

**MAKING SENSE OF THE UNBELIEVABLE: A
BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE STUDY OF
MEN'S STORIES OF FEMALE ABUSE**

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Glossary of terms

Amen	This is a support service dedicated to the care of male victims of domestic abuse in Ireland. This service is accessible via the following link: http://www.amen.ie/
BDA	Biographical Data Analysis: This is an analytic procedure which represents the final summary of the lived life analysis pattern. This analysis is informed by the transcript, debriefing notes, BDC, and the relevant interpretive panel analysis.
BDC	Biographical Data Chronology: This is an analytic procedure where the life story and events are chronologically ordered.
BNIM	Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method: This is an intensive case-based method of data analysis. The interview technique particular to this method also uses the term synonymously.
PIN	Particular Incident Narrative: A PIN is a narrative in which the teller provides a detailed expansion of a particular event in the life story.
SQUIN	Single QUESTION aimed at Inducing Narrative: This is the term given to the initiating question asked in the first stage of a BNIM interview.
TSS	Text Structure Sequentialisation: This is an analytic procedure where units of text are analysed in the order in which they appear in a transcript.
TFA	Thematic Field Analysis: This is an analytic procedure which represents the final summary of the told story analysis pattern. The creation of this document is informed by the transcript, debriefing notes, TSS, and the relevant interpretive panel analysis.

Abstract

Intimate partner abuse is a serious social issue. The professional practice of education has a mandate to foster competent health and social care practitioners (biographical caretakers) to appropriately care for others. Presently, there is a lack of understanding about how men account for their experiences of female abuse. This is because of prevailing discourses which render men's vulnerability as 'unbelievable'. This study examined how men in Ireland accounted for their experiences of abuse in their life stories. Using the ten stages of analysis in 'classic' Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method, three cases are presented which were analysed from a social constructionist perspective.

The study found that men account for their abuse experiences uniquely. They construct abuse as both an individual and collective endeavour. Dominant conflicting discourses of masculinity and intimate partner abuse disadvantaged both men and their biographical caretakers firstly in identifying abuse and secondly in responding appropriately. Although men use abuse narratives in accounting for their experience, they are more comfortable using dominant narratives of fatherhood and being a husband in constructing the abuse experience. The biographical work of reflection was found to be instrumental in recognising abuse as serious and appeared to speed recovery in the reconstruction of self.

These cases illustrate the inadequacy of current abuse definitions and policy which whilst it is changing, remains engendered. Greater sensitivity of biographical caretakers to the biographical process structures and their influence on how individuals present themselves is recommended as a goal for educators. Similarly, use of dominant discourses in talking about abuse with men and promoting the process of safe biographical reflection for those experiencing intimate partner abuses is recommended as helpful practices to recognise and respond to the problem of abuse. This study proves useful in illuminating men's realities through a novel methodology. It is hoped that the findings of the study prompt further exploration into this under researched area.

1 Prologue

"The basic problem...and its answer usually require attention both to the uneasiness arising from the depth of biography and to indifference arising from the very structure of an historical society...we must first translate indifference into issues, uneasiness into trouble and second we must admit both troubles and issues in the statement of our problem"

(Mills 1959 p.131)

This thesis could not have been written thirty years ago – not just because of the fact that I was in primary school, but because the social problem of “men’s abuse” did not exist. That’s not to say that it didn’t happen; there simply was no public discourse from which the phenomenon could be articulated. I am happy to say that this is slowly changing and hope that in thirty years time, there will be an altogether different thesis to be written in relation to the topic and men’s narrative constructions of self which surrounds it.

This study arose from several experiences of ‘uneasiness’ which occurred when I was working as a nurse in a large teaching hospital in Dublin. I cared for many battered women during my time working in the Accident and Emergency department. At the time I wrote a short paper exploring factors which affected nurses’ attitudes towards these women who were at times frustrating to care for (Corbally 2001). However a key incident related to an earlier experience as a junior staff nurse when I witnessed a senior nurse laugh at a man who had disclosed that his wife had hit him. The man was in coronary care – this was not the place for jokes. Although I remain troubled about not being brave (or senior) enough to confront the nurse at the time, my unresolved ‘uneasiness’ stuck with me as I made the transition into the professional practice of nurse education. In choosing to study this topic, I am making it up to that man, and many more abused people I have encountered. I believe that my uneasiness stems from the issue of

never understanding abuse as it relates to one's biography. I suspect this lack of understanding of the 'other' is something which can be changed through the professional practice of education.

The decision to undertake a professional doctorate rather than a traditional PhD is due to my primary belief that it has the capacity to bridge the gap between scholarly and practice domains. This is an important consideration for nurse educators who, in the face of shifting contemporary demands, need to demonstrate dual credibility, amongst both nurses in practice and higher education institutions (Mansell, et al. 2002, Higher Education Strategy Group. 2011). In the nursing literature, nursing practice and professional practice are synonymous terms illustrating the embeddedness of 'practicality' in the discipline. Professional doctorates require that research theses and their findings have relevance to practitioners (Lee 2009) and the wider social arena. Proof of this is illustrated throughout this thesis, but most particularly in the discussion of findings in Chapter seven. Although PhD study represents the traditional access point to academia, its narrow focus and potential irrelevance to 'real time social science' (Thomson and Walker 2010 p.393) is proving increasingly limited in an era of globalisation and economic limitations (Higher Education Strategy Group. 2011). Thomson and Walker (2010) make this point to highlight that PhD studies by their nature need not relate to contemporary society whereas professional doctorates are mandated to have a practical focus. Standardisation of the minimum requirements of doctoral programmes have proved useful in illustrating equivalence between skill levels attained at PhD and professional doctorate level (Quality Assurance Agency. 2008). Given such

equivalence, my choice in pursuing a professional doctorate is unsurprising and perhaps reflects a subtle desire to be both dynamic and distinctive.

Although I subscribe to Bourdieu's notion that reflexivity is implied in daily human communication (Bourdieu 2000, Adkins 2003) the practice of consciously 'doing reflexivity' can also be viewed as a means of situating the researcher in the study (Pillow 2010). Cognisance of the 'politics of location' identified by Koch and Harrington (1998) and indeed my positioning within it is important, particularly given the subject of inquiry. Through the course of this study, I have also been 'situated' by others in discussing the topic of intimate partner abuse. A more detailed discussion regarding my 'situatedness' in this study can be found in section 4.4 below. To date, I have found it has evoked a lot of interesting (strong) reactions from others. These reactions perhaps reflect the unusualness of a topic which has the capacity to evoke strong views from all perspectives (Hicks 1998). Most people to date have responded with their own narratives of confessing to 'know somebody' in a similar situation, but not believing that it was real abuse. This iterative experience through my biography represents the present discourse and steps towards its evolution relating to the topic of intimate partner abuse and those who experience it.

The thesis is original insofar as it represents the first biographical narrative study of the topic of intimate partner abuse on men in Ireland. Also, the fact that Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM) is used offers a unique perspective on this topic using an innovative method. Biographical approaches such as BNIM have been recognised as a useful resource for reconnecting policy with professional practice

(Chamberlayne 2002). It is hoped that the discussion of findings and recommendations in Chapter seven illustrate my vision of how this can be achieved.

1.1 Thesis overview

As you will have read, the prologue in **Chapter one** served as a guide for you to understand my historically situated position personally and professionally. I wish to outline the central components of the remainder of this thesis. **Chapter two** contains a more detailed introduction to the thesis in which the study aims and theoretical perspective is made clear. A critical analysis of the literature is presented in **Chapter three**. This is broadly broken into three interrelated areas; the professional practice of education, intimate partner abuse in society and masculinities. I argue that the dominant discourses of intimate partner abuse and masculinity have permeated all three of these areas, thus influencing its epistemological basis of understanding. Firstly, I introduce the overall aims of nurse education which is to foster competent nurses who have a narrative understanding of those they care for. I use the term ‘biographical caretakers’ (Riemann and Schutze 2005) as a term to describe those who interface with abused men. I then illustrate how dominant discourses influence the attitudes and practices of biographical caretakers in their care of men experiencing intimate partner abuse. The second part of the literature review concerns itself with how definitions, research studies and the media have influenced how abused men are ‘cared for’ in practice. The eschewing of research into male victims is also illustrated here. The final aspect of the literature review analyses the social construction of masculinity and how its rhetoric actively prevents abused men from seeking help.

Chapter four is concerned with methodology. Here, I justify Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM) as an appropriate methodology from which to explore men’s accounts of intimate partner abuse. I then discuss the processes underlying ethical

considerations, participant recruitment, data collection and the selection of cases for BNIM analysis. I then outline the particularities of the two track BNIM analytic approach (lived life and told story) and illustrate how the nine stages of analysis were used to create each individual case account and explain how the tenth and final stage of analysis created findings generated across the three cases. I then critically discuss how the use of BNIM interpretive panels formed an integral part of deepening the analysis of each of the individual cases.

Chapter five presents the interpretive case accounts of **Alan, Conor** and **Mike**. These biographies represent the study findings resulting from the nine stage BNIM analysis which each individual case was subjected to. The key finding in this chapter is presented in Figure 1 below.

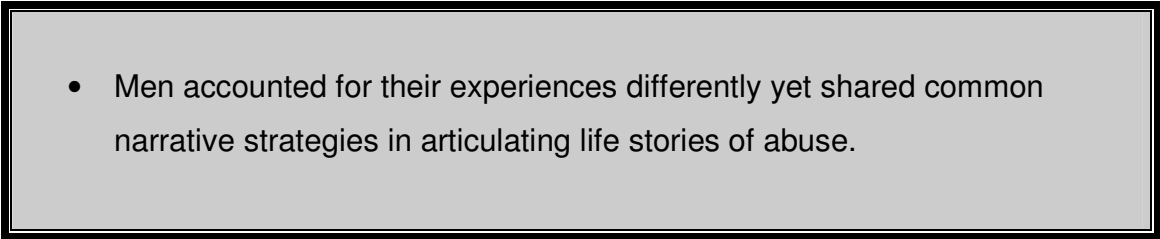
- 
- Men accounted for their experiences differently yet shared common narrative strategies in articulating life stories of abuse.

Figure 1 **Key finding emerging from BNIM case analysis of individual cases**

The synthesis of lived life and told stories of abuse are presented, historically situated in the context in which they were articulated. Embedded in each case account is the interpretation of meaning which is informed by the outcome of three separate interpretive panels. Chapter five captures the essence of each case account and the nuances of how men narrated their life stories.

Chapter six contains the findings from the tenth and final stage of BNIM analysis which is cross case theorisation. Here I move from the particular to the general and back again

to illustrate the relationships between men's narratives and broader social discourses.

Figure 2 below illustrates the key findings which emerged from this process.

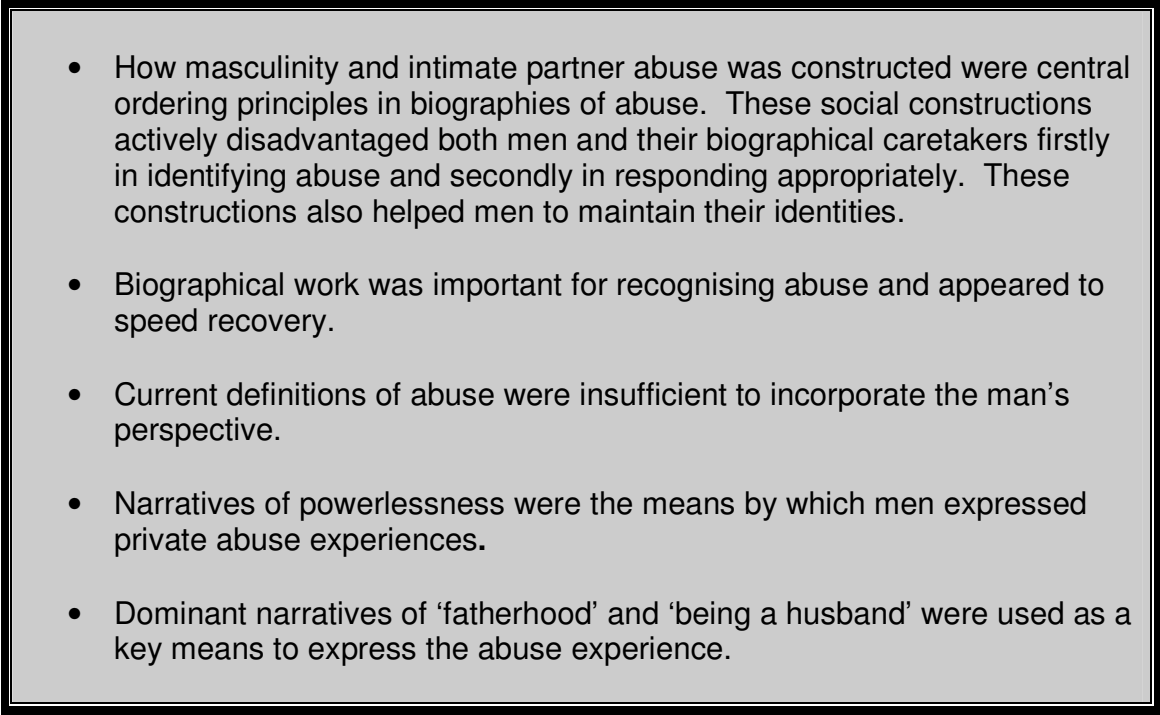
- 
- How masculinity and intimate partner abuse was constructed were central ordering principles in biographies of abuse. These social constructions actively disadvantaged both men and their biographical caretakers firstly in identifying abuse and secondly in responding appropriately. These constructions also helped men to maintain their identities.
 - Biographical work was important for recognising abuse and appeared to speed recovery.
 - Current definitions of abuse were insufficient to incorporate the man's perspective.
 - Narratives of powerlessness were the means by which men expressed private abuse experiences.
 - Dominant narratives of 'fatherhood' and 'being a husband' were used as a key means to express the abuse experience.

Figure 2 Key findings emerging from cross case theorisation

There are three interrelated areas in the cross case theorisation aspects to the findings presented here. Firstly, Riemann and Schutze's biographical process theory was used to frame the narrative evolution of the men's stories through the life story (Riemann and Schutze 2005, Schutze 2008). I illustrate how the contradictory discourses relating to intimate partner abuse and masculinity have shaped the sense making processes in articulating something which was socially characterised as 'unbelievable'. Biographical caretakers played a key role, particularly during the men's trajectories. The second key finding emerging from this is that the men who undertook the most biographical work (i.e. reflection) recognised the legitimacy of their abuse experience earlier and appeared to recover earlier in the life story. Thirdly, using a social constructionist perspective, I

found that existing definitions of abuse are not sufficient to capture abuse from the perspective of the men in this study. The men in this study constructed abuse not only as an individual phenomenon, but additionally as a collective phenomenon. I have called this phenomenon 'second wave abuse'. Fourthly, I examined the dominant narratives across the cases and found in addition to the expected abuse narrative, men more easily articulated abuse experiences through dominant narratives of fatherhood and being a good husband.

