP		
John	Group participant: observed only	IDAP		
Dale	Group participant: observed only	BBR		

Shane	Group participant: observed only	BBR		
Pat	Group participant: observed only	BBR		
Fred	Group participant: observed only	IDAP		
Luke	Group participant: observed only	BBR		
Steve	Group participant: observed only	BBR		
Brian	Group participant: observed only	BBR		
Andrew	Group participant: observed only	BBR		
Liam	Group participant: observed only	BBR		
Jacob	Group participant: observed only	BBR		
George	Group participant: observed only	IDAP		
Angelo	Group participant: observed only	BBR		
Vinnie	Group participant: observed only	BBR		
Roy	Group participant: observed only	IDAP		

Edgar	Group participant: observed only	IDAP		
Sam	Group participant: observed only	IDAP		
Rick	Group participant: observed only	BBR		
Sebastian	Group participant: observed only	IDAP		
Tim	Group participant: observed only	BBR		
Meeka	Group participant: observed only	BBR		

Table 3.2 Facilitators in the study

Pseudonym	**Role in research**	**Programme involvement**	**Interview date (if applicable)**	**Location of interviews (if applicable)**
Trish	Facilitator: interviewed only	BBR	17th March 2016	Probation Office
Les	Facilitator: interviewed only	BBR	23rd June 2016	Probation office
Rose	Facilitator: observed and interviewed	BBR/IDAP	8th October 2015	Interviewee's home
Kathy	Facilitator: observed and interviewed	BBR /IDAP	23rd June 2016	Probation office

Margret	Facilitator: interviewed only	BBR	25th January 2017	London Metropolitan University
Liz	Facilitator: interviewed only	IDAP/BBR	25th January 2016	Probation office
Dorothy	Facilitator: observed and Interviewed	IDAP/ BBR	4th Feb 2016	Public house
Stan	Facilitator and programmes manager: interviewed only	IDAP/ BBR	12th November 2015	Probation office
Caroline	Facilitator: observed only	BBR /IDAP		

The participant observation strand of the thesis brought me in to contact with thirty-five perpetrators and four facilitators. Reflecting the geographical area where the research was undertaken, there was limited ethnic diversity within this group. I do not make any assumptions about how perpetrators self-identified. However, some perpetrators made explicit references to their ethnicity during the programmes. Of the thirty-five, one identified as having Turkish heritage, two identified as being '*travellers',* one referred to himself as being of *Asian* heritage, two identified as 'black'. The youngest group member was twenty-one, and the oldest had his seventieth birthday when a programme session was taking place.

All four facilitators I co delivered sessions with were women, whom I have worked with regularly over several years. They are referred to in the subsequent chapters as Dorothy, Caroline, Rose and Kathy. Dorothy identifies as white Polish, and the other three identified as white British.

I intended to interview a mix of men who had completed programmes where I had acted as facilitator, and those who had no prior knowledge of me. Unlike in studies I had conducted with individuals subject to probation supervision (Hughes 2012; 2014) there was a degree of difficulty in securing the participation of service users, particularly those who did not know me as a facilitator. Perhaps this reflected the shame and stigma associated with this type of offending history, which is discussed throughout this thesis. Often, men agreed to participate, but then failed to respond to further requests for contact (see Coy 2006), or cancelled arrangements to meet. I discussed this issue with two facilitators who agreed to act as gatekeepers, by putting me in touch with men that they believed would be willing to participate and briefing those concerned about the research. This proved to be an effective strategy and ten men who had completed domestic abuse programmes in the areas of study were subsequently interviewed (five from each programme). Six of these were known to me though my work as a programme facilitator. Nevertheless, the difficulty in securing participation of perpetrators inhibited a diverse sample that reflected differing ages, backgrounds and levels of motivation. Of those interviewed, eight of the men interviewed defined themselves as white British, one as Turkish, and one as white Irish. The youngest of the interviewees was twenty-seven, and the oldest was seventy.

Interviews were conducted with eight group facilitators, which included all the members of staff who were actively delivering BBR in the area where the study was located, excluding three. Two were unavailable and I chose not to interview one facilitator who I had worked with closely over a long period of time, in view of the impact of our relationship on my capacity to act as an impartial researcher. Of the eight facilitators, five had delivered IDAP prior to its replacement with BBR, three had delivered BBR only.

One of the eight facilitators who was interviewed delivered BBR for a different probation organisation, who I met through my employment as a lecturer. This provided a useful set of perspectives and some insight into the apparent consistency of some of the perspectives held by facilitators, although did not contribute to the local and situational dynamics which were being explored. Two of the eight facilitators interviewed were men, and all identified as white. One identified as Polish. I additionally interviewed other members of staff including offender managers, who held responsibility for the management, enforcement and supervision of the individuals attending the group, and a partner support worker, who was employed to support women who were in, or had been in, relationships with men attending the programme. Although these interviews inform the thesis, and provided useful insights, I did not use the data acquired in the analysis because of the lack of direct involvement of these staff members in the programmes being studied.

Data analysis

Reflecting the inductive research process, data analysis has been undertaken thematically. Arguably, the notion of a thematic analysis is vague and unsystematic (Bryman 2012), however having considered various approaches to qualitative data analysis I determined that this was the most appropriate way to capture the nuances of the data and the exploratory aims of the research. I completed training on NVIVO, a computer aided package for managing qualitative data. However, after experimenting with this software I decided it created a distance from the research data and fostered too mechanical an approach. Instead considerable time was spent reviewing the data, as it was collected, and through careful reading of field notes and transcriptions. Recurring and similar statements were identified through annotation. This process took place in tandem with the development of a theoretical

focus which was emerging through reviewing literature. Specifically, Goffman's notions of 'stigma' (1963) and the 'presentation of self' (1956), Collins' (2004) notions of 'emotional energy' in interactions, and ideas about masculinity drawn from Connell (1995) and Messerschmidt (Messerschmidt and Tomsen 2017; West and Zimmerman 1987). Through this process a framework emerged in the form of themes and sub themes, which were used to organise and categorise the data. This was a repetitive process of reviewing. Nevertheless, it has yielded an analysis that reflected the experience of the group for participants and facilitators, as interpreted by the researcher.

My own biases and assumptions inevitably impacted on how I interpreted the data. This has required a challenging process of reflection on personal issues. A long-standing commitment to gender equality, a belief in the pernicious impact of patriarchal belief systems, being a father of two children; one of whom started to identify as transgender during the completion of the research; have all impacted on how I have interpreted the narratives within the groups and interviews. During the research I became conscious that I had developed a tendency to interpret almost everything the men said as reflecting oppressive and dominant discourses of masculinity, which inhibited my ability to develop an understanding of their lived experiences. However, I was similarly concerned to maintain an awareness of the damaging impact of the behaviour of the men involved in the study, and its relationship to oppressive forms of masculinity. There are no clear answers to these dilemmas; it is for the reader to make a judgement on whether I have negotiated them with integrity and transparency.

Sensitive methods and sensitive data: establishing an ethical framework

I have attempted to demonstrate how I have integrated ethical principles into my research throughout this chapter and the thesis. Nevertheless, explicit consideration is required given the sensitivity of the issues involved and the lack of complete openness in some aspects of the research. Therefore, specific ethical considerations are discussed in the remaining section of this chapter.

Researcher role: forming research relationships with participants

Drawing on feminist traditions in research (Kelly et al 1994), which have highlighted the tendency of the researcher to occupy the role of an expert who objectifies participants, I was eager to treat participants as experts in their own lives, and as equals (Coy 2006). There were constraints in adopting this overall orientation within the participant observation strand of the research, where differences of power were embedded within professional and organisational requirements (although facilitators do interpret these differently, with some being much more open about their personal lives than others). Nevertheless, I endeavoured to treat the group members with respect, empathy and dignity.

An awareness of the gendered dynamics of research required reflection. Throughout the collection of the data, I was conscious of how interactions were framed by gender. Race, ethnicity, class and age are of significance. There were clear limitations in my ability to change core aspects of my identity. Nevertheless, I endeavoured to retain a reflexive approach regarding the impact of these aspects in my interactions, and how I could counteract them. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, understandings of masculinity can be collectively negotiated and performed. This takes place against a global backdrop of dominant ideas about masculinity (Connell 2005). I was conscious that through interviews, and within group participation, I was engaged in the negotiation of masculine identities. I tried to avoid giving responses

that colluded with or encouraged dominant discourses of masculinity with the aim of encouraging participants to deconstruct their own experiences. I was aware however, through comments from co- facilitators and group participants, that my masculine identity was different from those who were directed to attend programmes. There is substantial complexity regarding the hierarchical nature of different expressions of masculinity. On the one hand the group participants may have experienced me as failing to live up to their own understandings of masculinity, through my demeanour, and a perceived association with nonviolence and commitment to gender equality. On the other hand, I was in a position of authority and while I was often oblivious to this myself, other facilitators commented on the tendency of group members to respond to me with deference. Constant attention to my demeanour, and emphasis on the non-judgemental nature of my role was therefore essential. Similarly, most of the facilitators I interviewed were women and I was conscious of how this might impact on researcher/participant interactions.

At the outset, I was eager to be as open and honest as possible in the conduct of my research, and eager to gain the consent of participants. This would have directed me towards telling the groups I was studying that I was not only a group facilitator, but also a researcher. Ensuring that the participants have given their fully informed consent for information shared to be used for research purposes is a fundamental starting point for ethically informed research. However as noted above, this was not the approach adopted for three key reasons. Firstly, if any of the participants had objected to my use of the data for research purposes, it would have made the research unviable, even if all the others had agreed, and perceived potential benefits. Secondly, disclosing that I was operating as a researcher may have impacted on the data which emerged, through what has been termed the ‘reactive effect’ (Webb et al 1966). Thirdly, and possibly most importantly, the ‘treatment effect’ of the programmes being studied could have been adversely

affected by my disclosure that I had a dual role as both as researcher and facilitator (Tara Young personal communication). This is significant because the men attending the programmes were primarily there to develop strategies to avoid future abuse. Emphasising my role as a researcher risked distracting them from the key objectives of the programmes: an ethical dilemma with potentially harmful consequences for partners and children.

In weighing up these considerations I consulted literature on participant observation and ethnography with hard to reach groups, where sensitive issues were involved. While not in a closely related area of study, I found Lawton's (2001) discussion of the dilemmas she faced as a participant observer at an inpatient hospice, particularly helpful. Lawton concluded, though not without reservation, that seeking the on-going informed consent of participants was not viable. She also expressed concern that regularly seeking consent may have an adverse impact on vulnerable individuals who were already in distress. She therefore took care to ensure that ethical standards were met through other aspects of research practice, such as ensuring anonymity and ensuring that the participants were treated with dignity. Holdaway's (1983) covert study of a police service, which he conducted when he was already a serving police officer also has similarities. Holdaway was accessing a closed social setting, which required a dual role of both researcher and an experienced police officer. Considering these studies, and particularly that of Lawton (2001), I endeavoured to avoid harm through carefully anonymising all data and being continuously attentive to broader ethical considerations. This included ensuring that participants were treated with dignity and respect and being cognisant of the potential impact of programme attendance on others in the participant's lives. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the research took place within programmes which had a primary role of reducing the risk of harm to intimate partners and children.

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Consideration of these issues prompts broader awareness of the role of informed consent as the crucial variable in ensuring ethical practice, which requires further exploration within the methodology and ethics literature. There is a risk that seeking informed consent prompts a procedural or bureaucratic approach to ethical practice, where ethical requirements are understood as being met, once consent has been indicated. This approach overlooks complexities with the extent to which research participants can be fully informed about the research in which they are involved, the requirement for on-going reflection about ethical practice throughout the research process, and the potential for the research to have an adverse impact on the participants.

For the semi structured interviews, I was entirely open about the research process and its aims. Information sheets were provided, and consent was requested with an explicit emphasis that this could be withdrawn at any time. Assurances were given about confidentiality and anonymity. However, due to the potential risks associated with domestic abuse I emphasised that there were some limits to confidentiality. I explained to each participant that should information be disclosed which prompted concern about harm to self or others, I had an obligation to share this with relevant safeguarding organisations. Due to the sensitive nature of the issues in focus, I was mindful of the potential for participants to experience distress. I identified organisations who could provide support to participants in advance. This meant that I would be able to pass on details and sustain my role as 'researcher'. However, the participants did not appear to need additional support within any of the interviews.

Overview and reflections

This chapter has presented the methods used to gather and analyse data, and the methodological position adopted. It has acknowledged that this study has been full of practical, epistemological and ethical dilemmas. In retrospect, a more

straightforward approach to gathering data may have been appropriate. For example, relying exclusively on the observations of groups, or solely on interviews. There may also be an argument in favour of excluding the facilitators from the study, as this may constitute a substantive focus of research attention. However, I was eager to gather a detailed and rich understanding of the workings of the groups and how those involved made sense of them. This necessitated the methods adopted. The samples involved have been purposeful rather than representative. Therefore, claims of generalisability cannot be made. Similarly, there are no claims that I was separate from the research process. My own biases, biography and identity unavoidably impacted on the processes of data collection, interpretation and analysis. To turn to literature again to illustrate these points, Margret Atwood brilliantly and resonantly captures the constructed and personal nature of narratives and knowledge, in *The Handmaids Tale*:

> *When I get out of here, if I'm ever able to set this down, in any form of one voice to another, it will be a reconstruction then too, at yet another remove. It's impossible to say the thing exactly as it was, because what you say can never be exact, you always leave something out, there are too many crosscurrents, nuances; too many gestures, which could mean this or that, too many shapes which can never be fully described, too many flavours, in the air or on the tongue, half colours, too many* (Atwood 1996: 144)

Despite these reservations, the methods used, the data collected, and its subsequent analysis has facilitated an original contribution to knowledge about the working of domestic abuse perpetrator programmes, and the experiences of those who attend them.

Chapter 4 ‘I’m not one of those wife beaters’

Introduction

This chapter explores the attitudes, feelings and perceptions of men following their referral to probation domestic abuse programmes. It asserts that the men understand group attendance as a threat to their gendered social identity and associate it with a profound sense of shame. Consequently, the group participants displayed resistance, which was expressed dynamically during interactions with facilitators and other participants within programme sessions.

The chapter begins by exploring several ways in which referral to the programme is experienced as a gendered threat, as stigmatising and emasculating. This is followed by an examination of men’s use of ‘denial, minimisation and blame’, as central strategies of resistance. The chapter then looks at how ‘learning’ is perceived as a threat to a masculine identity. Next, ideas about the men’s perceptions of broader threats to masculinity are identified. It is argued that men feel threatened because of perceived changes in gender relations, and this compounds the anxiety, fear and anger associated with group attendance. The final section explores the challenges the men experience in grasping the social rules of the group.

The chapter concludes by re asserting that programme attendance is associated with substantial anxiety and shame. Men form and negotiate defensive strategies to manage the problems posed and assert a preferred interpretation of their identities. Responses to the group experience are, however, not static. The members continuously interpret and respond to the dynamics of the group environment. To be successful, facilitators must be aware of the dynamic responses and interpretations within group work with abusive men.

The programme as a gendered identity threat

> *Steve: It's embarrassing in it. I'm not one of those wife beaters. I'm not coming home shouting 'where's my fucking dinner'* (Field notes, 6th April 2015).

Drawing on Goffman (1963), attendance at the group is understood as a threat to the preferred social identity of participants. Anxiety associated with stigma and shame were the most evident and recurring themes for those commencing the programmes. This sense of shame is bound up with understandings of masculinity.

The participants perceive the group as being for a category of people they refer to as '*wife beaters'*, which they dissociate from. Resolving conflict with other men, by use of physical violence is, to large extent, identified as a legitimate and positive expression of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2005; Collier 1998), and this is a theme which is recurrent in this thesis. Using physical violence against women, however, is interpreted as emasculating, and the interactions between group members reveal attempts to accommodate tension associated with this. Referral to a programme for a category of men who are violent towards intimate female partners therefore prompts 'shame', and 'embarrassment': words used frequently by the men involved in this study. Consequently, defensive strategies are adopted in which the group members seek to resist the perceived identity that willing participation confers. Accepting the legitimacy of their attendance on the programme is to accept an identity which is counter to that which they wish to present. Resistance is expressed through an explicit denial of the relevance of the programme, and anger about the process of their referral.

Resistance and associated defensive strategies are central to this thesis. However, building on Rubin (2016) they are not understood as intrinsically oppositional to programme aims, facilitators, or other participants. Neither are they understood as

especially negative. Rather, resistance and defensive strategies are understood as behaviours which enable the participants to preserve an acceptable sense of self, and manage the threats posed by programme attendance.

Being arrested and charged for an offence involving domestic abuse, and then having to attend a group designed for men who are abusive in relationships, was experienced as a profound threat to the social identities of participants; undermining their ability to present a version of themselves that they were comfortable with.

Reflecting the identity threat described above, Dave's recollections of his pre sentence report and court appearance show that one of the most difficult aspects for him was the way in which he was presented in this report. Dave was employed as an aircraft engineer and the interview was conducted, at his request, at his place of work.

> *….she has made me out as if I was some sort of monster. And I looked at it and I thought 'that's not me'. It was a totally different picture to what I had said in the probation office and been telling them. And then she put me on this 'medium, to high, to high risk' thing, and I thought: 'What the hell?' And it is not like me at all. Even my sister, who went to court with me. She read it and said: 'They are just having a laugh with you aren't they?' Really, honestly, they are having a laugh. And I think instead of rushing the process, a probation officer should maybe meet with the person…. like we are today, where we're sat down, and maybe get a feel for the person... rather than just thinking yeah, yeah, he did this. And he's done this before, and that was not relevant to what was going on really* (Participant interview, Dave).

Dave's progression through arrest, court appearance, group attendance, and his interview with me, is understood as an on-going attempt to resist what he perceived as a negative definition of his identity. He asserted that after his arrest the police

quickly recognised that he was not '*one of those people'*, and that they were interested in his knowledge of aircraft. He stressed the inappropriate behaviour of his former partner throughout the programme, albeit with increasing subtlety. As a research participant, he was eager to demonstrate the skilled nature of his job and his positive relationships with colleagues. His greatest source of frustration revolved around being defined and identified as someone who was abusive: when the pre sentence report designated him as posing a medium risk of harm, Dave's strategy was to assert his own preferred social identity, drawing on what he presented as evidence undermining the credibility of the assessment.

The following dialogue, from an interview with Mikey is explicit in the sense of stigma and shame associated with group attendance.

> *It's embarrassing. And I was battling that I shouldn't be here, and what on earth am I doing here… It probably took a few weeks before I thought 'hold up, you are actually learning something here'. It probably took a month. I wish I hadn't been so stubborn, because probation went on forever, and I could have got it all done a year earlier. But at the time that was me. I suppose as you go along you change a bit, but at the time I was thinking they don't know what they are talking about. I remember thinking what does that facilitator know? But first of all, it was embarrassment and shame of actually being there. [very long pause] My first thoughts was… I don't deserve this. Umm I can still understand why I thought that... Because you have done good for such a long time, and then you make a balls up, and then you are punished by everyone. By the police, by the family, by everyone. I still have the argument now, like I had a row with my wife's mum. I said, 'I looked after your daughter for twenty years', and now I make a balls up…. And it is like the end of the world. So, yeah, basically that is why I was so annoyed about coming. I didn't think I deserved it. Not to say I didn't learn, but I felt I didn't deserve it. Not that I am*

saying that what I did was okay, I understand all that, but it just felt like…that was…. I don't want what I say to be taken out of context, because it wasn't taken out of context, but I feel… The court send you here, judged on one thing, one thing that you do. They don't look into your background, it is just one thing. Donk [Mickey makes a down word motion as if striking someone on the head].

W: Did you have a report done? [referring to a pre sentence report, which could have provided character details beyond those relating to the index offence].

Mickey: Maybe I had a report done, but nobody had done a report on the last twenty-three years. Nobody said: 'he helps old ladies across the road and it is out of character'. You're tarred and told: 'just get in there'. And I am still a bit annoyed about that. I still… It is a little argument that I have, not an argument. I have it with myself [surprised tone] (Participant interview, Mickey).

Mickey articulates the shame associated with a conviction for assault. He is explicit in emphasising what he perceives as the more enduring and representative features of his identity, which he believes have been damaged through his conviction for domestic violence and referral to a programme for this category of offender.

The identity threat that a conviction for assault against a female partner represents is even more explicit in the interview with Trevor.

At least if you hit four or five blokes, and even if you got to court and even if you go to prison, the magistrate says: 'and you beat up four of them, that is impressive', and you think 'yeaaah, score a goal' but nobody likes what happens, hitting a partner; it is shameful (Participant interview, Trevor).

Comments made by Greg during the IDAP programme reflect similar themes. As with Trevor, Greg illustrates the acceptability of general aggression in contrast to the unacceptability of violence against intimate partners.

> *Greg responded to another group member acknowledging that there is huge embarrassment and shame experienced as a result of attending the group. He therefore tells people that he is attending anger management* (Field notes, 5th, November 2014).

Here the emasculating nature of physical violence towards women was juxtaposed with the social currency associated with violence towards other men. Trevor was proud of his skills and ability to use violence. In his interpretation, the 'sentencers are impressed'. In contrast, he emphasises the word '*shameful'* when describing his use of violence against women. Trevor's perception of a lack of suitability for the programme was despite a self-acknowledged history of relationships defined by serious violence towards partners.

The threat to the self-identity of participants is again evident in the following extract which involved a conversation between Luke and my co facilitator, Rose, at the break, during the first session of a BBR programme. Luke had expressed significant anxiety about programme attendance prior to the session and had tried to persuade staff that he was not suitable. For Luke, the threat to his identity was posed not only by the programme's association with relationship violence, but also because of his perception of the background and social class of the other men. He regularly stressed that he had not been in this environment, with 'these kind of people', because he is 'middle class'.

'I'm finding it very difficult. I felt sick for a lot of it. I know it was a bad thing but I know this now. It's not that I won't learn anything. I'm not normally a bad person'.

My co facilitator, Rose, sat down next to Luke and asked 'what can we do to make it easier?'. Praised for 'hanging in there' and said he has done the most difficult bit. (Field notes, 7th October 2015)

This reflection reveals Luke's attempt to negotiate a mutually acceptable identity and interpretation of events, within the group environment. He does not want to accept the identity of someone who could benefit from the group programme, but equally he does not want to appear as someone unable to learn from the experience. As the other group members bonded, Luke kept his distance. When most of the men started to go outside together at the break, Luke would remain in the room. When he contributed, his speech was always directed at the facilitators and not the other men, and he would adopt a 'catapult' body position: his hands being interlinked behind the head, with the elbows extended. In this position, he took up an increased amount of physical space and ensured distance on either side. This is a very common posture, typically adopted by men when they are called on to contribute to discussions. However, the frequency with which men adopted this posture decreased as the programme progressed. With Luke it was sustained.

Often manifestations of anxiety took the form of hostility to the facilitators and the programme, as illustrated by these field notes.

Ben [with teeth gritted and rising tone, although he is not shouting]

We get on as a group, and that is why we get on better out there than we do in here… well I'm just being honest. I speak the truth [embarrassed laughter from others] We are all here because we hate birds... well only joking, we have done something where the other person should be here and not us. I called

her 'a cunt' cause she was a cunt and I would call it to her again. I've addressed my issues which is why it is so boring doing the same stuff again .

The other group members do not get on board but sit in silence. It is an early stage of the group. However, others express their anger in not quite such strong terms (Field notes, 2nd December 2015).

Later in the same session after the break:

I ask Ben for a word saying: 'Nothing to worry about'. He was slightly tearful and said that he had 'loads of stuff going on'. I asked if he wanted to leave. He did. The remaining session was a very different dynamic: less confrontational, and more positive (Field notes, 2nd December 2015).

Ben sought to establish his preferred interpretation of events through challenging the legitimacy of his referral and he attempts to rouse a hostile attitude of shared anger within the group, with a degree of success (Collins 2004). His reference to '*getting on better out there than in here*' refers to time spent during breaks or prior to the start of each session, where participants can operate as a group without the influence of facilitators. Significant complexity emerges here. Using Goffman (1956), Ben can be understood as referring to a 'back stage' arena, where the participants are able to prepare for their 'front stage' performance. He is explicitly bringing 'back stage' discussions that take place in the absence of facilitators into the 'front stage' arena of the group room, to question the credibility of the programme and the facilitators. However, in doing so he has broken the rule of separating different arenas, and this may explain the reluctance of other members to join Ben in his expressions of frustrations.

Ben again demonstrated hostility in the following session.

Rose: How was last week's sessions?

Ben: We got bored with more borin' shit

Rose: That doesn't sound very positive

Ben: Well I already know it all

Rose: [pauses, and group is quiet] I think we need to make this a bit more like a group [Rose moves chairs around. Other group members start to assist in making the room reflect a circle more than a row. Ben stays in his seat, and consequently, he is sitting behind the circle of participants].

Ben: I'm not moving.

Rose: Well, you're a bit behind everyone.

Ben responds by lifting his chair and placing it directly in the middle of the circle of participants.

Rose: [*Tuts and rolls her eyes] Just sit there then if you want [in a frustrated tone]*

W: *It means that Steve and Andrew will be staring at the back of your head*

Ben: *I'm sure they don't mind – they might be busy doing something that is none of my business*

Rose: *You are telling us you know all this stuff, but you are not putting it in to practice*

Ben: *I am, but not in here*

W: *Well, we seem to be returning to that animosity thing, actually I'm talking to you Ben. We are trying to deliver this and you might be bored, but this affects other people, and makes it difficult for us*

Ben: *Okay [moves back behind everyone]*

Rose: *Will and I talked about stuff and everyone was on a high after the last group that I was here for, and there was really good feedback in the one to ones; it seems quite different now [The men look at their feet]* (Field notes 16th December 2016).

Ben's behaviour can be understood as an attempt to disrupt the session through using hostility and refusing to cooperate. Engaging appropriately would indicate accepting the legitimacy of the programme, and thereby imply an acceptance of a stigmatised identity (Goffman 1963), and a subordinated form of masculinity (Connell 2005). Ben's negative emotions impact on his interactions with other members. In keeping with Collin's analysis (2004), his interactions are not based on rationality, but on emotionality. Additionally, he endeavours to foster a mutual focus with other participants but is largely unsuccessful.

Resistance to identity threat did not always take the form of an explicit refutation of the relevance of the programme. On one occasion, an individual approached the reception desk, and stated: '*I am here for the beat your bird up programme'* (Field notes, 13th October 2015). This was understood as an attempt to express fearlessness about the threat posed by the programme, which paradoxically can be interpreted as conveying the opposite. As explored later, a feature of dominant forms of masculinity is the requirement to present as invulnerable and self - confident, with a disregard for the perception of others. The contrast between the presentation of self as invulnerable, and the anxieties experienced, emerges as one of the key challenges for men attending perpetrator programmes.

Minimisation, denial and blame as defensive strategies

Minimisation, denial and blame are recurring in academic discussions of domestic violence and are very familiar in the experiences of people who work with domestic

abuse perpetrators (Harne and Radford 2008; Bowen 2012; Dobash and Dobash 1992; Morran 2013; Kelly and Westmarland 2016). They are overlapping concepts which refer to the way men create narratives which play down the significance or impact of their behaviour, deny that they have been abusive, deny that their behaviour has caused harm, deny responsibility for their behaviour, or justify it. These themes were clear in the groups; to a lesser extent the interviews. Minimisation, denial and blame took several forms, including emphasising the responsibility of partners and victims for violence, criticising the criminal justice agencies, women in general, and 'the system'. The 'system' was a phrase commonly used to refer to agencies and processes over which men on the programme felt that they had no control. 'Blame' was often associated with a profound sense of injustice, which inhibited engagement with the programmes.

There are tensions in applying minimisation, denial and blame to perpetrators of domestic violence. A great deal of domestic abuse literature emphasises that violence towards female partners in relationships is supported by patriarchal values, which condone or even encourage the use of violence against women. Within this framework, violence towards women is an expression of male entitlement and is endorsed by dominant cultural views of masculinity (Dobash and Dobash 1979; 1992; 1998; Dobash et al 2002). Beliefs, identities and perceptions underpinned by hegemonic masculinity and traditionally defined gender roles were evident within the programmes observed. Taking this at face value, it might be expected that the men attending programmes would not experience shame or embarrassment about their use of violence towards intimate partners. If perpetrators believed that violence against women was acceptable, they would have no qualms about disclosing its use. However, the men's expressions of minimisation, denial and blame also reflect dissonances: their understandings and attitudes towards intimate partner violence, and its relationship to masculinity, are immersed in inconsistencies and

contradictions. Men typically attended the group with an expectation that others would understand violence towards partners, or women, as emasculating: those who use physical violence against women are referred to disparagingly as '*wife beaters'*, and the participants were eager to express resentment towards this perceived category of men, and hence their lack of suitability for the programme.

The strategies of minimisation, denial and blame are understood as attempts to present a preferred masculine identity, to the specific audience of the group and the facilitators (Connell 2005). Masculinity is hierarchically structured, and the participants attempt to present themselves to others in accordance with dominant ideas about being a man, while concealing traits that may lead to a subordinated identity.

Denial, minimisation and blame can also be framed within Matza and Sykes' (1957) 'techniques of neutralisation'. As with much of Matza and Sykes' work, these notions help to challenge the 'otherising' of those defined as 'deviant'. In discussing juvenile delinquency, they argue that offenders do not hold oppositional or deviant values. They suggest that individuals who commit offences are likely to experience and display guilt and shame, which cannot be wholly dismissed as calculated or manipulative. Instead, these responses are taken as evidence that their moral outlook reflects the dominant value base of society. The 'techniques of neutralisation' that they describe refer to the strategies used by individuals to justify their behaviour, avoid damage to their self -image, and challenge negative interpretations by others. There is a tendency in discussions of crime and harmful behaviour to depict those responsible as wholly different from everyone else based on their values, beliefs and behaviours. Tierney expresses similar criticism of the process of 'otherising', implicit in much criminological theory, which can be applied to some responses to domestic violence perpetrators:

> *It depicts the delinquent as being totally and consummately committed to a delinquent way of life. It is as if they brush their teeth and make love in a delinquent way, invariably refuse to help anyone in trouble, and harm people and property at every available opportunity* (Tierney 2006: 122).

These frameworks serve as a reminder that men who are violent towards intimate partners do not exist in a hermetically sealed category or hold views that are diametrically opposed to other men. Minimisation, denial and blame are understood, within this framework, as a means of coping with the threat to a gendered self-identity posed by a conviction of assault against a partner and subsequent referral to a domestic abuse perpetrator programme.