Chapter seven contains the discussion of findings presented in the earlier two chapters. Recommendations are made which have implications for the professional practice of education, for biographical caretakers and for future research studies. Here I also demonstrate the integrity of the research through discussing issues of trustworthiness and rigour applied throughout the research process. The thesis ends with a conclusion which is somewhat of an irony. Although it characterises the end of the text, there is no end to its influence on my biography and professional practice. It is hoped that this sentiment may be of use to others in their own journey towards understanding.

2 Introduction

“Many who live with violence day in and day out assume that it is an intrinsic part of the human condition. But it is not so”.

(Mandela 2002, p 12)

Interpersonal abuse is not a new phenomenon. One need just look at any history book to view details of murder, rape, genocide, torture etc. throughout the ages. Today, modern media bring continuous evidence of world violence and abuse into our living rooms. The World Health Assembly, in 1996 declared that violence was a growing problem throughout the world, recognising serious medium and long term health outcomes for individuals, communities and societies alike (Krug et al. 2002). In this declaration, health professionals have been signalled as key players in the prevention, detection and management of violence and abuse. This is because of the nature of their contact with victims either in the community or in the hospital setting. The World Health Organisation endorses the move to undertake more in depth research into uncovering the causes, nature and impact of abuse (Butchart et al. 2004). However, Blumer argues that:

“Social problems are not the result of an intrinsic malfunctioning of a society but are the result of a process of definition in which a given condition is picked out and identified as a social problem”

(Blumer 1971 p 301-302)

Intimate partner abuse is a ‘well defined’ problem in society. The difficulty lies with its definition which has essentially been ‘gendered’ to date. By this, I mean it has been well defined as a problem which is perpetrated by men and experienced by women. Hyden (1994) suggests that woman battering did not exist in an academic form until the feminist movement put it there. This movement has been so successful; terms such as domestic violence, intimate partner violence and intimate partner abuse have become language

synonymous with women's narratives. I suggest that the feminisation of this language has invariably influenced how men interpret and respond to abuse within relationships.

The process of social definition of problems *as problems* determines how they are perceived, received, measured and acted upon. Evidence of the feminisation of intimate partner abuse is evident through research, society media and politics (Fitzpatrick 2002, 2005). In relation to the topic of intimate partner abuse – gender matters. Gender provides a powerful foundation from which differences and tensions between the lives of men and women are viewed in the social world (Giddens 2001). The focus on 'difference' rather than similarity is interesting and may suggest an unconscious drive to maintain separateness from that which is 'not' the other. Most of the literature surrounding the topic of intimate partner abuse is influenced by feminist perspectives of women as victims within patriarchal societies (Walby 1990).

Gender relations refer to how men and women negotiate the world in terms of their relationships with each other. In the broadest sense, gender relations can be represented in a multiplicity of ways (Connell 2002, Hester 2004, Featherstone, Rivett and Scourfield 2007). Whilst it would be nice to believe that these relationships are freely negotiated, they most certainly are not. The nature and conduct of these relationships have been pre-programmed so that individuals are biographically preconditioned to perform their gender in socially acceptable ways (Riemann and Schutze 1991, 2005). Biographical preconditioning is influenced by institutional compliance patterns which represent desired behaviours and identities (Schutze 2008). For men, hegemonic masculinity represents the most publicly identifiable conceptualisation of masculinity in

contemporary society. Whilst the expression of masculinity is complex, undoubtedly men are influenced by public perceptions of what it means to be a man. Hegemonic masculinity embodies the most current and honoured socially constructed view of what it means to be a man (Connell 2005, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Arising from Gramsci's analysis of relations between social classes, hegemony relates to the dominance of a particular social group within society and its power over others. Although its excessive focus on structures is often viewed as a criticism (Wetherell and Edley 1999, Moller 2007) the concept is useful in providing theoretical insight into the expression of public masculinities. Ideas and beliefs about what hegemonic masculinity ought to be, inform the discourses surrounding it. The public practice of hegemony (the process of a powerful group establishing and maintaining control) is similarly influenced by such discourses (Pringle 2005). In society, people are held accountable for their 'performance of gender' according to the social constructions of how their gender ought to be performed (West and Zimmerman 1987, Butler 1999). How well gender is 'done' depends on how well an individual conforms to the dominant social construction (or dominant discourse) of acceptable gender practices within gender relations. This is an issue for women and men. Hicks (2008) points out that women are not passive recipients of femininity either. Women 'do' their gender just as much as men do. Mills (1997) points out the fluidity of discourse and its position as a constant site of meaning making. According to Mills (1997) discourses play a powerful dual role in formulating ideas about behavioural norms whilst simultaneously excluding less dominant ways of thinking. The dual role of discourse and its influence on men experiencing abuse is discussed further in the literature review. The insufficiency of hegemonic masculinity in

capturing the complexities of personal agency and the private expression of masculinity and its tension between public expressions is noted (Wetherell and Edley 1999, Moller 2007). Butler identifies the discriminatory power of discourse in legitimating language as “*whilst what is possible to say seems self-evident and natural, this naturalness is a result of what has been excluded, that which is almost unsayable* (Butler 1999 p.12). It is suggested that Butler’s reference to that which is ‘unsayable’ has resonance for men who are faced with accounting for abuse as their lived lives of abuse put into crisis normative definitions of gendered behaviour (Butler 1999). Although gender identities are not fixed entities, it is plausible that a challenge to ones’ gender order prompts the questioning of ones gender identity, by both a male victim and those he encounters (Connell 1995). This study seeks to explore how men account for abuse, examining the tensions between socially constructed norms and the realities of daily living.

Socialisation theory asserts that the correct behaviour or role for each gender is socialised or learned through exposure to environmental stimuli via ‘agencies of socialisation’ (Connell 1987, de Beauvoir 1997, Connell 2002). Those who do not fit the stereotypical mould are rendered ‘deviant’ (Hicks 2008). The stereotypical perspective of males in Irish society is based around breadwinning, heterosexual marriage, a private family and is constructed against a backdrop of strong Catholicism (Ferguson 2001). Those not meeting these expectations are classified as ‘deviant’ (Kessler and Mc Kenna 1978). However, there are problems with this perspective relating to its assumption of the direction of influence and the willingness of those being socialised to accept such norms (Hicks 2008).

It is impossible to ignore the global, historical and cultural influences which have shaped contemporary discourses regarding intimate partner abuse. Historically, men's violence and abuse of women was sanctioned by legal and social norms (Kelly 1994). Although laws such as this one clearly do not exist in western society, there is still evidence of the social 'normality' of violence against women in other cultures where for example, the killing of wives is practiced to preserve 'family honour' in some Asian countries (Krug et al 2002). Traditionally men in Ireland have enjoyed a privileged position living in a patriarchal society. Elements of this are evident through gender inequalities in areas such as policy, law, institutions, home life, violence and the workplace (Tolson 1977, Walby 1990, Giddens 2001, Grady 2002). It is of note that the term 'gender inequality' has become synonymous with inequality against women. Patriarchy, in the main has been and continues to be good for men. It is reasonable to suggest that challenges to this position, be they theoretical or practical, would be met with resistance.

I suggest that women's abuse of men represents the 'last taboo' of abuses in Irish society. Changing entrenched mindsets has proven difficult, particularly where power and identity are at stake. In Ireland, a pattern of 'denial' 'resistance' and 'scandalisation' seems to be required in order to bring about a change in the dominant societal discourses. Examples of the child sex abuse scandal by the Catholic Church where the issues were 'not believed' for so long in an effort to sustain the dominant discourse of Catholic power over Irish people and their children (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform 2009) solidify this belief. More recently the phenomenon of elder abuse was not believed to be a problem until it was brought to light in 2002 through an undercover media report

and subsequent government inquiry (Health Service Executive 2009). The scandal highlighted the failure of professionals in their responsibility to those in their care. It could be argued that educators may have contributed (albeit indirectly) to the potential failings of those they have educated due to improper educational strategy. It could be suggested that the feminist movement has made significant progress in making public a previously private phenomenon. More particularly, the ‘third wave’ of the feminist movement which began in the mid 1980s can be argued to have had the most influence, making visible the problem of men’s abuse of women and developing battered women’s shelters and other projects designed to overcome the suppression of women by men (Hanser 2007). Although some argue to the contrary (Hyden 1994), it remains more socially acceptable for a woman to identify herself as a victim at the hands of her male partner. This is because of problems with defining, explaining, managing and engendering abuse. Less is known about men’s abuse experiences because they are rarely asked for their story. The purpose of this study is to ask men for their story with the purpose of addressing particular research aims. These are introduced in the following section.

2.1 Study aims

The central research questions in this study are:

- 1. How do men account for their experiences of intimate partner abuse?*
- 2. What is the nature of intimate partner abuse as experienced by men?*

The position taken in this thesis is based on an interpretivist assumption that individuals create meaning in their lives through narrative. The talk that people engage in (and construct meaning through) is socially constructed, historically situated and informed by discourses which are in some cases paradoxical (Atkinson 1998, Chase 2005, Wengraf 2009). The social act of narrating involves a simultaneous process of engagement with self and society (Kohler Riessman 1993). In essence, elements of both structure and agency influence the discursive practice of narrating the self (Holstein and Gubrium 2000 p.103). The social performance of representing the self through narrative emphasises desired identities and minimises undesirable ones. Social constructionism recognises the mediating effect social relations play in the construction and creation of knowledge (Burr 2008, Gergen 2010). This theoretical perspective permeates the thesis and is particularly evident in framing the cross case theorisation in Chapter six below. The role social constructionism plays in informing the literature discourses of education, intimate partner abuse and masculinity is presented below.

3 Literature review

This chapter provides a critical review of relevant literature relating to the study. It is possible to identify three interrelated areas in this literature review; the professional practice of education, intimate partner abuse in society and masculinities. The original extensive electronic search of the databases was undertaken in October 2007 (See Appendix I below). However, since that time, the review of the literature has been continuous to date with new additional material being reviewed for inclusion on a monthly basis. To date, I have searched the following databases: Web of Knowledge, CINAHL Plus, JSTOR, Blackwell Synergy, and MEDLINE. The key words used included: violence, domestic violence, domestic abuse, intimate partner violence, male victims, men, female perpetrators, and women. Additionally, electronic searching of the internet using the above key words was also conducted, providing useful links to support groups and policy documentation. Hand searching of books contained in Dublin and Salford libraries was conducted. Some literature was obtained in person through visits to support groups and attendance at conferences. The literature presented in this chapter represents the most relevant sources for discussion resulting from a culmination of the above search strategies.

3.1 *The professional practice of education*

Educationalists are charged with the delicate task of fostering creativity, innovation and discovery in students' attitudes, thoughts and actions. The learning process is a powerful instrument which Brookfield argues can lead to "*alteration of our beliefs, values, actions, relationships, and social forms*" (Brookfield 1994: p.1). Such alteration has the

capacity to influence humanity in society. As a lecturer in nursing, there is an additional responsibility in encouraging the development of professional, competent and sensitive people who take care for those who are vulnerable within health care systems. The issue of ensuring professional competence is an important issue as it is a requirement for professional registration. It is also important for the integrity of the profession as the amalgam of practical and propositional knowledge are vital elements distinguishing professional nursing practice from other caring practices (Edwards 2001).

Although not clearly specified, the professional practice of nursing and other health and social care disciplines is inextricably linked with biographical perspectives of others. The delivery of care is dependent on the quality of the relationships generated (Chamberlayne, Bornat and Apitzch 2004). Both practices attempt to interpret the perspective of an individual as they exist within a wider (sometimes contradictory) social context. Having a narrative understanding of the person is argued to be a necessary condition for quality nursing care (Edwards 2001). In fact, expertise in nursing is recognised through advanced interpretive practices of the patient story, clinical condition and immediate context (Benner, Tanner and Chesla 2009). The particularised focus on the human response to aspects such as illness, trauma and disability is also important (Royal College of Nursing 2007). Although 'listening to the patient' and understanding the patient are elements of the nursing curriculum, this is often done without consideration to the biography of the person and its influence on the expression of self. Patients or persons in their biographies undergo what Wengraf (2000) terms 'difficult transitions' in the life course. Although such transitions (for example serious illness) are essentially experienced by the individual, they can only be fully understood by sensitive

consideration of both the individual in the society in which they live and in relation to the dominant discourses which influence it. If this is not done properly, there is a real risk of 'misrecognition', by ill informed biographical caretakers, of the real issues at stake (Chamberlayne, Bornat and Apitzch 2004). Although attention to narrative understanding of the person in health and social care has been advocated e.g. (Frank 1995, Charon 2006, Holloway and Freshwater 2007), understanding the nuances of storytelling and its importance in the construction of selves is relatively absent in current curricula. Whilst the education of nurses always attempted to encompass a holistic perspective in its educational philosophies, the development of its curricula have been influenced by tensions between on one hand meeting educational needs and on the other conforming to requirements enforced by professional bodies and Government. For example, An Bord Altranais, the Irish nursing board, stipulates exact hours to be dedicated to particular subject fields to ensure that its requirements and standards are met (An Bord Altranais. 2005). This brings a particular kind of tension to nursing curricula in forging a curriculum which meets the needs of contemporary healthcare delivery whilst simultaneously ensuring it meets the needs of its regulatory board. Due to its inextricable link with medicine, the overarching dominance of quantitative methodologies in determining best practice (under the guise of the Evidence Based Practice movement) is a potential contradiction which cannot be ignored. This has resulted in the continued dominance of what (Estabrooks 1998, Kitson, Harvey and McCormack 1998) calls 'medicine by numbers' where judgements on care are based on practitioners focussing on what 'the majority' have found to be effective. This presents yet another tension for educators who must endeavour to emphasise the importance of caring for the individual

whilst simultaneously stressing the importance of evidence based practice (Warne, Holland and McAndrew 2011). At a macro level, credence by governments of ‘robust’ evidence to support nursing and healthcare practice overlooks the micro level of personal biography where individuals exist and make sense of their lives. Although advocates of evidence based practice acknowledge the importance of ‘patient values’ in making clinical judgements, there is no emphasis on the position of the patient and how their biographies can influence their expression (or concealment) of these values. This is a fundamental flaw of the evidence based practice movement which assumes the ability and willingness of the patient to express what they value. Although health strategies may be seeking patient empowerment (e.g. the Irish Health Strategy 2003), there remains an unequal power difference between care providers and users. Lack of cognisance of this power differential by health and social care providers and its potential to influence ‘what is said’ by others renders caregivers less sensitive and potentially less effective.

The key currency in which education trades is that of knowledge. Universities claim to be institutes where higher levels of knowledge can be attained. Although the environment is supposedly a place for ‘higher education’ where different forms of knowledge are produced, the overarching influence of its social construction (via the many forms of relationships which result from engagement in academia) cannot be ignored (Gergen 1973, 2010). A desired learning outcome means that one’s individual frame of reference alters due to understanding things in a different way (Schon 1987, Higher Education Authority 2004). Lack of education and training is often cited as a significant barrier in caring for those affected by intimate partner abuse (Department of

Justice, Equality and Law Reform 2010). However, the nature of present education and training to date is influenced by prevailing perspectives of intimate partner abuse which presently favours women. Persons experiencing intimate partner abuse need to be cared for sensitively, respectfully and appropriately regardless of gender. Narrative competence is a necessary contingent for this to be realised.

The professional practice of nursing education within the nursing academe is a potential paradox to stereotypical notions of university academics that are argued to embed themselves in esoteric activity (Lee 2009). Nursing education is inextricably linked with nursing practice as clinical credibility is expected (Mansell, et al. 2002). Research in the professional practice of nurse education must challenge others to move outside their comfort zones of knowledge (Stansfield and Lee 2009). The practice of challenging norms is an essential element in advancing understanding. Given the premise that all knowledge is open to revision, this thesis challenges the prevailing norms of society, men, their narrative constructions of self and their relationships with biographical caretakers. All epistemologies have the potential for ‘blank spots’ and ‘blind spots’ (Wagner 2010). Blank spots relate to matters which are known to be little understood whereas blind spots relate to that which is unknown. Not knowing or understanding need not be viewed as a limiting factor but a framework for the shaping of new knowledge (Warne and McAndrew 2008, McAndrew and Warne 2010). A good example of this is Howard Becker’s illustration of his ‘blind spot’ in admitting his position of ignorance in relation to students’ knowledge regarding writing. In articulating that he did not know what student’s knew or thought, he was able to ask the right questions to generate a new

kind of understanding about academic writing. His professional practice was improved by this approach and clearly the effect of his work has altered epistemological understanding in this area internationally (Becker 2007). In summary, appropriate education plays an important role in addressing service user needs. Studies such as this play a role in continually challenging the existing knowledge base from which education is derived.

3.1.1 'Taking care' of men?

Inextricably linked with the professional practice of nursing and health and social care is its unique interface with those who are often vulnerable. Riemann and Schutze (1991) use the term biographical caretakers to describe the role carers, counsellors, nurses and other professionals play in the biography of individuals. Implicit in this term is an active commitment on behalf of the professional to 'take care' of the other during difficult transitions in the life course. The skill of caring for others is long recognised as a necessary condition for nursing and healthcare roles. However, its emphasis amongst other professional groups is less clear. Police, social workers and healthcare professionals often have involvement with men during particular crisis points in their lives. The interventions of these individuals in the lives of men are significant and often have fateful consequences for those who interface with them during the course of their practice (Ferguson & Hogan 2004). What is evident is that biographical caretakers, be they nurses, doctors and other care providers play an important role in the biographies of others whom they encounter. For example, Bury has illustrated the instrumental role medicine plays in the re-interpretation of persons living with chronic disease (Bury 1982,

Bury 1991). As a ‘wounded storyteller’, Arthur Frank also illustrated the instrumentality of caretakers in the lives of vulnerable others (Frank 1995).

The practice of nursing for example which is recognised as “*the use of clinical judgement in the provision of care*” (Royal College of Nursing 2007 p.3) implies that nurses are both practically competent and judicious in making choices for patient care. However, the level of narrative competence nurses (and potentially other health and social care providers) have in relation to understanding biographies and biographical processes is lacking (Greenhalgh 1999, Greenhalgh and Hurwitz 1999). According to Breckner (2007), life stories offer a useful interface between societal reality and reality as it is interpreted by individuals. This is an important consideration not just for nursing, but for all health and social care practitioners. A ‘narrative turn’ towards fostering a more ‘narratively competent’ healthcare practitioner can be traced to the early work of Saunders (1979) in the hospice movement and more recently illustrated in the work of promoting narrative medicine and nursing (Charon 2006, Holloway and Freshwater 2007). In being narratively competent, biographical caretakers can recognise the linguistic, cultural, and narrative structures people use to make sense of themselves and their experiences instead of accepting the ‘face value’ of some stories offered to them. One source of narrative shaping in storytelling used by individuals is that of biographical process structures.

Rieman and Schutze’s theory of biographical processes argues that there are four key structures which provide an order to an extempore narration and elucidate the person’s sense of identity. These are: biographical action schemes, trajectories of suffering

(biographical trajectory), institutional expectation patterns and creative biographical metamorphoses (Riemann 2003, Riemann and Schutze 2005, Schutze 2008). A conceptual representation of this theory as it relates to extempore story telling is presented in Figure 3 below.

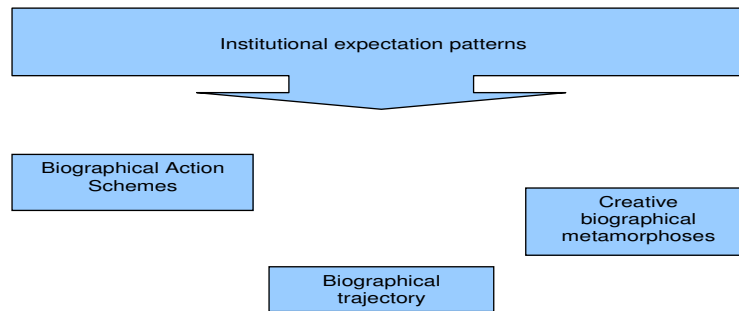


Figure 3 Conceptual representation of Riemann and Schutze's theory of biographical processes

Riemann and Schutze (2005) suggest that all of the biographical process structures are shaped by the central ordering principle or 'narrative gestalt' which represents the moral of the story. The use of 'narrative gestalt' in this sense is similar to the 'fabula', a term used by Bruner (2004) to describe the transcendent plight of a story. The notion of biographical trajectory emerged from Strauss' work on illness and dying trajectories and is similar to Bury's term 'biographical disruption' (Bury 1982, Bury 1991). A biographical trajectory is understood as a narrated event which brings about an interruption or stoppage of a persons intended biographical action scheme (Riemann and Schutze 1991). There are several stages to the biographical trajectory process in which the person reconstructs one's sense of self and meaning in relation to the events going on around them. Riemann and Schutze identify eight distinct phases which the person undergoes when traumatic events in the life course occur. Not dissimilar to the well known stages of grief identified by Kubler Ross (1969), the stages in biographical

trajectory elucidate a series of phases which persons deny, reject, resist and reconstruct their fates. Understanding such processes is useful for all involved and makes less traumatic, the conflicting emotions which occur during these particular phases in the life course.

The necessity of considering the influence of societal values and norms which shape the individual's life is an essential part of social inquiry (Mills 1959). Institutionalised compliance schemes represent socially derived schemes which directly influence a lived life (Schutze 2008). This scheme reflects the individual's value system which is fuelled by previous life experiences and conditioning (Erickson 1968). These are important considerations particularly given the subject and topic of inquiry. Further discussion of the social construction of masculinities in Ireland can be found in section 3.3 below. Similarly, constructions of intimate partner abuse and its relationship to societal values are explored further in section 3.2 below. Influenced by institutional compliance patterns, biographical action schemes within a narrative reflect intended patterns of activity (or non-activity) for the individual's life course (Schutze 2008). In this sense, our biographical action schemes can be interpreted as our 'cares' in life. Edwards argues that humans are 'constructed' by their cares and what they care about becomes a distinctive form of evidence (Edwards 2001). Considering this premise, it is all the more important that practitioners are narratively competent enough to discern what is meaningful from what is not meaningful from those in their care.

Goffman's theory (1990) of the social positioning of self has been criticised as focussing on performances at key moments, rather than the day to day living of life (Stanley 1992).

However, key moments are important particularly when biographical caretakers interface with individuals during formal events. For example, visiting a doctor, presenting to the police, being interviewed by a social worker is a formal event when decorum of performance is expected. The representation of self at these key moments is crucial to men who have been abused. Usually, there is an unequal power relationship between biographical caretakers and those whom they interact with (Warne and McAndrew 2007). This is usually due to the nature of the context in which they interact and also the sanctioned authority given to biographical caretakers in given situations (Plummer 2003). As a result, the consequences of biographical caretakers' error regarding those whom they interact with are high. For example in a study of 24 vulnerable fathers, many men lost access to their children by social workers overlooking their 'stories' and making decisions about their parenting ability without consulting them. Ferguson and Hogan (2004) also interpreted that in the many 'fateful moments' or turning points in these men's lives these became missed opportunities for health and social care workers to intervene in assisting the man to transform his life for the better.

In essence, appreciation of biographical processes in the life story is argued to be an essential skill for biographical caretakers who are professionally charged with 'taking care' of others in particular phases in their life. Neglect of biographical process structures in the life story and their influence on the presentation of self has the potential to have fateful consequences for vulnerable others (Riemann and Schutze 2005). It makes sense that the professional practice of education fosters the appreciation of this potential bridge for shared understanding between the individual and the society in which they reside.

Men are recognised as being reluctant users of support services. In relation to health for example, men visit the GP less, and are more inclined to present a problem late in the course of illness (McEvoy and Richardson 2004). One of the reasons for this is due to unhealthy social practices which are related to the social construction of masculinity which advocates stoicism (Courtenay 2000). Seeking support could be likened to admitting vulnerability, something which is contrary to being a man. Anecdotally, men who attended the Irish domestic abuse support group seemed to attend late in the course of their relationship difficulties. Some did not realise that there were difficulties until they were served with a legal order.

Abused individuals rarely use formal supports when leaving abusive relationships and rely heavily on social support networks (Stanko and Hobdell 1993). Perhaps one explanation for this is because of the potential for biographical caretakers' lack of sensitivity towards biographies of abuse. For example, Corbally (2001) found that nurses' attitudes towards battered women exhibited a lack of understanding of women's biographies. The irony of men being abusers, law enforcers, victims and supporters is something which is often not considered as a compounding factor for men.

According to the National Study of Domestic Abuse, only seven percent of those who left abusive relationships used formal supports such as refuges or help lines (Watson and Parsons 2005). Of this small percentage, one could envisage that the percentage of men seeking help would be less considering the prevailing social constructions of men who are abused by women.

3.1.2 Current practices

To date, services to deal with intimate partner abuse have been gender specific. The bulk of these services (women's aid, rape crisis centre, and women's refuges) have emerged from a feminist perspective on intimate partner abuse which presumes men's aggression and women's innocence. The lack of services for male victims in the USA has in some cases resulted in male victims of abuse attending male aggression programmes simply because there was no where else to go (Hines, Brown and Dunning 2007). Information regarding the current practice of caring for men who have been abused is scant. One agency in Ireland (Amen) provides dedicated help and support for men experiencing intimate partner abuse¹. This agency, (ironically founded by a woman) provides telephone counselling, court accompaniment and support group meetings to men who contact them. The work of Amen is limited by its location and resources – it is situated in the North East of the country and does not have any outreach branches. Although it does have a helpline, abused men for example in the South West of Ireland wishing to attend a support group meeting or meet a support worker have no option but to travel up to 350 kilometres. In direct contrast, women's support services have multiple branches and access points throughout the counties of Ireland². Additionally, men seem to present late in their abusive relationships and commonly only attend upon receipt of a court order³. Many men do not attend at all and interface solely with the legal system. In other countries, many of the supports for intimate partner abuse are based on models associated

¹ See: <http://www.amen.ie/>

² See: <http://www.womensaid.ie/services/local.html>

³ Please see my reflective account in Appendix II for more discussion on this.

with the feminist movement (Stanko and Hobdell 1993). This unquestioned assumption of sameness between men and women is potentially problematic. The Duluth Power and control wheel - an internationally recognised conceptual model represents abuse (mostly as intimate terrorism⁴) from a woman's perspective. This model which received international acclaim is used for benchmarking for many (male) perpetrator interventions programs worldwide. Given the fact that men as victims are rarely acknowledged, it is not surprising that their support needs are not easily identified. In interviewing 33 male victims of assault Stanko and Hobdell (1993) illustrated five key elements required to deal with male victims - 1 recognition of their suffering, 2 an empathetic approach to them as victims, 3 practical non-judgemental help, 4 positive support from male and female family and friends and 5 personal use of avoidance, humour and minimising of the experience occasionally (Stanko and Hobdell 1993). In the limited data available, few aspects of these support mechanisms appear to have been realised by men in Ireland.

For those who experience abuse and experience a crisis point in their biography, the most common interface men have is with the legal system. To date, this system has been less than sympathetic in its practice towards men. Under the Domestic Violence Act (Government of Ireland 1996), a person (usually a man) can be barred from his home without being aware at a hearing in which he is not present. In some parts of Ireland, it can take up to one year before they have a court hearing which could allow them to return (Cleary 2001). In relation to 'proving' a case of domestic violence, Cleary (2001) notes that judges do not require any proof of violence in order to make a judgement. This suggests that allegations (either true or false) could be sufficient to result in legal

⁴ Further discussion of the typology of intimate terrorism can be found in section 3.2.2. below

decisions with serious consequences for men. It is worth recognising that men represent the majority of law makers and law breakers in society. Making gendered connections here is not unreasonable as there appears to be a gender bias within the legal system – particularly when women hurt men. For fathers involved in family law issues relating to child custody and maintenance, the plight of fathers is silenced by the *in camera* rule of the Irish legal system which means that all hearings relating to family law must be held in private. This veil of secrecy regarding family law cases serves to silence the public discourse surrounding the treatment of men and their children as it results also in a blanket ban on reporting of cases. Mc Cormack (2000) argues that the absolute power judges use in exercising the *in camera* rule means that the people of Ireland are not allowed to know the workings of their own courts. If there is no information relating to fathers and their families there can be no debate regarding its fairness or otherwise (McCormack 2001, O'Sullivan 2001). The leniency of judgements made against women compared with men in recent court decisions has attracted recent media attention. Power (2010), a qualified barrister distinguished the certainty of sentencing male victims accused of killing their male partners and the leniency of women doing the same thing. For example in the month of March 2010, two women who killed their partners in non – accidental circumstances walked free from court, whilst Eamonn Lillis who killed his wife following years of abuse from her was convicted of manslaughter. Patrick Burke was killed by Ann his wife in March 2010. Patrick was killed by being hit with a hammer 23 times on the head. According to Power (2010), his wife walked free because she was a woman. The invisibility of male victimisation in Irish society is perhaps evident in rape law. In Ireland, sexual assault of men was formally recognised as a crime

in 1990 (Government of Ireland 1990). The fact that male sexual assault victims were ‘invisible’ in law up until twenty one years ago perhaps speaks volumes about the State’s recognition of this phenomenon.

3.2 Perspectives of intimate partner abuse

This section of the literature review describes how definitions, research, the media and policy have shaped the discourse surrounding intimate partner abuse. The eschewing of research into men and male victims is also illustrated here. Here, I argue that perspectives of intimate partner abuse are predominantly ‘feminised’ which is problematic for men who are abused. Furthermore, I illustrate that contemporary media portrayal of women’s abuse of men has legitimised and normalised women’s abusive practices. I also discuss policy efforts the area of intimate partner abuse and their usefulness from a man’s perspective.