My field notes contain narratives in which there is a denial of wrong-doing linked to a collective expression of unfairness in the criminal justice system towards men. These expressions reflect Matza and Sykes's (1957) observation that individuals often 'condemn the condemners', and 'deny that there is a victim' to deflect attention from their own behaviour, as a strategy of 'neutralisation'.

> *Sam relayed his control log, which relayed incident of smashing his partners phone…. Sam said that he had purchased the phone for her, so it was his phone to smash. There was some recognition that he was attempting to punish his former partner. Sam joined the general chorus of sentiment around perceived unfairness of the police and abuse he has experienced by his partner* (Field notes, 18th September 2014).

Fred adopted a similar strategy of denial and minimisation, by suggesting, as with Sam, that there was not a legitimate victim of his behaviour.

> *I don't get how I can be done for kicking the doors off, when I put the doors up, and then put them back on… After I had kicked them off.* (Field notes, 15th August 2014)

A more explicit and direct attribution of blame can be found with John, on his first IDAP session.

> *I shouldn't really be here as my partner is equally to blame*. *She wound me up by not letting me in to see my kids, so I kicked the door down. I mean why would anyone try and provoke someone who they know has anger management issues?* (Field notes 19th November 2014)

Within the same session, Dave made a similar statement.

> *Dave introduced himself, referring to an incident in which he 'open hand slapped' his partner after she had attacked him, and after they had both been drinking [Dave very nervous with a shaking voice as he speaks. He averts any eye contact and looks down]. Said that he is now receiving harassment from his partner. He also referred to a letter from the women's safety worker which he believed was responsible for ending his new relationship by 'making me out to be a monster'* (Field notes, 19th November 2014)

These extracts contain elements of minimisation, denial and blame as strategies of externalising responsibility. John and Dave were eager to present a preferred interpretation of the circumstances which lead to their referral. John emphasised the responsibility of his partner for his actions: his problems with 'anger' are presented as beyond his control and he creates a narrative in which the violence that took place was due to his partner's error in provoking him, despite her knowledge of his 'anger issues'. Dave places blame on his partner more explicitly, presenting himself as the victim, using minimal force in self -defence. His discussion of a letter from the women's safety worker is revealing. Once an individual is referred to IDAP or BBR programme there is a requirement that they provide details of current partners, who are then contacted by a 'partner liaison officer' (previously 'women's safety worker'). Initial contact is usually in the form of a letter or telephone call. If the partner wishes,

she will be given information about the programme, and information about sources of support. The contact is based on the premise that men pose an on-going risk to partners, which can in some cases increase during attendance at the programme. Dave was referring to a new partner changing her perception of him following receipt of an introductory letter. The letter itself is standardised and written in reasonably neutral language. However, in Dave's interpretation this further reinforced his sense of being stigmatised: he was being unfairly identified as a 'monster'. It might be expected that receipt of a letter indicating that a new partner was attending a domestic violence programme might well have a negative impact on the development of the relationship. However, Dave was unable to consider the view that he held responsibility for disclosing his background and discussing it with his new partner.

The following field note refers to a pre-programme session where the men due to commence BBR attended to complete relevant paperwork. The association between denial and minimisation on the one hand, and a perception of injustice on the other, is clear.

> *I invited the men in from waiting room: Dale is agitated and asks 'Where are we fucking going? The letter said one to one, and I have to be at work'. This prompted another participant to mutter 'What the fuck?'. The group sat down and quietly completed questionnaires, although evidently uncomfortable and anxious. Dale expressed his agitation again and said 'What the fuck is this? I said to my step daughter, your Mum is a slag, and then I ended up with IDAP, and then end up here'.*
>
> *Dale then softened in tone – and laughs about questions. Mickey completed questions first – said he is 'pissed off', I make a sympathetic noise when he says he has lost his job and business and he says: 'look at you' [in a snide voice] and repeats gesture in mimicking tone – I said that I was being sincere*

and acknowledging that he has had a tough time. He said he has had enough of being punished but said he is saying 'fuck it' (Field notes, 30th September 2015).

The recurrence of denial, justifications and blame within the data confirms the centrality of these themes when working with men on programmes for domestic abuse. The next example is taken from a conversation with Vinnie, at a meeting prior to starting the BBR programme.

Vinnie: I am a black belt in Japanese ju jit su. I always blocked her when she attacked, she would get bruises and then call the police – I never struck her. If I struck a woman she would be dead

[Vinnie stands up and demonstrates various blocking and striking techniques. He then abruptly changes the subject]: 'How long am I going to be here for when the sessions start?'

W: The sessions last for two and a half hours

Vinnie replies: What? Two and a half hours. Are you serious?

Vinnie shows me photos on his phone of boilers he has installed and proceeds to tell me about the mother of his children getting him arrested lots. He tells me that his children are in care because she wasn't able to get them into school and one of his children made allegations about her using physical punishment. Vinnie thinks this is 'just children's fantasy'. He says she is a good Mum, but adds that it used to break his heart when she screamed at them and upset them. He tells me that the index offence involved accidently texting 'die cunt', when he meant to say something else. He felt that the police didn't pay attention to all the contact from her afterwards, which proved that she wasn't intimidated. He says he doesn't want to be with 'wife beaters', and adds 'I don't

hate women, I love women. I have three of my own, why would God give me those if I hated women'.

Vinnie continues: *I got an injury from fighting ten men, I am a black belt and I nearly killed one – but then I pulled back and something was in the way of my foot and the power broke my own leg. That was God telling me not to kill.*
(Field notes, 6th June 2016)

This interaction with Vinnie revolved around denial and blame, bound up with a caricatured set of masculine beliefs, which he was eager to convey. Vinnie presented himself as possessing key masculine attributes of physical strength and skill with physical violence. Paradoxically, for Vinnie, these attributes confirm that he could not have assaulted his partner. He emphasises his difference from the 'wife beaters' and attempts to focus attention on aspects of his identity which he believes demonstrate his positive masculine character. Criticism of the police, and their failure to understand the context of his actions are also in evidence. Vinnie's active presentation as someone opposed to violence against women continued throughout the programme.

Alcohol, mental health, stress and external factors were frequently noted in the accounts of men. Failing to remember was an associated technique of neutralisation (Matza and Sykes 1957). These are evident in the brief statement made by Steve, when participants were asked to recall the incident that led to their referral to the programme.

Okay I'll go first. I can't really remember anything though because I was drunk. I got done for common assault. Apparently I pulled my partner's hair. Not that the alcohol is a let off. The only thing I remember is waking up in the police station. It's embarrassing. I'm not one of those wife beaters.

Notably Steve's account of 'pulling his partner's hair' contrasts with the prosecution documents which refer to a sustained attack against his partner involving kicks and punches and dragging her across a room by her hair (Field notes, 6th April 2016)

Strategies for minimisation, denial and blame were diverse, complex and creative. The common thread being that responsibility for violence is externalised. This was often linked to situational factors such as the immediate actions of a partner preceding the incident of violence. Minimisation, denial and blame are also presented as a cumulative process in which the on-going activities of others inevitably lead to violence. Loss of control connected with anger, in response to provocation or injustice, was often presented as consistent with hegemonic forms of masculinity.

Despite the frequency of their use, denial and blame pose an unsatisfactory resolution for men attending domestic abuse programmes. 'Putting your hands up', and 'accepting responsibility' emerged within the programmes as practices associated with dominant forms of masculinity. Men regularly referred to being able to 'accept' when they have done something wrong. The process of denial thus poses the risk of further emasculation and internalisation of shame. The following chapters will explore how the conflict that emerges within this dissonance creates space and motivation to engage in the therapeutic opportunities that the programmes offer, to acknowledge previous harmful behaviour and construct an identity in which this behaviour is not reflective of the entire self. As such denial, minimisation and blame, along with other strategies of resistance must be carefully negotiated by facilitators, if the group is to have a positive impact. Applying Maruna's (2001) understanding of the potential of promoting a non-offending identity in reducing further offending, is useful here. This prompts an understanding of defensive strategies as an indication of a desire among participants to view

themselves as positive partners and as holding values and beliefs which are hostile to intimate partner violence.

Learning as a threat to masculinity

The threat to the masculine identities of participants was also linked to the authority of the facilitators and the requirement to 'learn'. In the extract involving Ben above, he is explicit that he '*knows it all*'. Aspects of hegemonic masculinity inhibit men occupying the role of learner and fosters a perception that '*men know, they do not learn'*.

> *A mildly challenging session [interesting that this is unusual]. Two new guys for orientation [Mickey and Gary]. Both quite resistant, but one particularly so. Mickey insistent on asking me if I was married. I got drawn into a conversation about how long I had been married for, and he said: I have been married for 23 years. I should be teaching you. I have just done one thing wrong when I had totally lost it and the other 23 years were a happy marriage and its bound to be hard taking it. I was depressed. This course isn't for me and I have got nothing to gain from it.*
>
> *Eventually I suggested that I take him to the next room to discuss further because of the disruption he was causing.*
>
> *Mickey reiterated: I was married happily for 23 years and I wasn't myself. I did one thing wrong in 23 years so I shouldn't have been given this course as if there is something wrong with me. I kicked her up the arse when we were on a boat; we were both paralytic and had an argument. Then we separated and I was screaming that we had to give it another fucking go, when I wasn't supposed to speak to her. I wasn't responsible for my actions* (Field notes, 11th February 2015).

Mickey's self-identity is threatened by his perception that he is positioned as 'learner' in his relationship with me as a facilitator, making it clear that he has nothing to learn from me, or the programme. Age, class, and experience are also likely to be relevant in Mickey's perception that I was not someone entitled to teach him. Acknowledging that he could learn would require a re-evaluation of who he was, and the acceptance of what he perceived as a stigmatised or shamed self.

This perception of learning as emasculating was expressed in different ways by different individuals. Phrases, like '*it's all common sense'*, '*it's obvious',* and *'this is patronising'* were commonplace. As the programmes progressed, men managed the threat posed by learning with other phrases such as '*it is a good refresher'* or '*it keeps you alert*', which enabled them to preserve a masculine identity, while also being able to engage appropriately in the programme. This reconciliation was very evident in Simon's contributions during IDAP and in interview. Simon had spent fourteen years in a US prison, and was eager, throughout the programme, to express his knowledge of group environments, therapeutic techniques, and strategies for dealing with conflict. He regularly reminded facilitators and participants that he had not only attended a significant number of groups in the past but had also facilitated them.

> *Well for myself I thought I don't need to be here, and don't want to be here. And to a certain degree I still believe that, but, I came to a realisation that I have done all these classes in the US, but whether I have done them or not, it doesn't matter because in England they are irrelevant. Therefore, in order to prove to the people that matter that I am who I say I am, and I am going to do what I say I am going to do, I am going to have to take this class. And I learnt that no matter how much I know, you can always learn a bit more, and I think I learnt a little more about myself. There is always room to grow. And just to see the other guys changing at the same time. To hear their stories, to share your*

stories with them, and you can see that your stories had an impact on somebody. And they are like 'wow', 'I can't believe you said that', or 'I can relate to that', or 'I can't believe you went through that', and 'I can't believe you came out of the other end adjusted and not falling apart or broken at the seams'. And also, when you have been in a rough environment and people are saying 'and you still went through this class' and you are like 'yeah, you have got to have a sense of self-worth, and strength of character and the only way you are going to gain that is by learning about yourself. And the flaws that we have we need to learn to fix those, otherwise we will never change' (Participant interview, Simon).

Simon manages to re-frame being a 'learner' within an acceptable narrative of masculinity. He expresses that being a man requires putting in effort, dealing with challenges and acknowledging that there is always room to develop. He also identifies himself as someone who can help and support other men on the programme, through which he positions himself as an authority who is able to teach.

The following interaction between Simon and other men on the programme further illustrate these themes.

Simon: I always give 110 percent even though it not always relevant to me.

Simon spent some time discussing 14 years in US prison. Contrasted signs on walls in UK (motioning around the room to posters) which include things like '7 steps to recovery' and 'positive thinking' – with large writing in US saying 'warning shots will not be fired'. Said he has learnt most of the skills through previous courses but is gaining a lot from the course – which is acting like a refresher (Field notes, 6th August 2014).

Again, Simon directs the group to a preferred interpretation of his identity. He is someone with considerable experience of this kind of situation and knows how to

operate. He contrasts the unthreatening nature of the probation service in the UK with the harsh regime of the US. 'Giving 110%' is a clear point where competing masculine attributes are reconciled. Simon's statement suggests that even though 'real men' may not have anything to learn, they will make the best of the situation.

Broader threats: masculinity under attack and the problem of women

A common thread within the interactions between participants was a perception that as men they were under threat and increasingly powerless. The group-based programme, and by implication, the facilitators were identified as a reflection of this threat. Individual women, women in general and broader social changes were blamed for this. Emphasising the perceived wrong doing of women, alongside the criminal justice system's bias in favour of women, was a strategy of resistance. Misogynist speech made in the group was understood by participants as having potentially negative consequences, meaning some views were likely to be toned down. The perception among participants, that they had to measure their words was interpreted as further evidence that they were under threat.

Rick was very eager to construct a narrative in which he was the victim of unfairness. The interpretation of his behaviour as abusive and his subsequent conviction was attributed to biases in criminal justice system. This kind of statement was common in the groups; often associated with a broader narrative in which women are seen as having too much power.

> *BBR session 1: Rick emphasized his view, along with others, about women needing to attend groups and the unfairness of the CJS system in favour of women, giving examples of his own sense of victimisation* (Field notes, 6th December 2016).

Simon makes a very similar statement on an IDAP session.

Simon tended to demonstrate less responsibility for his own behaviour, stressing his perception that women should also be compelled to attend programmes and emphasising the unreasonable behaviour of the police (Field notes,18th September 2014).

During the same session, Greg made similar statements.

Greg emphasised view, along with others, that women need to attend groups and also emphasised the unfairness of the CJS system in favour of women, giving examples of his own sense of victimisation. He said that the only difference is that women tend to call the police (Field notes, 18th September 2014).

Claims by participants that they lack power and are subjected to injustice was also clear in an interaction within a BBR session documented below. Here the collective emotional content was in evidence as the men attempted to establish a discourse in which they had to tolerate violence and unpredictability from female partners in the context of a discussion of 'the media'.

Dale: Why is it one rule for one and another rule for another. Why are there groups of men sitting around here and not women. I have been stabbed and had 160 stiches.

Liam: Yeah... I have been kicked and punched, not excusing what I have done but I threw a phone at her when I heard that she was having an affair.

Mickey: I mean how much is a man supposed to take?

Adam: *Things have changed so that women are on top… please? What do you think will happen?*

> *I failed to resist a rant about disproportionate impact of domestic abuse on women, which led to increased hostility among the men* (Field notes, 8th September 2014).

Gary drew an explicit connection between the behaviour of his partner and the injustices of court processes.

> *Gary attended for session 3 of negotiation and fairness. Covered non-violent conflict resolution. Discussion of healthy arguments, process of negotiation and ground rules. Reasonably attentive and engaged although no clear evidence of understanding. Digressed to highlight difficult behaviour of his previous partner. He believes that courts always give priority to women and doesn't think this is fair. Reiterated previous statement: 'my wife has been with me for 11 years and then pretended to be scared of me, her statements was a pack of lies'* (Field notes, 20th May 2015).

Many men were eager to emphasise that difficulties with their partners reflected problems with women generally. This served to legitimise violence and deflect blame through asserting gendered hierarchies. During an IDAP session exploring how cultural messages tend to infantilise women's anger, Sam was eager to assert his own understanding about the problems posed by his partner, which is another example of this strategy of resistance.

> *I would previously just blank my partner if she was angry*. *With women you need to walk on egg shells*, *especially at the time of the month* (Field notes, 28th May 2014).

Within the same session, Sebastian used evidence from a newspaper to endorse his perception that men were increasingly powerless.

Sebastian eager to discuss article he had read in The Sun re male victims of domestic abuse. Belief in the disadvantages experienced by men still an on-going part of Sebastian's narrative (Field notes, 28th May 2014).

Reflecting Connell's (2005) discussions of 'household gender regimes', other related themes revolved around women not meeting gendered expectations of sexual behaviour and domestic duties. On occasion, men expressed anger about their contact with women who failed to complete domestic or child-care duties satisfactorily. Several referred to stress associated with coming home from work to find the house in a mess or referred to jealousy as central in the build up to instances of abuse. These accounts were occasionally expressed subtly to avoid negative judgements from facilitators. On other occasions they were explicit.

Pat relayed a control log which related to an incident where he had called his partner and her friend a 'pair of slags', because his partner's friend was talking about how many men she had slept with. He added, in response to questioning regarding effects, that his partner no longer saw this friend. Pat seemed to struggle to understand the controlling aspects of this, beyond recognising that it was inappropriate to use the behaviour and language that he did. Other men were collusive and had to be challenged regarding sexist judgements and labels made regarding the sexual behaviour of woman (Field notes, 18th September 2014).

In this group session men expressed their disapproval of women who they deemed sexually promiscuous. Although this was challenged by facilitators, the gendered expectations about sexual behaviour appeared to be deeply engrained for many of the men.

Liam illustrated his frustration with challenges to gendered domestic expectations. He would regularly refer to the positive nature of his childhood and the success of his parent's marriage. In his perception, one of the crucial ingredients of their success was that they held traditional gendered roles. For Liam the legitimacy of these roles was under threat, both within the group and more generally.

> *Liam: Thing is about women is fair enough if she has been working, but I would want dinner if I had been working. I keep hearing all this it isn't the 1950s anymore , but my Dad has never cooked a piece of toast in his life and his marriage has lasted since 1967. Women go on about this stuff. I'm not saying I'm like that, I'm partly tongue in cheek* (Field notes, 2nd December 2015).

The following interaction echoes this, where the threat posed by women, and a perception that they are disproportionately supported at the expense of men, is again in evidence.

> *Dale begins to tell the group about the extent of the difficulties he has experienced due to a previous partner: One day I will tell you what else there is, [implying that it is too personal to share at this stage]. Ah fuck it – my Mrs accused me of rape. We had sex on the Friday, then sex on the Saturday, then next thing I know I am on bail for rape.*
>
> *Liam: That is bullshit; they should be branded. That happened to my mate* (Field notes, 16th December 2015).

In a later session, the same individuals expressed their anger and frustration about what they perceived as difficulties posed by women and identified that the programme was part of a broader threat to masculinity.

Liam: Well I went drinking with my bird and she was drinking so I drank more and thought fuck you. She was talking to her friends so I just got wankered and did this almighty fart. Oh shit. I've said the wrong thing, haven't I?

Dale: People who write this shit need to get some real experience. Why the fuck is this about men all the time, it is like being racist, except it is the other thing. I can't remember the word. What is it?'

W: Sexist?

Dale: Yeah that's it. What about the women? (Field notes, 13th January 2015)

This section has highlighted the way in which men were experiencing 'masculinity challenges' (Messerschmidt 2000), in which rights and privileges associated with being male were perceived as under threat: for the men, this threat was posed by women, and structures that had given women too much power. However, other challenges to conventional masculinity were also identified: for example, the following interaction illustrates a concern with a threat posed by 'gayness'.

Notable comments / discussion prompted when we were talking about influence of 'culture', Vinnie engaged, as they all did, in the exercise, identifying gendered aspects of film. Then moved on to saying the thing that bugs him is that there are 'too many gays on television', which will influence his son, 'because he will see it and think it is normal'. Prompted agreement from Tim who agreed that there are more gays now than before on television (Field notes, 29th June 2016).

Beliefs reflecting hegemonic masculinity were not only reflected in comments which were explicitly negative or hostile to women. Interactions with facilitators also reflected gendered hierarchies and beliefs. Participants would tend to direct their contributions towards me, as the male facilitator, rather than my female colleague. However, this tendency decreased as relationships with facilitators developed. Men

would also apologise to the female facilitator for expletives or for sexual references. The statement '*there is a lady present'* was made on several occasions at the early stages of groups, especially during the sexual relationships module of IDAP. Some men made comments towards female facilitators based on their appearance with the assumptions that this would be appreciated. For examples, Edgar, who was usually very quiet in sessions, moved towards a facilitator who was standing in for my usual colleague and said with a smile '*Dorothy, you are looking gorgeous tonight*'. Within the same session, Arthur was eager to talk to Dorothy and say '*Are you Polish? It was worth fighting the Germans for you. You have lovely eyes'* (Field notes, 14th May 2015).

Whatever the game is I don't want to play

For most of the men attending the group, the expectations are, at best, ambiguous, and this prompted anxiety. The men who I interviewed reported being anxious before the group because of the uncertainty involved. To use a dramaturgical analogy (Goffman 1956), they were entering the stage without a script. They had a sense that they were expected to perform a role that they did not wish to play and which they were not familiar with. The group room, or stage, often resonated with previous experiences which were not positive arenas. There were visible parallels with a classroom. The seating arrangements, authority of the staff, the use of pens and paper and the presence of learning prompts all loosely resembled elements of a school and contrasted significantly with the work and home lives of some of the men. Many men establish their sense of selves through work and employment, where relationships are often based on hegemonic masculine practices of banter, hierarchy and physical action (Seidler 1992). Entering an arena which followed different rules and had different expectations was inherently threatening and potentially emasculating. How to 'do masculinity' (West and Zimmerman 1987) in

this arena was uncertain. For some this uncertainty, or lack of comfort, continued throughout the group, however for others the rules, requirements, and the script were quickly grasped. Gender played a key role in the difficulties that the group environment posed as it was perceived as not in keeping with usual male behaviour and interactions.

Fear of being in a group environment itself was identified explicitly by several of the interviewees and was evident when meeting individuals prior to the start of their first group session.

> *When it came to the group [laughter] my probation officer said 'oh, you'll be attending a group', and I was quite apprehensive and nervous... because I'm not too…. I suppose I'm quite shy when it comes to new people….and when it comes to being slung in a class with a load of different faces, it is quite unnerving. Yeah, so first with Alfie and John…um… and everything seemed okay…Three was okay…. And then the following week, I think it was a couple of weeks after we got thrown into the deep end, into the big group, with yourself, and I, uh [struggling for words noise]. There was one guy that stood out really, and that was Greg. I found him intimidating. Mainly because some of the guys have said 'do you know who he is, do you know what he did'. That sort of thing. And I was sort of like 'no I don't know who he is, I don't know him, I'm not from around here'. And I think that was part of the nerves, not knowing, because everyone else knew him, this supposedly gangster. They painted a picture of him being a big gangster and I thought 'eeerm, okay'. And then of course in the room, Greg used to direct his eye contact straight at me [laughter] and I was like 'Oh fuck, my god, I am so dead'. And I found it intimidating. My eyes would drop to the floor straight away, as soon as he made eye contact, my eyes would drop to the floor* (Participant interview, Dave).

Dave is in his forties, had no previous convictions prior to the index offence of assault, which led to his referral to IDAP. He had a skilled job as an aircraft engineer. His sense of difference from the other men, and the threat they posed is clear. After attending an 'orientation' session with two other men, he then attended the main group where he felt that his fears about the people on the group were realised, personified by 'Greg'. His attribute of 'shyness' meant that he was not naturally equipped to deal with the requirements of the group, and the type of masculinity that other men displayed.

On another opening session of BBR, one man left the group room and asked to speak to me. He said that being in a room full of other people '*like that'* was too stressful and added that he could not return. This individual was not seen again. It was often the case that participants did not attend at all following referral: there may have been several reasons for this, but it is likely that for some fear and anxiety played a role.

While many of the men I interviewed were open about their fear and anxiety preceding the group, this was often implicit, and mediated by gendered social understandings. Anxieties were often expressed within socially acceptable gendered narratives: more subtle responses included phrases such as '*I am not really a group sort of person'* (Field notes, 16th June 2016*).* Mildly aggressive and confrontational language was common at the start of group sessions. This is understood, within this thesis, as an expression of anxiety, mediated by the constraints of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2005).

For many men, the perceived expectation to 'open up' in front of a group of people was a clear source of anxiety. For other men, the source of anxiety was not always clear. Rather, it was the general uncertainty, and 'not knowing' what the group would involve.

Well, I was trying to go with an open mind but didn't know what to expect. Well… it was just nerves about what was going to be said and what was going to happen (Participant interview, Morris).

Jack, who had completed BBR expressed very similar sentiments.

Well [stutters] I didn't want to, you know… When you are dealing with people you don't know. It wasn't a fact of talking with the teachers, it was opening up with all these other people around you that you don't know' (Participant interview, Jack).

The possibility of being expected to relay details that are contrary to how individuals prefer to present themselves is anxiety provoking. As Jack illustrates, there was a need to act in accordance with masculine roles. There was an expectation that in the group, masculine presentations would be undermined by the enforced exposure of parts of identities and experiences which were emasculating.

So everyone grows up in a different way and are you are thinking, I dunno, it might be a bit of a bloke things, but it might be a that you are thinking I am a bit 'pansy'. Are they thinking 'that bloke is a pansy, he wants to grow a spine or something'. That's what blokes think. Everyone goes through life, thinking 'I can deal with everything'. It's the man thing [laughter] come on pull yourself together. It is being able to say that you are terrified of certain things like losing my family or losing this (Participant interview, Jack).

The exchange between Ryan, and more established members illustrates the challenges posed by the group requirements, and their gendered nature.

Ryan: Is it going to be talking like this every week?

Others: Yes [all at the same time, with laughter]

Ryan: Fuck….because no offence: this is like a fucking mother's meeting [followed by more raucous laughter]

Harry: Yeah, but you keep getting in the shit. Wouldn't you rather be told by us than by some other fucker?

Ryan: Well yeah – but , no offence [indicating to Rose and I] you two are like you're from the fucking 90's and are all 'peace and love', the real world isn't like that, and I can't be like that. (Field notes, 21st January 2014)

Ryan makes clear his discomfort with the group since it does not reflect his gendered self. Sitting and talking is for women: it is 'a *mothers' meeting'*. Women sit and talk; men '*do*'. His reference to the facilitators being from the '90's' illustrates his perception that the responses and perspectives we were offering were of a different time and therefore not relevant for the realities of his life. Reflecting on masculinity and what it means to be male, is itself a threat. To be a 'real man' is to' 'know it'. As Garner (2016: 126) suggests, quoting one of the men in her study, men do not reflect on what it means to be a man, they '*feel it in their balls'*: which reflects the emotionality of exchanges on the programmes (Collins 2004)

Anxiety and tension about the social rules were central at the commencement of both IDAP and BBR programmes. There were differences in how these developed over time between the two programmes. With BBR, unlike IDAP, several men commence the programme at the same time. This prevented the socialisation of newer members by more experienced and established members. The early sessions were very challenging, with participants displaying anxiety and resistance. With IDAP, there were typically one, two or three men joining an established group at every new module.

The data gives some sense of the anxiety and hostility of the men attending. At the start of the programmes, interactions between men were minimal, and limited to

shared expressions of hostility and defensiveness. However, as the groups progressed the men demonstrated bonds through increased interactions and reciprocal approval. The next chapter turns to these themes.

Summary and conclusion

This chapter has outlined the ways in which attending a programme for domestic abusers poses a profound threat to participants and provokes significant anxiety. The sense of threat and anxiety often appears in the form of hostility to the programme and denial of its relevance. For many individuals the threat of attendance is significant enough not to attend, despite the possible consequences of being returned to court and having a harsher sentence imposed or being immediately recalled to prison. The perception of the group as a threat can be located within a framework of gendered performances, and dominant ideas about masculinity. Most significantly, programme attendance is perceived as a threat to the gendered self -identity of participants and is associated with shame, in which their entire self-perception is stigmatised. The negative association of the group with violence towards women plays a central role. Men develop defensive strategies to manage the threat and stigma posed by the group. Minimisation, denial and blame are understood as central in this process. The threat posed by the programme is compounded by other elements in which participation runs counter to masculine roles. For example, the programme is threatening because it places the men in the role of 'learner', which is associated with a lack of authority and with deference. This exacerbates an experience of shame and 'spoiled identity' (Goffman 1963) in which the preferred self is undermined through the role the group requires.

As well as the threat to the gendered sense of self, the programme is threatening because of uncertainty about social rules and a lack of familiarity with the style of interactions. At the commencement of the programmes, men face uncertainty about

what is involved, which they experience as threatening and anxiety provoking. As they start to develop an understanding of what is required many of the participants continue to express anxiety because of the expectations of group participation, which requires men to talk, reflect, be open and avoid humour, all of which are contrary to the beliefs the men have about what being male requires.

The threatening nature of the programme, and a sense of injustice about referral were also associated with broader ideas about masculinity and men in general being perceived as under threat. Many of the men understood the group programmes as reflective of broader challenges to their masculine identities. Gendered identities were perceived as being threatened by women who were seen to be exerting an unfair influence. Consequently, men felt that their sense of themselves as men was under threat, in society, within their relationships and within the domestic abuse programmes they attended.

The men initially expressed their sense of feeling threatened through resistance to the programme and the facilitators and by emphasising their lack of suitability. These were sometimes expressed collectively. As men progressed through initial sessions, they demonstrated strategies to navigate the group requirements and developed an increasingly positive orientation to each other, and to the programme. The next chapter explores these developments.

Chapter 5 ‘I wasn’t expecting it, but these are a great bunch of guys’

Introduction

This chapter explores how men made sense of their experiences, responded to the facilitators and to each other, and negotiated gendered identities and anxieties as the programmes progressed. The groups develop into ‘ecologies’, with their own features, shared emotions and interconnections (MacKenie and Livesley 1986). The ‘ecology’ of the groups is affected by relationships and interactions as well as the physical environment, and organisational context. The participants in each programme do not interpret and make sense of their experiences in isolation, but form relationships with other members, and form a collective identity and a shared set of understandings and emotional connections. The group culture and dynamics are a central part of the group experience, and arguably of more significance than the programme design or content (Corey and Corey 1997). Despite this, the impact of group processes has been largely ignored in discussions and evaluations of domestic abuse perpetrator programmes (Bowen 2011; Hughes 2017).

This chapter describes an overall process in which men move away from resistance and anxiety displayed at the start of the programmes (see Chapter 4). They perceived attendance as a threat to their gendered sense of self, and anxiety because of a lack of confidence about the social rules of the group. However, drawing explicitly on Collins’ (2004) theory of interaction rituals, this thesis describes how perpetrators and facilitators form an intersubjective set of shared understandings and meanings, develop a collective identity, and a shared set of social rules governing behaviour in the group, which enables them to manage the programme requirements and negotiate a revised and mutually agreed set of

identities. During these processes the men can become increasingly willing and able to reflect on their relationship aspirations, masculinities, and behaviour.