3.2.1 Definitions

The literature relating to intimate partner abuse is awash with a variety of terms which attempt to describe it. Terms such as; domestic violence, domestic abuse, and intimate partner violence have not proved useful in capturing the phenomenon of abuse. As Johnson and Ferarro (2000) point out, it is important to be clear about what definitions are used when making generalisations about violence, abuse and its impact on society. However, this has not always been the case as most definitions have assumed a gendered definition. Additionally, all of the definitions have tended to be pre-formulated in

advance of research or policy. This leaves open the potential for ‘blind spots’ of understanding regarding how intimate partner abuse is defined by those experiencing it. During the literature search a variation in the use of these terms across literature databases was noted (see Appendix I). Domestic violence has traditionally been the term used to describe violence between partners. In Ireland, domestic violence refers to actual or potential use of physical, emotional and sexual force in close relationships (Office of the Tánaiste 1997). The problem with this definition is that it assumes ‘close relationships’ which may not be the case and assumes ‘violence’, which may not necessarily be prevalent in all abusive relationships. Domestic abuse⁵ is a more useful term (Watson and Parsons 2005) which appreciates the ‘pattern’ building nature of conflict. However, Bowen (1998, p8) suggests the terminology of violence as ‘domestic’ prompts connotations that it is a ‘family affair’ and therefore not a serious crime. Also, the term ‘domestic’ suggests that the abuse occurs only in the home setting, thus excluding events which occur outside the home environment. Bonomi et al (2006) highlight the contextual nature of language in producing meaning indicating that different contexts can use different terminologies. In an effort to bridge the ‘meaning’ gap, a choice to use the term ‘domestic abuse’ at a colloquial level with the participants was made⁶. Similarly, the choice to use the term ‘intimate partner abuse’ in this thesis resulted from cognisance of the appropriateness of the meaning of this term which featured more in academic environs.

⁵ Although this term features least in the frequency of database citings, in my pre-research visit to a men’s domestic abuse support group - the term ‘domestic abuse’ was articulated as the most appropriate language to use (they suggested that I use this term in information leaflets).

⁶ See point 5.

In more recent times, the term ‘Intimate Partner Violence’ has been adopted by many, including the World Health Organisation (Krug et al 2002). Although ‘violence’ is included in its wordage, the descriptor is certainly broader and acknowledges controlling behaviours in addition to the 3 traditional ‘categories of abuse’ (physical, psychological and sexual’). It is also useful that an interpretive perspective about harm is included in this definition (which is also present in the Watson and Parson’s 2005 study). Incorporating perceptions of harm suggests a move away from defining intimate partner abuse as an ‘acts based’ phenomenon, which has been a source of criticism in the literature (Straus 1979, Straus, et al. 1996, Straus 2007). However, this could prove problematic for men who may not identify acts or behaviour as harmful. In an effort to generate a working definition suitable for the purpose of the study, an amalgamated term was generated which encompassed important aspects from each of the above definitions. What I included also was the addition of ‘intentionality’ and ‘use of power’ along with ‘past’ to intimate relationship, and ‘money’ to the controlling behaviour section. The key rationale for widening the definition of intimate partner abuse in the first instance was due to the fact that little is known about how men defined abuse. It was hoped that this amalgamated term would prove more useful and would potentially capture abuse from a man’s perspective. Table 1 below provides an overview of abuse definitions and how the working definition of abuse was formulated.

Table 1 Overview of terminology and associated definitions used in literature.

Term	Source	Attributes/definitions
Intimate Partner Violence	WHO 1992 cited by Krug et al (2002)	The intentional use of physical force or power , threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, Mal-development or deprivation.
Domestic Violence	Office of the Tánaiste 1997	Actual or threatened use of physical force , emotional or sexual violence of any kind which occurs in close adult relationships
Intimate partner violence	Krug et al (2002) WHO	<p>“Intimate partner violence refers to any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship. Such behaviour includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts of physical aggression – such as slapping, hitting, kicking and beating. • Psychological abuse – such as intimidation, constant belittling and humiliating. • Forced intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion. • Various controlling behaviours – such as isolating a person from their family and friends, monitoring their movements, and restricting their access to information or assistance”
Domestic Abuse	Watson, Parsons (2005)	<p>“A pattern of physical, emotional or sexual behaviour between partners in an intimate relationship that causes, or risks causing, significant negative consequences for the person affected” p38</p> <p>Inclusion of ‘neglect’ also under the term abuse</p>
Stalking	Finney (2006)	<p>Stalking: two or more incidents – causing distress, fear or alarm – of obscene/threatening unwanted letters or phone calls, waiting or loitering around home or workplace, following or watching, or interfering with or damaging personal property by any person including a partner or family member.</p>
Intimate partner abuse	The term used in this thesis adapted from the above definitions	<p>Intimate partner abuse refers to the intentional use of power manifested by a pattern of behaviour within a current or past intimate relationship that causes, or has the capacity to cause psychological, physical or sexual harm.</p> <p>Such behaviour includes but is not limited to:</p>

		Psychological abuse: intimidation, humiliation and threats etc. Physical abuse: Hitting, kicking, beating, slapping etc. Sexual abuse: Forced intercourse and sexual coercion. Controlling behaviour: Restriction/isolation from supports (family/friends/information/assistance/money). Controlling the movement of victims. Stalking (See Finney 2006) Neglectful behaviour which may result in physical/psychological harm to others
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As illustrated above, the choice in defining intimate partner abuse using these constituents was initially determined by a need for a working definition. Whilst this was temporarily useful by encompassing previous definitions, it is also acknowledged that it is essentially gendered given the fact that it is informed by previous gendered definitions. The contrast between the formulated working definition (above) and the outcome of men's social constructions of intimate partner abuse is discussed further in Chapter seven.

3.2.2 Typology

Whilst the section above explored 'definitions' of intimate partner abuse, it is important to make distinctions about the nature of abuse and how it is exercised between couples in a relationship. Johnson's (2005) theory of intimate partner abuse distinguishes four distinct patterns of intimate partner abuse within particular relationships. These categories; situational couple violence, mutual violent conflict, violent resistance and intimate terrorism were informed by his work which focussed solely on women. The first two categories are theorised to be 'mutual' i.e. equally perpetrated by men and women whilst the latter two theorised to be unidirectionally directed by men towards women.

The exercise of abuse is argued by Johnson (2005) to be dependent on the control motives (or controlling behaviour) of each individual. Johnson distinguishes the controlling behaviour from 'violence' as something not directly done to the individual. This indirect, intentional hurt is exhibited via threats, economic control, privilege and punishments, the use of children and social isolation. He contradicts his perspective somewhat by including emotional abuse and sexual control which are arguably 'done to' another. According to Johnson (2006) the fundamental flaw with much intimate partner abuse research lies in the fact that claims about 'intimate partner abuse', fail to distinguish that there are four distinct patterns. The range of sampling and research techniques used to study abuse can explain this somewhat (see section 3.2.3. below). Making generalisations based on insufficient or incomplete data clearly runs the risk of making erroneous policy decisions with potentially negative effects for those involved (Johnson and Ferraro 2000). Whilst I would agree with Johnson's argument regarding the risks of insufficient data informing decision making, I would disagree with his claim that only his four patterns are all that is required in classifying the types of abuse. A more detailed description of Johnson's typology is described below.

Situational couple violence (initially termed 'common couple violence') refers to abuse which is not related to any pattern of control within a relationship. This is likened to a 'lashing out' of one or both parties during an argument and does not tend to escalate over time as neither parties have control motives, the 'violence' is reactionary to the particular situation (Johnson and Ferraro 2000). The intention is minimal and the harm experienced by either party is argued not to be long term. Johnson argues that situational couple violence is the most common form of abuse between couples. If men are acknowledged

in the literature, it is most often through this pattern which is felt to be not as serious as intimate terrorism (see below). This is most commonly found in the family violence studies which find high levels of female initiated conflict (Gelles and Straus 1988, Straus, et al. 1996). Situational couple violence was initially termed ‘common couple violence’ to illustrate its pervasiveness within relationships. This also suggested that there is a level of social acceptability surrounding this kind of abuse. This relative acceptability is evident in contemporary media also (see section 3.2.4 below). According to Johnson (2006), the pattern of **mutual violent conflict** is the rarest of the patterns of violence and is characterised by both parties being equally controlling and violent to each other. He made this claim from retrospectively analysing 274 interviews with married women who had experienced intimate partner abuse (Johnson 2006). Women in the study were fourteen times more likely to have experienced situational couple violence than mutual violent control⁷. Perhaps the attribution of mutual violent conflict as something which happens rarely reflects the lack of socially available discourses from which to articulate women’s violence (de Welde 2003).

The two remaining patterns of violence in Johnson’s typology theorised as gender asymmetrical (i.e. perpetrated by men and experienced by women). **Intimate terrorism** is a unilateral pattern where an individual is both violent and controlling to a partner who is neither violent nor controlling. Johnson theorises that one partner in this instance does not respond and it is assumed that this form of violence results in significant harm for the partner who is on the receiving end. In this polarised perspective, men are attributed to be the predominant perpetrators of this kind of violence (Johnson and Ferraro 2000,

⁷ Johnson (2006) said that ten women articulated experience similar to the pattern of mutual violent control.

Johnson 2005, Johnson 2006). Its original term ‘patriarchal terrorism’ indicates the roots of its social construction which automatically embedded men in society as culprits. It is ironic that Johnson argues that sampling bias influences study findings throughout his theory and is however happy to report 97% levels of intimate terrorism reported solely by female victims of abuse. Intimate terrorism is most identifiable through female victim studies⁸ which describe in detail the patterns of violence and control exercised along with its impact on women’s health and well-being (Johnson 2006). The paucity of data from male victims has been (wrongly) assumed to be due to a lack of the existence of intimate terrorism by women against men. This discrimination by omission is evident in some internationally recognised conceptual models of intimate partner abuse. One example of these is the Duluth power and control wheel that was devised from a large scale study in Minnesota (fuelled by the battered women’s movement) in the early 80s⁹. Clearly, this model is women focussed and embedded in feminist perspective which embeds the patriarchal dominance of men over women. However, it is now a widely used ‘model’ in providing a framework for supporting ‘victims’ regardless of their gender. Intimate Terrorism as a male-perpetrated phenomenon has clearly been adopted as the norm with token recognition of the fact that females can be abusers also (Krug, et al. 2002, Johnson 2006).

Violent resistance, the fourth pattern of abuse is characterised by one partner being violent and controlling (an intimate terrorist using Johnson’s lexicon) and the other partner being violent but not controlling. Violent resistance, according to Johnson is

⁸ See section 3.2.3.3 for more discussion.

⁹ See : <http://www.theduluthmodel.org/pdf/PhyVio.pdf>

almost exclusively the domain of women who ‘hit back’ at men but receive both violence and controlling behaviour in return (Johnson and Ferraro 2000, Johnson 2006). Although this pattern seems logically consistent with the view of women as victims it is unclear whether such violence occurs prior to or following an abusive event by the other partner. In a study of 87 women prosecuted for assaulting their partner, 38.7% of the women cited self defence as their reason for assaulting a partner. This suggests that the ‘other’ abused first. However, an equivalent percentage in this study (38.9%) stated that they were provoked - this is not the same thing as defending oneself (Stuart, et al. 2006). In summary, Johnson’s typology is useful in illustrating that the nature of abuse can vary. However, his perspective regarding the one-sidedness of victimhood/perpetrator is argued to be somewhat polarised. In the ‘real world’, things are rarely black and white and constructing someone as 100% victim or 100% perpetrator¹⁰ would seem unhelpful, particularly when attempting to break the cycle of abuse (Hyden 1994).

3.2.3 Research

Research perspectives on intimate partner abuse have influenced the prevailing knowledge through its extensive emphasis on women and relative paucity of attention on men. This has resulted in a feminisation of discourse surrounding intimate partner abuse. Broadly speaking, the research literature in relation to intimate partner abuse and men can be grouped into three categories; National surveys/crime surveys, family conflict studies, and victim perspective studies. Each category has different theoretical underpinnings and

¹⁰ If one were to truly reflect upon one’s disagreements with others, I would suggest that events can rarely be interpreted as ‘completely’ one person’s fault – despite one’s claim that it is so. I make this point based on my own reflection of the context of disagreements and also in relation to the fact that multiple interpretations of the same events are possible.

have, in some instances, produced conflicting results. These are discussed in further detail below. The first studies examining female violence against male partners began in the 1970s (Steinmetz 1977, Straus 1979). These studies, which proved the existence of intimate partner abuse against men were viewed as controversial at the time and continue to be the subject of critique. Archer's (2000) meta-analysis found that whilst men are more likely to experience physical abuse from female partners, women are more likely to sustain a visible injury. The 'visibility' of injury or harm is perhaps something which legitimises women to seek support/assistance more readily than men. Also, it is possible to argue that those who offer support (such as healthcare providers, counsellors etc) may relate better to abuse which is clearly recognisable. This is in spite of the fact that the most 'damaging' form of abuse (emotional/psychological) according to those who experience it, is invisible (Watson and Parsons 2005). Cultural and contextual issues are also possible predictors of intimate partner abuse. Modern societies with liberal and secular values which facilitate the economic and familial independence of women represent a change in the balance of power for women. Archer argues that female initiated abuse is more likely in developed countries due to reversal of the traditional power balance (Archer 2000). This may explain the lack of data on female initiated abuse in world wide data sets which incorporate first, second and third world data (Krug et al. 2002). Although there appears to be data on female initiated abuse in the first world, most of it is quantitative and not without its critics (see section 3.2.3.2 below). Using the analogy of an elephant as a metaphor for intimate partner abuse, Mc Hugh et al (2005) argue that researchers have attempted to theorise about intimate partner abuse by examining and describing its body parts rather than the whole entity. Unclear conceptual

definitions about the meaning of intimate partner abuse, minimisation of the existence of female initiated intimate partner abuse and methodological limitations have all resulted in wide variations of data on the subject. These are introduced further below.

3.2.3.1 National surveys/crime studies

Crime surveys such as the International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS), British Crime Survey (BCS), the National Crime Victimization survey (NCVI) and National Violence Against Women (NVAW) survey in the United States are useful sources of information on the prevalence and experiences of crime (Alvazzi del Frate and van Kesteren 2004). For example, lifetime prevalence rates of having experienced abuse and/or sexual assault were 7% for men and 20% for women in the NVAW study (Tjaden and Thoennes 2000). A limitation of such survey reports however lies with its reliance on individual's accounts of what they term 'abusive'. Given the prevailing discourse surrounding masculinity and intimate partner abuse, men may not always interpret abuse as abusive. In relation to intimate partner abuse in Ireland, one in five women reported abusive episodes to police; men were even less likely to do so (Watson and Parsons 2005). This unreported 'dark figure' (Young, O'Donnell and Clare 2001) further highlights the incompleteness of statistics (in particular police statistics) in capturing the prevalence of intimate partner abuse, particularly from the male perspective.

Up until 2004, no comprehensive data existed on the prevalence of intimate partner abuse in Ireland. The National Study of Domestic Abuse (NSDA) consisted of a nation-wide telephone survey. This study found that six percent of men in Ireland had experienced

severely abusive behaviour from a partner (n=3077)¹¹ (Watson and Parsons 2005). This meant that approximately 88,000 men in Ireland (or one in twenty) had experienced abuse by a partner at some point in their lives. This NSDA study was significant insofar as it was the first to articulate the problem of women's abuse towards men. This study was a catalyst for policy change at governmental level in relation to this phenomenon (see section 3.2.5 below). The findings from the Irish study are comparable with British figures which indicate that five percent of men had experienced abuse in a 12 month period¹² (12,226 men nationally) (Finney 2006). Another notable aspect of the 2004/5 BCS, was that both men and women had equal experiences of stalking (9%), suggesting that perhaps this is a method of abuse used more against men comparatively. This aspect of abuse was not examined in the Irish NSDA.

A greater prevalence of intimate partner abuse amongst men was found in a cross-sectional survey of persons attending General Practitioners in Ireland (n=237) (Paul, Smith and Long 2006). The prevalence of violent incidents and controlling behaviours experienced by men was higher than women (54%), though women were more likely to express fear of a partner. Although the sample size was relatively small, it provides useful information about the existence of female abuse in Ireland. The contrast in prevalence rates between the NSDA and the study conducted by Paul et al (2006) study is notable. This challenges the validity of telephone survey methods as a means for disclosing incidences of abuse by male victims (Thomas, Purdon and Nicolaas 2003). It is suggested that the context of healthcare (and perhaps the biographical caretakers who

¹¹ 15% of women (one in seven) had experienced severe intimate partner abuse in this study.

¹² 6% of women (one in twenty) had experienced one or more incidents of intimate partner abuse in this study.

work in this context) provided men with an easier means of disclosure. Amongst the growing body of research identifying female violence against men (Graham-Kevan and Archer 2005) the concept of ‘self-defence’ has not been sufficient to explain either the prevalence or intensity of female initiated abuse. Another important point to consider is the lack of explanation by feminist theorists about why the vast majority of men are **not** abusive (Umberson, et al. 2003).

3.2.3.2 Family conflict studies

The underlying philosophy behind the body of research termed the ‘family conflict studies’ emerged from conflict theory which is based on the premise that conflict is an inevitable part of family life. It is perhaps the most widely used measure of intimate partner abuse prevalence and also the most widely criticized in the literature. It conceptualises intimate partner abuse as ‘acts’ undertaken by one against another (in resolving conflict) regardless of their perceived harm by the recipient. Since its creation in 1979, over 500 research papers have been published which have used the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS), a scale designed to measure ‘conflict tactics’ used within relationships ranging from verbal reasoning to physical force (Straus 1979, Straus 2007). The CTS method interviews couples and compares the scores allocated by each couple on their perpetration and experiences of conflict tactics.

Much of the findings which emerge from this body of literature supports the notion of ‘gender symmetry’ in intimate partner abuse i.e. that women are as abusive than men (Kimmel 2002a). This claim directly confronted the basic premises of feminist movements and their associated support networks as most studies arising from this body

of research illustrated that men had experienced more violence (in the form of ‘conflict tactics’) than women in intimate relationships (4.6% compared with 3.8% respectively in a survey of 2146 families) (Gelles and Straus 1988). Whilst the CTS and associated studies were instrumental in illustrating formally, female violence within relationships, their assertions of gender symmetry (in relation to violence) based on equal experiences of tactics fall short of capturing the true phenomenon of intimate partner abuse as it is experienced. The fact that these scales are predominantly behavioural (focussing on actions) is the aspect of this tool which has received the most criticism (Dobash, et al. 1992, Kimmel 2002a). As a result, it is difficult to ascertain either the amount of ‘harm’ experienced by either party or the context in which the ‘tactic’ was used. It is possible to argue that in conforming to the notion of ‘hegemonic masculinity’, many men may indeed not recognise such ‘tactics’ used by women as abusive in the first place. The sampling criteria used in these studies (married or dating couples) also has the potential to mask extreme forms of violence as it is doubtful that a person who is being interviewed with their partner’s knowledge is likely to express that they have experienced serious and harmful abuse. The phenomenon of ‘mutual violence’ has also been identified in these research studies (Cook 1997) and is perhaps linked to the pattern of situational couple violence for the reasons described above. Making generalisations about all ‘domestic violence’ which is actually representative of only one of these patterns of abuse as discussed earlier, runs the greatest risk of making erroneous policy decisions with potentially disastrous effects for victims (Johnson and Ferraro 2000).

Crime surveys, national surveys and family conflict studies have been invaluable in identifying that a proportion of men experience abuse from their female partners. There are some methodological weaknesses inherent in these studies. One such weakness lies in a fundamental assumption of quantitative research and the realities of intimate partner abuse. Whilst large scale sampling strategies select representative numbers of participants, it is likely that contextual elements of the research may have flawed the findings due to victims' hesitancy in admitting that they are the victims of abuse and potentially suffering negative consequences if their disclosure was found out (Hines et al 2007). For example, a man who is experiencing intimate terrorism is unlikely to report to a researcher (with his partner aware) abuse which they themselves are ashamed of. Secondly, survey methodology is commonly associated with aggregates of a phenomenon rather than the intricacies (Robson 2002). Intimate partner abuse against men is little understood. Attempting to measure a phenomenon using pre-determined responses may not adequately capture the meaning of 'abuse' for men and worse still may distort efforts to respond to male victims which may be based on insufficient data. The influences of context and culture on intimate partner abuse are significant and can not be ignored. It is also of note that the vast majority of family conflict studies were conducted in the United States, which is a potentially limiting fact also.

3.2.3.3 Victim studies

"The assumed reticence of men and the unproblematical acceptance of it by researchers, turns the focus of attention in the victimisation literature almost exclusively to women and their experiences..."

(Stanko and Hobdell 1993 p.400)

Victim studies refer to research targeted towards those with direct experiences of intimate partner abuse. In relation to men, the paucity of studies in contrast to the plethora of family conflict studies (described above) is striking. The absence of a significant body of research in this area perhaps reflects a 'forbidden' discourse (Allen-Collinson 2008) surrounding abused men. This relative dearth of research suggests that the victim studies perspective is not considered a phenomenon worthy of study (Mills 1959). Only a few narrative studies of men were found in the literature search (Allen-Collinson 2008, 2009a, 2009b, Migliaccio 2001, 2002). Another collection of men's narratives was reviewed by Cleary (2001) and is discussed later. In narrative studies, it appears that factors associated with public and private selves influence the storying of abuse. Subscription to masculine norms seems to be a paralysing factor, articulated as prolonging men's relationships and preventing help seeking (Allen-Collinson 2008, Cleary 2004, Migliaccio 2001). Personal attributes such as physical size, self-reliance, control and stoicism seem to play a part in influencing the expression of the abuse experience (Allen-Collinson 2009b, Migliaccio 2002). Similarly, commitments associated with public masculinity such as marriage, family and the church are also used by men to justify why men stay in abusive relationships (Migliaccio 2002). This supports the premise that men's institutional compliance patterns influence their biographical action plans (Schutze 2008). Evidence of men rationalising abusive acts by minimising

women's abuses has also emerged as a factor in narrative studies. This finding, identifiable in narrative studies of women (Hyden 1994) further illustrates the complexity of this phenomenon as it is interpreted by the individual.

In relation to making sense of the abuse experience, a process of sense making in accounting for abuse is recognisable. This is characterised as a period of initial denial and is followed by an eventual acceptance of their fate (Allen-Collinson 2009b, Cleary 2004, Migliaccio 2001). Narrative strategies used such as avoidance, rationalisation, placation, disassociation and response have been used as a means of coming to terms with abuse (Migliaccio 2002). Narrative disassociation through writing has been identified in case studies of a severely abused man's life history (Allen-Collinson 2008, 2009a, 2009b). Documentation via a diary and the use of the third person in writing the abuse story served a dual role as a protective mechanism, enabling narrative disassociation from traumatic experiences whilst providing a useful means for him to record acts and reflect upon experiences (Allen-Collinson 2008). As mentioned earlier, a collection of 41 anonymised letters sent by men to Amen were published (Cleary 2004) and reviewed for this study. The very fact that these letters were written by men and sent to this support agency also serendipitously supports the practice of writing as a therapeutic mechanism by abused men.

Narrative studies of abused men provide a useful lens to explore in depth, the nature and scope of abuse. Evidence of all aspects of intimate partner abuse (defined above) has been demonstrated in victim studies and in narrative accounts (Cleary 2004, Migliaccio

2001). However, more recent research has expanded the meaning of abuse illustrating its nature and extensive scope. Using the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism, Allen-Collinson (2009a 2009b) identified the devastating extent to which invasion of personal space and personal property can be exercised by a woman and experienced by a man (Allen-Collinson 2008, 2009a, 2009b). Whilst acts of violence and control are often theorised under the category of ‘physical abuse’, her case studies lend weight to the suggestion that existing definitions regarding the nature and typology of abuse are potentially limited.

Evidence of a double victimisation for men who seek support from biographical caretakers has also been identified from victim studies (Migliaccio 2001, 2002, Cleary 2004). Narratives of ‘not being believed’ by Gardaí (the Irish police force), solicitors, social workers and the medical profession, illustrated in Cleary (2004), are used in the text to justify why they stayed in abusive relationships. This phenomenon has resonance in other research (Migliaccio 2001) which identified institutional reactions as a negative experience. Threatening men by telling them they would not be believed was also used as an abusive technique by women to prevent men disclosing abuse (Cleary 2004). Not being believed by biographical caretakers has emerged in other studies of men. In case studies of 24 fathers in Ireland who were involved with social/family support agencies (Ferguson and Hogan 2004), denial of the men’s plight was evident. Similarly, a survey by Hines, Brown and Dunning (2007), found that abused men reported varying responses from support services included; being refused, being laughed at and being accused of being a male batterer. This could also be viewed as hegemony in action as those who

subscribe to the more dominant identities marginalise those who represent marginalised masculinities.

The power of biographical caretakers emerges through the victim studies perspective. Wrong advice given by police, lawyers and social workers was found to have damaged men in their pursuit of child custody and legal orders (Cleary 2004). It is no wonder that mistrust of the legal system is prevalent amongst men (Lehane 2005). According to Richardson (2004), men's choices in accessing health services are more linked to the value men place on it rather than its necessity. It is possible to suggest that mistrust of a service such as the police may prevent men from accessing them, regardless of the competence of personnel. This suggests that the social constructions of male abuse are currently not 'believable' or legitimate within the wider public discourse.

Another larger scale victim study has elucidated the types of abuse which are experienced by men (Hines, Brown and Dunning 2007). In a survey of 190 men who telephoned a helpline, all had experienced some form of physical abuse. Severe and life-threatening attacks were experienced by 24.1% of the men. In relation to controlling behaviour (which was coded using the Duluth Power and Control wheel), 94.8% of men stated that their partner tried to control them using coercion (77.6%), emotional abuse (74.1%), intimidation (63.3%), blaming, minimising and denying abuse (59.9%), manipulation of the 'system' (50.3%), isolation (41.5%), and economic abuse (38.1%). Manipulation of the system related to female abusers using the legal system to falsely obtain legal orders or custody of children. This is argued to be the use of 'female privilege' in manipulating services which traditionally are the domain of female victims of abuse. 'Female

privilege'¹³ as opposed to 'male privilege', perhaps challenges the appropriateness of the universally accepted Duluth Power and Control wheel in conceptualising the nature of women's abuse towards men. In the study by Hines Brown and Dunning (2007) 64.5% of men with children stated that their partners used children to further abuse the men by threatening to remove the children from their lives. Of the 41 letters sent to Amen, men's accounts of how their female partners manipulated the Irish court and legal system were also notable (Cleary 2004). Examples of women's reported manipulative techniques included claiming that they themselves were battered, or claiming that their partners were abusing their children.

Compared with physical abuse, emotional abuse has been identified as having the most damaging impact on the lives of victims of both sexes (Coker, et al. 2002, Watson and Parsons 2005, Pico-Alfonso, et al. 2006). The consequences of emotional/psychological abuse impact on physical, psychological and economical well being. In a secondary analysis of a large scale study data, (Coker, et al. 2002) intimate partner abuse was associated with increased risk of poor health, depression, chronic disease and chronic mental illness amongst men and women (n=14,192). Depression, anxiety, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and suicidal ideation were also all correlated with psychological abuse. Importantly, an escalation in psychological intimate partner abuse was strongly associated with deterioration in physical and mental health (Coker, et al. 2002). This means that men and women who continue to stay in abusive relationships are potentially less physically and mentally well; this most probably compounds their potential to leave their abusive relationships.

¹³ In the Duluth Power and Control wheel, Male privilege is a term used to describe men's manipulation of women

The context of men's health in Ireland is also worth briefly considering. Men's life expectancy is shorter; mortality rates are higher than women (Courtenay 2000, Richardson 2004). Young men in Ireland are four times more likely to die than young women. Young men in Ireland also have the second highest rate of suicide amongst the 30 for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)¹⁴ countries. Whilst suicidologists continue to investigate the reasons for this glaring statistic, it is plausible to suggest that difficulties in interpersonal relationships may be one contributory factor to the unfortunate decision these men take in ending their own lives. Suicidal ideation has previously been linked with victims of intimate partner abuse in previous research (Coker, et al. 2002). In a grounded theory study undertaken by Philbin (2009), commitment to identities associated with family membership was associated with non-suicide. Although Philbin's study was in the context of psychosis, it seems plausible to suggest that if a man's family membership is fractured or if a man's identity is lost through abuse, there is potential for these situations to bring about thoughts of suicide regardless of any previous mental health history. A variety of emotional effects from abuse have been illustrated to have arisen from experiencing intimate partner abuse from a study of male victims of assault. 'Taking care of one's self' is often perceived as what men ought to be able to do. Victimisation or assault had the capacity to undermine this sense of ability, resulting in feelings of vulnerability, fear and in some cases post-traumatic stress disorder (Stanko and Hobdell 1993). Clearly, intimate partner abuse is detrimental to health, regardless of gender.

¹⁴ http://www.oecd.org/document/58/0,3343,en_2649_201185_1889402_1_1_1_1.00.html Accessed May 7th 2009

The victim studies perspective on abuse is useful three ways: firstly, it illustrates some level of similarity between men's and women's abuse experiences. Secondly, these studies also begin to highlight gendered divergence; in the nature of abuse exercised and also in coping strategies that men utilise in living with abuse. Thirdly, they signal that the abuse experience is far from simple and best described as a complex, multifaceted phenomenon. The dearth of narrative studies positions this study well in its potential to contribute to this developing body of research.

3.2.4 Media

Gergen (2010) identifies the centrality of people in socially constructing knowledge about the world. In the media, female aggression towards men has traditionally been viewed in a humorous light, as the cartoons in Figure 4 below illustrate. Humour such as this plays upon broad public acceptance of a level of female abuse towards men by ridiculing men perceived to have an identity which equates with victim role. Public ridicule and denial are acknowledged as common strategies used by men in the practice of sustaining hegemonic masculinities (Connell 2005b). The media represent a public means by which dominant identities associated with masculinity are portrayed and also how non desirable identities are subordinated. Awareness of the dominant public identities informs individuals about negotiating their own private identities (Gubrium and Holstein 2001). One would wonder how publishable these cartoons would be if the roles were reversed?