This chapter starts by identifying the groups as 'gendered ecologies' through which men start to feel a sense of safety and security. The men are described as 'dropping their guard' as they start to accept that the group will not involve the assault on the self that they fear. The next section explores how the men usually proceed to display significant bonds, expressed through rituals which reaffirm and validate their social identities (Collins 2004). During this process an increasingly positive orientation towards the group is displayed. The chapter then explores some of the themes evident in the group interactions through which groups express and negotiate their collective identities and the identities of the individuals within them. The role of humour as a method of expressing collective bonds and on-going resistance is explored. This is followed by a discussion of other ways in which the men perform gendered roles within the group. Finally, there is a discussion of how the men continue to express and negotiate gendered beliefs about society and their relationships. The chapter concludes by emphasising that effective group programmes must create an environment in which men feel sufficiently positive, safe and validated. Only when this environment is established can a critical dialogue take place which encourages men to reflect on the past and the impact of their behaviour on others, without further entrenching hostility and defensive practices.

The group as an ecology of shared emotions

Randall Collins' (2004; 2008) analysis is of central relevance within this chapter. He examines the interactive rituals which create group solidarity and 'emotional energy'. Collins (2008) argues that humans are fundamentally 'hardwired' towards cooperation and solidarity. 'Emotional energy' is understood as emanating from successful group interactions, which involve the emergence of 'combined' and

‘shared bodily rhythms’. He goes on to argue that where the mood and emotions of a group develop sufficiently, individuals become carried along within a ‘collective effervescence’. Collins applies this Durkhemian concept to small scale interactions to describe how the emotions, and shared understandings of a group can dominate the individuals within it and influences them as an external force. The use of these concepts is not typical in discussions of domestic violence perpetrator programmes and have some tensions with a thesis premised on the constructed nature of identities and interactions. Nevertheless, as noted in Chapter 2, this language resonates with the experiences of those who have participated in group-based programmes with abusive men. When commenting on the group experience, both within the group, and during accounts after completion, participants and facilitators often referred to groups as having ‘positive energy’, or ‘a good feeling’. They comment on the impact on their emotional state of being, more so than referring to rational changes in attitude, thinking or understandings, which are more common indexes against which interventions are measured. Similarly, facilitators refer to groups as being ‘draining’, ‘negative’ or ‘flat’. As Collin’s argues (2004), interactions are not always successful. There is often a failure to establish a shared understanding and mutual focus, and these tend to drain energy rather than create it. There are complexities here in the context of domestic abuse perpetrator programmes. In some instances, there would be shared mutual focus and solidarity among the group participants on the one hand, but a difference of understanding between the participants and facilitators on the other. For example, on occasions the men would collectively express their frustrations about attendance, or present shared beliefs about masculinity. However, their understandings differed from those being presented by facilitators who were eager to emphasise the value of attendance and alternative approaches to being male. As discussed in Chapter 6, facilitators attempt to negotiate this to develop a positive group atmosphere. Randall Collins (2004; 2008) therefore brings a focus on to the way in which

interactions have emotional content and involve the negotiation of meanings. Applying this framework to domestic violence groups forms part of the core contribution of this thesis.

A gendered ecology

The shared identity, collective experience and ecology which emerges in the groups cannot be understood without placing gender at the centre of analysis. The group members are exclusively men and they are required to consider their relationships with women, and their beliefs about masculinity and femininity. Drawing on Connell (2005), the group is understood as 'a gendered arena', in which masculinity is recognised as a social practice. Gender and masculinity are viewed as constructed, given meaning and regulated, within social interactions, rather than being inherent or fixed (Connell 2005; Messerschmidt 2014). Characteristics associated with masculinity are therefore not static. They are understood as being actively produced and negotiated within specific settings and in a state of constant flux. Nevertheless, there are dominant ideas, characteristics and behaviours associated with being male, which are understood as being culturally engrained and enduring, and which exist in a world 'gendered order' (Pringle 1987; Connell 2005). Connell (2005) uses Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony', to describe the way that a dominant set of ideas and practices suppress and subordinate other ideas about being a man. The roles, identities and social rules associated with masculinity are negotiated actively between participants, within group settings, against a broader backdrop of cultural beliefs and ideas. In accordance with Connell's (2005) theory of hegemonic masculinity, the men are not understood as merely expressing these culturally fixed beliefs. Rather they are understood as producing, reproducing and negotiating masculinity through their interactions. Masculinities are understood as

configurations of practice which are performed differently between different times and contexts, and in which men make decisions about how to act.

Male dominated groups, such as those on which this study is based, are arenas in which contested beliefs about masculinity are interpreted and regulated. Within the programme setting, the content, facilitators and enforced attendance, constrain men's ability to act out some expressions of masculinity. Furthermore, the programmes offer an alternative construction of a being a man. The men respond to these circumstances by establishing alliances and by re negotiating and acting out specific forms of masculinity which are viable within the group. These are negotiated through the creation of informal group rules, which are enforced and displayed through a range of strategies, including humour, encouragement, disagreement, and gestures. Within this, individuals negotiate and construct an individual identity which they play out in the group. The details of these dynamics are discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

Learning the rules and dropping your guard

As described in the previous chapter, the group programme is initially experienced as a threat, which prompts significant anxiety. This is largely because referral and participation constitute a threat to the masculine identities of the participants, and the environment is perceived as inherently foreboding. However, as participation progressed, anxiety, which was often expressed through hostility, tended to reduce quickly. Following this, meaningful discussion and reflection commenced. This fundamental change of approach towards the programme typically took place within the first session of IDAP, where more experienced members could socialise newer members into the group. The process in BBR was slower, as larger groups of men started at the same time and worked through the programme together. Nevertheless, a significant change in orientation was notable after one or two

sessions. This chapter explores how this change takes place and what influences the process.

In the previous chapter, Dave and John's first sessions was discussed. It was noted that anxiety was a key feature of their experience: attempts to minimise their abusive behaviour, hostile body language, and limited eye contact were in evidence. However, the other men on the programme, who had commenced at an earlier stage were welcoming and positive, as was typically the case. They described the benefits of the programme and recalled their own experiences as 'starters'. They told the new members that the programme was '*not what you think',* that the other members were '*a good bunch of guys'* and that the facilitators were '*sound'.* By their fourth sessions, Dave and John were able to join others in welcoming a new member, who commenced on the subsequent module. This is reflective of the rapidity of the change of their orientation to the programme.

Mickey discussed this change of orientation in an interview following completion of BBR: he reflected that as the group progressed, he was increasingly able to manage 'identity threat', as well as develop some ease with the implicit rules.

> *I was thinking it was going to be like a military course and you sit down and do that, but it was quite relaxed, and I am listening to people speaking and you start learning and start questioning yourself. And think well I must have done something wrong or I wouldn't be here. And you see other people. There is no way you can go in there saying you are right. And once you start listening, you think, well I am here, I might as well learn something. It would be no good going through the course fighting it all the way. You can't really see what it is like until you were there. It was good* (Participant interview, Mickey).

Mickey describes the group experience as a process, involving a slow change of orientation and reduction in resistance. Listening to others, and the implicit

reference to the emergence of a changing self-perception, along with a changing perception of the group, are evident in this account.

Trevor recalled managing his resistance to the programme, and the development of a positive orientation.

> *You have an idea. A preconception of what a woman beater looks like, equally when I first went to prison and all the cells were locked, you would hear all the noise, and you would think, what do these people look like… prisoners? Then you wake up the next morning and you think, he looks alright. He's normal, he's got hair, he's got teeth, he's got clothes…But to get back to what we were saying, about when I first went in, I remember thinking 'oh shit, who the fuck are these guys' And I remember thinking, 'I don't like it, I really don't like it, but this is my chance', but at that point, domestic violence wasn't spoken of in our house, and she was like 'did you tell them anything?' 'no, no shsh shsh'.*
> (Participant interview, Trevor)

Trevor's interview was rich and reflective, containing an awareness of his own expectations about the other members of the group, and an interpretation of how they might be perceiving him.

The process of socialisation into the group is evident in the following extract from my field notes, where other members responded to Ryan's hostility about the value of the group.

> *Ryan:* I really can't be doing with this bollocks
>
> *Fred: Yeah well you've only just started, you have to give it a chance*
>
> *Simon*: *You have to think 'each one teach one'*
>
> *George: Do you want to end up like me?*
>
> *Ryan: No*

George: Well stop fucking bashing people up then! [raucous laughter] (this comment was a reference to an earlier disclosure from Ryan about his tendency to respond violently to frustrations) (Field notes, 21st May 2014)

This exchange took place within the IDAP programme, where participants joined and left the group at each module. The other members had completed substantially more of the programme than Ryan, and he was the youngest member of the group. The exchange can be understood as a process of the established group members explicitly socialising the newer member into the rules of the group.

Later in the same session, Ryan again demonstrated his lack of comfort about this style of interaction, but also attempted to participate appropriately.

Men asked to discuss what it means to be honest – all engaged with exception of Ryan who struggled, with occasional utterance of 'what the fuck is this about?' and confused looks but was polite and joined in when there was humour present.

In a later session he showed a similar line of resistance, a lack of comfort about 'discussions' and a style of interaction based on openness and exploration. Arguably, the relative equality of participants within the group, rather than an explicit hierarchy was not a style of interaction that Ryan was comfortable with. Ryan had made references to wanting to be 'told' in an instructive manner and continued to feel puzzled by the group experience. However, a willingness to engage and an increasing level of ease were also in evidence.

Ryan politely asked about the relevance of the session, which was exploring sexual respect. 'It doesn't seem to be about sexual respect and seems to be about the same thing as the other shit' [referring to other programme sessions]

Other group members encouraged him to see benefits and explained what they felt they were. I suggested that the course was about taking time to

consider perspectives – not about delivering information, which he suggested he agreed with – Rose gave an example of what we would be doing next week – which will involve discussion of sexual attitudes – he said this sounded better. (Field notes, 9th June 2014)

Ryan's on-going struggle with the nature of the programme continued:

I am getting a lot from the group and I do think a lot more. I think I have changed, but a lot of it seems like a waste of time. We've just been talking shit about the check in for I don't know how long.

[Ryan was encouraged by other group members to think about change as being a slow process. The facilitator expressed the view that a group where there is considerable discussion, might be challenging for a practical person such as himself] (Field notes, 10th September 2014).

A further example of the way groups and individuals negotiated resistance and defensiveness to the programme is evident in the following exchange.

John very talkative from the outset. Said that he was enjoying work but frustrated about travel costs. When asked about completion of control log he immediately began relaying it. I interjected and said that I would like to hear from another group member first. John initially went quiet but during the other group member's delivery said 'I can't be fucked with this tonight. I turn up and get interrogated about smoking green'

When asked about this he said 'I am pissed off with being mugged off. That is the third time someone had been rude to me at probation, just cutting me off when I started to speak is rude and I am pissed off'.

The group responded with mild giggles and smiles, suggesting that he should 'calm down', and take 'a chill pill'. John responded by smiling appropriately to others delivering control logs (Field notes, 21st January 2014).

Here some of the informal group rules are being asserted: the men gently demonstrate that it is not a place where hostility towards facilitators is appropriate. In keeping with Durkheim's (1972) theoretical framework on the role of rule breaking in sustaining social bonds, the men are asserting their ongoing commitment to the programme values and attempting to reintegrate the rule breaker. The responses of the participants to John may be motivated by genuine commitment to the group, and identification with the facilitators. Equally they may perceive that John is likely to bring about negative repercussions through his behaviour, so needs to learn the rules of the programme.

In week three of a BBR group the gradual depletion of hostility was in evidence, albeit with some ongoing resistance. The references to the 'animal game' are recollections of an activity played in the previous week, where each member was asked to introduce themselves by name, and then associate their name with an animal that started with the same letter. This exercise was not from the BBR manual but was included at the suggestion of one of the facilitators as a bonding exercise.

Very quiet in waiting room – no conversation as I kept passing, people looking straight ahead.

W: Welcome back. Good to see people are here and that there isn't just 1 out of 12. We are just going to go around and ask what you can recall from last week and if there is anything else to check in

Luke: I'm feeling more confident, and strong enough to get through it

Steve: I'm feeling okay. Just remember thinking about stuff. Just want to get through it, but I want to learn while I'm here

Mickey: I'm okay. I remember that I am a mouse. Like they said [beckoning towards those who had spoken already], I've got no choice

Jacob: The one thing I remember is the animal game. Still trying to keep an open mind

[Brian is a new member who was not here last week].

Ben [motioning towards Brian] He has to choose an animal

Brian [smiling] Brian the beetle

Vinnie: Feeling very tired. Trying take things in…and well, we've got no option.

[Liam was absent in the previous week].

Ben [motioning to Liam] He has to choose an animal as well

Liam: I don't know; I'll be a Lion. [laughter]

Adam: [smiles widely] I learnt a lot from being here, and I want to apply it to my new relationships.

Ben: Well I wasn't really here last week. I was homeless. I got the prick. That was why I was sat here with my bag. But I am here this week feeling better. I had a row with her and she had the prick and told me not to come back. I get the prick all the time. I am getting the prick for coming here, with her saying I am having an affair (Field notes, 13th October 2015).

The interactions above demonstrate an increased comfort within the group environment. There is a sense in which the men begin to feel an inkling of trust towards other members and a sense that the group may be a place in which there is a degree of safety, in which they are able to express a masculine identity, and in which they will not be overtly challenged, threatened or undermined.

A 'band of brothers': hand shaking, cheers, laughter and cakes

The previous sections identified that resistance to the programme tended to change, reasonably quickly, to a more positive orientation, less characterised by the hostility and defensiveness of early sessions. As groups progressed further, the orientations tended to be increasingly positive.

One of the striking features of the programme observations were the bonds that were demonstrated between the men ordered to attend. These bonds were expressed within the programmes where I was purposefully collecting data for this thesis and are reflective of my experiences with groups of perpetrators over a ten-year period. Similarly, but more equivocal themes were expressed in the interviews. The phrases, '*good bunch of guys'*, '*all in the same boat'*, and '*I learnt a lot from the other guys'* occurred with frequency. The presentation of respect, responsibility and affection between the men are touched on in the extracts above and are further explored here. Collins (2004) is helpful again. He argues that aggression is unusual in social groups, even with individuals who are categorised as being 'violent'. As anticipated by Collins' theory of social interactions (2004), one of the most striking aspects of the data collected through observation and interviews is the sense of collective identity which emerged. Displays of aggression, hostility or negative orientations were rare within the group environment. During the programmes observed, there were only four notable occasions where there was explicit reference to potential conflict between group members or group members and facilitators. On the first of these, a potential participant recognised another group member who he had previously had an altercation with. He quickly fled the scene at speed, to avoid further confrontation. On the second occasion, a group member expressed, in confidence to the facilitator, that he was concerned that another man with whom he had had violent confrontations in the past would be attending the group. He was eager to express that he was '*not fearful'* for himself but assumed that neither the

facilitators nor other group members would welcome the other male and himself '*rolling around and fighting'*. On the third occasion, a group member became upset because he perceived that he had been slighted by a facilitator. The expression of hostility was minimal, but the infringement of the informal group rules was in clear evidence by the response of the group, who gently mocked the individual and used humour as chastisement. On the fourth occasion, a group participant was upset about a comment made in jest by a second participant which referred to an imagined sexual encounter with the first participant's partner. The first group member's response demonstrated that he perceived a breach of the collective spirit of the group. In Collin's (2004) language, the shift in the collective energy of the group was palpable. After a substantial pause, and silence among all members, the second participant offered an apology, and normal relations were resumed. Notably, at the end of the session, the two men referred to evidence of progress. Specifically, one said to the other:

> *A few years ago, we would have been tearing lumps out of each other wouldn't we, but now we can just move on and know it is not worth it* (Field notes, 23rd March 2016).

The development and expression of bonds are captured in the following reflection within my field notes which relate to the participants arriving for IDAP.

> *On arrival at the probation office, men would report to the reception desk. They would then sit and wait to be called in to the group room. Facilitators generally did not do this until all the men were present, or until the group start time had arrived. This created space for informal greeting ceremonies. The first man would arrive and take a seat. When the second man arrived, the first man would usually stand, smile and the two men would greet each other and shake hands. The third man would shake hands with both men, and this ritual would continue as each man arrived. No one would be excluded from the hand*

shaking ritual. As later men arrived, the expressions would sometimes escalate into cheers. Generally, I was not immersed in these waiting room arrival ceremonies but would observe from the reception area. Specific words or phrases could not be deciphered. However, laughter and teasing were central (Field notes, 29th October 2014).

The ritual was on-going within IDAP, which, as noted, was a 'rolling' programme design involving new members joining for each module. The men already attending the group programme would socialise new members into the ritual in a continuous process. With BBR, it took several sessions before these characteristics were in evidence. The drop-out rate was far higher, and the bonds never expressed with as much enthusiasm. As noted elsewhere, men on this group commenced the programme at the same time and the ceremonies and rituals established more slowly. The following extract from my field notes refer to the emergence of bonding rituals within BBR.

Jacob: Where do I start. It's been a tough week. Though not much has happened. Still unemployed. [Long pause] Last week resonated for me. I saw a lot of that in myself in those videos and on the chart. It hit home

Adam: I feel we are bonding as a group

W: Yeah, I see that there is a lot of conversation in the waiting room now, which had previously been quiet

Mickey: [laughs] It is mainly just him [Pointing to Ben] the rest of us are quiet

Steven: Just been plastering and can recognise behaviours discussed in the programme in the previous week

Andrew: [Ben again interjects] He's upset about knocking down the wrong shed [others laugh]. (A reference to a previous conversation where Steven

disclosed that had been instructed to knock down a shed at work, but knocked down the wrong one (Field notes, 11th November 2015).

After two or three sessions, the men would include me in hand shaking as they entered the group from the waiting area. This became more ritualised as the group bonded, with participants almost forming an orderly queue to shake my hand at the beginning and end of sessions. The men demonstrated confusion and uncertainty about how to greet my female co facilitators. The men would greet female facilitators verbally, but they were not entitled to automatic hand shaking rights. On one occasion, an experienced female tutor found humour in the stereotypically masculine exchange. She responded by positioning herself next to me as the men shook my hand on departure and insisted on shaking the hand of each participant. To the amusement and discomfort of the men, she gave an exaggerated hand shake, and deepened her voice, drawing attention to the masculine nature of the ritual.

As well as being abundant in the sessions observed, the bonds between men featured heavily in the interviews with the participants.

I can recall the first programme, because I was amazed, absolutely amazed… Because I came into the foyer there, and … it might have been Greg who was there… but anyway… as soon as I walked in… the guy came up and shook my hand…. And then everyone came up and shook my hand. And I couldn't believe it. They all shook my hand. They welcomed me. We were all in this boat together and let's pull together, and I was absolutely amazed. The comradeship on that course was excellent. It was excellent. They weren't toe rags. I mean, that was my mental concept. I couldn't believe it. And throughout the course, everyone that came in, we shook hands with them. So the previous course, passed it onto the next course, and we passed it on to the next course.

And the other thing was, everyone was trying to help everyone else (Participant interview, Arthur).

Arthur emphasised that these bonds were based on sincerity; giving an example where members were concerned about one of the group.

Well you remember John , who disappeared and didn't come back, well everyone was really concerned... 'How can we help John?'. It was care. Everyone was caring for everyone else, but it was a pleasant surprise, it was a really good atmosphere. I mean I looked around and I thought again I'm in the wrong place, because everyone is in trainers, and I was in shoes and a suit. But again that is a perception, you know life is full of perceptions (Participant interview, Arthur).

Similar sentiments were expressed by Trevor, from a different IDAP group, where he refers to his positive feelings towards his peers.

They were a great bunch of guys, and really I was fortunate that I was with these guys, because after the third month, everybody was open and honest, and there would still be a bit of 'but she did this, she did that', but there was an openness and I'm not taking credit for it, but in breaking that ice I found myself in an environment, where I thought I like these people, I feel comfortable with them (Participant interview, Trevor).

Later in the interview Trevor explicitly referred to the group as a collective unit with shared goals, by making an analogy to a team.

Because I know how difficult that is. And if you are in a team sport, you help that guy, because you did it for me. Because we were a team (Participant interview, Trevor).

Trevor adds that people had different roles. He emphasised that he was not the 'captain' but was the star striker. This references to roles is explored later.

Similar themes are reflected again in the following statement by Liam during a one to one review.

> *It's funny, I thought there were going to be an 'orrible bunch of tattooed, grisly blokes you know 'I knock women about' types. Stereotyping really, but I thought I am not going to belong with them. But they had similar circumstances and were a really nice bunch of blokes* (Field notes, 18th May 2016).

Reflecting the bonds and relationships which are formed during the programme, Adam was very eager to have a photograph during one of the final sessions. He subsequently emailed the photograph to me. All the participants were willing to engage in this and did so enthusiastically. The picture is shown below and captures the energy within the group. The men are smiling and leaning towards each other, with arms extended so that they occupy overlapping physical space.

More cynically, the photograph could be interpreted as reflecting a dismissive attitude towards the programme and a failure to treat it with adequate seriousness. However, in view of the comments made within the session, and by group members during interviews, this interpretation does not reflect the understandings of the men who are seen here. The following extract is from the same session, in which Dale relays what he has gained from attending the programme. Other members contribute in a mutually supportive exchange.

Dale: I have learnt a lot from this group… What's that word you said a while ago?….You know… About the way I come across…Intimidating. Yeah, that's it…intimidating. And I have listened a lot to Mickey, and I was relating to what you said [motioning to Adam] about your Dad. My Dad was like that; couldn't get close to him. He was old school. And everyone here has been good. I've listened to everyone, and you Adam [Dale and Adam shake hands].

Liam: I would like to apologise for the way I was the other week. I acted like an asshole.

[There were a few seconds of silence before Adam said 'apology accepted']
[Liam was referring to attending the programme under the influence of alcohol]

I add that I think Liam is courageous to apologise, and that this is something that men on these groups have said they find difficulty doing.

Dale: [with laughter] I never say sorry.

Adam: My Dad would never say sorry

Mickey: I never say sorry, but that is because I am always right.

[laughter from all]

An exercise follows in which the men are required to work in two groups to document on flip chart paper what they have learnt during the programme. I say that we need to separate the two most vocal men in the group. There is laughter from all group members in immediate acknowledgement of who the 'most vocal is'. Mickey points to Adam and says: 'He needs his own group'.

The men engage enthusiastically and competitively in the exercise. As is typically the case, each group is eager to write more than the other group, and keen to shield their flip chart from the other group, with constant banter (Field notes, 11th May 2016).

The photograph and the dialogue illustrate 'emotional energy' which Collins (2004) describes as occurring in positive group interactions. There is mutual endorsement, affectionate teasing, empathy and play in evidence. These relationships are reflective of the notion of *homosociability.* This refers to the tendency among men to enjoy the company of other men in non-intimate relationships. This has been identified as a potential mechanism through which men can re assert their masculine identities and affirm gendered understandings (Hammeran and Johansenn 2014). However, in this context the relationships between the men also created security among participants which enabled them to withstand criticism without reinforcing the stigma or shame evident at earlier stages of the group. Critical observations by others are interpreted as being directed at one *part* of the self. The *whole self*, in its entirety, is endorsed and valued by the group.

The bonds expressed are highly gendered, with approval being expressed though 'banter', hand shaking, and limits on explicit displays of emotions. The group is thus recognised as a having the potential for men to reassert the masculine identity and the power associated with it, through confirming and endorsing hegemonic masculine practices.

Adam: I have set up my play station – totally got into 'Call of Duty'. I have got all my friends on it, even though I don't know them. And I'm thinking about it all the time [lots of laughter]. I am imaging all these guys as a team [Followed by lots of laughter] (Field notes 2nd March 2016) .

A further exchange illustrates how a quieter member of the group was offered encouragement when he contributed. Luke had continued to maintain distance from the other men and avoided contributions unless directly asked to express a view by facilitators. Despite his lack of warmth to other members, when he did contribute, he was offered encouragement.

W: Sometimes Christmas can prompt some awareness of how things are not where you would like them to be. I'm conscious that you have had a stressful year Luke

Luke: Yeah, and my family are aware of that. I've lost a lot of confidence. There is a girl I'm attracted to at the gym, and normally I would have just gone and spoken to her, but now I can't. I am a really nice guy and I am starting to work out that that is where a lot of my problems have been because people take advantage of me. I am changing this now. I was seeing this girl and she started to turn nasty so I just blocked her. I wouldn't have done that before. If people asked me to do something I would do it. My mum has always said I got involved with the wrong sort of girls. But I still have very low confidence.

Liam: [claps] Really good to hear from you mate, and you have got a lot to be confident about. Articulate and got his head screwed on.

[Others nod and give gestures of agreement]

W: How are you feeling about the group Luke?

Luke: well I really can't relate to the videos – I have grown up in a nice family and never been exposed to anything like that. (Field notes, 23rd December 2015).

Expression of bonds and resistance through humour

While the above describes an increasingly positive orientation to the programmes, a degree of resistance was maintained throughout. This was often used to set limits on how much personal identities and perspectives were open to change. Throughout the delivery of programmes, humour was central in the expression of collective resistance as well as the affirmation of change. Humour is understood as a complex and diverse phenomenon which is hard to define. Expressions of humour included verbal responses, physical performances, mocking of others and description of past events or future possibilities. These diverse practices are unified by breaking or stretching of expected behaviour, beliefs or statements. Attention has been given to the benefits of humour (McCreaddie and Wiggins 2008; Laursen 2017). Some commentators have stressed the positive impact of humour in promoting emotional well-being, managing negative emotions, coping with difficult situations, enabling sensitive discussions, and creating social bonds. However, humour can also be understood as a pernicious practice of subordinating others and their perspectives. In view of its dual role and impact, the regulation of humour is challenging for facilitators. The facilitators tended to allow and even encourage the use of humour, where it was used with positive intentions, although set some limits to its use. Challenges to humour were not necessarily explicit or frank but involved the absence of praise or shared gestures of disapproval.

The role and use of humour in group based criminal justice interventions, and domestic violence programmes has not received much attention. However, Laursen

(2017) provides a fascinating exploration of the use of humour in prison cognitive behaviour programmes. Laursen carefully contextualises the delivery of cognitive behaviour programmes within a Foucauldian understanding of power (Foucault 1977). Power is seen as exercised through subtle mechanisms, through which individuals are expected to accept a discourse of themselves, which presents their behaviour as a choice, related to distorted beliefs and thinking deficits. However, the mechanisms of power allow for resistance, of which humour was a central strategy.

Consistent with Laursen's exploration and other academic analysis, humour was used for several purposes within the groups studied here. It was used to demonstrate and solidify relationships between facilitators and participants, manage tension, regulate gendered boundaries, establish hierarchies, undermine the programme content, and undermine the credibility of facilitators. Humour is therefore understood as a multifaceted strategy of resistance through which group participants can retain a preferred definition of self and cope with the threat of the programme.

For participants, humour was represented almost exclusively as a positive experience. They stressed its role in establishing bonds and coping with anxiety. Collins (2004) gives specific attention to humour as a mechanism of reinforcing social bonds. He describes humour as an explicit expression of shared emotional energy, through which individuals develop a sense of belonging. He refers to shared laughter as the 'build up of collective effervescence…involving rhythmic repetitions of breath, caught and forcefully expelled' (Collins 2004: 65). Reflecting the 'collective effervescence' laughter becomes involuntary, and reflects the shared bonds and mood, and emotional synchronisation of the groups being studied.

Evidence of the role of humour in creating social bonds and managing anxiety can be seen in the accounts that follow. Shane, who had completed IDAP, stressed the role of humour within the first sentence of his interview.

Joining the group at first, is a bit...because you don't know what to expect, it's a bit daunting ya know, but you settle in really quickly. The guys, they settle you in really quickly, with humour [laughter]. Humour is a big part. (Participant interview, Shane)

Similarly, Dale, who demonstrated substantial resistance and hostility at the commencement of the programme referred to humour as an element that enabled him to cope.

Dale: At the start I thought I would be chucking chairs all over the place, at you or the other guys

W: What stopped you?

Dale: Well because it's a fucking comedy act in it. We have got some total clowns, so we have a laugh (Field notes, 30th March 2016).

Both Shane and Dale (despite the cynicism that might be inferred from Dale's choice of language) are making a reference to the role of humour in providing reassurance. Shane's reference to humour captures a key theme for the groups and shows how the participants demonstrated affection and approval for each other, within the constraints of masculine codes, which inhibit any overt display of emotions (Connell 2005). Statements which referred to humour as lifting the mood of the group, and reducing the threat posed were abundant in the in interviews with participants, and in the sessions of programmes.

Humour was regularly used to mock the content with varying degrees of subtlety. A regular approach was to make statements that caricatured men who were violent in relationships. Through this type of response, men would demonstrate an awareness of a perceived category of individuals who the programme was designed for by an exaggerated performance of this character. They would seek to identify their lack of conformity to this identity or highlight the inability of the programme or the facilitators

to reflect their individuality or status. The following interaction took place within the sexual respect module of IDAP. At the commencement of this module men were asked to keep humour to a minimum, be aware of its possible impact, and their motivations for its use.

> *W: Can anyone think of any example of putting pressure on a woman to have sex*?
>
> George: *Get on your back you fucking bitch [Followed by raucous laughter form all other group members]* (Field notes, 2nd July 2014).

During a later session within the same module, when men were asked what they had learnt, Ryan made the following contribution:

> *I have learnt that you mustn't stick things up a women's ass without permission (quoting from list of abusive behaviours in workbooks) [followed by raucous laughter from other members* (Field notes, 16th July 2014).

In both instances, the participants were endeavouring to demonstrate what they perceived as the obviousness of the messages being given, and hence their lack of conformity to the type of person who would need to be instructed or advised on the issues being discussed. The programme and the facilitators were being mocked for assumptions made about the attitudes and beliefs held by participants.

Humour was used to manage the threat that the programme posed to the preferred definition of the self. Ryan would regularly emphasise that the programme was based on a misplaced assumption that there was something wrong with him, something wrong with men, or something wrong with dominant forms of working-class masculinity.

Ryan attended for session 2 of the non-threatening behaviour module. Participated well in discussion, stating that he was 'fantastic' at the start. Others laughed
Fred replied: [laughing] He is the legend
Ryan volunteered with enthusiasm to relay control log (Field notes, 20th August 2014)

From this point onwards, Ryan was affectionately greeted as 'the legend' at the start of the group, and when he made contributions that were controversial, or seen as in opposition to the messages of the programme, they would respond with phrases such as '*here goes the legend'* along with laughter and back slaps.