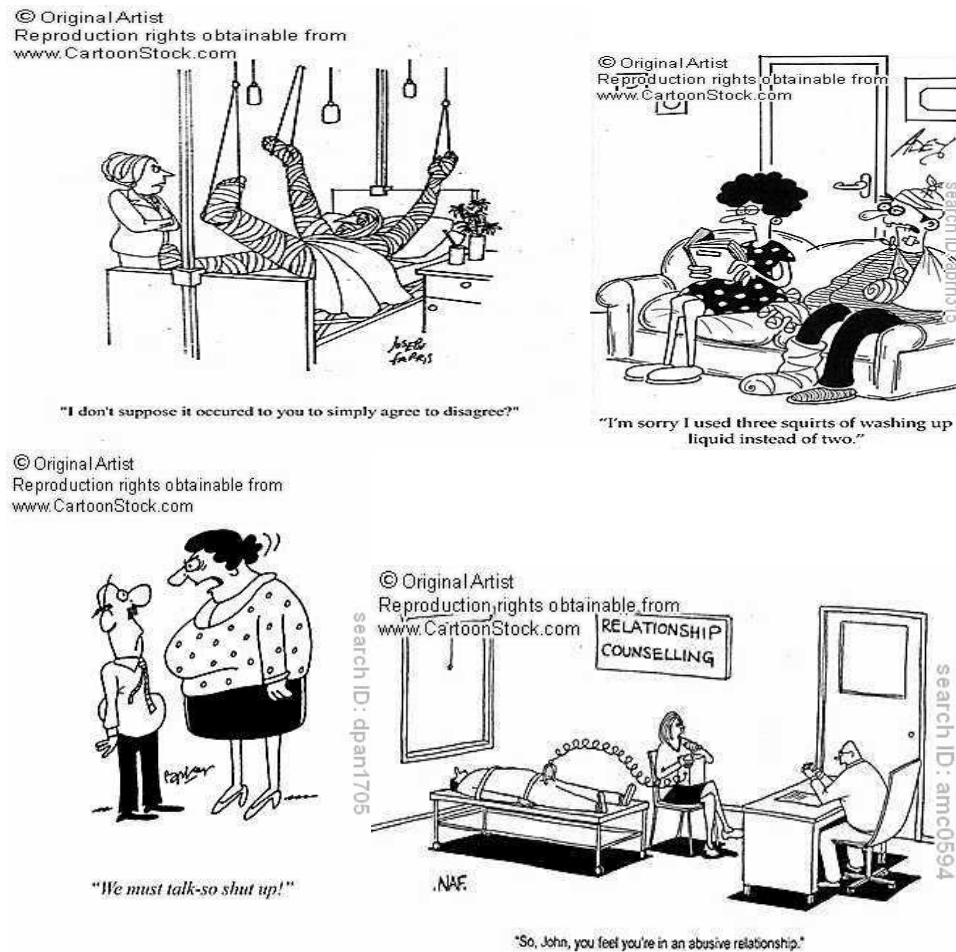


Figure 4 Examples of cartoon humor about female abuse of men
(Source www.cartoonstock.com [Accessed March 15th 2008]).

As highlighted in section 3.2.2 above, the category situational couple violence first articulated by Johnson (2005) seems to be the pattern most commonly portrayed in the media. Incidents relating to 'tit for tat' or 'getting your own back' exchanges between couples (e.g. an advertisement for Toyota Yaris on YouTube: (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YCOKe-beCs&feature=related>)¹⁵) pervade. This further illustrates the acceptability of this particular kind of behaviour. As Johnson suggests, the merging of this pattern of 'couple violence' with other patterns dilutes the

¹⁵ Accessed 23rd June 2010

‘real story’ of intimate partner abuse which is intentional and potentially harmful to those who experience it. However, the fact that this type of violence is mostly female initiated perhaps suggests that ‘violence’ against men (however minor) is universally accepted as tolerable behaviour

Despite the dominant discourses in the media, a more positive shift towards appreciating a masculine perspective of victimisation in Irish media has been noted, suggesting the dominant discourse itself is modifying. A recent media campaign highlighting awareness of men as potential victims of abuse was launched in by the Irish national male victim support group in 2010. Additionally, in 2010, ‘Fair City’, the largest national television soap opera ran a storyline of a woman abusing her partner. Damian and Suzanne’s relationship narrative was interpreted by 5-600,000 viewers in their living rooms—challenging the dominant constructions of this topic (Kenny 2008). The climax of this storyline watched by 721,000 viewers¹⁶ prompted a fervent discussion on a local discussion forum¹⁷ suggesting that this topic has sparked a lot of interest.

3.2.5 Policy

The influence of second wave feminism has been a key element of the placing of women’s agendas at the centre of policy discussion internationally. This is also apparent in Ireland, where the women’s movement has been instrumental in re-examining the social relations between men and women in Ireland in the last 30 years (Ferguson 2002b).

¹⁶ Source: Irish Film and Television Network website:

<http://iftn.ie/broadcast/BroadcastNews/?act1=record&only=1&aid=73&rid=4283523&tpl=archnews&force=1>

¹⁷ 55 postings about the Damien and Suzanne storyline on Fair City were posted on www.boards.ie. URL: <http://www.boards.ie/vbulletin/showthread.php?p=68931835> [Accessed 5th February 2010].

However, the same impetus can not be said from the perspective of men. Worldwide, there appears to be a gendered approach to policy generation, with women being favoured over men in international policy discourse (Connell 2005a). Connell also notes that many of the agencies which have a mandate for gender equality implicitly discriminate against men by virtue of the fact that they specify that they assume gender equality is a women's issue. In Ireland, most of the agencies established to care for those experiencing abuse have been gender specific, whilst providing tokenist services to service users of the opposite sex if necessary. Connell notes that many contemporary state policies which promote 'family friendly' and 'gender equal' organisations are in reality supportive of women's continuance of domestic responsibilities (Connell 2005c). This could be viewed as a perpetuation of patriarchy which prevents men who want to fulfil their role at home from doing so.

Walby (1990) argued that the patriarchal structure of state policy was biased in favour of men with more men in positions of power in politics than women. Legislation, formed by the state also forms part of Walby's structure of state policy. Prior to the feminist movement, policies were clearly lacking in terms of support for women. Change in such legislation has been evident. Examples of such changes in legislation includes: pay equality, equal working time, anti discrimination in employment, parental leave and maternity leave (Hearn and Pringle 2006). However, it could be argued that the responses of the state have swung in favour of women only – for example the vast difference between maternity and paternity leave still persists.

Within the last decade, there has been an identifiable change towards the consideration of men's health and well-being in policy generation in Ireland. This appears to be reflective of international movements which have attempted to promote men's health in an international forum. The first recognition of the need to identify men's health within a national context was the National Health Strategy in 2001 (Department of Health and Children 2001) which signalled the need to develop a national health policy specific to men. Research into men's health in Ireland also was evident during this time (McEvoy and Richardson 2004, Richardson 2004). These works informed the creation of the first men's health policy which materialised in 2008. The document is significant as it recognised men as both victims and perpetrators of abuse, legitimising both groups as equally deserving of appropriate assistance from relevant services. This was a milestone in strengthening public policy in relation to men and men's health. It was also the first document to recognise the need for a gender mainstreaming approach in dealing with health and associated issues (Richardson and Carroll 2008). Gender mainstreaming involves the consideration of both genders and their needs in planning and providing services, particularly when they arise from issues of gender inequality (such as intimate partner abuse) (World Health Organisation. 2002). It is ironic that the visionary ideal of gender mainstreaming which explicitly mentions both genders emerges from a document focussed on men. Many female focussed policy documents which strive for gender equality yet exclude men in their text (Connell 2005a). Some change in policy is evident over the last decade in Ireland. A governmental commitment to the implementation of gender mainstreamed services was solidified with the establishment of Cosc in June 2007. Cosc (a Gaelic word which means 'to prevent') is the National Office for the

Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence. Cosc has generated a national strategy (COSC 2010) and is continuing to examine current responses, promoting an efficient and co-ordinated response to intimate partner abuse, sexual abuse and abuse arising from gender differences (www.cosc.ie). Although the establishment of Cosc will influence policy discourse, it is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of this office in achieving its goals. Although gender-based violence as something that Cosc is mandated to prevent, it is suggested that this term is misplaced as current usage of this term relates not to the context of Ireland, but as a force used in countries undergoing armed conflict (Jennings and McLean 2005). The gender based underpinnings of abuse clearly have a broader remit than in the context of armed conflict. The social construction of masculinity in society is discussed further in the following section.

3.3 The social construction of masculinity

Masculinity refers to socially constructed notions of being a man. Expressions of masculinity reflect cognition, attitudinal and behavioural ideals of the prevailing culture (Beynon 2002). It is not possible to critically discuss notions of masculinity in isolation from femininity because they exist on the continuum of gender and directly influence each other (Connell 1995, Featherstone, Rivett and Scourfield 2007). However, the discursive practice of masculinity and its historically situated ideology are often asserted to be dictated by a dichotomous perspective of that which is not masculine (Migliaccio 2001). The perspective of masculinity in this thesis does not place it in opposition with femininity, assuming potential for conflict; it rather views masculinity and femininity as interdependent entities. This interdependence is complex. According to Connell (2003),

“There are multiple dimensions in gender relations, and the patterns of inequality in these dimensions may be qualitatively different. If we look separately at each of the substructures of gender, we find a pattern of advantages for men but also a linked pattern of disadvantages or toxicity”

(Connell 2003 p.252)

Clearly, elements of this irony may have significance for men who experience intimate partner abuse. Constructions of masculinity and femininity have what Nye terms a ‘protean quality’ meaning they are not fixed and can mutate depending on the context and the individual (Nye 2005 p.1939). Masculinities are practices which foster particular desirable identities which are co-constructed by both the self and society. (Butler 2004). The means by which men position themselves through talk is a negotiated process and is far from simplistic as Connell and Messerschmidt point out.

“Men can dodge among multiple meanings according to their interactional needs. Men can adopt hegemonic masculinity when it is desirable but the same men can distance themselves strategically from hegemonic masculinity at other moments. Consequently “masculinity” represents not a certain type of man but, rather a way that men position themselves through discursive practices”

(Connell and Messerschmidt 2005 p.841)

Given the protean nature of masculinities, it is plausible that differences between public and private portrayals of masculinity occur due to variations in the ‘audience’ or ‘stage’ at the time (Goffman 1959). Such variations in the portrayal of self are assumptions of biographical narrative expression and are discussed further in section 4.1.1 below. Holstein and Gubrium (2000) highlight that the discursive practice of masculinity is influenced by particular ‘going concerns’ (p 97), that is the working perspective of a social organisation. One such going concern for men is the portrayal of hegemonic masculinity.

As mentioned earlier, hegemonic masculinity is the term ascribed to a configuration of practice where dominant identities regarding masculinity are sustained. This dominance is perpetuated by sub-ordination (of those not dominant), complicity (with the dominant group) and marginalisation (of those not authorised to be dominant) (Connell 1987, Connell 2005b, Connell 2009). The theory of hegemonic masculinity, attributed to Connell, was derived from the Gramscian concept of hegemony, a means by which power over others is sustained through particular practices (Connell 1987). It is important to be mindful that the advantage of membership with a dominant group (what Connell terms patriarchal dividend) brings consequences for those who deviate from it (Connell 2005b). This is an issue for men who are abused by women. Connell theorised that the prevailing gender order (i.e. men's dominance over women) was built on relations of power, the division of labour, emotional relations and discourse (West and Zimmerman 1987, Connell 1987). Power was exercised through men's consent to the ideology associated with hegemonic masculinity. Idealised identities embodying hegemonic masculinity have been associated with people such as the actors Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger (Connell 2005b). Comparisons such as these have been criticised as being too narrow and broadly unattainable (Speer 2001, Moller 2007). However, a broader type of hegemonic masculinity has also been recognised in the ordinary expression of self (Wetherell and Edley 1999). In their study of 61 men whom were asked about what masculinity meant to them, Wetherell and Edley found that in addition to 'heroic' and 'rebellious' framing most men framed masculinity in the 'ordinary' sense, as the fulfillment of social stereotypes. It is the ordinary sense of hegemonic masculinity, and its portrayal which is of interest in this thesis. As

highlighted earlier, compliance to particular patterns (or stereotypes) influence how one makes sense of oneself in a life story (Riemann 2003, Riemann and Schutze 2005). These institutional compliance patterns affect biographical action plans or how one intends to live one's life (Riemann and Schutze 2005). Considering this perspective, it could be suggested that living the life of a 'good family man' espoused by Ferguson (2001) represents the narrative expression of compliance with hegemonic masculinities. Common masculine attributes include aggression, inexpressiveness, stoicism, competitiveness, strength, and risk-taking (Brannon 1999, McEvoy and Richardson 2004, Richardson 2004). These attributes represent 'plausibility structures' by which hegemonic masculinity can be articulated. Subscribing to hegemonic masculinity regardless of type presents a paradox for men insofar as it is simultaneously beneficial and disadvantageous. On one hand it sanctions acceptable discourses of masculine practice which, if men comply, they are afforded the benefits of what Connell terms the 'patriarchal dividend' (Connell 2005b). However, on the other it simultaneously excludes unacceptable practices. It is suggested that male vulnerability or victimhood represents an unacceptable practice due to its association with femininity (Mills 1997). Maintenance of hegemonic dominance requires preservation work in order to sustain the dominant collective identity (which in this case is masculinity) (Butler 1999). In the face of a crisis of collective identity Connell (2005b) asserts that particular defensive procedures (usually denial and ridicule) are operationalised. Berger and Luckmann's (1966) assertion that "*the violence of these defensive procedures will be proportional to the seriousness with which the threat is viewed*" (p. 166) is an important one when considering a threat to the dominant societal group. It is suggested that men who

experience abuse must have some knowledge of this potential threat which invariably influences the choices a man makes in pursuing his biography.

Connell's initial work focussed mainly on structures, a factor critiqued by others (Wetherell and Edley 1999, Speer 2001). This flaw, identified also by Connell himself, resulted in a revision of his original theory (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Although steps towards appreciating influences on the personal expression of masculinity were made, there remains concern about the sensitivity of hegemonic masculinity in capturing the private world of individuals (Moller 2007). Despite its flaws, hegemonic masculinity provides a useful framework to examine publicly legitimated identities of men in this study. The inadequacy of hegemonic masculinity in capturing the 'nitty gritty' features of masculine expression at the level of personal agency is a concern which has been recognised by others (Wetherell and Edley 1999, Speer 2001). Narrative methods have been acknowledged as one means by which masculinity at this level can be explored (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). The BNIM analytic method is advantageous as it encompasses both perspectives of masculine expression, exploring relationships between the general (structure) and the particular (agency) through narrative accounts. Further discussion of this method can be found in Chapter four (below).