Retaining seriousness for any length of time was rare. This is not to say that the men would not share intimate feelings with apparent sincerity, combined with a willingness to support and enable others. However, almost invariably, when one of the men shared an intimate set of experiences, or discussed emotions, he would intersperse it with humour. The following account refers to Pat's contribution within an IDAP session and is illustrative of the way in which participants oscillate between seriousness and humour.

Pat was invited to relay experiences to new group member. He said that he is attending after 'seriously injuring his partner'. He speaks to the new member with focussed eye contact. He said that 'he should turn up every week and get it done' [while laughing]. Added that it's a good group environment, and it goes quickly.
He said 'You have a laugh and we don't talk shit [this meant they don't deny]'. Advised group that case conference regarding his children is happening this Friday but said he is not attending. Seemed disillusioned with the process as several professional agencies do not carry out agreed tasks which results in

on-going delays. Was frustrated that his probation officer was on-leave and to his knowledge had not prepared a report. He said that he was not planning to attend.

Participated well in remainder of group identifying key aspects of 'respect' in a relationship; firstly, identifying breakfast in bed as a means of showing respect. Agreed that love and affection were important. Identified obstacles such as stress.

Identified key issues in vignette which showed a man sending his partner to get cigarettes and then becoming abusive because he perceived her to be 'flirting with the man in the shop'. When asked for alternatives, Pat joked that the man should have locked her in the car and bought his own cigarettes, adding that he could have been respectful by 'drilling air holes' in the boot. Confirmed he was joking (Field notes, 10th September 2014).

Arthur was adept at sharing content of emotional depth, while interjecting humour. This is evident in the following extract, in which he spent some time sharing sensitive personal experiences.

Session 1 of module 1: The men were asked to recall the first experiences of violence and consider how this has impacted on them. Arthur was particularly active in the session telling the group about the problems in his marriage because of his episodes of aggression. Arthur spoke seriously and expressed regret. The other men listened attentively with eye contact and nods. Arthur started to laugh and explained that his episodes of aggression often involved throwing his shoes at windows, which smashed then had to be replaced.

Arthur began laughing and added: I have to wear soft shoes now, so that they bounce off of windows. I have spent too much money replacing windows [Lots of laughter from Arthur and all the others] (Field notes, 23rd October 2014).

On some occasions, humour took on explicitly misogynistic forms, and it was hard to identify a line between humour and anger, which were bound up with processes of minimisation, denial, blame and justification. Usually, participants conformed to the expectations of the group, imposed in part by the facilitators. There were boundaries to the humour, however, these were not always sustained, as illustrated by the following extract, which followed a video vignette during BBR, in which a man was abusive towards a partner.

Liam: Yeah well it's because his wife is a minger and that's why he's got the hump.

[Followed by some smirks by other members, and glances at facilitators, presumably to look for their reaction]

Later in the same session, Liam made a similar expression: He's pissed off because he has an ugly bird

[This time more laughter from other group members].

W: I think it is important not to make disrespectful comments about appearances.

Liam: [Tutts] No. I didn't mean that, I just mean women can let themselves go, and this can lead to the break down (Field notes, 2nd December 2015)

A similar use of misogynistic humour was expressed by Darren, and documented in the following extract.

Darren mainly keen to get away early. There was a mention of dogs, and the value of walking them (a recurring theme in these groups) Darren added 'isn't

that the reason most of us are here'; making it explicit that that he was using the term 'dogs' as a derogatory word for women. I challenged him frankly re the appropriateness of this joke, and he was very apologetic. Care taken to provide general encouragement for him in the context of criticism (Field notes, 7th January 2015).

Humour leaders and humour performances

Certain individuals within each group occupied roles which were central in creating, affirming and symbolising the shared values of the group; through which common understandings and values were expressed. Humour, and the ability to facilitate it was a key attribute of these individuals. These roles were shifting rather than solid, with some members skilfully using their personal resources and experience to drift between two or more roles and different types of performance (Goffman 1956). However, it is not accurate to characterise the individuals as 'jokers' or 'entertainers', because of the complexity of the roles that they occupied, and the status they held within the groups.

Despite the serious nature of the discussions, humour was integrated throughout each session. It was used to demonstrate several conflicting positions. Humour was a means of expressing solidarity, neutralising threats, celebrating values and demonstrating where rules had been infringed. Some of the value expressed via humour can be understood as 'subterranean', using Sykes and Matza's (1957) influential theory of 'delinquency and drift'. That is, values were expressed which were celebrated within specific contexts. The group generally interpreted violence, deviance and destructive behaviour as unacceptable. However, these were also implicitly celebrated, often using humour. Arthur, who has already been quoted above, was central in facilitating humour as an expression of these aspects of the group dynamics. The following extract serves as an illustration of the complex role

of humour. In the following, Arthur gave a lengthy narrative in which humour responses were central.

> *Arthur recalled being intimidated by a violent bully ay school, named Billy. He said that he met him much later on in life and wanted to respond violently. Prompted discussion re the long- lasting impact of violence. Said that he later met him again and got on well with him. He pointed out to Billy that he was violent, and Billy responded saying that his father was very violent. Prompted discussion re learnt behaviour. Participated in logging of vignette and identified violence as a means of control and domination. Discussed his own use of violence and referred to childhood experiences when at the age of about 7, he and three other friends, would act as slaves to older boys who were aged about 17. He said that they would participate in gladiatorial fights, sometimes with knuckle dusters, carry bricks on their heads, and belly flop on to walls. He spoke about these experiences positively saying that he enjoyed fighting at this age, and that his slave owner was a nice guy, on one occasion buying him a comic annual for winning a fight. Unlike one of the others who used to boil live newts [lots and lots of laughter throughout Arthur's account]* (Field notes, 23rd October 2014).

The richness of this series of disjointed but related statements from Arthur are hard to unpick because of the substantial amount of meaning that is embedded. As with much of the data, the stories that Arthur shared express gendered values. His earlier account of using soft shoes illustrates an attempt to reinterpret violence and aggression as an external force which can only be managed. The men related to the caricature of impulsive violence, which is not tolerated by others, and has negative consequences, but is also celebrated. Arthur's early experiences illustrate a masculine celebration of having had tough set of childhood experiences. They are celebrated further because of their unusual and extreme characteristics, which gives

them a comical element, despite the evidence of child abuse and bullying. They therefore serve to illustrate, in caricature form, narratives that the other men can relate to.

Within the same session, Darren provoked raucous laughter with several of his contributions:

> *Darren was quiet for most of the session. His only contributions to the first half were to pass the sandwiches and ask if we could finish early. However, he did relay a situation in which he apprehended an individual who had tried to break into his shop. When questioned directly he referred to his first use of violence as an incident when he waited, as a child, at the bottom of a playground slide, for another child to slide down, and then hit him to combine the impact of the child's decent and his punch. He couldn't recall why. He later made reference to violence between his parents recalling that he had once observed them fighting with bar stools, which provoked laughter* (Field notes, 23rd October 2014).

Other instances of banter took on more physical forms. For example, Ryan demonstrated a 'chicken dance' .

> *Ryan participated well. While he challenged some of the messages of the programme this was always done appropriately and respectfully, and he does appear to be giving serious thought to the issues discussed. Seems a little stuck in terms of developing an alternative perspective regarding the use of sexual language relating to women. He identified importance of not being concerned about perceptions of others and did this by demonstrating a chicken dance - to the huge amusement of the group - who linked it to 'letting go'.*
> (Field notes, 24th September 2014)

Performing masculine humour was a regular feature within the programme, as is evident in Ryan's actions above. It is also evident in the following session of BBR.

> *Liam: When we are watching the football. My mum goes mental. She starts making a noise like a chicken [Liam demonstrates standing up and leaping around as if trying to kick a ball and making clucking noises while the rest of the group laugh; even Luke]* (Field notes, 3rd February 2016).

Later in the same session, the group was effectively derailed by a humour performance, reflecting the involuntary aspect of laughter described by Collins (2004).

> *Adam: [Interrupted discussion of video]: How do you know if you have broken your wrist?*
> *[Hysterical laughter from Mickey who emphasised the randomness of comment].*
>
> *Mickey: Go like this [Making a twisting motion with his hand]. Go like this [making an inverse twist with the same hand].*
> *[Adam copies the movements while listening intently].*
> *Mickey: [with apparent sincerity]: Does that hurt?*
> *Adam: Yes*
> *Mickey [leaves a long pause]: Well then don't go like that [repeating the same gesture]*
> *Caroline loses composure and starts to cry with laughter, along with rest of the group who find more amusement in her laughter*
> *Adam: [gets up, approaches me] Listen to the click. [He moves his arms and screams to demonstrate the pain] Did you hear it?*
> *W: No.*

Adam: But I felt it [More laughter follows from the group].

Caroline starts trying to read out mindfulness exercises, but Mickey is in fits of giggles

I take over but Mickey and others, and Caroline are still in fits of giggles.

I agree that we are not going to get anywhere tonight with this but check everyone understands the approach. Adam refers to eating a banana as an example of mindfulness. Prompts more laughter (Field notes, 3rd Feb 2015)

Further examples of this kind of banter are provided in the following extracts, where key humour facilitators lifted the mood of the group, but avoided blatantly offensive remarks, or undermining the programme or the facilitators. The contrast between these individuals and others who had more difficulty with the demands of the programme is in evidence. The following conversation is from a check-in at the commencement of a BBR session, where members are asked to relay their current circumstances to other members.

Adam: [With sincerity] I have been teaching other people about this. The people who need it. Can I bring some other people along?

Mickey: [with laughter] How do you know who needs it, and why are you trying to help people?

The other men, including Mickey, laugh.

Dale: Well I have just been fucked off. Staying away from everyone

Caroline: Have you been in touch with your mum? [reference to Dale's frequent discussion of his mother as a figure of support].

Dale: No. I have fucked me mum off for a week. Just fuck everyone and fuck Facebook. I drop kicked my fucking phone into the wall, and it's fucked.

Dale and the group look serious for a few moments and the atmosphere of the group becomes tense.

After a period of silence Adam makes kung fu type noise (hii yaa), while standing up and making a kicking motion, in an attempt to replicate Dale kicking his phone. The group, along with Dale, laugh uproariously.

Mickey: [Smiling] What would we do without Adam [He then turns to Dale] Do you know, I have made a living out of people smashing phones? I don't want them to stop [more hysterical laughter] (Mickey's business supplies mobile phones and phone parts) (Field notes, 17th February 2016).

And on another occasion:

We watched a video vignette as per the requirements of the session.

Dale: Not another one of those EastEnders things?

Caroline turned lights out.

Mickey: Oi keep your hands off of me [raucous laughter] (Field notes, 9th March 2016)

Individuals such as Mickey, Adam, Arthur and Ryan are perceived as positive group members by other participants. They used humour, often with a degree of inappropriateness. However, they also expressed commitment to the programme and supportive attitudes towards the other men. As such their humour was not often challenged by facilitators. In the groups that felt positive, there were group members who were skilled with humour, who expressed it within the context of overall respect for the facilitators, the programme, and the other men. This would enable an environment where frank exchanges could take place and an increased tolerance of criticism, without a reassertion of defensive strategies or hostility, and without the negative impact on the emotional energy.

Other performance roles

The ability of some individuals to use humour to create a positive environment was one of several roles that men occupied. As noted, those that could use humour without disrupting the group process achieved considerable status. This was one method of asserting a masculine identity in the context of the threat posed by group attendance. Different responses to the gendered threat of the group were in evidence. These were hierarchically organised. Status was conferred between group members through agreement, body posture, timely laughter, eye contact, silence and reference to having learned from specified individuals. During his interview, Trevor indicated that each group had different roles, which he understood as being mutually supportive, but carrying different degrees of status. Those who carried the most status in the group were those who largely cooperated, expressed subversion subtly, used humour effectively, contributed actively (although with some reserve) and could conform to hegemonic masculine attributes. Those that carried least status, did not contribute, complained too much, were not able to acknowledge any responsibility, or demanded too much 'air time'.

Trevor described his role, and the role of others in the group, as well as the hierarchical arrangement of masculine positions, in a stereotypically gendered manner.

> *The group were like a football team. There were people you had to carry. You might think I was the captain because I told the most stories, but I wasn't. The captain was a sixty-year-old guy who didn't really say that much, but when he did talk, everyone listened* (Participant interview, Trevor).

Trevor made further reference to the implicit functioning of status in other parts of the interview.

You could see that I was open, and that brought out a lot of openness, you do need somebody that is open in the group, to go 'yeah I fuckin' hit my wife, and she fucking didn't deserve it' [he makes a gasping noise illustrating reaction of other group members] 'You've let the side down' but I didn't feel I was being disloyal, to my comrades…I was realising that I need to tell the truth to get something out of this, if you don't want to that is fine. And you would find… well there was shy people there, and they would say… well I kind of agree with Trevor. And the facilitators would let me talk, they wouldn't force me, and they would say 'Trevor, what do you think', and they would let me talk, they didn't force it, and the other guys would start going 'Yeah! I do that too'. And that was like the ice breaking, and it was melting, so what I was doing was helping the facilitators, and I would ask the others questions: ' I'm on your side' but after a while, and it is a 9 month course, and after 3 months of it there was enough there to bring everybody out, they were a great bunch of guys, and really I was fortunate that I was with these guys, because after the third month, everybody was open and honest, and there would still be a 'but she did this, she did that', but there was an openness and I'm not taking credit for it, but in breaking that ice I found myself in an environment, where I thought I like these people, I feel comfortable with them.

I only found one guy difficult. He was so negative, and I didn't prejudge anybody, but there was this one guy who said to me at the break: 'These people will fuck you up, don't you think for a minute that they are on your side because they will fuck you up, you make one bad step and you will be in prison', and I remember thinking, ummm, and I was on such a high, my life was at least getting in the right direction, and, and I found that negativity, and thought, 'ahh but you're a bit of cunt'…it planted that seed, and for a whole week I thought how do I sort this out, and I told my probation officer, and I

didn't mention any names, but I said that this one person has really had an effect on the group, it has brought me down, because I'm doing so well and I don't need negativity (Participant interview, Trevor) .

Perception of differential status among participants was also evident with Mickey.

W: What else would you say about the other people in the group?

Mickey: The two pissed ones were no use whatsoever. But then who am I to have a go at them. They have got problems. And rather than me thinking it was funny, actually they weren't funny, actually you are spoiling it for everyone. We are here to learn something. We are all sitting down and submissively trying to learn something, but what do you do?

W: Were there different roles in the group?

Mickey: I wouldn't put myself as a leader, but I was understanding it, and others weren't and I thought Adam was as well, whether he is putting it into practise, and I thought Ben as well, but he went away. Others had problems (Participant interview, Mickey).

Other styles of 'performance' were evident in the group. Many individuals remained quiet and their voices are lost in the groups and within this thesis. Quieter members were sometimes affectionately teased about making minimal contributions, but on other occasions encouraged when they did. A lack of contributions prevented participants from achieving the highest status in the group but did not always result in low status. The extent to which status was afforded seemed to be influenced by how well members could demonstrate compliance with masculine attributes, show solidarity with the group, yet still comply by demonstrating a positive attitude towards the programme and facilitators.

Some individuals asserted very dominating performances which demanded constant attention. For example, Angelo would talk incessantly throughout the group sessions he attended. On several occasions he performed breakdance moves while others talked. Although other members demonstrated amusement, there was also frustration expressed through mockery. His performances were regarded as excessive. Similar reactions were observed in response to Vinnie. In one instance Vinnie stood up and started thrusting his hips while making references to his sexual prowess. These included extremely misogynistic and graphic references to anal sex and sexual violence. The group responded with giggles and statements including '*alright mate calm down'* (Field notes, 14th September 2016). Both Angelo and Vinnie reveal the value placed on pitching the masculine performance at the right level, to achieve the greatest influence and status within the group.

Celebrations of biologically constructed maleness: sex and violence

As described above, the men tended to feel less defensive as the programme progressed. However defensive strategies persisted throughout the programme, in which elements of hegemonic masculinity were reasserted in the face of perceived challenge from programme attendance. Often these appeared as efforts to draw boundaries around how much they were prepared to adapt to the requirements or accept alternative interpretations of masculinity.

Key expressions of masculinity within the group revolved around having experience of physical violence and having a strong heterosexual sex drive. There has been consistent and diverse attention to the expressions of these masculine values (Cohen 1955; Connell 2005; Collier 1998). As explored in the previous chapter, the men often expressed the view that there was a growing narrative which sought to deny, or devalue these features of masculinity, which were regarded as both

inevitable and desirable. IDAP, BBR and the facilitators were regarded as part of a broader attempt to challenge and undermine these traditional masculine traits.

Arthur and Darren's accounts above, which refer to childhood experiences of violence are illustrations of the role that violence plays in masculine performances. Both referred to tough childhoods in which physical violence was at the centre. Significantly, Arthur had a successful career managing people in an industrial chemistry firm and has a PhD. He did not disclose either of these aspects of his history. Arthur was explicit in interview that he did not feel that he fitted in when he initially met the other men, noting their footwear and general presentation. His choice of what to disclose is understood as an effort to present himself in accordance with the requirements of the group, and the style of masculinity that he associated with it.

The celebration of violence was often evident in accounts of childhood, as indicated in the following extract from my field notes.

> *Greg participated in small group exercise about experiences of violence and identified school as a place where he would have first witnessed such behaviour. Participated in discussion of vignette. Discussed his own first use of violence. Recalled coming home having been bullied. He said that his mother sent him back out to sort the situation out himself and said that 'he shouldn't be coming in crying to her' warning him that his father would react angrily if he were to find that he had not dealt with the situation. Greg regarded this as positive and said that if he had sons he would do the same thing, and that he has never looked back since. He was carefully challenged by another group member who said that his own son was not a fighter, and that he wouldn't respond to his son like this. He said that it seemed that fighting had caused Greg lots of problems and left him feeling worn out. Greg seemed receptive to this. He later added that he was glad he had daughters so that he didn't have*

to deal with this situation. Prompted some discussion re why it was different for daughters. Greg seemed more comfortable understanding differences as down to testosterone (Field notes, 23rd October 2014).

The previous extract refers to the presentation of experiences of violence in childhood and makes references to biological understandings of male violence. Similar expressions emphasising the ongoing ability, and occasional willingness to use physical violence were in abundance throughout the course, as the following extracts reveal.

Discussion of use of violence. Some group members emphasise that violence is sometimes needed.

Alfie: If Roy comes at me I'm going to take him down, it's my training, it is just going to kick in. (Alfie has previously been in the army) (Field notes, 3rd June 2015).

And later in the same session Alfie recalled an early memory of witnessing male violence.

Alfie: *I remember watching my dad pin someone up against a fence, and I remember thinking 'my dad's hard'* (Field notes, 3rd June 2015).

In another session, Adam illustrates a narrative which emphasises the biological basis of physical toughness and violence.

In response to the scenario 'someone knocks over your girlfriend's drink' – Adam says: 'my man instinct would kick in' (Field notes, 9th December 2015).

Adam expresses similar sentiments in another session.

Adam: I have a question for you [Looking at Caroline and myself] Does violence work? Forget the politics, don't get political with me because that irritates me. But does violence work?

W: What do you think Adam?

Adam: Well I hate violence but when you tell someone something two, three times, and nothing happens and then you tell them a third time and nothing happens, and I hate it, but then you are violent and you get results. It shouldn't work, but it does and I wish it wasn't like that. We are in probation, and for political reasons we can't be saying this, but violence works. If I keep provoking you and saying 'you can't eat, you are going to get violent'. If not why are there these wars going on all over the place. Violence works. I hate it but it works. It's in our nature. And girls like it too. They are attracted to us if we are aggressive and if we defend them. They are not attracted to us if we are meek. I'm telling you if I just keep telling you that you can't eat, you will get aggressive. The thing is men are more powerful than women, it is nature and natural. Men need to be men. Women should be able to work but I believe that they should also know to let men be in control because it is natural. Let men be men (Field notes, 23rd March 2016).

Later in the same session, Mickey added what he regarded as evidence to support Adam's narrative.

Mickey: Well you just need to have your balls cut off. It's the testosterone. I was watching this thing about how we evolved from two different kinds of monkey. One was the chimp, who just kills for fun. The other one would just sit around and fuck all day.

Liam: [interjecting] I would rather be one of those ones

Mickey: Anyway, the ones that fucks all day died out, and we are evolved from the ones that kill for fun (Field notes, 23rd March 2016).

The sections above reflect central and recurring expressions within the programme. Few participants attended without making some reference to past experiences of

violence. Many men explicitly condemned the use of violence, but this was done while referring to an ability to use it and experiences of having done so. For example, Simon, who has previously been introduced, had spent considerable time in an American prison. He made lots of references to his participation in extreme gang related violence. He described his responses to current conflicts, which involved avoidance of violence, as one of choice, emphasising that he could respond violently to situations if he was inclined to do so. Similar characteristics were evident in an exchange between Mickey and Adam during a slightly heated exchange. Both men said that in previous years they would have been '*tearing lumps off of each other'* and agreed that it was good that they were now able to refrain from this.

Narratives which drew on biological constructions of masculinity did not just revolve around the capacity to use physical violence. They also referred to heterosexual desire and prowess. Heterosexuality was a recurring theme in the group. As with violence, this perceived feature of masculinity was understood to be under threat. There were a substantial number of instances illustrating the value attached to heterosexual sexuality in group sessions. Some are used below as illustrations. A common strand involved making comments about female probation staff, including facilitators. For example, Liam would regularly refer to the physical characteristics of the women in the video vignettes we discussed. The following extract is taken from my field notes from a 'catch up' for two individuals who had missed a previous session, to illustrate expressions of heterosexuality.

Dale: I can't stand my probation officer. She said that I can't have any more misses or its back to court. I said 'fucking go on then do it'. What am I supposed to do, decide when I have an epileptic fit? I tell you I have got onto a group that I am getting loads out of and opening up with, because I get on with

the boys here. If I had to start with another group I would start piping up (meaning smoking crack).

Liam: My probation officer is gorgeous, and she's gone back to Australia. Boo.

Dale: [Asking W) Was it Rose last week? [Dale missed the previous session and was asking who the co facilitator was]

W: Yes

Dale: [Smiling] Missed out on that then! [He and Lee giggle together] (Field notes, 16th December 2015).

Both Arthur and Ryan similarly demonstrate their heterosexuality in the following two extracts:

Caroline: How are you Ryan?

Ryan: I am fantastic: I am making money, getting pussy and getting drunk (Field notes, 13th August 2014).

Arthur referred to problems of being more 'sexed' than his wife, and that she would only want sex to have children. He paused and then added [smiling] that he 'didn't do that badly because they had trouble conceiving their second child' [laughter from the group]. Recalled a conversation with a work colleague who said that his wife always had a headache. He responded by referring to the fact that he was having sex in the park and in various other places because of his wife's eagerness to have another child (Field notes, 26th November 2014).

Such displays of heterosexuality were not only ritualised in conversations and expressions between group participants but were also displayed by directing comments and actions towards female facilitators. These included comments and behaviours towards female facilitators, and comments made about the perceived threat of homosexuality. Explicitly homophobic comments were rare, although did

occur. However, the value placed on heterosexual prowess, and banter about 'gayness' reinforced the 'gender order' in the groups (Connell 2005).

Summary and conclusion

This chapter presented a core piece of analysis of this thesis. I have endeavoured to explore the interactive dynamics involved in domestic abuse perpetrators programmes. These programmes have tended to be evaluated based on the content or outcomes. Consequently, the experiences, interpretations and dynamic interactions of participants has been neglected. Drawing on a symbolic interactionist perspective which places gender at its centre, this chapter has argued that group attendance should be understood as a profound threat to the masculine identities of participants. Shame emerges as a key theme which the men express at the point of referral, along with anxiety about the informal gendered rules of the groups. The participants respond to these threats through strategies of resistance. Initially these are characterised by minimisation, denial and blame, and hostility towards the programme. However, participants develop collective strategies to manage the threat posed. These strategies involve humour and reciprocal validation. Through these processes, individuals can present a version of masculinity within the constraints of programme attendance, identify with the other participants and retain an acceptable sense of themselves as gendered beings. The men shift from being fearful of being stigmatised to being able to compartmentalise perceived blemishes on their character. These reactions can be understood as counterproductive features of group attendance, or even collusive, because they involve assertions of destructive forms of hegemonic masculinity. However, through these processes there is a sense of safety which is created, which enables men to be challenged, and encouraged to reflect on their behaviours and gendered beliefs. The next chapter explores how facilitators balance creating an environment which does not

reinforce resistance, while also setting boundaries and promoting change. Finally, the evidence of changes in understanding on the part of the men attending will be explored.

Chapter 6 Finding common ground: Facilitator perceptions and perceptions of facilitators

Introduction

This chapter explores the role of facilitators in the interactional dynamics and processes of the Integrated Domestic Abuse programme (IDAP) and Building Better Relationships (BBR), drawing mainly on interviews with facilitators, but with some reference to participant interviews and field notes. As with the men referred, facilitators are involved in an interactive process through which understandings and gendered identities are negotiated and performed (Collins 2004; Goffman 1956; Connell 2005). As noted in previous chapters, discussions of domestic abuse interventions have tended to be dominated by concerns about content. There has been some attention given to the 'style' and approach of facilitators (Hughes 2017), and discussions of more general probation practice have emphasised that effectiveness is dependent upon service user engagement (Hughes 2012). However, the individual agency, identities and understandings of facilitators have not been given much attention. Similarly, the way that the men experience facilitators has not been explored. As argued in the previous chapter, domestic abuse perpetrator programmes are described as gendered ecologies in which identities are constructed, performed and negotiated (Connell 2005; West and Zimmerman 1987). In this chapter, this framework of analysis is used to explore the role of facilitators in domestic abuse groups. Facilitators are understood as negotiating understandings with the participants during the group sessions, in an attempt to promote a positive group environment with mutual focus and 'emotional energy' (Collins 2004).

The interactions between facilitators, and between facilitators and participants are underpinned by ideas about gender (Connell 2005). There was an explicit view among facilitators that best practice necessitated that programmes were delivered by a male and a female, and this reflects the design of many domestic abuse programmes. However, this ran contrary to the regular experiences of group facilitation within this study, which tended to involve delivery by two women, due to gender imbalances in the staff group. All but two of the facilitators I interviewed were women, and one of the men was in a management role. This imbalance had implications for the provision of domestic abuse programmes within the area where the research took place.

Facilitators bring a diversity of understandings, emotions and styles into the group environment, which impact on the collective energy of the group. The characteristics of facilitators were central in the experiences of group-based interventions among participants. This reflects literature and research which have emphasised the role of relationships between practitioners and service users in promoting compliance and positive engagement (Maruna 2001; McNeill 2006; Hughes 2014). However, within discussions of probation practice these themes have largely been applied to members of staff with case management responsibilities. Their application to group-based interventions has been much more limited, and to some extent has been critical of their value (Travers 2012).

While there was, to some extent, a collective identity among facilitators, organisational factors had undermined this. Increasingly, facilitation of groups relied on sessional staff, who were not permanent members of the programmes team, which was depleting in numbers, and distributed across the county. The sessional domestic abuse programme facilitators all had other sources of employment in different roles. This increased the potential for differing perspectives and

approaches to the groups. These facilitators tended to have limited contact with the interventions team outside of group delivery.

Two of the facilitators I interviewed were employed on a sessional basis by the Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC), with full time employment in the National Probation Service (NPS). These members of staff held professional qualifications which gave them probation officer status, which was not the case for any of the facilitators whose permanent role was programme delivery.

This chapter starts by exploring the individual orientations of facilitators towards delivering domestic abuse programmes and considers how they think and feel about their work. It moves on to more specific considerations of the work of facilitators including the strategies used to manage the resistance posed by men attending the groups. Managing the competing pressures of encouraging engagement and developing mutual focus, while challenging the perspectives and beliefs of participants emerged as pivotal. Gender is central in the navigation of these challenges, with facilitators being explicitly aware of how perceptions about their masculinity and femininity impact on interactions within the groups. Finally, the facilitators are considered from the perspective of the men directed to attend domestic abuse programmes. The accounts of the participants suggest that the relationships with facilitators is central in determining the experience of the group and the impact that is has.

The overarching argument of this chapter is that a positive group environment requires facilitators to have a dynamic approach which is responsive to the men attending programmes. Programmes which aim to challenge and change behaviour need to foster relationships based on a degree of trust and a sense of shared understandings. This thesis attempts to explore how mutual focus and 'emotional energy' are involved in establishing these characteristics within groups. These issues prompt reflection on programme integrity, which has been interpreted too

narrowly. ‘Integrity’ has been used to emphasise consistent delivery of the programme material, at the expense of considering the role of the interactional and relational aspects of group-based programmes, in achieving outcomes. A wider interpretation of ‘integrity’, which recognises the importance of the style of approach and the role of professional relationships, would be likely to enhance the effectiveness of domestic abuse programmes (Philips 2015).

Life as a domestic abuse programme facilitator: overall orientations

This section explores the overall orientations and understandings that facilitators hold towards the delivery of domestic abuse perpetrator programmes. At the time of writing, staff employed to deliver programmes were expected to deliver interventions from a portfolio, which consisted of several programmes, each targeting specific offender groups. The facilitators did not specialise in working with domestic abuse perpetrators and expressed differing attitudes to undertaking this aspect of their work. Some facilitators demonstrated substantial personal investment in working with domestic violence perpetrators. Delivering this work formed a central aspect of their identities and impacted on how they made sense of their broader lives. Others expressed reluctance. In keeping with the theoretical frameworks employed in this research, the facilitators accounts involved the identification of emotions and feelings towards the programmes and to those identified as domestic abusers.

I have never been able to put my finger on it. It isn’t from a personal perspective, it is more from a professional one. I really loved the substance misuse programmes and general offending behaviour programmes. I was really interested in those. So, lining them all up, I put IDAP off. My manager used to say: ‘Are you ready to do IDAP training’, and I would say no, but as the

team got smaller, I thought I better get trained and bite the bullet (Facilitator interview, Kathy).

Implicit in Kathy's statement is that, ostensibly, staff could make a choice about whether to participate domestic abuse perpetrator programmes. However, also implicit, and as evidenced in other interviews, was a growing expectation to deliver domestic abuse programmes. This expectation intensified because there had been a substantial decrease in the portfolio of interventions that were delivered within the CRC, and this was identified as a source of frustration for some of the staff.

Currently I deliver Building Better Relationships, and the Thinking Skills Programme. That is pretty much it with regard to what we are delivering at the moment. We no longer do drink impaired drivers, we've lost 'BSR', the Building Skills for Recovery one, and 'Resolve', the anger management one, we have never got enough people to do it. I think everyone was encouraged to do the HAPAS one, which is connected to the court, and that has been built on a bit to make it reflect a bit more of what we did with them. I don't know why we lost BSR, I think it is appalling that we have lost it in this area with all the drugs problems we have. We are gutted that we lost that, I really enjoyed doing that one. Resolve; we just don't get the referrals. More often than not people are put on the Thinking Skills Programme (Facilitator interview, Les).

While Kathy and Les indicate reluctance to be involved in working with domestic abuse perpetrators, the following quote from Dorothy is reflective of the long-standing interest and enthusiasm that others expressed.

I think the areas that we used to work in, we used to have these slight specialisms, so you know, mental health, domestic violence or sex offenders. I never kind of saw myself working with sex offenders. I had a lack of confidence

in that area. I was more familiar with domestic violence….And it was still early days when we started addressing domestic violence...it was hard to get the courts to take it seriously, because the solicitors would stand up and say, 'this is just a domestic'. I was quite interested in getting to grips with it, and seeing the dynamics and seeing what we can do to prevent future offending (Facilitator interview, Dorothy).

Here personal interpretations of programmes are bound up with emotionality. Kathy refers to not wanting to deliver a domestic abuse programme, and a preference for other programmes, while '*not being able to put her finger on it*'. Les uses the words *'appalling'* and '*gutted'* when describing recent developments affecting his work. Significantly he refers to his colleagues collectively '*we are gutted we lost that*' (Collins 2004).

The emotionality of programme delivery was also evident when facilitators discussed their personal lives during interviews. For several facilitators, delivering domestic abuse programmes was not something which could be compartmentalised within a work arena, but had implications for how they understood gender and their own personal relationships, with one facilitator citing IDAP delivery as key in the breakdown of her marriage.

One thing that I will say, is that it was a session of IDAP that led to me leaving my husband. So that was a massive impact, and I think a good thing. Yes it was a massive thing and if I hadn't have been doing this job I would still be with him (Facilitator interview, Rose).

Similar themes are evident in the following, which followed a direct question about the personal impact of delivering perpetrator programmes.

Maybe it does more than I think. Especially being single, I think I am more aware. I am constantly looking for signs and thinking. Sometimes I might go

back and think 'oh my god, I was abused in that relationship'. It does make me start 'ruminating' on things. Oh my God I'm using BBR language now. I think if you have been doing it for 15 years I think this must really affect your outlook on life. And this is quite a personal thing, but I am single and it affects my outlook on men. When I say what I do, a lot of men think 'Oh my God, she must hate men'. Which I don't, obviously. But you are more wary. I look at behaviours in my friend's relationships and I think oh god, that looks a little bit controlling to me. And my friends say will you stop it, that is just your work. I remember being at home and my Mum and Dad were having an argument, and my Dad said something really nasty, and I said that is really abusive. And he was horrified. And I was horrified, but I guess you are watching the world through a very different lens when you are doing this work (Facilitator interview, Margaret).

Further illustrating the personal impact of delivering domestic abuse groups, Margret explains how this has affected her interpretation of the behaviour of others in her life, and there is a sense of personal responsibility to identify and support people who are victims of abuse. This shows the potential for group facilitation with domestic abusers to have a substantial impact on the lives of staff and the way they interpret behaviours beyond the programmes. The tensions this can bring are expressed in the following.

I recently found out that my best friend's Dad has been violent towards her mum for 30 years. She has only found out recently because she caught him hitting her. I beat myself up about it because I spent so long with that couple and there were so many signs. She didn't have a job, he took her away for six months of the year, she didn't have any money. And I remember thinking you fucked up massively there, and I just felt so guilty about it, and then I finally thought, you can't see it all the time. And I think managing it, you can't have a

switch on and a switch off and if I'm not at work. And ultimately, like all human beings I didn't want to see it. I didn't want to see them as an abusive couple. But I was horrified (Facilitator interview, Margret).

Facilitating probation domestic abuse programmes is thus enmeshed with personal biographies, understandings and emotions, which are likely to impact on how the groups are delivered.

Managing groups

The facilitator perspectives can be understood as consistent with the conceptual framework of this thesis, which understands individuals within interactions to be orientated towards cohesion, mutual focus, shared emotions and shared understandings (Collins 2004). The expectations of facilitators are, however, in conflict with the initial positions adopted by the participants, who as described in chapter 4, perceive group attendance as a threat to their gendered social identities, which prompts defensive strategies (Messerschmidt 2000). Willing participation was understood as accepting a stigmatised masculine identity associated with violence against women and being positioned as a 'learner'. The facilitators therefore, initially at least, held different understandings of the programmes to the men attending them. As with other cognitive behavioural programmes the assumptions underpinning the material was that the men held deficits in their thinking, beliefs, and emotional management (Laursen and Henriksen 2018). From the perspectives of the facilitators, the men were legitimately required to attend programmes to correct their deficits, through a rehabilitative strategy. The men on the other hand tended to deny that they were responsible for domestic abuse or deny that it had taken place. The participants located the causes of their referral to the programme, externally, while facilitators, and the broader ethos of the correctional services in which they were situated, located the causes as within the men. This contrasting

understanding reflects other participant observations of cognitive behavioural intervention programmes (Laursen and Henriksen 2018). The men held views of relationships and gender which were incongruous with those being presented by the facilitators. Therefore, facilitators and the participants engage in a process of negotiation. Facilitators attempted to present the men with an understanding of the programme experience which they could accept, and which they did not perceive as a threat to their masculine identities.

The facilitators demonstrated an implicit awareness of the difference in orientation between themselves and the participants and described the strategies they used to develop positive interactions and shared understandings. Specifically, they endeavoured to counter resistance by emphasising to the men that they would not be treated negatively or in a manner which was judgemental or stigmatising. There was a strong consensus that explicit confrontation should be avoided. Managing resistance through negotiation and reassurance were identified as core aspects of successful facilitation.

> *Last night we only had four out of twelve. Dealing with practical obstacles and emotional obstacles and dealing with anxiety and how it feels to be in the room from their perspective, so a lot of non-judgement and empathy needed I suppose* (Facilitator interview, Kathy).

> *The resistant guys are the trickiest. On Tuesday we had to completely abandon the material to take some of them and say, okay, this is why we are trying to do this. We are not trying to stand here and waive our fingers at you and say you're really bad, you've done this and you've done that. So we kind of went off the programme completely in order to get that re engagement [laughter]. I am sure that NOMS wouldn't recommend that way forward but they [the men] were completely stuck. Literally everything we threw at them and everything we tried to explain to them, tried to work it round to show them*

it was for their benefit, it wasn't happening, so we had to down tools and say, 'okay what are we going to do with this'. They did seem a little better. Three out of the four are very anti ex-partner, and then one who partially tries but then realises the rest of the group isn't with him, who ironically has the lowest IQ, and is the best member [laughter]. I don't know, just working with resistance and acknowledging it, and saying 'okay, what do you actually want'. Let's look at that, and then come back to the programme. There is a danger of just keeping on battling through the material (Facilitator interview, Trish).

Promoting the group as a positive environment, where the men felt less threatened was identified as central in all the interviews conducted with facilitators.

We try and create a relaxed atmosphere as best we can, even if they are resistant, but for our Tuesday group we had to be aware of the conditions of success[4], but we don't like to make it too much like an experience of school, because they often say 'this is like school' (Facilitator interview, Trish).

And I think I have got quite a naturally therapeutic and warm style, and generally they liked me. Not that that mattered, but because they did they wanted to kind of please me. They loved it if I praised them, or smiled at them (Facilitator interview, Rose).

The facilitators perceived their role as one which required them to challenge the men, or prompt changes in behaviour, thinking and beliefs. However, they understood this as a precarious activity which could reinforce resistance and hostility. In Collins' (2004) language, facilitators were aware of the care needed to

[4] The 'conditions of success' refers to guidelines within the BBR programme which participants are expected to agree to at commencement. The manual encourages facilitators to revisit these conditions when there is resistance within the group. The conditions of success are listed as: active participation, open participation, supportive participation, and respectful participation.

encourage an interaction that generated positive emotional energy and mutual focus. The phrase 'treading carefully' recurred in interviews with facilitators.

> *You need to avoid challenging too strongly because it means they have got no where to go and they get more defensive. I think the strongest challenge you could make would be letting someone know that I don't agree with them* (Facilitator interview, Rose).

> *I think during the training I remember I was quite anxious and quite nervous, and I was told I was the best improver, which was great. And I think you know, I was just finding my feet with the challenging, you know, asking question to then unravel from men, more information. I think you have to pay enough attention, you listen to what they say and then you kind of unpick it, or probe a bit further, and ask them questions so that they can start reflecting on whatever they have said themselves. Because you know what they are saying is not accurate or it is wrong, but if you are challenging someone and start saying actually, 'that is not accurate', they are going to shut down, you are not going to get anywhere with them, they are going to become defensive. We are trying to work with them in a way that is not judging them* (Facilitator interview, Dorothy).

The phrases '*we are not here to judge you', and 'showing empathy'* were central in the accounts of facilitators, and praise was offered regularly within the groups. This praise endorsed the behaviours and beliefs that the facilitators aimed to promote. They tried to promote understandings of programme attendance, which were compatible with masculine identities. For example, facilitators would place emphasis on the '*resilience'* needed to attend and complete the programme, and the '*courage'* required to reflect on previous mistakes. Subtle rituals and symbols were in evidence to set the tone of interactions as empathic, relatively informal and non-judgemental: all the facilitators dressed with a degree of casualness, and general

conversations between facilitators and groups members would take place prior to the delivery of programme material. These interactions, including the importance of recognising the likelihood of resistance, are evident in the extract below from a member of staff who had substantial experience as a group facilitator. This interviewee was the 'treatment manager' for the team and was therefore influential over the practice of other facilitators.

So it kind of depends on the individual. You get a lot of guys who present as alpha males [sigh]. A lot are quite fragile. We get a lot of guys with over inflated egos, but actually they are quite fragile, because when you start to apply the model of equality, it doesn't put you in a good light. You are basically saying to people, the belief system that you have grown up with … and thought served you…is wrong. That is why I think the programme is as long as it is and is as repetitive as it is. Because you ain't going to get it first time around necessarily. So the skills of the tutor are you have to be motivational, you had to persevere… I think you have got to have empathy. Empathy with them, and perhaps their lack of choice with how they got to this belief system in the first place. And when you get to the responsible parenting module, I am always reminded of how much DV these people have witnessed, or been surrounded by. It is all they have ever known in some cases. It doesn't exclusively explain why people are domestically abusive, but it does for a significant proportion of them. So tutor skills: you have to be motivational, you have to have empathy… you have to be fairly relaxed with the fact that people have made poor and dubious choices. And in fact, maybe they haven't made a conscious choice, they have just assumed that this is the way to do things. And I think you have to be… the best people I have seen do it are non-judgemental. It's about making people believe it is incorrect themselves, rather than just telling the its wrong. You are on dangerous territory there.

I think the interesting thing is kind of working with people who are still a bit defensive at the beginning but as they go along, they see obviously that we are not condemning them, we are not judging them, and some of the things we discuss in the group may actually ring true with them, and some of the skills they have learnt may actually help them in other areas of their life, not just with relationships (Facilitator interview, Stan).

Paradoxically, while emphasis was placed on being 'non-judgemental', part of the role of facilitators was to make judgements about risk and participation, which is a further tension emerging in the role of the facilitator. However, risk assessment and management were not the primary objectives of groups facilitators. These roles are given to offender managers. The national probation service and the community rehabilitation companies largely operate on the offender management model. This is discussed elsewhere in detail (Canton 2011), but for the purposes of this thesis, this model separates offender management from interventions. In practice, this means that primary responsibility for assessing and managing risk falls to those with offender management roles. Programme facilitators are primarily involved in delivering interventions. While they are expected to be attentive to changes in risk, and relay information to offender managers, they do not hold responsibility for making formal assessments of risk.

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Facilitator front and back stage arenas

As with participants, Goffman's (1956) notion of front and back stage arenas is useful in understanding the performances of facilitators, and their strategies for managing groups. Facilitators can be described as 'front stage' when they are delivering programmes. However, they are also part of a group 'behind the scenes' with other facilitators, with whom they will discuss, plan and develop collective sentiments about their work and about participants. During sessions, facilitators endeavoured to provide positive feedback, demonstrate empathy and avoid being

judgemental. The role also requires them to maintain professional boundaries, manage emotions and avoid making statements that the men could interpret as collusive with beliefs supporting domestic abuse (Hughes 2012).

In back stage arenas facilitators expressed sentiments that were different to those expressed front stage. These backstage arenas can, however, also be understood as performances to a different audience. Within them, facilitators plan how the group will be delivered. This can involve mundane divisions of tasks prior to the group and planning to prevent key individuals from being disruptive. Frustrations about the content of the sessions are expressed, and the extent of permitted deviation from the programme content is considered. Following the group, facilitators expressed emotions which have been suppressed during programme delivery. These can manifest as exchanges of exhausted sighs, mocking of the participants, and expressions of anger. Facilitators also exchanged positive emotions about the progress of participants and the enthusiasm that they have demonstrated. A brief extract from my field notes illustrate some subtle back stage activity in planning a group session.

> *I asked Caroline what the approach was for tonight's session. She made a face of disdain and made dismissive gestures at the manual. Indicated that she did not think that the content of the session would be well received or would engage the men* (Field notes, 16th September 2015).

This extract illustrates many of the subtle rituals involved in planning how to encourage a specific interpretation by the participants: the way facilitators can be creative and resistant to organisational prescriptions.

In another extract, from the following week, the same facilitator relayed her interpretation and concern about one of the members of the group.

> *I arrive at 17.15. Caroline already at the office. I ask how she is.*

Caroline: hmm, fine

W: You don't sound that convincing?

Caroline: …Well I saw Jacob last week. I asked about his relationships and circumstances and he said how well things were going and that his partner is noticing changes, but, his PO…she told me that she has moved out of the family home into a refuge because of abuse, and he killed her pet, which is a real risk factor.

Caroline was outraged about Jacob's activities and the false presentations he made during interactions (Field notes, 30th September 2015).

Caroline was identifying Jacob as someone whose accounts could not be trusted. As with many aspects of back stage discussions, there was emotional content to Caroline's narrative, which involved giving voice to her frustrations, which could not be done during the delivery of the programme. Within the framework of this thesis, her comments, directed at myself as a co facilitator can be understood as an attempt to develop shared emotion and mutual focus, including anger as a response to Jacob's behaviour and his insincerity. This type of interaction was frequent in exchanges between staff involved in the delivery of programmes. Facilitators expressed solidarity through anger and negative sentiments towards men attending the groups, and through hope and optimism about their progress (Collins 2004).

Similar back stage themes could be identified after sessions were completed, where difficulties of maintaining professionalism and suitable performances were given expression, as illustrated succinctly in the following extract, which documents the actions and words of two facilitators after the completion of a particularly challenging session.

Caroline and I turn to each other, remaining in our seat, we smile, and Caroline sighs, clutches her head in her hand, laughs and says: 'What the fuck?' (Field notes, 11th September 2015).

Caroline: I think we lost control of that group. Sorry about shouting at Adam, I shouldn't have said anything, but he is just trying to get alongside you and always pushing, and it gets on my nerves (Field notes, 18th November 2015)

The following refers to the end of a different session which I delivered with Kathy and illustrates a shift from front stage to back stage performance.

Kathy politely smiles holding the door open for the last member to leave the room. She slowly shuts the door retaining a fixed grin. She then stumbles backwards. She lies spread eagle on the floor clutching her head and laughing (Field notes 7th September 2016).

Creating a positive group environment

The above frustrations noted, facilitators who were interviewed and observed were orientated to promoting positive environments where there was mutual focus, cohesion and shared understandings within the groups. Overall, they recognised the importance of demonstrating 'respect' and avoiding any behaviours or statements which would reinforce the defensiveness of participants.

Reflecting the different perspectives and individual understandings of facilitators, there was a contrast in attitudes towards BBR and IDAP (Hughes 2017). Facilitators judged the material and design of each programme based on whether it supported or undermined a positive group experience, within which reflection about past behaviour and future goals could take place. The differing opinions about which programme supported these aims most, reflected the personal preferences, beliefs about domestic abuse, and the interpersonal styles of facilitators (Hughes 2017). In

turn this impacted on the enthusiasm with which facilitators delivered programmes, and their capacity to create 'emotional energy' and 'mutual focus'(Collins 2004)

Most of the facilitators were positive about their experiences of IDAP. A key aspect was the relative flexibility that the programme offered, which enabled facilitators to respond to the individual concerns and perspectives of participants as they emerged. Some noted the contrast between IDAP and other accredited programmes, which were seen to have a much more prescriptive and structured design. IDAP created space for facilitators to respond to the men as individuals and to the perspectives that they brought with them to each session.

> *For me IDAP was fabulous. You work with what you are given, you work with the themes and you know what you are supposed to be achieving within the session. You work with discussions and think on your feet all the time and you work with that. Sometimes a certain module would apply to those in the group and you would give them space for that, as opposed to 'lets move on', because we have got this and this and that to do'…People have completely different styles, but again IDAP would give you that flexibility. It is normally, 'I take over this exercise and you take over that exercise but feel free to come in whenever you want'. And it is a good example of pro- social modelling. Because you are not sitting there quietly and letting one person take over the whole session, so that it's more natural than 'I can't say anything here because it is his part'* (Facilitator interview, Dorothy).

There was scope to give attention to the negotiation of shared understandings, which is central in developing the positive orientations and mutual focus required for a positive group experience. This was reflected in the actual delivery of the programmes where considerable time was allowed for responding to resistance, negotiating relationships and exploring how group attendance was understood. This was supported by the rolling format of the programme (Chapter 5) which

enabled more experienced and established participants to socialise newer members into the mutual focus and shared energy of the group.

Some facilitators were positive about IDAP because they identified within it an understanding of domestic abuse that they shared. However, others found IDAP challenging for the same reasons, placing emphasis on a perceived negative orientation, which could prompt further defensiveness from participants.

> *One of the negative things about IDAP is that it felt that you were bashing them around the head a lot. Because of the structure of the programme, there were nine different things that they had to identify, when actually they were there for the index offence. Although I think it is good for them to talk about other controlling behaviours, I don't know that them acknowledging how awful they are is a good way of building up their self-esteem* (Facilitator Interview, Rose).

> *I think some of the DVD clips like 'Why have I been arrested' are quite full on for guys who are already feeling a bit prickly, and at the start of the programme. It makes the guys very defensive when it is a difficult group. Some are fine but if they are already on that page it is hard to deliver*. (Facilitator interview, Stan).

> *It just felt, with IDAP, that there was a very heavy atmosphere. It was all discussion based, and let's watch a DVD every module of a man being abusive* (Facilitator interview, Kathy).

Interestingly, the benefits of the direct approach within IDAP was also cited as a strength. For example, some facilitators referred to ethos of 'challenging' the participants as a positive feature.

I like IDAP because at some points you were quite blunt with them and I think the challenging parts were quite effective. So even if they didn't agree with you, they would hear it (Facilitator interview, Dorothy).

Personally, over a period of time, from a professional perspective I rate IDAP. It was something I took a lot of satisfaction from to deliver well, and I felt that for a lot of service users is worked well. You got some good insight out of people into their offending behaviour. IDAP is, you would say, more of a challenging programme (Facilitator interview, Stan).

The differences in perspectives reflect competing academic narratives about how to prompt change among domestic abuse perpetrators behaviour. Some commentators have argued that IDAP, and the broader Duluth design which it is based upon, are excessively confrontational (Dutton 2006). However, others have argued that making challenges is a requirement of meaningful engagement and prompting change. Challenges are, however understood as needing to be measured, respectful and made within a professional relationship based on mutual respect (Gondolf 2007; Kelly and Westmarland 2015; Hughes 2017).

Some facilitators were uncomfortable with the cyclical nature of IDAP, which they felt reinforced its negative orientation and increased the difficulty of developing a mutual focus among the men. As explored in earlier chapters, IDAP consists of 9 modules, each focussing on a different type of abuse (appendix 2). For each module men were required to identify an incident of past behaviour. For example, physical abuse, sexual abuse or economic abuse. Kathy illustrates her negative perception of this feature of IDAP in this extract.

Kathy: I didn't like IDAP because it was a very negative programme, and quite repetitive, and the same structure of 1,2,3; 1,2,3. With a lot of emphasis on

what they had done wrong. I like BBR because it is a lot more positive. There is quite a lot of TSP in there as well. And I love TSP

W: Can you say a bit more about what you mean by 'negative'?

*Kathy: The structure was a bit boring, it wasn't very responsive to different people's learning styles, although the session plans were very thin, so I suppose you could have been a bit creative. I just didn't really ever warm to it. It sucks your creative juices out of you (*Facilitator interview, Kathy).

A similar point is made by Rose.

I think that was the problem with IDAP, going over control logs again and again, you are reinforcing a message, that you are bad, nine times. And already they have been through that with the court, and the PSR and their pre programme work. All of this has been hammered home to them (Facilitator interview, Rose).

Most of the facilitators acknowledged some of the potential pitfalls of IDAP and referred to needing to deliver reflexively, being mindful of the potential of the material to prompt negative and defensive reactions from the men. Professional discretion in the presentation and use of material was considered essential and facilitators often reassured participants about the continuity of respect during the delivery of challenging material.

I think the way we would get around that is with the therapeutic style and acknowledging that this is the past. I think if we were to run it like the manual we would end up with a load of broken men. That is the feedback they have given us 'oh we have to do another control log' and actually, thinking back to one guy who had written his first control log and the last control log on the same offence and you could see the progress he had made by describing the offence. It was tangible. There was a sense that you had to make sure they were okay, after all this 'what did you do' so that is why we had to do a 'nice

checkout' to make sure that they are not just the offence (Facilitator interview, Rose).

The above quote gives a sense of the ongoing attempt to balance the delivery of material, which the men may experience as threatening or damaging, with encouraging them to sustain mutual focus with the facilitators and experience interactions positively. Control logs are referred to in the quote here and in earlier chapters. These are a central feature of IDAP and the broader Duluth programme on which it is based. These are documents which require men to 'analyse' an incident where they have been abusive in the past, and typically start with some frank statements such as '*an incident when you physically abused your partner'.* Many of the participants denied that they had been violent or abusive, and as such these statements prompted resistance and defensiveness. However, the facilitators noted that the men became more comfortable completing the control logs, and when positive group relationships were established, participants were more willing to hear criticism of past behaviour, and to acknowledge past abuse (Hughes 2017). Nevertheless, as illustrated in the above quote, where reference is made to 'a nice checkout', facilitators endeavoured to engage in more positive interactions following challenging material or discussions. For example, facilitators would offer praise at the end of each session and encourage the men to offer praise to each other.

Well they have done something horrible, and they have gone through the court process, but if you are making them feel shit about themselves you won't give them anywhere to go, and I think it becomes like a self-fulfilling prophecy. The analogy that I use in an exercise has two chairs that I get them to sit on; one after the other: the offending me, and the positive responsible me. It's a balance between holding them accountable for what they have done and not letting them make excuses, and saying yes you have done that in the past, but this is not all of you and you don't have to do that in the future. You almost

want them to feel bad… well you do want them to feel bad about what they have done, and the impact they have caused and you want them to understand that, but that doesn't absolutely define them (Facilitator interview, Rose).

As noted, most facilitators were aware of the need to be responsive to the individuals on the group. However, they were also aware of organisational pressure to ensure consistent delivery of the programme materials, and the likelihood of being critiqued by managers if they drifted away from the manual.

It is the same with all programmes, one size fits all and we try and make it relevant with the learning points. Yeah, it's a shame because you know when there is video monitoring it is going to come up as programme drift, when you take it on balance it is the very thing you need to do to get people moving again (Facilitator interview, Stan).

This facilitator, like many others, is describing a tension between endeavouring to engage the men and responding to their concerns on the one hand, and meeting organisational requirements on the other. He is identifying that engaging the men requires a responsive and dynamic approach, which a strict adherence to the programme manual does not support (Phillips 2015).

The facilitators who had delivered both IDAP and BBR understood the latter as being less repetitive, more gentle and less explicitly confrontational (Hughes 2017). Consequently, it was also identified as being more therapeutic in style and less negative. On this basis, some expressed a preference for BBR.

I quite like it because it gives you ideas about how you could deliver. And I find that with BBR you can be quite creative. In terms of how long the session plans are it is kind of prescriptive, but it gives you ideas. There is a little bit of group work, and there is pair work and then there is discussion, and then there

is a DVD, and then that creative conclusions bit at the end, where they can do a human sculpture, that excites me. I just felt that IDAP was very bland… There was no room for creativity. It was just discussion, discussion, discussion. It was not always my favourite way of delivering (Facilitator interview, Kathy).

BBR I would say is more about forming a therapeutic alliance, which is part of general trend in probation and the approach we take to accredited programmes. I would characterise it as being less challenging and more motivational. Not that IDAP wasn't motivational but it motivated people to change by having that insight into their offending behaviour, whereas with BBR it is a more motivational approach. My impression of BBR, there is still challenge in there, but it is not as inherent as it was in IDAP were it was on weekly basis, particularly through the logs and the weekly skills practices. The challenges were designed into it. And that is a little bit less so in BBR, which talks about the therapeutic alliances and working in a motivational way. There is some challenge in there. You've got the GAM, which is like the control log, but this kind of does it in a different way, so the difference would be, in every control log you have the effects on the kids, and you have a responsible parenting module, so the response would be around the examples of where you have used your kids around the partner. In BBR there is a child's perspective DVD, so you listen to a witness statement, so in a way it is challenging, but you discuss it in a different way. I had the sense that the challenge isn't as direct. (Facilitator interview, Stan)

It is interesting to note the phrase '*therapeutic alliance'*, which was used by several of those interviewed. As Stan pertinently argues, this language reflects broader developments in probation practice, which stress service user engagement and professional relationships. This is a significant backdrop against which recent

probation practice has developed (Hughes 2012; McNeill 2006; Canton 2011). Arguably this term is a professional terminology, which reflects the attempt by staff to develop mutual focus and emotional engagement with service users during interactions, in keeping with the theoretical framework of this thesis (Collins 2004).

While facilitators noted the more gentle approach of BBR, and the challenges involved in delivering IDAP, which had greater scope for confrontation, they also expressed frustrations with it. As explored in a previous publication (Hughes 2017) the facilitators interviewed referred to problems because of its heavily structured design and the amount of material, which inhibited responsive and dynamic interactions with the men.

> *It's a lot more, I think it is a lot more structured than I am used to. I am used to picking at something rather than just running through the programme. I think if it was semi-structured that would be better. Less of a one size fits all worksheet filling approach: fill in this work sheet and fill in that worksheet. Just spending the time to chat to people. Maybe giving them a scenario to work with. It's not to say that you can't get in there and do a little bit of exploration and see how that person thinks about things, but the structure impedes that. Some sessions are great at opening-up that dialogue and get you to start to understand where people are coming from, but others are so structured there is just no space. It depends on the delivery style and how you adapt, and how you deliver the programme depending on the group you have got. Because if you have got a group that is quite on board with whatever is going on, then you can work with them and be more exploratory and more challenging. If you have got a lot of deniers, you know obviously, you have to tread quite carefully. That was available in IDAP, but in this case (BBR), the material is so proscriptive, there are so many different exercises that you need to complete, it's like you are saying ' yeah, that is a very valid point but we need to get on*

with what we are doing', so you have to shut them down when they want to explore certain issues that were relevant to them. So as tutors we are not given that much flexibility (Facilitator interview, Trish).

Therefore, while the BBR material is less explicitly 'challenging' than IDAP, the resistance to the programme remains, and there is less space to engage in relational work required to develop mutual focus and positive group interactions.

Some facilitators expressed discomfort about BBR because it was not sufficiently challenging. There was a sense in which the programme, although less likely to prompt resistance, did not involve the same sagacity as IDAP. Within this understanding, engaging in challenges is not fundamentally counterproductive to fostering a positive orientation among the men. Rather it is something which is required if interactions on the programmes are to have depth and meaning, in which participants would feel able to be open, and share intimate personal details. The sharing of intimate, personal experiences associated with shame is understood as part of the ritual of the group, in which emotional energy, and a sense of interconnectedness emerges (Collins 2004). It is within these processes that self-questioning about masculine identities and past behaviour can become ritualised, and part of a shared mutual focus between participants and facilitators.

What little I remember from the rationale, they felt that IDAP was too challenging, which was causing people to close up, and not really admit to what they have done, so they wanted a bit more of a gentle approach so people 'don't feel threatened, don't feel judged, come out of your shell' and then maybe start looking at it. For me, it is a bit too wishy washy, and there is nothing that is quite substantial (Facilitator interview, Margaret).

Relationships between facilitators

Facilitators perceptions of their co-workers were characterised by mutual support and respect. However, some tensions were evident. It is within these tensions that some of the implicit rules and codes of conduct can be observed. As noted in some of the discussions above, staff understood that participants were likely to show resistance to the programme. References to 'being non-judgmental', 'encouraging',' and 'showing respect' recurred. These were ritualised within group programmes through listening, tones of voice, avoidance of confrontation, chat, and humour. These served as constant symbols that the relationships between facilitators and participants were based on mutual respect and shared focus.

Problematic interactions between facilitators emerged when there was a perception that these rituals of respect were not being sustained. Some staff were identified as being 'too confrontational', and thereby undermining the positive environment of the group.

> *Well some people are just a bit… [slight contortion of the face]… I have delivered with quite a lot of people, and some are just like, they feel that the men are not quite deserving of respect; knowing that the men are feeling shit about themselves, and the response is: 'well you should feel shit about yourself, because that is what you have done you horrible man' [laughter]* (Facilitator interview, Rose).

Another key issue which could lead to tensions appeared when there was a perception that a co-facilitator was undermining, or collusive with the male participants. There were recurrent references in off the record discussions that some facilitators were more difficult to work with than others because you could not rely on them to be sufficiently supportive.

Caroline told me that she is frustrated about ongoing tensions with another tutor [a]. Referred to his behaviour towards a third colleague [b] – said that when [b] challenged a group member, [a] responded in front of group members that 'that was a big word for her'. [b] very upset about this which she felt reflected general tone of his approach. [a] has tried to call [b] repetitively since, but she is too upset to speak. Caroline also referred to a similar experience with [a] which involved her spending a long time challenging a group member following a racist comment – to which [a] responded you have been told off now haven't you. Caroline experienced this as extremely undermining (Field notes, 6th August 2014).