Men's bodies act as a locus from which they position their identities. This is an important consideration for men who are abused by women. According to Stanko and Hobdell (1993) physical injuries have the capacity to cause disability and as such impact on undertaking normal daily activity. Men's ability to 'take care of one's self' in the

event of assault is important to men's sense of identity. Given the fact that men experience less physical injury than women (Archer 2000) with bruising and cuts being the most likely injuries sustained by men (Watson and Parsons 2005), it is unlikely that men will seek assistance for such minor injuries such as these let alone disclose abuse. It is suggested that men who experience abuse view their experiences through a male frame which views victimisation as being 'weak'. This contradiction to espoused masculinity, compounds men's efforts to seek help as they feel isolated and unable to express their feelings (Stanko and Hobdell 1993). Victimhood according to Tremblay and Turcotte (2005) is 'women's territory'. In their seminal work on social constructionism, Berger and Luckmann (1966) identify that the intensity of resistance or defence of 'implausible' masculinity is related to how seriously this implausible behaviour threatens the collective identity. Considering hegemonic masculinity as the dominant discourse, the antithesis of this is can be interpreted as 'emphasised femininity'. This is constituted of opposing characteristics to masculinity such as compliance, caring, being emotional and passivity (Giddens 2001). Although hegemonic masculinity is an ideological aspiration (MacInnes 1998) in real life, many men desire to sustain an identity associated with hegemonic masculinity in the ordinary sense (Wetherell and Edley 1999).

In society as a whole, men constitute most of the law breakers and also the law makers which means that perceptions of masculinity are intertwined in both sides of the legal system (Stanko and Hobdell 1993, Connell 2005c). It is clear to see how men who experience abuse could be viewed as 'marginalised' in terms of their masculinity and relatively invisible within society as they constitute a minority group. Given the history

of wife abuse, and the apparent acceptability of husband to wife abuse, it is unsurprising that the possibility of conceptualising violence against men by women has been very slow to emerge. In summary, the social construction of masculinity is complex. Historical and sociocultural influences affect the dominant discourses surrounding masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is a widely used concept in the masculinity literature. In its 'ordinary' sense (Wetherell and Edley 1999) hegemonic masculinity relates to men's articulations of functioning in stereotypical roles in society. The utility of married fatherhood as an ideological interpretative resource for men in expressing masculinity has been recognised theoretically and in research studies (Edley and Wetherell 1999). Given the 'protean' nature of masculinities and its potential for contextual variation, men can have conflicting identities. How men make sense of these and comply (or not) to the dominant ideology warrants further exploration and is discussed further below.

3.3.1 Public and private masculinities

"Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are. We have to imagine and to build up what we could be to get rid of this kind of political "double bind", which is the simultaneous individualisation and totalisation of modern power structures"

(Foucault 2002, p 336)

One of the premises of social constructionism is that how an individual constructs themselves is invariably entwined with the society in which s/he exists (Mills 1959, Gergen 1973). For men negotiating hegemonic masculinity in the public world involves a conscious decision to portray oneself in the best possible light. This is not without challenge. As highlighted earlier, institutional compliance patterns are desired behaviours

which are socially constructed at a macro level (Schutze 2008, Burr 2008). These macro social constructions of public identity provide and inform private identity construction. Plummer's term 'intimate citizenship' is particularly useful in illustrating the dynamic relationship between the private persona and the public world in which they live. Although denial of female perpetrated abuse is ideological, its practice becomes evident through its absence in public discourses.

"For narratives to flourish there must be a community to hear"

(Plummer 1995 p.87)

In terms of accounting for oneself, social beings negotiate the construction of their identities whilst being cognisant of both discursive practices and also discourses in practice around them (Holstein and Gubrium 2000). In other words, society provides the individual with 'raw materials' from which to build an account of oneself (Wetherell and Edley 1999). Men who experience abuse who face a contradiction of selves, simultaneously identify with both dominant and marginalised groups. Edley and Wetherell (1999) remind us of the fact that men are both masters and slaves to language, producing and being a product of it. This is an important consideration, particularly in relation to the expression of masculine identity. Choices need to be made by an individual to act (or not) in particular ways within social contexts. However, suffice it to say that how one 'does' their identity is determined by a multiplicity of factors, is contextually determined and influenced by the discourses in practice (see below). The performance symbolises valued identities and minimises undesired ones.

Discourses in practice refer to current socially sanctioned interpretations of phenomena which have evolved historically and been embedded within institutions (Foucault 2002). The relevant discourse in practice for men is most notably that of hegemonic masculinity, discussed above (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). This discourse in practice prescribes legitimated or acceptable identities. In articulating technologies of self-construction, the individual makes choices to portray 'presentable' or socially acceptable identities (Hollway and Jefferson 2009). This phenomenon is no different in the context of the narrative interview. The presentation of self through narrative is also another opportunity by which others interpret and judge the integrity of the person by social interaction.

When discussing the private and public worlds of men, there is a dichotomy between the public world (defined by being visible outside the home) and the private world of patriarchy (that which is within the home or personal to the individual). Narratives provide one means in which an individual's life choices regarding their identities can be expressed. The life story of the actor Rock Hudson¹⁸ provides a good example of a man's dilemma between a public masculine identity and a contradictory private masculine identity. During his career, Rock was voted favourite leading man for films and portrayed an identity in the public media of being the epitome of heterosexuality being a successful married man. Privately, he was homosexual and contracted a HIV infection (Hudson and Davidson 1986). Although Rock was all of these identities at once, his choices in concealing his homosexuality and HIV infection from public discourse must have been influenced by his recognition of the fact that his public dominant identity (as a successful married man) required making choices about the

¹⁸ See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock_Hudson [Accessed April 13th 2011]

consequences of concealing his vulnerable, marginalised identity. Awareness of the dominant discourse of the time (which was heavily anti-homosexual) invariably affected his life choices. However, the disclosure of the fact that Rock Hudson's death resulted from an AIDS related illness challenged the very discourse he attempted to hide from. There is an analogy between Rock Hudson's dilemma and the potential dilemma of men experiencing abuse. Men who are abused by women are problematic in society as they do not fit the mould of the socially constructed reality and masculine identities which have been carefully constructed to ensure men's continued dominance. Society attributes men with being violent, in control, aggressive; when its attributions are not met the response is often unfavourable (Faludi 2000). Rock Hudson's story illustrates the power of narratives in reshaping discourse by challenging its very foundation. In relation to the study topic, it is hoped that this sentiment can be replicated by those who read this study.

The 'malestream' influence of public power difference via hegemony has been discussed earlier (Hearn 1992). However, the realm of the private although it is assumed to be an extension of patriarchy, relates particularly to femininity. This 'home advantage' is powerful for women, despite claims that the public patriarchy extends into the home; it is not necessarily the case. When a man is abused by a woman, he is potentially a victim in the eyes of the law. However, this experience also inscribes him into a particular category of person. This category of person (victim) is also closely associated with the category of female. In other words, the abuse experience challenges his gender identity and conceptualisations of what this means to him. Considering the theoretical perspective of identity as a co-constructed phenomenon, the abuse experience not only challenges men's ideas about themselves but also simultaneously challenges other men's

ideas about them Jackson (2004). Constructions of masculinity are done in relation to femininity and additionally in relation to other men (Courtenay 2000, Migliaccio 2001).

Public Identity Narratives, constructed via contemporary media influence are a key influence on the portrayal of self in the public eye and as such define acceptable discourses of practice from which individuals interpret meaning and choose to perform (or not) (Plummer 2003 p.167). The correct performance of masculinity requires competence firstly in identifying the importance of societal influence on individual behaviour and cognisance of the social rules of acceptable expression (Fisher 1978). Holstein and Gubrium (2000) argue that these processes represent the ‘technology’ of self construction (p.103). This essentially determines how individuals position themselves within narratives. What is important to note is the alternative in Holstein and Gubrium’s thesis which is the condition that such discursive practices and discourses in practice need to exist or be ‘in practice’ in order for them to be considered legitimate means for interpretation. If they are not ‘in practice’, essentially they could be interpreted as invisible discourses (Davies and Harre 1990, Butler 2004) and as such not amenable to narrative expression. It is suggested that male victimisation is not a legitimated phenomenon. However, what is legitimated is that which is equated with hegemonic masculinity in the ordinary sense (Wetherell and Edley 1999). One example of this is fatherhood. The context of fatherhood in Ireland is discussed below.

3.3.1.1 Fatherhood

Being a father is recognized as a legitimate means of ‘doing masculinity’ through narrative expression (Wetherell and Edley 1999). In Ireland, there is a subtle chivalry in responses of the state in particular where children are involved, beginning at a constitutional level and filtering down through legislative, social and human resource policy practices¹⁹. It could be suggested that this chivalrous notion emerges from a social consciousness of men’s collective violence and power (Connell 2005b, Connell 2009). Traditional notions of Irish patriarchy viewed child rearing as the sole domain of women, whilst fatherhood was a functional relationship associated with breadwinning (Walby 1990). The role of fatherhood in Ireland has changed in more modern times and reflects the international shift towards ‘new fatherhood’ (Richardson and Carroll 2008). Whilst little is known about the actual role of fathers in the household, there appears to be a prevalent theme of social exclusion of fathers when directly compared with mothers in Ireland. This is discussed later on in this section. Traditionally, the gender stratification of functional fatherhood in Ireland was re-inforced with laws and social welfare policies which rendered mothers as economically dependent. Up until 1973, women who married were not allowed work in the Irish public service. This ‘marriage ban’ solidified women’s role as home workers and as mothers at home providing child care. Though EU equality directives in the mid 80s were instrumental in re-instating a balance, the social construction of women as home makers prevailed (Coakley 1997). The influence of the Catholic Church which prevented the use of contraception also reduced Irish couples’

¹⁹ Examples include Bunreacht Na h'Eireann – the Constitution of Ireland and human resource policy differences in relation to maternity and paternity leave. A more detailed discussion of Irish social practices of favouring mothers (by excluding fathers) can be found in (Ferguson and Hogan 2004).

choices in relation to becoming parents. Consequently perceptions of fatherhood were formed through traditional conceptualisations, religious beliefs, financial necessity and the law.

The ‘Celtic Tiger’ economic boom which originated in the mid 90s resulted in a dramatic alteration of traditional family roles. Currently, in families with children, fathers are the sole breadwinners in only 50% these cases. 30% of families in Ireland currently are dual-earners (Ferguson 2002c). This clearly suggests an alteration in the role of the mother within the family. The improved financial status of mothers in Ireland via employment and improved social welfare benefits reduced mother’s dependence on fathers meaning financially speaking, mothers did not need fathers to survive (Leane and Kiely 1997). This has altered the balance of power within families and perhaps challenged fathers to clarify their purpose within the family. This ironically has never been asked of mothers.

This has resulted in a contemporary shift of perspectives in relation to fatherhood. In Ireland, the ‘new fatherhood’ relates to caring and nurturing men who actively participate in childcare in addition to being a family breadwinner (Richardson and Carroll 2008). There is a paucity of research evidence to support this newly adjusted division of labour though it appears that there have been some changes in men’s practices within the family evident in western societies, resulting in a conscientious shift toward equality of housework and childcare (Connell 2005a). Father involvement can be viewed in three ways, by engagement with children, by accessibility to children and by responsibility for children (Featherstone, Rivett and Scourfield 2007). The dearth of Irish literature in these areas makes detailed discussion about these ways difficult. Ferguson (2002a)

identified only one study undertaken in the late 80s examining women's perceptions of men's input into household work (Ferguson 2002b). In this study, fathers had more responsibility than women for playing and going on outings with their children, though women did undertake the bulk of other domestic activity. Clearly more research is required to articulate the key role fathers play in children's lives.

Irish law has also been influential in undermining the role of fathers in childcare and there appears to be an exclusionary theme for fathers here also. The Constitution of Ireland defines the family by marriage. The only father, who is viewed as legitimate, is a married father, despite the fact that a mother is given automatic rights by being a mother. This has serious implications for unmarried fathers as they have no automatic right to child custody if they leave the home. More recently, the Irish State is coming under pressure to improve the rights of unmarried fathers (Ferguson 2002a). Family law in Ireland also appears to be restrictive for fathers in relation to the amount of access which is granted to children. Frustrations with the family law system and how it threatens relationships between men and their children emerged in a qualitative study of 24 men who were involved in social/family support services (Ferguson and Hogan 2004). The dynamics of men's exclusion from involvement by various government agencies were identified by all participants in the study. This was the same for both male victims and perpetrators of abuse. This was in fact reinforced by accounts of 20 professionals who acknowledged exclusion of men either implicitly or explicitly. This study, the first of its kind in Ireland illustrated the challenges for men involved in social/family support services in accessing their children. The phenomenon of excluding fathers does not appear to be unique to Ireland as Featherstone, Rivett and Scourfield (2007) noted.

Although their claim was made in relation to male perpetrators of abuse, it does have resonance for male victims of abuse.

Domestic work within the home has always been viewed as the domain of women. Since the industrial revolution, the movement of women into the workplace has resulted in a reduced value of this work in monetary terms (Giddens 2001). This is in spite of the fact that this work still had to be done. Men's avoidance of undertaking housework was found as a recurring theme in a European review of men and their role within the family (Hearn and Pringle 2006). Men's reluctance to alter this situation is evidence of the perpetuation of patriarchy. The care of children also forms part of work in the home. Modernity, MacInnes (1998) suggests, has undermined this structure of patriarchy by influencing men's roles evident both in the home and in society. Views of the 'new man' relate to perspectives of a more health conscious man who is involved in shared parenting (Haywood and Mac an Ghall 2003). As highlighted earlier, married fatherhood is recognised as an interpretative positioning resource for men (Edley and Wetherell 1999). Considering the evolution of married fatherhood constructions in Ireland and the practices of exclusion, it is not surprising that vulnerable fathers (i.e. who have children and are abused by women) experience a double bind, as not only do they risk damage to their masculine identities, their exposure to their children is at stake also.

3.4 Summary

This chapter critically analysed the literature in relation to three broad areas; the professional practice of education and care, perspectives of intimate partner abuse and the social construction of masculinity. It is suggested that the epistemology and social construction of intimate partner abuse has been predominantly feminised which has influenced the practice of educators and biographical caretakers in their care of abused men. The merit of narrative studies as a means to examine constructions of masculinity and intimate partner abuse was also discussed. The following chapter introduces the methodology used in this study.

4 Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM) which was utilised in this study. The ‘method’ in BNIM is somewhat of a misnomer as it is a methodology in itself in addition to having a particular set of techniques associated with the collection and analysis of data. This chapter begins with positioning the method within the interpretivist paradigm. The key assumptions of BNIM are then discussed as is the rationale for selecting this methodology and method. The chapter concludes with a discussion of its practical application in relation to this particular study.