The frustration that Caroline is demonstrating can be understood as being prompted by her co-facilitator's failure to manage and support a joint performance (Goffman 1956), and as disruptive to the collective mutual focus. The perceived collusion by one facilitator, with the perpetrators, at the expense of the other facilitator, appears as something very difficult to manage. Nevertheless, there were other instances of frustration, with other members of staff failing to ensure that 'equality' between facilitators was represented. Several staff who were noted as being 'difficult' to deliver with, were described as behaving as if they are in charge, or the senior partner, or failing to take adequate responsibility in challenging the perpetrators.

The problem with her, is that we are supposed to be demonstrating equality, but it is clear to all of them that she wants to be in charge and tell me what to do and when I can speak (Facilitator interview, Les).

He is fine, the offenders like him, but he tends to just to do the bits he wants to do and has his own little chats with them. You end up doing the challenging stuff and end up being the bad guy (Facilitator interview, Liz).

Facilitators and gender

An element that stood out clearly in discussions and interviews with facilitators was that there was a very strong preference for delivering groups with one male facilitator, and one female facilitator. This posed problems because there were very few male facilitators employed to deliver programmes by the CRC where the research took place. Those men who were employed were reported by their co facilitators as having some deficits in their skills or approaches to delivery.

The female facilitators had a clear perception of the group rooms as gendered arenas in which expectations about gendered roles, and how to 'do gender' were central. The women delivering the programmes noted inherent tensions in delivering a programme to men who are likely to have hostile attitudes towards women in general, or clear expectations about how men and women should act. These were reflected in men expressing discomfort about discussing sexual behaviour in the presence of female staff and apologising for swearing or engaging in 'male talk' (West and Zimmerman 1987; Garner 2016). Both male and female facilitators perceived that the participants were more likely to be defensive towards female staff and less likely to defer to their authority. The observations confirmed that participants would respond flippantly or sarcastically to challenges by female facilitators. Participants would often make references to the physical appearance of female facilitators and make comments about their sexual attractiveness. There was agreement among the women delivering IDAP and BBR that these difficulties decreased significantly when a male facilitator was present.

> *My preference would always be to work with a male, but there are very few male tutors. I think ideally that would always be the best team, because they are not straight away doing transference and thinking you are just like my partner* (Facilitator interview, Trish).

I think because I'm a woman, they think I must be judging them, because they have committed an offence against a woman. And especially when you have got two female facilitators, I've heard it, on several occasions, 'well, it's you and us', and I think when they see that there is a male, they kind feel bit more comfortable with it. They are a bit more agreeable and don't have to defend themselves, they don't feel like… They don't expect the same level of attack from a male (Facilitator interview, Dorothy).

There is a massive difference delivering with a man than delivering with a women, it feels like you have to work harder with two females, and we have to be a bit more guarded, it feels like there is a bit more of an atmosphere of us and them. Which you don't want, but I have never felt like that with a male tutor (Facilitator Rose interview).

There are complex gendered dynamics in evidence here, but all three of the above quotes indicate that developing a shared understanding and managing hostility is easier when there is both a male and female facilitator.

Participant views on facilitators

Without exception the participants who were interviewed referred to their relationships with facilitators as being the most central factor in enabling them to engage and benefit from the programme. This observation is consistent with broader developments in probation practice, previously noted, which have emphasised the role of relationships in promoting engagement and facilitating change (McNeill 2006; Maruna 2001). Displaying warmth, empathy, and understanding emerged as key factors in encouraging to the men to engage

positively in the group. Related themes of listening and being non-judgemental were central.

> *It was a chore to start with and then I didn't mind going. I did lose a bit of work over it, but then I didn't mind going in the end, I almost looked forward to it in a way [chuckles]. To be honest, my teachers made it so easy. They are so good at their job. I think it was just that they are so honest. And they understood people* (Participant interview, Jack).

However, also of note is after positive, trusting relationships were established, direct and challenging feedback, was both accepted and welcomed.

> *Because I found, at least the facilitators, well they said we're not judgemental here. We've probably seen a lot worse, probably seen a lot better, you're probably in the middle. Doesn't matter to us. What matters to us is that you are here and that you make the most of it. I fell in love with the guy delivering my course… He's a fantastic man; well they all are. One of the three I had, I found her… she stimulated me in that she provoked thought. You would not get away with anything; you might say, it was a nice day Thursday, and five minutes later you would say it was raining on Thursday, and she would say whoa whoa whoa, five minutes ago you said it was a nice day. She would make a terrific lawyer. And you see as the programme went on, people were falling into traps with her. She would say, well what do you do now? Now that you're on IDAP? I would say I let her have control, and she would come back [whooshing noise] You Let Her! I see, whose really in control* (Participant interview, Trevor).

> *But the teachers did make you feel very easy, what's the word...More at ease. I didn't expect it to be so friendly. I expected it to be 'you have done something wrong, you're in a class with a teacher'. I didn't expect it to be so free and easy. You could say what you wanted to say when you wanted to say it. But*

they were all brilliant. One was much more to the point I would say. I think the other two were more laid back, but they do get to the point, but in a nice way (Participant interview, Morris).

Some participants emphasised the role of professional relationships and trust.

First of all it must be very difficult for them, to sit in front of people who are 19, people who are 54, people who are in different sorts of relationships, and people who have got drug abuse and relationship abuse. And they never judged anybody. They had a programme and set processes to go through. And I think if you just bang out the stuff, you get nowhere. You have got to form a relationship. And although the relationship they formed with all of us was distant, if they said 'what did you do?' you knew that they wouldn't judge you. And in the first couple of weeks I sat there and listened, and gave very short answers. But then I opened-up, as the others seemed to, in genuine conversations. You found with the encouragement that they gave that we all tried to help each other (Participant interview, Callum).

Within these quotes is a sense that participants placed substantial value on their relationships with facilitators. They appreciated being given validation, and were not prescriptive about the individual approach adopted, as demonstrated by the praise given to the differing styles of facilitation. Drawing on Bottom's analysis of relationships between probation staff and service users, directive, challenging or gentle approaches were accepted if there was a perception of 'legitimacy' (2001). This was in turn dependent on a sense of fairness and trust.

Summary and conclusion

This chapter has given attention to the role and understandings of facilitators on group processes, as well as some brief attention to how they participants perceive

them. Facilitators of domestic abuse programmes face substantial hurdles if they are to engage resistant men in a positive group experience, and thereby enable a process of reflection and change. Facilitators and participants hold contrasting perceptions of the role of the programme. The shame associated with attendance leads to hostility. Despite these difficulties participants consistently praised the facilitators, emphasising the group environment they created and their ability to prompt reflection. The observations of group delivery and interviews with facilitators shows that effectiveness is dependent on careful management of resistance, and an awareness of the importance of demonstrating respect and non-judgemental attitudes, in which participants feel valued. When interactions are based on trust and a perception of overall respect, challenges to attitudes and behaviour appear to be more accepted, and there is a greater willingness among participants to acknowledge and share instances of intimate partner abuse.

As with men directed to attend the programme, the facilitators had expectations about how interactions on the group should take place. The facilitators referred to ‘good groups’ and ‘bad groups’, based on the extent to which the conduct of the men attending conformed to their expectations. Good groups were characterised by limited hostility, and ‘engaged’ participants who accepted responsibility for their behaviour and displayed enthusiasm about the programme. Facilitators identified a key aspect of their role as attempting to ensure that the groups were positive environments, through avoiding confrontation, and giving attention to the negotiation of common understandings with participants. Most of the facilitators felt frustrated by the organisational emphasis on standardisation.

Chapter 7 Perceptions of change

Introduction

The focus of this thesis is on how individuals who have attended probation domestic abuse perpetrator programmes make sense of, and actively create a group experience, through the development of shared understandings, and expressions of collective emotions and symbols (Collins 2004). However, a discussion of perpetrator programme experiences should not be separated entirely from considerations of impact. Therefore, this chapter examines the programmes based on the perceptions of participants, exploring how they understand, and experience change.

The accounts of perpetrators are not presented as reliable indicators of change. As discussed elsewhere, there is a substantial body of literature indicating that men who are violent within relationships tend to create narratives which minimise, justify and deny their abusive behaviour. Men who attend programmes are engaged in 'presentational management' (Goffman 1956). They are aware that they are being subjected to judgements from a variety of professionals about the risk they pose and are conscious of the interpretations of other participants. Additionally, they are attempting to construct and present an acceptable self-identity to manage the stigma and shame associated with violence towards intimate partners (Goffman 1963; Matza and Sykes 1957). Nevertheless, while the accounts of perpetrators should not be treated as reliable, this does not mean they are not of value (Morran 2013). Rather, they can reveal how men have experienced the group and how ideas about relationships, gender and identity can shift. The chapter draws on the interviews conducted with the men who had attended BBR or IDAP, and on the statements they made in the latter stages of their programme attendance. The interviews enabled me to ask the men to reflect on the programme after completion,

without the influence of the other men in the groups. During the interviews, I emphasised that my role was as a researcher, however some did have knowledge of my role as a facilitator and this is likely to have impacted on what they chose to present. Nevertheless, important perspectives about change were present in the accounts offered. The perspectives offered within the interviews were not inconsistent with the observations of the groups as they took place, although they did lead to more detailed and reflective accounts of the programmes attended and their impact.

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This chapter first explores the idea that group participation can foster a change in overall emotional orientation, in which the men observed a tendency to respond with less hostility to others and described a decrease in generalised anger. In accordance with previous observations (Hughes 2017) this change was not always understood as linked to any specific content within either programme. Following this, attention is given to specific strategies for emotional management. These are included within the programme materials and have the explicit aim of making the men more aware of situations where they are at risk of behaving abusively and better at preventing escalation. The next two sections in this chapter discuss an increased level of responsibility for past abuse and an increased understanding of the perspectives of others. The final theme of the chapter explores how the men have revised and negotiated their sense of identity, including their understandings of being male, and being in a relationship.

In accordance with previous chapters, a central element of the change identified by participants can be understood as emotional. While this is intuitively a central element in effective interventions, discussions of emotions as a mediator of change have been surprisingly lacking in academic discussion of perpetrator programmes. Collins (2004) describes interactions as having an impact on the emotional state of individuals. This has implications for developing an understanding of how groups

may impact on behaviour change. In a positive group experience, there is a collective experience of emotions which have a low association with violent behaviour. For example, empathy, optimism and confidence were expressed more frequently by the men at the end of the programmes, as opposed to hostility, anger and frustration, which tended to be in evidence at the start. Emotional expressions and experiences are understood as highly gendered, and part of the way in which gender is collectively performed. Effective domestic abuse programmes therefore involve a reconfiguration of collective masculine identities and emotions, which can impact upon interactions beyond the confines of attendance. Collins (2004) suggests that where emotions are shared in one context, they can affect longer term changes in emotional reactions; especially where they are bound up with symbols and rituals which can be used to reinvoke the collective mood of an interaction previously experienced, as explored in chapter five. Symbols can include key phrases, words, gendered rituals, stories and metaphorical biographies. These are a speculative set of ideas which require considerably more exploration, nevertheless this understanding is consistent with the accounts of the men and may offer some insight into how group interventions can foster wider behavioural change.

A general and profound change

Overwhelmingly, the men who had attended the programmes were explicit in stating that the programmes they attended had been positive and profound. They described an impact which was beyond the change in attitude towards attendance noted in chapter five, and one which lasted beyond their completion of the programmes. Most participants referred to the programme as not only a positive experience, but one which they felt led to substantial change. Often, the participants had difficulty specifying what the changes were. This lack of specificity could be interpreted as indicative of a lack sincerity, and an attempt to demonstrate reform. However, these

perceptions can also be understood as an overall change in emotional orientation or interactional style that can be transferred from one situation to another, and thereby lead to less hostile interactions with others (Collins 2004). Interventions are often based on the principle that individuals have specific dysfunctions which are in need of correction (Lau rsen 2018). However, participants do not always understand change in this way. Rather, the most profound changes are not perceived as specific or rational, but general and emotional. The following extracts from interviews and observations illustrate this general sense of change.

> *Whoever I've come across in the probation service, they have said, how did you find the course, and I've said, it was an eye opener; it was really informative. It helped me a lot. Think before you jump into things. That is what I have learnt. And I could sit there and look around the room, like where I was caught sleeping. But I was still listening [laughter]. That is how I am. I can look like I'm not listening, but I am still taking stuff in... you have to listen and take it in* (Participant interview, Dave).

While there is some specificity in Dave's account of what he learnt from the group, there is an overall sense of impact and change which is beyond any individual learning points. The words do not fully capture the enthusiasm which Dave demonstrated through his tone. The following extract from my field notes, taken from a one to one review, further illustrates a tendency for participants to experience change at a more general level.

> *Shane: It's good*
>
> *W: What's good about it?*
>
> Shane: *Well, I can't remember when I am put on the spot [laughter] but it is helping me.*

W: So the detail is a bit hard on one hand; on the other there is a sense of it helping. How is it helping?

Shane: Well, I'm a different person and it makes me think about other people… with the mental crusher and that…and the pattern of thinking and that…. It is also just coming here. It reminds me of what I have done. Not so much what we cover, but just coming here. I like the blokes, and like listening to what they have to say, and the teachers do an excellent job (Field notes, 26th January 2016).

Similar reflections are in evidence in the following extracts.

And I look at IDAP as… going to school, knuckling down… learning, but you can leave school with all the qualification that you have, and then get a job in Sainsburys. I have friends who left school with me who are still back in Ireland stacking shelves, and they are happy with their lot... and I would kind of look down my nose and think I am better than you, but I'm not, but what IDAP has done… you can qualify, but there is no point, I used to joke and say, you know I'll use all of this at my next interview, and say they've told me I am really good at IDAP, but there is no point if you don't use it the day after you leave school, to go on and further your education and make the most of it and use what you have learned for benefit (Participant interview, Trevor).

Here there is a sense that Trevor is finding it hard to pin down the specific learning points but nevertheless wishes to convey the impact of the programme on how he has understood aspects of his biography, including how he makes judgements about others, as well emphasising the need to integrate changes into his day to day life. As he points out: '*there is no point if you don't use it and…use what you have learnt'*

The following exchange took place among group participants in the waiting room prior to an IDAP session. Again, an overall sense of impact is communicated, as well as a sense of commitment to the programme and concern that it was due to be replaced.

> *Quick chat with Greg, Dave and Callum in reception as I enter the building for the group. As is often the case, they have arrived very early for the session and are chatting in the waiting room.*
>
> *Greg commented: I heard that the group is finishing [with a surprised and concerned tone]*
>
> *I explained that it is being replaced with a different programme called BBR, which is designed to be less challenging, more forward looking, and less focussed on previous abuse.*
>
> *Callum added: It will make re offending rates go up. You have to accept what you have done and this group makes you do that. I used to speak to my wife like a bag of shite. I ask my wife if I am different now… and she says yes.*
>
> *Dave added: It needs the hard-hitting bits. I learnt loads because it was blunt.*
> (Field notes, 27th May 2015).

Awareness and responsibility for abusive behaviour

While much of the sense of change that the men referred to was general, there were specific changes that were identifiable. Most of the men provided very clear shifts in understandings of their own behaviour, or at least a willingness to own and describe instances of their abuse. This in turn led to less frequent displays of negative or hostile emotional expressions about their partners or other people in their lives. As discussed in chapter four, when men commenced the programmes,

they typically denied that they had been abusive and tended to blame their partners. As the programmes progressed, most of the men conveyed narratives of their behaviour in which they accepted responsibility and agreed that they were legitimately required to attend. These narratives of responsibility were often evident in IDAP when men were relaying their control logs for each of the modules. In the control logs, the men identified and analysed instances when they had displayed the type of abuse that the module was examining. They were then expected to share this account during the second session of the module. Specifically, the participants were required to identify the intentionality of their behaviour, consider its impact and recognise how they had exhibited 'denial, minimisation and blame'. In the early stages of the programme men tended to complete control logs which described what they perceived as the inappropriate behaviour of their partners. Alternatively, they refused to complete the control log at all. In some instances, they wrote '*I have never done this'*, or simply *'never'* on the top of the form. '*Leaving the control log at home', 'at someone else's house'* or '*putting it through the wash'* all emerged as justifications for not being able to present their work during the relevant IDAP session.

As the programme progressed, there was an increasing willingness to complete control logs with a focus on their own behaviour. However, the participants would tend to relay the less violent aspects of their actions and continue to locate some responsibility on their partners, reflecting the on-going shame associated with violence towards intimate partners, and the desire to present their accounts within culturally approved narratives of violence (Collins 2008).

Arthur referred to incidents where he would play loud jazz music late at night. This would happen when sober, but also later and louder when he was drunk. He was able to reflect that he did this with the intention of irritating his wife. When his wife asked him to turn it down, he would turn it up. The following

morning, he would deny that the music was loud, or that it had been late. Also adding that he would tell himself that his wife liked Jazz music, so she must have just been complaining. He said it would have been his perception and belief that he was in his own home, worked hard and should be able to do what he liked, when he liked. He added that he and his wife were in separate rooms and felt he may have resented this at the time (Field notes, 26th November 2014).

On a separate occasion, Arthur again demonstrated awareness of the diverse and subtle mechanisms through which he had exercised abuse and control.

Arthur shared his control log which demonstrated a considered awareness of the impact of some of his behaviour on his partner. The control log referred to enthusiasm for his wife going out for women's guild meetings, because this gave him an opportunity to drink heavily. Consequently, she was ultimately not able to attend meetings because of fear regarding the state he would be in on her return. This prompted reflection on the part of other group members and shifted the tone of the group, from blame to one of self-responsibility (Field notes, 17th February 2015).

The first of these extracts is from a module which explored minimisation, denial and blame as substantive forms of abuse. These were areas that participants found particularly difficult. Paradoxically, accepting responsibility emerged as a feature in the performance of masculinity. Men on the programme would demonstrate defensiveness if they believed that any suggestion was being made that they had failed to '*put their hands up'* when they had '*done something wrong'*. Arthur's example illustrates careful reflection on instances when he had failed to consider his partner's perspectives and acknowledged that he had previously constructed a

narrative which denied any wrong doing. Callum's contribution to a group session illustrates similar themes.

> *Callum participated very well in the session, responding attentively to others. He delivered an appropriate control log, which referred to an incident when he and his wife had disagreed regarding the purchase of a television. He said: 'I became frustrated about not being heard and adopted a tone which was threatening and controlling. I switched to the communication style I would have used in the military, with a heavy frown and stare [Callum demonstrates; prompting laughter from the group and agreement that this would be intimidating]. I reverted to using my military lifestyle and training at home instead of leaving it in the past. I regretted speaking to her in a manner that would have made her feel small'* (Field notes, 17th February 2014).

As with Arthur, Callum demonstrated a reflective approach to previous behaviour, with an understanding of how abuse can take a variety of forms including intimidation, asserting male privilege and undermining their partner's space for action (Kelly and Westmarland 2015).

Interestingly, the completion of control logs enabled the men to be selective about what they disclosed to the facilitators on the one hand, and the other participants on the other, again reflecting the complex presentational management they engaged in (Goffman 1956).

> *Greg attended for session 2 of module 6: sexual respect. He acknowledged at the outset that he had difficulty relating to the module because he has always been clear that no means no when it comes to sex. He denied that he had ever been sexually abusive or placed pressure on partners for sex. Nevertheless, Greg participated well in the general discussions and responded to others in the session emphasising the importance of communication. He said: 'what I*

am learning from every bit of this course, is that you have to talk to each other… Sometimes I would want sex, and my partner wouldn't, but no means no'. His written work, however, contained an account which contrasted with what he shared with the group. In the control log he referred to an incident when he had persisted in demands for sex and applied pressure to his partner: I came in drunk one night and I fancied it. She kept saying 'you're drunk'. Greg identified beliefs that justified his behaviour as: We are married and it shouldn't always be one way, i.e. when she is up for it. I should get sex when I want it (Field notes, 9th June 2014).

Throughout these accounts there is a sense of carefully balancing disclosures to meet the competing pressures of stigma (Goffman 1963), and a requirement of openness, in keeping with the culture of the group, and expectations of the facilitators.

Within BBR there was a less explicit focus on abusive behaviour so there were fewer opportunities to demonstrate changes in levels of responsibility. However, the shift towards accepting responsibility for past abuse was evident in the interviews with men who had attended both IDAP and BBR.

It was more involved than I thought it would be. What with the DVDs and you have your group talks and everything. Once they show you and explain about the DVDs it is very eye opening. Very graphic. And when you see the situations, you do actually sit there and you think, bloody hell, and you see yourself. I've said that, I've actually used body language like that. The way the bloke is talking to his wife or his girlfriend or whatever. When I've got annoyed or got the hump with her: Fuckin hell; for God's sake (Participant interview, Morris).

In this account, Morris, who completed BBR, is referring video vignettes, used on both IDAP and BBR. These involve actors portraying instances of intimate partner abuse. The vignettes prompted diverse responses from participants, with some becoming defensive and referring to them as 'over the top' and having no relevance. Others, such as Morris, recall recognising their own behaviours, and subsequently a sense of responsibility for their actions.

Shifts in responsibility were not always dramatic. Instead they involved degrees of change or a willingness to engage in self-questioning. For example, in the following extracts from field notes and interview transcriptions, Ryan, Mickey and Gary demonstrated that they were willing to accept some responsibility, whilst continuing to emphasise that their partners or external circumstances were also to blame. There is a sense that they were struggling to let go of blaming others and are trying to establish narratives that reconcile the messages received on the programme with previous understandings.

> *Ryan attended for session 3 of the module 'Non Violence'; his final session. Ryan discussed progress he has experienced during the programme and said that he will 'miss the other members'. He said that he does now accept responsibility and acknowledged that he previously blamed his partner for his behaviour. He said that he still thinks that his partner's behaviour was unacceptable but acknowledged the need to focus on himself and work towards access to his daughter. He said that he has learnt to be more reflective, in a positive rather than negative way, and finds himself reacting differently without thinking about it. The group discussed how this might relate to a different set of values that Ryan has developed over the course. Ryan also discussed the negative impact of 'expectations' as a cause of arguments in relationships* (Field notes, 5th November 2014).

Mickey: Well she is always telling me I was always a pushy person, and I don't want to be like that. Controlling. She says I am controlling. But I never thought I was controlling. Some women are very submissive, and they can be controlled, but I think women are ultimately more controlling (Participant interview, Mickey).

Gary attended for catch up on non-threatening behaviour, session 1 of the module. He demonstrated some understanding of threatening behaviour and gave some examples. Some evidence of change in responsibility, acknowledging that he might have hugged her roughly when his ex-partner suggested that he tried to 'knee' her and acknowledged that he may have had his hand to his head in an expression of frustration, which she mistook for a gun gesture. However, he similarly stressed that she is over sensitive and tends to be over dramatic. Acknowledged that she might have been fearful, although later stepped back from this (Field notes, 1st July 2015).

In each of these instances, there is a sense of internal struggle between acknowledging the harmful aspects of previous behaviours and preserving an existing narrative. For some of the men, there were much franker acknowledgements of past violence, especially within the interviews.

Denial, minimisation, the whole thing, and I thought, you are lying your fucking teeth off mate, and it was nice to see some of the group start to go off of that stance, and by seven months into it I thought: 'You know what, I'm a prick… and I did it'. And some of them were conceding that it was at least 50% their problem. And I'm now of the belief, and I have said to my wife, 'you know what, you've got to take some of the share of the blame for this because you're a human being, you do get angry, you do piss me off, but there is nothing that warrants me hitting you. There is nothing that warrants me degrading you to a point where you feel so low you'd want to kill yourself'… My wife has felt like

that… and to walk away, and that counting to ten…it now makes sense… because if I don't: I'm capable… And it's a shitty thing to say, but I am capable… I go into a place. I feel sick… with the madness. Because, and I don't know if you have ever been there, shall we call it an episode? I believe it is a sickness… My episodes they're building up and building up, and it could be a salt and pepper argument: 'Pass the salt... That's the fucking pepper!'. BANG. It's prolonged. It's not like an 'AARGH'. It's like you see in the videos, have you seen the videos from IDAP? Well, we used to watch them in the group and I would feel some sort of horror that the guy would behave like that. What a prick… But then I would start to study my own behaviour. And honestly, my behaviour was two hours. Honestly… It's like what you would see on a Syrian video of torture. I've held a previous partner under water, held her, [blubber noises while forcing his hand downwards] and then, again [repeating gesture and noises]. It was inevitable that if I carried on, someone would die (Participant interview, Trevor).

Displaying responsibility within the group and within interviews is influenced by several factors. Some participants will understand that accepting responsibility is a requirement of the group and recognise its association with assessments of their risk. Participants also recognise that demonstrating responsibility leads to positive feedback from tutors and peers. Others continued to find difficulty incorporating stigmatising and emasculating past behaviours into their self-identities. Each group will have a different climate, which will impact on the extent to which responsibility is acknowledged.

Irrespective of the sincerity of the changes in the level of responsibility, it is interesting to note that there is not a clear evidential link indicating that an increase in responsibility will lead to a reduction in further instances of abuse. It is therefore significant that this is such a clear focus for many domestic abuse programmes.

IDAP focuses on encouraging participants to acknowledge what they have done, while BBR moves away from this notion, and is understood by facilitators as being more forward looking. Nevertheless, many of the participants identified that accepting responsibility was central in facilitating change and building positive relationships with intimate partners, children and others.

Development of empathy and alternative perspectives

Linked to the development of responsibility, the participants involved in this study referred to a growth of awareness of the effects of their behaviour on partners and others. At the commencement of the programmes, participants would often express the view that their conduct was not serious and had no significant negative effect. Typically, men would relay accounts in which they portrayed themselves and their partners as equal participants in a heated argument or would create narratives in which they, rather than their partners, were victims of abusive and unreasonable behaviours. Often, the men would stress the resilience of their partners. However, as the programmes progressed participants presented altered narratives about the impact of their behaviour. With increasing frequency, they acknowledged that their partners, and others had experienced fear and intimidation because of their actions.

> *Greg stressed the need to re-establish trust and not make promises. He said that in the past he has 'blacked out' at times of extreme anger. He made a pertinent contribution to another member, who had been expressing the view that the court should take greater consideration of personal circumstances in sentencing. Greg pointed out that irrespective of circumstances, if you have hurt someone, that is what the courts should focus on. He also added that acknowledging this helps you move on. Greg made helpful contributions regarding the need for agencies to focus on needs and potential risks to the children. He said that he is finding participation helpful in expressing feelings and said it is like group therapy* (Field notes, 5th November 2014).

While there is only a brief mention of the impact of his abuse, Greg demonstrates a substantial shift from an earlier position, by acknowledging that he has 'hurt someone', which in turn legitimises his attendance at the programme as well as the interventions of other agencies. Identifying and accepting this is referred to as an important aspect of 'moving on'.

> *Arthur said that he is learning a lot from the group and said that he now recognises that he caused his ex-partner substantial distress as a result of emotional abuse. He said he had previously recognised the instances of violence but had denied the emotional element. He did not share his control log but gave a carefully considered acknowledgment of the upset that an argument caused his wife* (Field notes, 17th December 2014).

Arthur's account reflects a key learning point that many men expressed after completing domestic abuse programmes. He shows a broad understanding of abuse, which encompasses a variety of forms. Many participants commenced the programme with an understanding of domestic abuse which was limited to physical violence, which they referred to as isolated instances. Non-physical elements of control, intimidation and harm were viewed as reciprocal and ultimately harmless (Kelly and Westmarland 2016). The transition towards understanding abuse as multifaceted and part of a pattern of controlling behaviour was particularly the case with men completing IDAP, which had at its core the aim of encouraging a recognition that abuse in relationships involves interrelated strategies of subjugation, which are supported by the threat of physical and sexual violence (Kelly and Westmarland 2016; Dobash and Dobash 1979; Dobash et al 2000; Westmarland 2016).

An awareness of alternative perspectives did not only revolve around an appreciation of the impact of abuse. It additionally included an understanding of more minor frustrations that their partners were likely to experience and express

within relationships. At the commencement of domestic abuse programmes, participants tended to refer to criticism, and particularly criticism from their partners, as lacking any legitimacy. Often criticism was identified as unreasonable and associated with shortcomings of their partners rather than a consequence of their own behaviour. These understandings are enmeshed with gendered roles and fears of emasculation. Accepting criticism was associated with subordination and a threat to masculine identities (Connell 2005). Receipt of criticism was often used as a justification for instances of abuse (Dobash and Dobash 1988; 1992). However, as participants progressed through the programmes, they demonstrated a greater willingness to listen to criticisms and respond in non-confrontational ways.

> *Discussion between participants about accepting criticism, in which John is challenged by Alfie to understand the perspective of his partner and change his behaviour on this basis.*
>
> *John: What about when your missus is constantly criticising you and getting at you all the time, and that is all you hear?*
>
> *Alfie responds frankly: Well you should stop doing the thing that she is criticising you for, then she would stop criticising you. [The other members laugh but nod and agree]* (Field notes, 25th February 2015).

While Alfie is being critical of John, rather than explicitly discussing his own behaviour, this exchange reflects the value the group placed on understanding the perspective of others and rejecting a narrative of women and partners being collectively and consistently unreasonable. Alfie also displays an understanding of the perspective of John's partner.

The following extract refers to Dale, who had been quite a resistant participant and expressed consistent hostility towards other people in his life, who he believed had caused him problems. He had acknowledged past aggressive

behaviour but attributed this to his mental health difficulties. When others were critical of his aggression, he would present this as their failure to understand his circumstances. Despite this resistance, Dale began to acknowledge how his conduct impacted on others, which was consistent with an overall change in his behaviour towards the facilitators and other professionals involved in his supervision.

> *Men asked to relay how they were and to feedback what they had learnt from the programme to date. Dale engages in a considered conversation with me and the other participants.*
>
> *Dale responded: Well…I have learnt a lot from this group, what's that word you said a while ago. You know about the way I can come across?*
>
> *W: Intimidating?*
>
> *Dale: Yeah that's it: intimidating. And I sort of see that now. And it doesn't really get me anywhere. And I have listened a lot to Greg, and I was relating to what you said [motioning to Adam] about your dad. My dad was like that. Couldn't get close to him. He was old school* (Field notes, 11th May 2015).

As well as acknowledging his tendency to be intimidating, Dale demonstrated a willingness to reflect on the development of his interpersonal style, by engaging in a conversation with others about their fathers. While this process of reflection on why participants are the way they are is not directly linked to empathy, it does support an ability to develop a more flexible set of understandings and an ability to link behaviour to internal, rather than external factors. However, Dale's willingness to consider that he is intimidating should be understood within a framework of gendered identities and gendered performances (Connell 2005; West and Zimmerman 1987). The capacity to be intimidating is consistent with the masculine identities that most of the participants held. Many of the men were

comfortable acknowledging that they could be intimidating, aggressive, frightening and have poor anger control. They tended to be distinctly less comfortable acknowledging fear, insecurity, or controlling behaviour.

Within the interviews, many of the participants were explicit in acknowledging the impact of their behaviour on partners.

> *I frightened her to death, I really did. I frightened the life out of her. She picked a knife out of the drawer and came at me with a knife, thinking about it after…if you verbally abuse someone and you call them all the fucking cunts and whatever, that is assault* (Participant interview, Callum).

> *I remember the one about all the effects on children, and thinking that doesn't affect me, I've never abused my children. Yes you have, bang to rights, guilty. The two people they love most in the world, and daddy's hitting mummy, and making her cry, and making her bleed. Making her scream. I mean… one of the worst things is that my wife peed herself; in front of our child. And I could see my little boy going [Trevor makes a noise to indicate disbelief], and I was shocked. We were all shocked. And to live with that, and again, I'm being as honest as I can be… It wasn't discrete, she had her dressing gown on and that was open, and you look and go what the fuck is going on, this is crazy. This isn't on the IDAP videos. The fear. Like a little dog, when you are shouting... and my little boy seeing that. So when you come to the impact on children, you think no, no, no. 'YES, ABSOLUTELY YES' [pronounced tone to indicate acceptance of responsibility and acknowledgement of harm caused]* (Participant interview, Trevor).

These extracts provide clear illustrations of the ability of participants to understand their behaviours from alternative perspectives; recognising the harm caused. This usually involved a significant shift from the minimisation described

earlier (Chapter 4). These shifts in understanding, and acknowledgments of responsibility were dependent on the development of collective group experiences described in chapter 5, which enabled men to manage the perceived shame associated with abuse against intimate partners, and overcome their defensiveness.

Emotional management and interruptive strategies

In keeping with other explorations of men who have completed perpetrator programmes (Morran 2013; Kelly and Westmarland 2015) specific techniques to interrupt and prevent episodes of violence were central in the accounts of participants. For example, in the third session of each IDAP module, men would be taught strategies to identify situations in which abusive behaviour might occur, and then skills that might prevent or deescalate it. By the end of the programme, the men should have been taught nine strategies (appendix 2). Examples of those included in the IDAP manual are 'listening to women's anger', 'negotiation and fairness', and 'communicating thoughts and feelings'. One of the strategies was 'time-outs'. Reflecting other examinations of interruptive strategies, 'time-outs' was a skill that the men referred to as something they could recall and regularly use (Wistow, Kelly and Westmarland 2017). 'Time-outs' were referred to in both programmes but given considerable attention in IDAP. BBR did not have specific sessions for teaching emotional management strategies and instead these were integrated throughout the programme. In the case of BBR, participants referred disproportionately to the 'helicopter view'. This strategy was generally interpreted by the men as a means of removing their thoughts from the intensity of an emotionally heated encounter. It was identified by many participants as keeping calm within situations by being able to observe the conflict from a distance. Some of the more engaged men would add that it enabled them to understand a situation from several different perspectives, which would reduce the emotional intensity they were

experiencing. The practice of mindfulness was central within the BBR manual. The men were required to participate in activities associated with this practice throughout the programme. These included focussing intently on pieces of music, eating grapes with an awareness of every sensation, breathing exercises and muscle tensing. Some facilitators were creative in the way in which they incorporated exercises to promote this skill. While reluctant at first, the participants seemed to enjoy these activities. Although some men noted the value of mindfulness, these tended to be individuals who had prior experience and knowledge of this strategy. Within the interviews, few recalled it as significant.

> *Oh yeah, definitely, no question about it. I am now much more likely to count '3,4,5' before I say anything, and appreciate, if there is something not in the right place, because I like things in the right place. Before I'd say: 'what the hell have you done now, you know that the cardboard goes there, and the tea bags go there'. I don't do that now, because… It's not worth it, and also it's not good for her and it's not good for me. So I reckon we've got ten years left to live, so let's live it peacefully* (Participant interview, Arthur).

Arguably, 'time-outs', the 'helicopter view' and mindfulness activities operate as 'symbols' (Collins 2004). These symbols have a collective and shared meaning for those within the group. Reference to having taken a time-out would invariably lead to praise from other group members and facilitators, occasionally leading to applause and back slaps. For one group of men attending IDAP, who expressed particularly strong expressions of solidarity, the phrase '*fuck it'* was used with regularity, and often in synchrony. The men used this statement to describe situations where they had felt close to losing self-control because of anger but were then able to take a step back by saying '*fuck it'.* All the of the men in that cohort identified with this phrase, which became a potent symbolic statement indicating membership of the group, as well as the purported adoption of a strategy which

avoided the escalation of negative emotions. This is an example of how collective emotional energy may be re-invoked in later interactions. Significantly, this also illustrates how masculine identities can be sustained without recourse to intimidation or violence.

> *The time-outs, the talking, and the way that we are talking, not letting things bottle up. We are talking through it in a way and trying to get things set. Not finalised, but just so it has been dealt with. Certain issues like the helicopter thing, I have only got little aspects of that, my brain doesn't take in everything that we went over. There is a lot. But you'd take aspects from it. I sit back and say: 'That isn't happening. Don't go assuming. Don't be building up a picture before you know' Everyone does it, you can assume so much, and get yourself into such a tiz thinking this has happened, and then when you actually find out the actual facts, it is nothing like you have built up in your head'* (Participant interview, Gary).

While Gary expresses a lack of confidence in expressing the ideas he has learnt from the programme, the application of an interruptive strategy is evident with the phrase '*That isn't happening'.* As with other men on the programme, showing self and situational awareness was associated with an ability to pre-empt instances of abuse, and be attentive to negative thoughts and emotions.

For some of the facilitators, the tendency to refer repetitively to one or two very specific strategies was evidence of the lack of impact of the programmes on some men. Despite this, many participants noted that they had an increased ability to avoid, reduce or manage powerful emotions associated with violence and abuse.

> *There are different skills that these people have taught us to stop things boiling over, and there is probably a point where if we are all goaded enough we can reach a point where we can explode, and it's what you can accept, and the*

different levels that you can go to. My tolerance level is still the same, but my defusion level is much better. I spoke to friends about it and they said, 'You have always been a bit like that', and I said 'What… what do you mean' [shocked tone], and they said 'Well, you're easy to temper, you know, you like your own way, and when you don't get your own way you shout at people; do this and do that' and I thought 'I don't want to be like that anymore', and I'm in a job where I look after lots of people and guys on sites who can be the hardest bastards you can imagine, and you can still get a response from them by talking to them respectfully. You don't have to take the hard man approach. And things are different today and looking for the signs that people are there to rile you, or that will say the wrong thing that can temper you… and knowing how you can get in a difficult situation, you need to get out of that, or defuse that. And a thing that I have learnt is the kettle syndrome. It's alright to get warm but after that you don't want to get any hotter, and you don't want to get it bubbling so that you need to defuse that (Participant interview, Callum).

The gendered basis of interruptive and emotional management strategies is evident. Referring to a tendency to be angry, to 'loose it', or to be aggressive were understood by participants as consistent with dominant ideas of masculine behaviour (Connell 2005). Many of the men were happy to accept that their behaviour was a consequence of their loss of temper. As discussed in previous chapters the capacity to 'loose it' within certain circumstances was understood as an essential component of masculinity. By emphasising the use of strategies to manage aggressive and dominating tendencies, men were implicitly re-asserting their masculinities, although with an acknowledgement that moderation was required. Related to this, many of the men described how they would tell others that they were attending an anger management programme, rather than a domestic

abuse programme, re-confirming the acceptability of anger and domination of others through anger, as a positive masculine attribute.

The emphasis placed on interruptive and emotional management strategies allows participants to side step the threat that the programmes posed to their gendered identities in other respects. By stating that a situation is resolved through use of a time-out or other calming strategy, a narrative in which the identity of the participant is flawed, can be resisted. Within this narrative, the problems and challenges which lead to negative behaviour are ultimately the responsibility of others. Taking a time out can therefore reinforce this and support an understanding in which the participant does not hold responsibility for abusive behaviour but can claim that their capacity to resist provocation has increased. The participant can therefore balance the expectations of facilitators, while also retaining a broader masculine identity which is bound up with symbols and associations outside of the group.

While most participants were positive about interruptive and calming strategies, some were cynical and uncomfortable about their application.

> *So all what we have learnt, from the whole thing, is to walk away, but if you walk away, it's not gone and it has not dealt with the issue. So I am still in two minds about that. My mum always said 'Your mouth will get you into trouble'. It has for 50 years, and at 51 I am trying to do something about it. Walk away ... because when I let it out, I am the governor at it. And then everything else falls into place. But you don't need to be right. You don't need to keep arguing. You don't need to be controlling. I am still confused that that is not the best way to do things. Getting it out in the open. But what you are teaching is 'no, don't do that', and I am not sure… I don't know…You let it out, and you are not holding a grudge, you get it out in the open and it is sorted. I've watched other people and they don't scream and shout but they are niggly with each other, for the next two weeks. Or two months [laughter]. So I am still in two minds*

about that. But there is the option to walk away, rather than arguing your point, just saying 'whatever' but I am still not 100% comfortable. I'll do it but I'm still not sure that you shouldn't get to the point. Men can do it. They can scream and shout at each other, and then it is sorted. But women can't. They like it the other way. The way you are teaching us (Participant interview, Mickey).

Mickey recounts a navigation through the material and an attempt to reconcile his perception of the programme with his previous understanding of masculine interactions and appropriate responses to conflict. Mickey refers to '*being the governor'* at expressing himself in a manner which would be perceived by others as intimidating. He finishes this line of reasoning by referring explicitly to the capacity of men to express their perspectives and frustrations clearly without leading to difficulties: that men rather than women are comfortable with confrontational communication styles. However, he also attributes this ability to other aspects of background and identity.

Trevor recalled reacting very negatively to interruptive strategies when they were first presented to him.

For years people said we can give you the tools to cope with that, people were saying 'count to ten, take a deep breath' [in a mocking voice] and I was thinking: You stupid fuck. What the fuck is that all about? Count to ten? I'm going to count to ten and then punch you in the face ten times (Participant interview, Trevor).

Trevor later conceded that emotional management strategies explored on IDAP were helpful. He offered examples of strategies taught on the programme as well as suggestions from the other group members which he had found to be useful. These included purchasing a punch bag, which he had hung in his garage. Significantly, Trevor was clear that these skills needed to be continuously applied.

Do not let anything about what is happening right now fool you, I was a nasty, nasty bastard, I mean really nasty, and I'm still capable… I am very much aware that this is a recovery period. I look at it like; like a drug addict, I've never taken drugs, never taken alcohol excessively, but I'm in recovery. Every day is a fight, ummm, one more day, every minute counts, because I am volatile, and I am a lot of times under stress, and what I IDAP has done, it has given me tools… to be able to cope (Participant interview, Trevor).

Adam perceived the ability to keep calm as enmeshed with deeper understandings of his aggression and anger, in which the underpinning factors needed to be explored. As with other men who complete the programmes, he understood emotional management as requiring an ownership of the insecurities related to their aggression, rather than just strategies to manage the perceived provocation of others.

For example, you are out with your girlfriend. And she is talking to some other guys. Paying them more attention than she is paying you. There might be no harm in it, but there might be harm in it. Before the programme, it would have been it… IT WOULD HAVE BEEN 'IT'. We're leaving the place, everyone knows I'm upset, she knows I'm upset. We're arguing, going on and on. After the programme, even though there is a small percentage that I haven't adapted to, and I haven't adapted to fully, that is the jealousy bit I think. I'm fully over it, but I am still adapting. If it happened now, and she's talking to male friends, this is what has changed. I will go over and I will get to know people. I will make it obvious that she is here with me and I will make it obvious that there is no insecurity. Even though there is that percentage that I am still working on with the jealousy (Participant interview, Adam).

Negotiating a revised male identity

As emphasised throughout this thesis, experiences and understandings of the programmes are highly gendered. This reflects a wealth of literature that has drawn attention to the way in which gender informs identities and social action. This includes the influence of dominant beliefs about gendered roles (Connell 2005) and attention to the situational performance of gender within interactions (West and Zimmerman 1987). The pervasive influence of gendered ideas within these programmes is of explicit significance. The programmes studied here are exclusively for men who have been in heterosexual relationships and been violent towards female partners. For IDAP, the focus on gender is unambiguous and central. The programme is predicated on an understanding that violence in relationships is underpinned by patriarchal beliefs and male entitlement. It directs participants to reflect on their constructs of masculinity and how this has served to justify and inform their abusive and controlling behaviour. BBR is not as clear in its emphasis on gender inequality as a central cause of violence in relationships. Its justification as a replacement for IDAP was in a large part based on academic challenges to feminist understandings that underpinned IDAP and Duluth informed interventions (Dutton 2006). Nevertheless, gender and discussions of masculinity are given attention within BBR. This is both explicit during a session devoted to identifying the messages people are given in the media about gender, and implicit in discussions about relationships. It is, therefore, not surprising that most of the men who had attended the programme were able to articulate reflections on their gendered identities and their understandings of 'maleness'. It should be acknowledged that the men were prompted to consider these areas within the interview questions and within the programmes, but nevertheless, their responses demonstrated detailed consideration.

The attention given here to changes in gendered identities reflects a broader strand of academic literature which has focussed on patterns of desistance from offending behaviour, and how this might inform rehabilitative strategies (Maruna 2001; McNeill 2006; Farrall 2002). It has been argued that a pathway out of offending behaviour can be encouraged by being attentive to processes of desistance, rather than focusing on factors that may have caused offending behaviour in the first place. Maruna (2001) has drawn attention to the importance of establishing of a 'non-offending identity' in this process. This is in turn, understood as being fostered by supportive professional relationships, where the practitioner encourages supervisees to recognise their positive attributes and goals. This body of thought has prompted practice guidance which has emphasised professional relationships, engagement and service user led interventions (Hughes 2014). While these seem intuitively logical, these ideas contrast with themes that previously dominated criminal justice practice, which were based on understandings of service users as in deficit and requiring instruction in skills, or corrections to their thinking styles. The utility of desistance as a process in understanding and enhancing interventions for domestic abuse perpetrators has been given some attention (Morran 2013) although this remains limited. This thesis aims to add to this body of knowledge by exploring how a focus on identity might throw light on the process of change within domestic abuse interventions, and specifically on how identities are gendered.

Many of the men interviewed were able to articulate clear reflections on masculine identities following the completion of programmes. All made connections between the type of masculine identity that they had occupied and their previous tendencies to respond in destructive ways to problems.

The following extracts from interview transcripts are responses to the question 'Did the programme encourage you to think differently about what it means to be a man?'

Oh without a doubt. Everyone in that group had looked deep inside themselves and what it is to be a guy. And what I could see outside the group, maybe on our breaks and seeing people say: 'What is important in life? Life is short'. Everyone got that. And be as happy as you can. I did see it, because I did go out a couple of times with them. Everyone did break down a little bit more and did act towards each other a bit differently. A lot of us said 'you are showing a side that you don't show anyone', and people said 'it feels like I have known you most of my life'. I might be a bit different because I wear my heart on my sleeve, and if there is a problem I do say it. I do understand this stuff, I am not the run of the mill (Participant interview, Jack).

I think there are different ways of being a man today. Perhaps my upbringing was about 'you need to look after yourself, you need to protect yourself, and don't let anybody shit on you' and today there are different traits that are more relevant to society than perhaps they were then. I got beaten up in school as a kid, and the following day my father took me back to school and told me to point out which kid it was, and he said 'I want you to go over there and hit him. If you don't hit him I will hit you'. And again, that might not be right. I never beat anybody up in my life but I knew how to look after myself if I had to. I've only had to do it once. But it was maybe a very hard lesson to learn in those days and maybe there are softer ways of learning those lessons today. I've certainly not done that with my children (Participant interview, Callum).

As with many of the men who had completed one of the programmes, Callum creates a narrative in which he is able to show how he fulfilled traditional masculine identities through the presentation of a tough childhood, with a tough father, and an ability to 'look after himself'. While there is some ambivalence in the representation of his childhood, Callum is clear that there '*are different ways*

of being a man today', and that there is, at the very least, the option to occupy and express a masculine identity differently to how he has done in the past.

And again, resonant reflections appear in Morris' account in response to a question about the group experience and its impact on beliefs around gender and gendered identities.

> *The stuff about the wife tidying the house comes from the 1930s. I still know people who are like that. This guy I know says 'it's my house, it's my wife'. It is 2016. Women drive cars, drive lorries, and they are in pubs. Everyone is equal. You can't speak to someone as a piece of shit because she is a woman. It is the same thing with all of this racial crap. It doesn't matter about that. It is the pyramid thing, I still know people, the wife has to stay at home, and you think 'for fuck's sake'. But you don't know what is going on at home. If you are speaking like that in front of people what is it like at home. But people thought that about me.* (Participant interview, Morris).

Here Morris connects broader narratives of gender and identity with his own sense of change. He positions himself as an individual committed to equality, who is critical of others who fail to interact respectfully to others. His personal identification of the significant spaces which women have entered '*cars, lorries and pubs'* are interesting, although beyond the scope of this thesis. Significantly, he acknowledged that this is a changed identity for him and notes that others would have recognised him as abusive and controlling.

> *We had a row after Christmas about the dishwasher. My wife said [Callum puts on a high pitched mimicking tone] 'You haven' emptied the dishwasher, na, na ,na' [Callum makes a pincer like movement with his hand to represent his partners criticisms of him], and before I would have gone [Callum puts on a deeper voice and points his finger into the air to punctuate each word] 'I*

bought the fucking dishwasher! You fucking empty it'. I thought 'that was me before', so instead I just went and emptied the dish washer. Because you don't need that. Some people say 'ohh he's under the thumb and all that', but I just thought she is upset about it, and I don't want her to be upset. So, I think about it differently and there are some good things that have come out of it (Participant interview, Callum).

Reflecting other parts of the interview, Callum articulates an understanding of his previous behaviour as an expression of a dominant form of masculinity, in which challenges to status and authority are not tolerated. There are traces of ambivalence about moving away from an identity associated with this kind of masculinity. He refers to a perception that others will be saying he is '*under the thumb'.* Nevertheless, he presents the view that he does not regard this as being as important as having a harmonious relationship with his partner, and more respectful relationships with others.

Several of the men found difficulty in reconstructing their masculine identities. Trevor's account below, illustrates this point particularly powerfully. Throughout a lengthy interview, Trevor presented as an individual who was able to reflect on the destructive impact of his previous commitment to a traditional masculine identity. He was eager, in his words, to be a 'different man', who was more sensitive, and could maintain positive relationships with his partner and child. However, while he felt able to tone down the extremes of his masculine behaviours, he was not able to leave them behind entirely.

I am very sensitive. But I cannot be a sensitive person. I'm a man. Look at me. I've been in prison, I'm a man, I couldn't cry… I can't cry. I can't put my shoulder on you and go [in mock sobbing voice] 'oh this is terrible, it's terrible'. The sense of rage was that everybody else had what I wanted… I act like a spoilt child… I hate that about me…. And I have had no real role models to say

'it's fine to cry, it's fine to get a hug from your wife'. I mean any relationship I had... the lady would lie here [motioning to his chest and shoulder] either after making love or just in an affectionate moment, and often they would say: 'Do you know Trev, I feel sooo safe.' Then I would say: 'You know what, you are safe'. And as I got older there would be times when I would think, I want to feel safe. I want that. And what would happen, is I would nuzzle up, and I would last maybe 10, 15, or 20 seconds, and I would think: 'oooh, I don't like that, this is not for me'. I remember for fun dressing up in my girlfriend's underwear, with a bra, the whole thing, with two potatoes down the front, for fun, when she came home from work, and I remember the door opening, and I put on a tape; that's how long ago it was [laughter]; she walked in the door. It was the one and only time she brought a friend home… and I went: 'ahhh fuck, fuck'. They laughed… but where I am getting at with this, is that, I know that there are lots of people, who not only get off on it, but they feel comfortable… I found it cringing, and I'm not talking from a macho point of view, I'm not talking about anything else. To nuzzle up on my partner's breast. I can correlate the two things. This is not right for me. It might be right for a thousand others, for a million other guys, it not right for me. And having to learn that I will never have that comfort… That conflict of not wanting it… wanting it…all these things… Always thinking that the other guy has a better life.

And one of the things that I learned on IDAP is… it's not that I hate women… I do respect them, to an extent…. it's that I… get afraid, and it could be from anything, it could be about life, it could be about my own emotions, it could be I feel insecure, it could be anything, but fear is manifested by anger, the anger is another emotion, and in the IDAP programme I found a lot of the other guys I could see that in them as well, this is how I am going to deal with my fear, and I will be angry... like a petulant child … and I'm still a petulant child… But what

IDAP has done… It has given me tools… it's given me the wake-up call to say something seriously is wrong here... and you have to deal with it… you have to start exploring. So, I'm happy to talk to anybody… and if you can help people in the future… or if I find something out… I am a sponge for knowledge regarding this particular problem… and there is no beating about the bush in this house about domestic violence, it is open… I've done it… I'm ashamed of it…. my wife is not the first…. I've nearly killed people… partners (Participant interview, Trevor).

Trevor's account reveals experience of being constrained by the masculine identity which he holds. He reflected through his interview on having a sense of rage, which by the end of the course he could identify as connected to his inability to give expression to his insecurities, frustrations and emotional needs. Within his narrative he can recognise these difficulties, although he is not able to fully resolve them. The symbolic rituals of masculinity are deeply engrained and emotionally powerful. These are threatened profoundly by alternative rituals of intimacy in which men are recipients of emotional support.

Trevor was not the only man to complete the programme who was conflicted. Adam was particularly frank and articulate during interview, as he had been throughout his attendance on the programme.

If I had a girlfriend right now, everything pretty much, would be 50:50. Before the programme, it would be 70:30. And I didn't have to be aggressive or violent, to make this happen, it was normal. After going through what I have been through and after learning all these new skills that I have learnt, I have changed to 50:50. The reason being, everything is going to be pretty equal. However, and there is a big however, I can't hide or pretend that it doesn't exist that I am a man, and you are a woman. Before it would mean 'I'm a man you do as you are told', in a way, and 'you're a woman, this is what you do'; in

a way. Now it is I do what I want to do, and you do what you want to do. However, I'm still finding it difficult to let go of…a percentage. Only a percentage. Not that men should be adored. Not that men should walk on red carpets, but men are men and women are women. There are some things that she should step up and say 'You know what? I'm a woman, I'll do that' and just by nature, by nurture, just by life, there are certain things that women can't do. I'm not talking every single one of them, I am talking a very high majority. I just want respect for that, but it is now 50:50. Just because we are men it doesn't mean that you are lower than us. I am not going to say come and massage my back and expect you to massage my back, because you deserve a massage on your back too, you've been working hard all day. However, there are certain things. You can give birth I can't. So, let's not spoil it. Remember she is going to be weaker than you. Her emotions are different to you. Softer than you. And women, remember that he is the man. He is going to be different to you, and there is going to be some feelings that you can't ever get that he gets. There are some feelings that you can't get that she gets. So just remember the difference: you're a woman, I'm a man, and just remember that everything else is equal and let's keep it like that (Participant interview, Adam).

Adam, like Trevor, is unable to fully resolve the messages he has received on the programme, including a desire for intimacy within relationships, with engrained beliefs related to a 'gender order' (Connell 2005). Nevertheless, a critical reflection of ideas about masculinity and relationships is in clear evidence.

Summary and conclusion

This chapter has explored how men attending programmes for domestic abuse perpetrators understood and experienced change. The data does not provide any evidence of changes in behaviour beyond the confines of the programmes or the

interviews. The accounts may not reflect actual decreases in abuse towards intimate partners. There is, however, other evidence that perpetrator interventions can have a positive effect on behaviour (Bowen 2011, Bloomfield and Dixon 2015. Kelly and Westmarland 2015). This chapter instead has considered 'how' programmes might work.

The men who completed IDAP and BBR, almost without fail, thought that attending the programme had prompted a profound change in their behaviours and attitudes towards partners and others. Reflecting Durkheim's (1972) distinction of social activities, the group experiences were not merely part of the everyday or profane aspects of daily life. They were sacred and deeply imbued with meaning. Powerful and committed statements were made during group participation and within individual interviews, in which collective emotional experiences were symbolically embedded during interactions, which created solidarity and shared understandings. However, it should be noted that those who were prepared to be interviewed were likely to be the most motivated participants. Notwithstanding this, participants identified that programme attendance led to more respectful communication styles and an awareness of how others interpret their behaviour. For many of the men, these changes were understood as connected to an increased awareness and responsibility for past abuse. IDAP was premised on developing responsibility for past abuse, while for BBR this aim was less central. Nevertheless, during interviews, all the participants asserted that self-responsibility was important, irrespective of which programme they had attended. Narratives of responsibility had symbolic value which prompted empathic emotional exchanges. Related to this, the men displayed an increased awareness of the impact of their behaviour on others, recognising the distress they had caused to partners and children. Change was also associated with critical reflections about masculinity and masculine identities. Many of the men displayed awareness of the destructive nature of acting out some forms

of masculinity and wished to develop relationships with reduced hostility, aggression or control. However, most retained ambivalence about how much of their identities they were prepared to relinquish. Asserting masculine attributes such as self-control, acknowledging mistakes and accepting that some things are beyond their control appeared as a pathway through which many of the participants reconfigured a sense of masculinity. These revised and negotiated understandings of masculinity were ritualised within the programme though connections to symbols. For example, there were key stories and biographies that the groups tended to repeat, in which men praised each other for accounts which embodied these values. Some men become symbolic in themselves and were referred to regularly in group discussions and within interviews. These were men who had biographies which represented change and reorganisation of masculine values.

At the core of this chapter is the issue of how learning and experiences within programmes can be transferred into relationships and day to day interactions. Cognitive behavioural approaches have dominated intervention programmes within the probation service, and there is considerable evidence suggesting that this approach is associated with effectiveness (Canton and Dominey 2018; Travers 2012; McGuire 2000). Within these approaches, thinking styles and learned behaviours are the targets of intervention. However, this research indicates that the impact of programmes is not solely cognitive and rational but bound up with emotions. It was through emotions that participants and facilitators make sense of their experiences. Similarly, recollections were orientated towards emotionality over specific content or learning points. On this basis, it is argued that greater consideration of the limitations of cognitive behavioural approaches is required, as well as exploration of other frameworks which support change.

The accounts of the men, and the theoretical strands explored, suggest that emotions which support positivity towards intimate partners can be fostered within a

group-based environment which is attentive to the dynamic process taking place. Where positive emotions are enshrined in symbols which can be invoked easily, there may be increased scope to integrate positive emotional orientations which endure beyond the group experience.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

This thesis has explored interactive dynamics within two probation domestic abuse perpetrator programmes, the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP) and Building Better Relationships (BBR). It is situated within a symbolic interactionist theoretical tradition but also informed by ideas about gender, which are often neglected within this paradigm. The approach of this study contrasts with dominant policy and academic discussions, which have focused on programme design, and evaluations of impact. The specific contribution and originality of this thesis is in its application of Randall Collins' (2004) analysis of emotions to the understanding of group formation. Moreover, this thesis does not rely solely on interviews to examine how participants understand their past experiences. Instead it has employed direct observation of interactions and collective emotions. The thesis is based on a purposive sample, and generalisations are made with caution. Nevertheless, the data that emerged suggests that programme delivery involves complex and dynamic processes, individual understandings and collectively negotiated interpretations, which take precedence over programme content. Successful groups are identified as involving a shared mutual focus between the participants and the facilitators, which generates 'emotional energy' (Collins 2004). These processes occur against a back drop of cultural understandings about gender (Connell, 2005).

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The accounts of the men and observations of their interactions during group sessions indicate that both IDAP and BBR can encourage participants to engage in critical reflection about past behaviour, gendered identities and their relationships. As such they have the potential to lead to reductions in abuse. This research has implications for how group delivery, programme integrity and effective practice are understood. Facilitators and participants are active in interpreting their group experiences and negotiate meanings through their interactions. It is argued that

programmes are likely to be successful, in achieving their aims of reducing intimate partner violence and its associated impacts on children, when facilitators are responsive to group dynamics and to the understandings and anxieties of participants. Despite the influence of the 'desistance paradigm' in probation practice, which has prompted attention to service user engagement, professional judgment, and relationships, the organisational culture continues to direct staff towards standardised delivery, reflecting a limited view of 'programme integrity' (Philips 2015; Hughes 2017).

Revisiting BBR and IDAP

The two programmes explored within this study, IDAP and BBR, both have lineage to the 'What works' initiative which started to be a major influence on probation practice towards end of the 20th century (Canton and Dominey 2018). Both programmes were approved by criminal justice accreditation panels, which required them to adhere to key principles which meta analytical research associated with effectiveness. These principles include being informed by cognitive behavioural psychology, targeting criminogenic factors, and having a high degree of programme integrity (Raynor and Rex 2007). This framework has meant that deviance is understood as a reflection of dysfunctions within the individual. This contrasts with the understandings of participants, who understand their behaviour as a product of external circumstances (Laursen and Henriksen 2018). The 'What works' framework has meant that staff are required to deliver interventions in accordance with their design, without digressing. Probation services incorporate standardisation frameworks to ensure that programmes are delivered in accordance with the manuals. 'Treatment managers' are expected to watch video recordings of the programmes being delivered and hold facilitators to account where they deviate. IDAP was unusual in that it was not just informed by these principles, but also

based on the Duluth perpetrator programme and therefore incorporates feminist understandings of domestic abuse (Hughes 2017). Unlike most probation programmes, IDAP and Duluth give attention to cultural and social factors, rather than focussing only on individualised deficits. Within this framework, domestic violence is understood as bound up with male entitlement and involves the subordination of women, by men, within intimate relationships. These programmes therefore aim to challenge the beliefs which support and condone violence and abuse.

Duluth style programmes have been subject to criticisms on the basis that they are ideological rather than empirical, that they are too confrontational and that they fail to address the diverse and individual factors underpinning domestic abuse. Specifically, critics have challenged the view that domestic abuse is always motivated by patriarchal control (Dutton and Corvo 2006). These criticisms reflect broader themes influenced by the emergence of the desistance paradigm, which suggest that relationships, individualised understandings and engagement are important in prompting changes in behaviour. As a consequence of these debates, IDAP was replaced with BBR, which purports to respond to the perceived shortcomings of its predecessor. BBR is less directly challenging, with less emphasis on previous patterns of abuse. Domestic abuse is understood as reflecting complex circumstances, often involving poor emotional management and poor self-control, rather than a being caused by a desire to dominate intimate partners . However, some facilitators in this study criticised BBR because of its heavily structured design, excessive content, and limited space to respond to the individual concerns and anxieties of the participants. It was also criticised by some of the men who said that they would have welcomed more direct challenges (Hughes 2017).

The focus on programme design and content, along with an insistence on standardised delivery, risks obscuring the crucial ingredients of programmes and simplifies how they are understood, interpreted and delivered. Participants and facilitators involved with both BBR and IDAP commented on the capacity of attendance to prompt critical reflection about past behaviour, masculinity, identity and relationship aspirations. The findings from this thesis suggest that how material is delivered, and how tensions are navigated are at least of equal significance to the programme design. This prompts greater attention to how facilitators and participants make sense of and experience the material and apply it to their broader lives. This in turn has implications for how programme integrity is framed and applied, so that it supports rather than inhibits programme outcomes (Phillips 2015). This study indicates that facilitators feel constrained by the emphasis on standardisation and anxious about deviating from the material set out in the programme manuals. Despite academic and policy emphasis on processes of desistance, and the associated need for professional judgement, relationships and engagement, these principles do not appear well embedded in practice at the time of writing.

Reviewing the analysis

Chapter 4 asserted that participants experience domestic abuse perpetrator programmes as a substantial threat to their gendered self-identity; attendance is therefore associated with shame and stigma (Goffman 1963). In response participants demonstrate defensive practices which include hostility towards facilitators and to the programme, which they see as bound up with broader challenges to their authority as men. Participants perceive willing participation as accepting a stigmatised and emasculated identity. Their anxieties are compounded by a lack of knowledge about the rules of group participation and a lack of familiarity with the group-based environment.

Chapter 5 described how the participants become less defensive and demonstrated positivity towards programmes attendance, to the facilitators and to each other, as the groups sessions progress. The participants demonstrated shared emotional experiences and felt less threatened. Consequently, they showed a greater willingness to consider alternative perspectives and to recognise inconsistencies between their actions and their relationship goals.

Chapter 6 explored the role of facilitators. It argued that facilitators attempt to steer the collective mood of the groups towards common understandings which reflect the goals of the interventions, while being aware that that being excessively confrontational will reinforce the defensive practices of the participants. It is noted, that contrary to some of the criticisms of Duluth style programmes, many participants welcome frank and clear challenges, when these are delivered within a context of respect, and when the challenge is specific, rather than targeted at the whole individual. Chapter 6 also gave attention to the value placed on facilitators by participants. Being non-judgemental, having a willingness to challenge and demonstrating respect were key strengths.

Chapter 7, the final analysis chapter, suggests that the participants understand the programme experience as having a profound impact on how they view themselves as men and how they understand their previous behaviour. Participants also refer to the programmes as equipping them with strategies to avoid relationship conflict. The men who completed the programmes referred to a greater capacity to accept responsibility for past abuse, an improved ability to understand the perspectives of others and substantial changes in the way that they understood their masculinity. While these accounts should not be taken as providing evidence of changed behaviour in relationships, they do provide insight into how change might take place, and how participants understand change.

Concluding thoughts and practice implications

This thesis is based on a purposive sample and is primarily exploratory. It does not aim to provide an evaluation of the programmes involved or give specific practice or policy guidance. Nevertheless, the findings do call for further research to explore how the dynamics of programme delivery impact on effectiveness

. This final section identifies the limitations of this study and the implications for practice and further research.

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As emphasised throughout this study, the dynamic interactions within domestic abuse programmes are central in the experiences of facilitators and participants. In keeping with Phillips' (2015) doctoral research exploring Duluth intervention programmes, this research calls for a broader and more nuanced understanding of integrity, which places emphasis on style of interactions, ethos, and overall aims. Rather than being understood as delivering the content without deviating, a more effective and appropriate measure of integrity is the extent to which the delivery supports the outcomes of encouraging men to consider ideas about male entitlement, their behaviour within relationships, and their relationship aspirations. These considerations have implications for the training and support of staff who deliver domestic abuse programmes. Specifically, encouraging staff awareness of the impact of shame, strategies of resistance and emotions appears as vital. Enabling staff to be confident in making judgements about delivering programmes also requires the support of an organisational culture that promotes responsiveness to participants, rather than one that instils anxiety about deviation. Facilitating domestic abuse programmes is a complex, challenging and important task. The interviews with staff suggest that there is inadequate training and support for this. This is consistent with broader observations that responses to domestic abuse do not reflect its prevalence or impact (Phillips 2019). The location of criminal justice

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domestic abuse programmes within the privately managed Community Rehabilitation Companies, which are expected to be orientated towards low and medium risk work, rather than within the National Probation Service, reflects this lack of investment in work with domestic abuse perpetrators (Gilbert 2013). Staff employed to work with groups of domestic abuse perpetrators, navigate complex and competing demands. How they undertake this is touched on in chapter 6, but this study is limited in its exploration of this area. Specifically, the emotions of facilitators before, during, and after the delivery of groups are not explored in any detail. Considerably more research is required to examine the relevance of facilitator emotions and agency. It is argued that attention to the emotions of facilitators, and their skill in recognising and responding to the emotions of others is likely to improve the efficacy of domestic abuse programmes in prompting change among their participants.

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The contribution of the desistance paradigm in recognising the importance of service user engagement and professional judgement is positive. However, designing and implementing practice that reflects the priorities highlighted by desistance literature requires substantially more development, particularly in programmes designed for domestic abuse perpetrators. This has implications for the training, support and management of facilitators, which should aim to ensure that they are confident in their judgements and understand the perspectives of those that they are working with.

There are several key limitations with this study that prompt further exploration and research. As asserted throughout, this study was based on a limited sample within a specific geographical location. There is a general invitation for further investigation into the dynamic processes of offender groups generally, and domestic abuse perpetrator groups specifically. Additionally, the location where this study took place was characterised by limited diversity in the ethnicities and cultural backgrounds of

participants and facilitators. The need for interventions and research to be sensitive to the cultural identities of those involved has tended to be neglected in both practice and research (Phillips and Bowling 2017). This calls for further research which explores how culture and ethnicity may impact on the experiences of interventions (Glynn 2014).

It has hopefully been clear throughout, that the data from this thesis does not provide clear measures of changes in behaviour or reductions in abuse. Instead the focus has been on processes within interventions. Identifying associations between specific programme features and facilitator styles on the one hand, and changes in behaviour among participants on the other is difficult because of the complex circumstances impacting on participants within their broader lives. This study calls for further research to operationalise and measure how specific features of programmes and facilitator approaches can foster longer term changes in relationship behaviour. Perhaps a specific point of exploration is to examine how emotional rituals expressed within the programme (as discussed in chapter 7) which place value on nonviolent expressions of masculinity and de-escalation of aggression, can be invoked beyond group attendance, to foster reductions in abuse.

While this thesis has primarily emphasised the importance of processes within domestic abuse perpetrator programmes, this is not to suggest that programme design is not important. Carefully designed programmes are essential in enabling facilitators to encourage participants to develop alternative perspectives and understandings. They also help orientate group programmes towards factors associated with domestic abuse. In each of the programmes there were elements that resonated with the men's experiences and were consistently noted as prompting critical reflection. The video vignettes, strategies for managing emotions and discussions of gender were noted by facilitators and participants as being valuable. Several exercises from the programme manuals were evidently useful in

promoting mutual focus and reflection, though these were dependent on the mood of the group in question. Effective programmes should therefore be a flexible and structured set of resources which enable facilitators to challenge participants, while being responsive to their individual perspectives and emotions. Designing programmes, which are primarily flexible resources for facilitators, rather than proscriptive and detailed instructions manuals, is evidently important. This research suggests that facilitators currently feel like they are tools of the programme manual, rather than vice versa.

Finally, and related to the above discussion of content, the theme of gender runs through the accounts of facilitators and participants. It is central in the discussions that take place within programmes. Participants can be observed trying to make sense of gender and masculinity throughout the sessions, where gender is acted out and performed. This focus reflects the feminist understandings of domestic abuse which IDAP and Duluth perpetrator programmes are based upon. There has recently been a move away from feminist informed practice, on the basis that it reflects a simplistic and ideological approach to addressing domestic abuse. Feminist understandings of domestic abuse have therefore been challenged by alternative narratives which suggest that gender is not as central as previously thought. BBR can be understood as a reflection of some of these developments. However, it is argued that many of the criticisms of feminist practice are based on distorted and caricatured understandings. These reflect broader reactionary themes evident in popular culture which seek to undermine discourses which promote gender equality. While the men who attend perpetrator programmes exhibit complex individual circumstances and histories, their understanding of gender roles remains central. Effective programmes therefore need to continue to be informed by feminist thinking, which situates domestic abuse within gender inequality.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Duluth Power and control wheel

Appendix 2: Overview of Duluth / IDAP programmes structure

The programme includes the following 9 modules. Each focussing on a section of the 'Power and control wheel', with the addition of a module on sexual respect. Participants can start the programme at any module excluding the sexual respect module

Module 1: Non violence

Module 2: Non threatening behaviour

Module 3: Respect

Module 4: Support and trust

Module 5: Honesty and Accountability

Module 6: Sexual respect

Module 7: Partnership

Module 8: Responsible parenting

Module 9: Negotiation and fairness

Each module consists of 3 sessions. The first involves an introduction to the topic being explored through discussion and the use of video vignettes. The second requires the men to provide an example of when the have demonstrated the abuse which is in focus, through completion of a control log. The third involves teaching the participants a 'non-controlling strategy'. Those which are included on the programme are as follows:

Taking time out

Recognising anger cues

Using positive self-talk

Coping with jealousy

Acknowledging women's fear

Using assertive behaviour and accepting criticism

Accepting women's anger

Being aware of non-verbal cues and active listening

Communicating feelings and thoughts

Letting go

Non-violent conflict resolution

Appendix 4: Overview of BBR programme structure

BBR is structured around four -core modules, each containing six sessions. Participants must complete the foundation module first. The remaining modules can be delivered in a rolling format

Module 1: Foundation

Session 1: Introduction to BBR

Session 2: Gender and society

Session 3: Learning from the environment

Session 4: Being objective about relationships

Session 5: Influences and identity

Session 6: Preparing for change

Module 2: My thinking

Session 1: Analysing relationship aggression. My thinking

Session 2: Biased thinking

Session 3: Modes of thinking

Session 4: Beliefs, rules and consequences

Session 5: Re writing the script

Session 6: Creating change in my thinking

Module 3: My emotions

Session 1: Analysing relationship aggression. My Emotions

Session 2: Identifying emotions

Session 3: Emotional thinking

Session 4: Accepting emotions

Session 5: Stress

Session 6: Creating change in my emotions

Module 4: My relationships

Session 1: Analysing relationship aggression

Session 2: Assertive communication

Session 3: Attachment

Session 4: Conflict resolution skills

Session 5: Intimacy and respect

Session 6: Creating change in my relationships

Appendix 5: Ethics application

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW FORM

In the case of **postgraduate research student** projects (i.e. MRes, MA by Project/Dissertation, MPhil, PhD and DProf), this form should be completed by the student concerned in full consultation with their supervisor.

In the case of **staff** research projects, this form should be completed by the member of staff responsible for the research project (i.e. as Principal Investigator and/or grant-holder) in full consultation with any co-investigators, research students and research staff.

Further guidance on the University's Research Ethics Policy and Procedures, along with links to relevant research ethics materials and advice, can be found on the Research & Postgraduate Office Research Ethics webpage:

http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/research/the-research-and-postgraduate-office/current-students/research-ethics.cfm

This form requires the completion of the following three sections –

SECTION A: APPLICANT DETAILS

SECTION B: THE PROJECT - ETHICAL ISSUES

SECTION C: THE PROJECT - RISKS AND BENEFITS

SECTION A: APPLICANT DETAILS

A1	**Background information**
	Research project title: Desistance from domestic abuse: the role of narratives, identities and professional relationships
	Date of submission for ethics approval: 5/5/2015
	Proposed start date for project: September 2015
	Proposed end date for project: September 2018

	Ethics ID no:	***** (to be completed by RERP)

A2	**Applicant details, if for a research student project**
	Name: William Hughes
	London Met Email address: hughesw@staff.londonmet.ac.uk

A3	**Principal Researcher/Lead Supervisor** Member of staff at London Metropolitan University who is responsible for the proposed research project either as Principal Investigator/grant-holder or, in the case of postgraduate research student projects, as Lead Supervisor
	Name: Wendy Fitzgibbon
	Job title: Professor of Criminology
	London Met Email address: w.fitzgibbon@londonmet.ac.uk

SECTION B: THE PROJECT - ETHICAL ISSUES

B1 The Research Proposal

Please attach a brief summary of the research project including:

Background/rationale
Aims/objectives
Research methodology
Review of the key literature in this field & conceptual framework for study
References

Please see attached summary

B2 Research Ethics

Please outline any ethical issues that might arise from this study and how they are to be addressed.

The proposed research involves the use of interviews with men who have a history of abusive behaviour in a domestic context and with staff who work with them. Additionally, it involves the proposed collection of ethnographic data, using participant observation where I will have a dual role as both practitioner and researcher. Therefore, both the subject matter and methods of the proposed research raise a number of ethical considerations, regarding consent, confidentiality, impact, risk, and researcher identity. My consideration of the dilemmas posed by these issues is discussed in the following.

Ethical considerations are of particular significance when conducting interviews with individuals who have a history of abuse in relationships. This is because of the sensitive nature of the issues involved and the risks of harm associated with this category of offending. Anonymity and confidentiality are central given the personal nature of the subject matter. Therefore, interviewees will be advised regarding confidentiality and the anonymity of data. However, there is a need to be aware of the potential risks posed by individuals with a history of abuse. Risks can include physical and emotional harm to intimate partners and children. The research participants themselves may also have a degree of vulnerability, and there is a need to be mindful of the potential for distress.

Where research participants make disclosures indicating a risk of harm, or where behaviour prompts concern, information will be shared according to the safeguarding procedures of the organisation which holds responsibility for the management of risk. In the case of this research, Probation Services and Children's services will be of particular significance.

In view of the sensitivity of the issues that are likely to be discussed, particular attention needs to be given to interviewing skills. If distress is caused during the research process,

	the vulnerability of the research participants needs to be considered as well as the potential implications for intimate partners or other family members. Having worked with domestically abusive men for a number of years, and worked as a Probation Officer for over ten years, I am well placed to conduct research in a manner which reflects these considerations. Nevertheless, on-going peer supervision will be required, which I have discussed with my academic supervisors, as well as peers in the criminal justice sector who work with abusive men and their families. I have made arrangements for regular contact with staff in the criminal justice sector so that I am able to discuss any concerns. A number of sources of support for the participants will be identified at the outset, for the event that the discussion of sensitive issues causes distress. These include support structures within the Probation services and Children's services, in addition to direct access services such as NACRO.
B3	In relation to conducting interviews with members of staff who are employed to work with domestically abusive men, there are some overlapping ethical dilemmas. Confidentiality and anonymity remain central, to ensure that staff are free to express their perspectives regarding their work. However there will also be limits to this where staff make disclosures which suggest that they have not followed agency procedures in terms of the management of risk. In such instances, the issue will be discussed with the member of staff in the first instance and if required the information will be referred directly to relevant agencies. There is also the potential for the research process to prompt concerns regarding the well-being of members of staff, given the emotionally demanding nature of their work. I have a knowledge of relevant services available to support staff. I have additionally secured the agreement of the agencies where I plan to conduct my research and in cases of serious concern, I would discuss these issues with the line manager of the individual involved.
B4	In relation to the dilemmas posed by the ethnographic collection of data from participation in group based interventions, there are specific ethical issues relating to researcher identity and informed consent (Lawton 2001, Wiles 2013). Men on the groups involved are aware of, and reminded of, the limits to confidentiality. They are aware that information is shared with other professionals involved in their risk management, and that organisational records are held regarding their participation. They are additionally reminded that where there are concerns regarding risk, this will be passed on to relevant safeguarding agencies. However, there are specific considerations in gaining their on-going and fully informed consent regarding the research process. On the one hand, seeking the informed consent of participants is a
B5	usual premise of ethically informed research. However, there are other considerations that need to be taken into account. The group based programmes involved in the proposed research are designed to address the factors associated with domestic abuse and thereby reduce the risk posed by men with a history of such abuse. Their effectiveness is dependent on positive relationships with the staff members who are involved in the delivery of these interventions. Seeking the informed consent of the

men involved therefore poses potential difficulties in terms of impact on the treatment effect of interventions. Emphasising my role as a researcher is likely to draw attention away from the men's ability to focus on the substantive foci of the interventions, which relates to past abuse and the development of strategies to avoid future abuse. In weighing up these considerations, I have considered Lawtons' participant observation study of an in-patient hospice (2001). In this instance the researcher considered the impact of highlighting her role a researcher on the validity of her findings. This is applicable to my proposed research which seeks to develop an understanding of the experiences and interactions of men and staff involved in domestic abuse perpetrators programmes.

Given the factors outlined above, I propose to meet the ethical considerations by giving careful consideration regarding how ethnographic data is used, in liaison with academic supervisors and the organisations involved in supervising the delivery of the relevant programmes of interventions. This management of data may, for example, involve avoiding detailed discussion of individuals cases or detailed use of direct quotes attributable to individuals. I have gained the consent of senior managers of relevant organisations, to collect and use data in the manner described and will continue to liaise with them as the research progresses

***NB** all research projects have ethical considerations. Please complete this section as fully as possible using the following pointers for guidance.*

Does the project involve potentially deceiving participants? No
Will you be requiring the disclosure of confidential or private information? Yes (as described above
Is the project likely to lead to the disclosure of illegal activity or incriminating information about participants? Yes (considered in above sections)
Does the project require a Criminal Records Bureau check for the researcher? Yes (already conducted)
Is the project likely to expose participants to distress of any nature? Yes (Considered in B2 and C1)
Will participants be rewarded for their involvement? No
Are there any potential conflicts of interest in this project? Yes (see above sections re dual role)
Any other potential concerns? No

If you answered yes to any of the points above, please explain.

As described above, the research is likely to involve sensitive and personal information regarding abusive relationships. These will need to be carefully managed to ensure that participants are aware of sources of support, and that research is conducted with sensitivity and awareness. There is the potential for research participants (members of staff and service users) to disclose information indicating that others are at risk of harm, or information which prompts concern about the well-being of participants themselves. Participants need to be explicitly aware that in such circumstances, information may need to be shared with senior members of staff in their organisations, or other safeguarding agencies. Such disclosure will only be made in very specific circumstances and will involve the communication of the minimum level of

	information required to ensure safety. Where possible, such a disclosure will be discussed with the participants in advance. The potential conflict of interests arises from my dual role as both practitioner and researcher, and the collection of data in an ethnographic context. Careful management of data and supervision are central strategies in ensuring that I fulfil the requirements of each role
	Does the proposed research project involve: The analysis of existing data, artefacts or performances that are **not** already in the public domain (i.e. that are published, freely available or available by subscription)? No The production and/or analysis of physical data (including computer code, physical entities and/or chemical materials) that **might involve** potential risks to humans, the researcher(s) or the University? No The direct or indirect collection of **new data** from humans or animals? Yes As described above, the research will involve the collection of data from people through interviews and ethnography. The ethical considerations are addressed above. **If you answered yes to any of the points above, please explain.**
	Will the proposed research be conducted in any country outside the UK? If so, are there independent research ethics regulations and procedures that either: **Do not** recognise research ethics review approval from UK-based research ethics services? No and/or Require **more** detailed applications for research ethics review than would ordinarily be conducted by the University's Research Ethics Review Panels and/or other UK-based research ethics services? No **If you answered yes to any of the points above, please explain.**
	Does the proposed research involve: The collection and/or analysis of body tissues or fluids from humans or animals? No The administration of any drug, food substance, placebo or invasive procedure to humans or animals? No Any participants lacking capacity (as defined by the UK Mental Capacity Act 2005)? No

	Relationships with any external statutory-, voluntary-, or commercial-sector organisation(s) that require(s) research ethics approval to be obtained from an external research ethics committee or the UK National Research Ethics Service (this includes research involving staff, clients, premises, facilities and data from the UK National Health Service, Social Care organisations and some other statutory public bodies within the UK)? Yes **If you answered yes to any of the points above, please contact your faculty's RERP chair for further guidance.**

SECTION C: THE PROJECT - RISKS AND BENEFITS

C1	**Assessment**
	Please outline **the risks posed by this project to both researcher and research participants** Risk of emotional distress through discussion of sensitive information and perspectives Potential for this distress to impact on others with whom participants are in intimate relationships Risk of researcher collusion with violent / abusive men, or reinforcement of abusive attitudes and behaviours Hypothetical risk of physical or emotional harm to researcher, as a result of research being conducted with men who have a history of violence and intimidation, albeit usually in a domestic context **the ways in which you intend to mitigate these risks** Use of empathic, non-judgmental interviewing style, being aware of the potential distress associated with discussing sensitive and personal. Regular supervision by peers and signposting of research participants to sources of support. Clarity regarding circumstances in which information may be passed onto to safeguarding agencies. Careful management of data, anonymity and selectivity. Developing general themes instead of attributing specific quote or relaying information about specific cases. As above, Regular supervision with academic supervisors and peer supervision with colleagues in the criminal justice sector. Risk assessment of all participants in relation to violence or aggression towards others. Where appropriate, interviews to take place in Probation premises. **the benefits of this project to the applicant, participants and any others** As described in the attached summary of the research proposal, the research aims to develop and build upon existing knowledge regarding approached to working with abusive men, in the light of recent developments in the broader context of working with individuals subject to criminal justice supervision.

Checklist to be completed by applicant prior to submission of the form

Section	***Completed***
Section A	
Section B	
Section C	
Research Proposal attached	

Please submit this *Form* as an email attachment to the Chair of your faculty's Research Ethics Review Panel (RERP)and copy in all of the staff and students who will be involved in the proposed research.

See: http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/research/the-research-and-postgraduate-office/current-students/research-ethics.cfm

Please note that research ethics approval can be granted for a maximum of 4 years or for the duration of the proposed research on the condition that:

- The researcher must inform their faculty's Research Ethics Review Panel (RERP) of any changes to the proposed research that may alter the answers given to the questions in this form or any related research ethics applications
- The researcher must apply for an extension to their ethics approval if the research project continues beyond 4 years.

Feedback from Ethics Panel

	Approved	*Feedback where further work required*
Section A	Yes	
Section B		**Reviewer 1** The information sheet/consent form should state how data is stored (and for how long), also give LondonMet contact details for the researcher and the supervisor. **Reviewer 2** Not sure if the answer should be 'No' in B5 to the question: Is the project likely to expose participants to distress of any nature? As rightly pointed out, the collection of information on personal experiences of men with a history of abusive behaviour may evoke emotional distress and disturbing sense of guilt. Does this not fit into "distress of any nature"? Information Sheet / Consent Form: There is missing necessary information that should be on this, as follows: It is not quite clear what the research is about and what information participants will be expected to share with the research investigator. It does not seem adequate or clear enough to help research participants to make informed decision as whether to or not to participate in the research. At least they should understand what the research seeks to achieve and what nature of information is being sought from them and how this information will used. This does not clearly flag-up that participating in the research is voluntary. It would help to explain why it is necessary to do audio-record the interviews and how this will be used, kept and disposed. They should also know how long this recorded data will be kept. It is important to let research participants know what to do if they wish to complain about the research - contact details of

		the research investigator and another responsible person other than the research investigator; probably the director of studies or the principal supervisor. It might be important to include the date Consent was given on the form if they are going to be kept by the research investigator. **Reviewer 3** I agree that the answer to the distress question should be 'yes', and a sentence added noting that the question of mitigating and managing distress is already covered in sections B2 and C1.
Section C	Yes	
Date of approval NB: Researcher to be notified of decision within <u>two</u> weeks of the submission of the application		

Appendix 6: Ethics approval

From: **William Hughes** <w.hughes@londonmet.ac.uk>
Date: Tue, 23 Jun 2015 at 14:13
Subject: Re: ethics resubmission
To: k.fischer@londonmet.ac.uk <k.fischer@londonmet.ac.uk>

Thanks so much klaus - that is great news. Thanks also for you best wishes for the research

Very best

Will
On Tuesday, 23 June 2015, Klaus Fischer <k.fischer@londonmet.ac.uk> wrote:
Dear Will,

No problem about the delay. Thank you for making the amendments.

I am pleased to tell you that research ethics approval is hereby given.

Good luck with your research.

Best wishes,

Klaus

On 23 June 2015 at 11:20, William Hughes <w.hughes@londonmet.ac.uk> wrote:
Dear Klaus,

I am re sending you my ethics application form and information sheet / consent form, following an original submission in May, where the reviewers helpfully made a number of suggestions. Most of the issues related to the development of the info /consent form to give more detailed information to participants.

I think I have captured the amendments advised by the reviewers, although look forward to any further advise. I took some time trying to find the typos in the form before realising that the reviewers had helpfully amended these, which was much appreciated.

Sorry for the substantial delay in making the amendments, been a bit caught up with marking

hope all is well

best

Will

--
Will Hughes
Lecturer in Criminology
London Metropolitan University

--
Professor Klaus Fischer
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
London Metropolitan University

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Appendix 7: Information sheet

Research information sheet /consent request

I am currently completing a piece of research funded by London Metropolitan University. This piece of research relates to how professional agencies respond to men identified as having problems with relationships or have previously been abusive within relationships. I am interested in your experiences and thoughts regarding group programmes, supervision and relationships.

I would like to interview you because you have knowledge which is relevant to my research. In particular I would like to ask for your views on how change can take place among men who have had relationship problems, and your involvement with different interventions and professional relationships.

I am expecting the interview to last between 30 minutes and 1 hour. It will be arranged at a time and place convenient to you. Participation in this research is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the research at any stage and request that any information you have shared is not used.

With your permission, I would like to make an audio recording of the interview so that I can capture your thoughts accurately and give you my full attention. These recordings will be transcribed following the interview so that I can study them further. If you prefer I am happy to take notes instead.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Anything you share will remain confidential. Names will anonymised in the transcriptions and in any publications or reports produced. However, in the unlikely event that you tell me something which prompts concern about your well-being or the well-being of others, I would be obliged to pass this on appropriately. Such disclosure would only occur in specific circumstances and would involve the communication of the minimum level of information to ensure safety. I would seek to discuss any such concerns with you in the first instance.

Audio recordings will be deleted following transcription and all data will be held in a secure password protected computer system. Written documents will be held in a locked filing cabinet in my office at London Metropolitan University. Written documents will be destroyed following the completion of the research. This is anticipated to be within four years.

Comments, concerns, questions or complaints

The research is informed by ethical guidelines and seeks to be responsive to the experiences of participants. If you have any comments, concerns, questions or complaints I would like to hear from you. You can raise these with me directly or alternatively with my supervisor, Professor Wendy Fitzgibbon. Any complaints will be dealt with sensitively in accordance with London Metropolitan University's complaints procedure, which can be found on the University website.

Supervisor contact details

Professor Wendy Fitzgibbon
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
London Metropolitan University

166-220 Holloway Road
London
N7 8DB

w.fitzgibbon@londonmet.ac.uk

My Contact details

Will Hughes
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
London Metropolitan University
166-220 Holloway Road
London
N7 8DB

hughesw@staff.londonmet.ac.uk

Agreement to participate

If you are happy to continue, please would you indicate this by signing below?

- I confirm that I am willing to be interviewed for the research described above.
- I understand that the information I provide will be confidential and anonymised prior to use in any research publications or reports.
- I understand that information will be held securely and audio recordings destroyed following transcription and that transcriptions and other documents will be destroyed at the completion of the research.
- I understand that information will only be passed onto other agencies in the event of concerns about risk to myself or others.
- I am aware that I have the right to withdraw at any stage of the process and have the information I have shared deleted.

Signature: …… Date: ……..

With many thanks

Will Hughes

Researcher

London Metropolitan University

Appendix 8 Interview guide: service user version

Remind participant of purpose of research, confidentiality, sensitive nature of some of the issues, and right to decline at any stage, as per information sheet.

Sec A

I would like to firstly get a general picture of you and your circumstances?

1)Can you tell me which age category applies to you?

a) 18-24, b) 25-34, c)35- 44, d)45- 54, e)55-64, f)65-74, g)over 75

2) *How would you describe your ethnicity?*

3) Are you on Probation or licence?

4) Are you currently in a relationship?

5) Do you have children? How many?

6) Are you working?

Sec B) I would now like to hear about some of your experiences of group programmes?

7) Which group based programmes have you attended?

8) Tell me about the circumstances that led to you attending the programme?

9) What did you think about being referred to the programme?

10) What were your experiences of the staff who have worked with you during the programme

11) Are there parts of the programmes you have attended that stood out as being helpful?

12) Are there parts of the programme that stood out as being unhelpful?

13) Can you tell me about your experiences of the other men on the programme?

Sec C I would now like to ask you some questions about your relationships

14) Tell me a bit about your relationships with your partners

15) Tell me about the difficulties you have had with your relationships?

16) What are the positives you have had in your relationships?

17) What do you think was the cause of difficulties in your previous relationships?

18) Can you tell me if the programme changed in the way you think about yourself?

19) Can you tell is the programme you have attended has encouraged you to think differently about relationships?

19) Can you give me some examples of the way that the programme encouraged you to think about what it means to be a man?

20) Has the programme helped you make any changes in your behaviour?

21) What else, if anything, has been significant in terms of encouraging you to make changes?

22) Is there anything that I should have asked, which I have missed

Appendix 9 Interview guide: staff version

Tell me about your role in relation to working with domestic abuse perpetrators?

Which programmes have you delivered. Could you tell me about them?

What are the difficulties in delivering / facilitating programmes?

Could you describe some of the typical characteristics of the men who attend the programmes you deliver?

Tell me about how you encourage participation for the men on your groups? What skills do you use?

Why do you think the men your work with behave abusively?

What do you think is needed to stop men behaving abusively?

Tell me about the training you have received to undertake your work?

Can you tell me about the personal impact of undertaking a job which involved working with domestic abuse perpetrators?

Is there anything you think I should ask, which I haven't?