“When we aggregate people, treating diversity as error variance in search of what is common to all, we often learn about what is true of no one in particular. Narrative approaches allow us to witness the individual in his or her complexity and recognise that although some phenomena will be common to all, some will remain unique”

(Josselson 1995 pp 32-33)

Making clear, the ontological and epistemological assumptions of research studies is essential in order to appreciate its underpinning assumptions. Although ontology is primarily concerned with the study of being, its use in research vernacular is synonymous with that of theoretical perspectives (Crotty 1998). Both terms are concerned with explicating assumptions underpinning particular approaches to social inquiry. The ontological position taken in this thesis (which represents the ‘I’ in BNIM) is based on an interpretivist assumption insofar as individuals socially construct meaning in their lives through narrative, which is inherently a social interaction. This means that the epistemology of meaning is created in the social realm. Interpretivism implies an ontology whereby meaning is negotiated by actors engaged in social interaction (Crotty

1998). The talk that people engage in (and construct meaning through) is socially constructed, historically situated and informed by discourses which are in some cases paradoxical (Atkinson 1998, Chase 2005, Wengraf 2009). The social act of narrating involves a simultaneous process of engagement with self and society (Kohler Riessman 1993). In essence, elements of both structure and agency influence the discursive practice of narrating the self (Holstein & Gubrium 2000). The social performance of representing the self through narrative is undertaken with a view to emphasise identities which are intended to be communicated, minimising less desirable ones. Social constructionism recognises the mediating effect social relations play in the epistemology of knowledge (Burr 2008, Gergen 2010). A more detailed discussion outlining how these perspectives influenced my decision to use BNIM are discussed further below.

BNIM originated from a narrative biographical method used to study Holocaust survivors in the 1970s (Fischer-Rosenthal and Rosenthal 1997). The construction of this method was informed by a variety of theoretical orientations such as linguistic analysis, grounded theory, social constructionism and hermeneutic analysis (Berger and Luckmann 1966, Glaser and Strauss 1968, Labov 1997). Through case based analysis BNIM facilitates retrospective understanding of the private and public worlds of the individual and their interactivity with historically evolving contexts (Wengraf 2008)²⁰. The assumption that biographical stories represent situational interpretation of lives rather than a ‘truth’ of what actually happened in one’s life is a key feature of this method (Chamberlayne,

²⁰ Tom Wengraf also hosts a website on Methodspace – an online research community forum: <http://www.methodspace.com/profile/TomWengraf> (Accessed 14th May 2011). There is also a JISCmail BNIM community (BIOGRAPHIC-NARRATIVE-BNIM@JISCMail.AC.UK) in which topical issues to BNIM are discussed on an ongoing basis.

Bornat and Wengraf 2000, Bruner 2004). The generation of case accounts using BNIM is characterised by a particular interview style and comprehensive, detailed analytic method. Detailed description of the BNIM analytic method is necessary and will be provided later in this chapter (section 4.3 below). However, to grasp the concept of BNIM analysis Figure 5 below provides a conceptual model which also presents how the cases in this study were formulated.

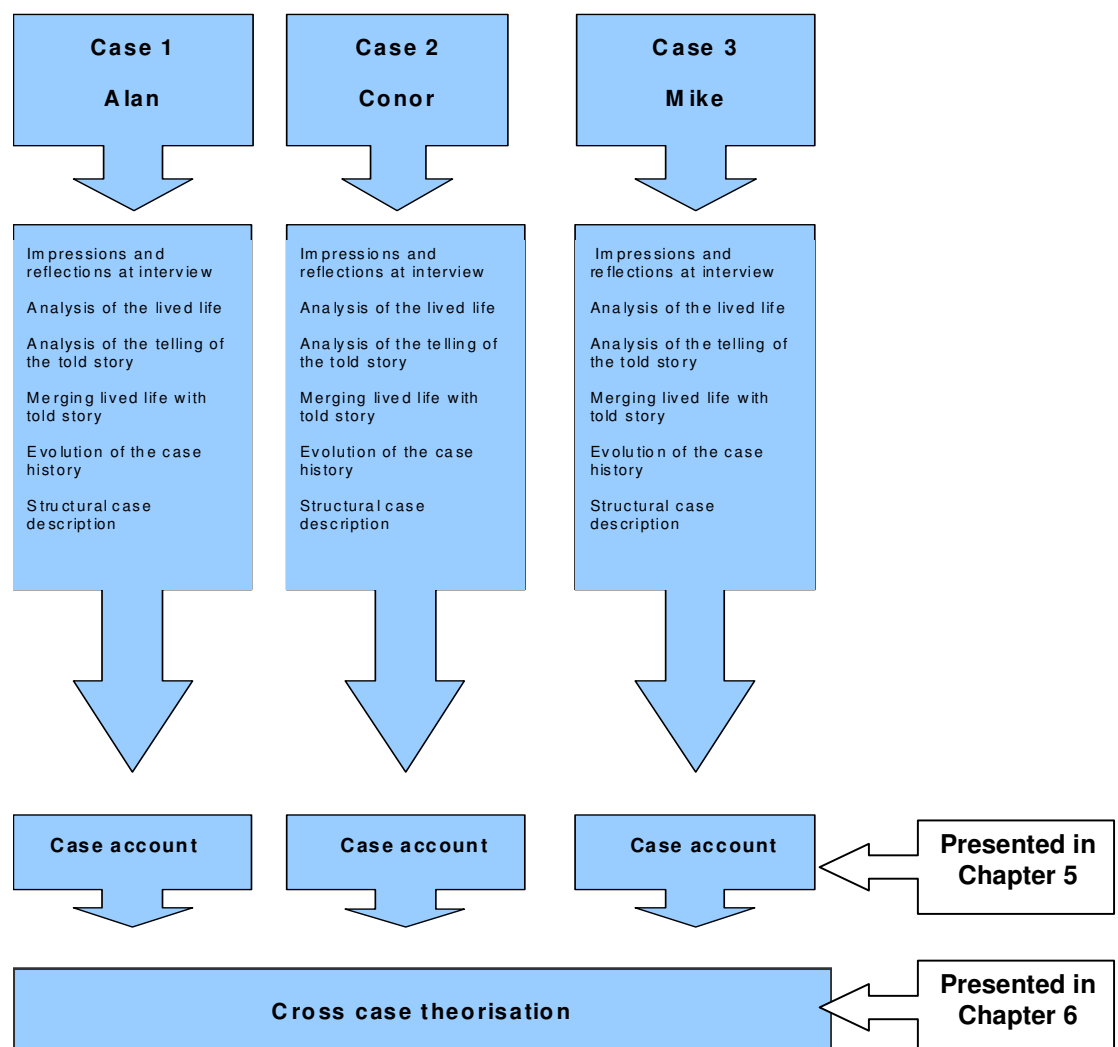


Figure 5 Conceptual model of the BNIM process of case account generation and theorisation

4.1.1 Biography, Narrative and Interpretivism

Narratives are a key means by which individual identity is constructed and portrayed. As discussed earlier, the construction (and re-construction) of self through story telling is a fluid process, continually influenced by discursive practices and discourses in practice (Holstein and Gubrium 2000). It is this very susceptibility (of personal narrative to discourse) which is ideally suited to a biographic narrative investigation (Bruner 2004, Kohler Riessman 2008). Stories and narratives are terms which are often used interchangeably. There are some distinctions; stories have narratives embedded in them in addition to interweaving elements of plot, characters and emotions (Paley and Eva 2005). Also narratives are performances of co-construction of meaning involving a narrator and listener and attention to the linguistic and social rules of interpersonal communication (Kohler Riessman 2008, Mishler 1986). The relative vulnerability of interpretive studies of stories lies with the fact that *“tellers can only select, coaxers can only sift, texts can only sieve and readers can only interpret”* (Plummer 2005 p. 42). Clearly, the nature of interpretivism invites criticism from those engaged in paradigm wars, seeking to legislate one version of truth over another (Seale 1999, Denzin and Lincoln 2005). However, bearing that in mind, interpretive research methods recognise the interpretive nature of truth (perhaps more honestly than positivists), advocating that verisimilitude, plausibility, or believability (rather than ‘truth’ per se) is obtainable through interpretive research processes (Denzin 1989a, 1989b, Scott, 1998, Hoffman 2007).

Narrative methods (as a school of enquiry) became established through the Chicago school of sociology in the 1920s (Chase 2005). The work that emerged from this school at the time signalled the beginning of humanist approaches to sociological inquiry where the appreciation of both objective and subjective factors, in addition to the contextual influences, changed the landscape of traditional qualitative inquiry (Chamberlayne, Bornat and Wengraf 2000, Plummer 2005). Some time later, interest in the textual structure of conversation prompted another perspective on the nature of narrative (Labov 1997, Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou 2008). Interest in narrative methods appeared to expand somewhat in the 60s and 70s. Perhaps this was associated with the ‘liberation movements’ of the time which rejected the singular and advocated a more pluralist perspective to life experiences (Chase 2005). The establishment of a dedicated journal on narrative in addition to the relative explosion of literature in the early 90s established the presence of a ‘narrative turn’ in social science research (Elliott 2005).

It is possible to use the metaphor of ‘bricolage’ or quilt making to describe the process of interpretive research. Interpretive *bricolage*, described by Denzin and Lincoln (Denzin and Lincoln 2005) is the piecing together of different representations of a story, taking cognisance of the complex situation it arises from. The *bricoleur* uses different methods and techniques of representation and interpretation. It is possible to identify bricolage in many different forms (Denzin and Lincoln 2007). In this study, bricolage is used in the broadest sense as an interpretive narrative endeavour. The different techniques used in this study include the two track analysis process of the lived life and told story (described in more detail below). The bricoleur appreciates the interpretivist nature of narrative presentation “stitches, edits and puts slices of reality together. This process creates and

brings psychological and emotional unity, a pattern of sorts to an interpretative experience” (Denzin and Lincoln 2005 p.5). BNIM utilises bricolage in the broad sense to intensively investigate the structure of the case from multiple perspectives. This is discussed in further detail below.

Narrative research has the capacity to provide a ‘practical wisdom’ in comprehending what individuals experience in day to day life. Story telling is an inherent feature of life in conveying meaning (Charon 2006). Most of what is known about men and their experiences of intimate partner abuse is presently only implied through the discussion of quantitative research findings (see literature review above). Less is known about how male victims live their lives or indeed tell their stories. This is an irony considering that support services for male and female victims are dependant on the ‘telling of a story’ to access the required help. Life stories can serve a number of purposes; they can be used as a historical account of events and they can illustrate ambiguity and change. More notably, they have the capacity to facilitate a more holistic perspective of the lived life, rather than what Plummer terms ‘research by amputation’, where assertions about phenomena are generated from looking at only one aspect of it (Plummer 2005). This problem has already been identified in the intimate partner abuse literature (McHugh, Livingston and Ford 2005).

The choice to use a narrative approach was made for a multiplicity of reasons. Firstly, in Ireland, men’s life stories have not been subject to narrative analysis using this method. Using this method constitutes original research on a phenomenon not found in Irish

research data. Secondly, there is a paucity of research on the subject of men's experiences of intimate partner abuse. This study would contribute to the (small) body of research and theoretical literature in this area (Watson and Parsons 2005, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Thirdly, the usefulness of biographical methods in informing professional practice has been long established (Chamberlayne, Bornat and Apitzch 2004). A greater understanding of the subjectivities embedded within cultures of professional care would be invaluable for professional practitioners (or biographical caretakers) in providing sensitive and appropriate responses to those whom they work with (Charon 2006). Also, in more recent times, the use of biographical methods as an agent in shaping social policy in contrast to traditional 'top down' approaches has been recognised in cross-national biographical studies of identity and society (for example: the Social Strategies in Risk Society (SOSTRIS) project (Chamberlayne, Bornat and Wengraf 2000) and the more recent Euro Identities project <http://www.euroidentities.org/Aboutus/>²¹. This study albeit small, can potentially affect policy, not by generalisable data, but by identifying individual difference within cases and examining their influence on current policy. The apparent structured 'ness' of the approach was also a factor influencing my choice of methodology²².

As a case-based method, BNIM acknowledges the following; the processes of change, transition and time, social and historical contexts, the lived texture of lives and the appreciation of structure and agency within those lives (Meares 2007). Case-based methods are particularly useful in discovering individualised reactions to social problems

²¹ Accessed 16th August 2010

²² Upon reflection, I realise that my attraction to the structure was informed by a search for a clearly defined method – something which Taylor and Hicks (Taylor and Hicks 2009) illustrate can not exist due to the 'messy' nature of research.

like a biographical trajectory such as abuse. The ability to theoretically focus on single cases has merit in generating a broader understanding about individual processes of meaning making within the broader social field – for example in health, social care and law (Breckner 2007). The value of narrative inquiry lies with its ability to look not only at the story but also at ambiguities, processes and changes within that story (Plummer 2005). It is assumed that during their lives, men undergo various transitions during their biographies of abuse, from their first experience of abuse to the epiphanies or turning points which alter the flow of the person's lived life (Denzin 1989a). One of the techniques of BNIM interpretation is the use of interpretive panels. The usefulness of these panels for theorising from biographical evidence proved useful in generating new perspectives in understanding marginalised groups and is discussed further in section 4.3.3 below (Chamberlayne, Bornat and Wengraf 2000).

Temporality is embedded in the meaning of a narrative (Mishler 1986, Charon 2006, Kohler Riessman 2008). The two track approach of BNIM analyses temporality in two distinct ways, by analysing events which occurred chronologically and comparing them with how they are presented in narrative time. It recognises the subjective processing of historical detail (Wengraf 2006). A crucial factor in choosing BNIM as a method was its sensitivity towards the multiplicity of contextual and cultural determinants which influence storytelling (Plummer 2005). The culture of Ireland, the context of fatherhood, family life and social norms surrounding intimate partner abuse has influenced the social construction of female initiated intimate partner abuse. Of particular interest is the context of hegemonic masculinity and how it influenced men's decisions to seek (or not

to seek) help and support. One of the core aims of BNIM is to ‘situate’ the person within the wider context/s. According to Wengraf (2008)

“To ignore the macro-societal and world history is always a mistake: in a period of ‘globalisation’, part of the ‘situatedness’ of any subjectivity is their situatedness in the currents of the 20th-21st century world. The psycho-societal should not be reduced to a world-history-ignoring social psychology”

Wengraf (2008, p. 207)

In essence the thematic field analysis and the cross case theorisation aspect of BNIM recognise the relationship between the general and the particular in order to enhance understanding about the lived life (Jones and Rupp 2000). The context of interview also determines the story which is co-constructed in the environment with the interviewer (Mishler 1986). The recording of field notes immediately following the interview (part of the BNIM process) incorporated the consideration of environmental, physical and other relevant contextual factors into the analysis of the case (Brewer 2003) .

The choice to explore how individuals’ interpretations of themselves evolve through their life story required the making of choices about the most appropriate lens from which to research this phenomenon. The choice to use the ‘classic’ method of BNIM interview and analysis was made by considering a number of factors. Firstly, the interview technique was felt to be an empowering mechanism (see 4.2.4 below) insofar as participants could choose the start, direction, content and end of their stories. I wanted to hear men’s own constructions of their story rather than their responses to what I thought were important facets of it. Honouring this premise out ruled other methods such as grounded theory which focus on theoretical sampling as a means of generating theory

(Philbin 2009). Secondly, cognisance of societal resistance to interpretive methodologies (i.e. paradigm wars) in addition to the resistance about the subject of abused men shaped my decision in choosing a method which was thorough and structured. I believed that the thoroughness and structure of BNIM – rightly or wrongly would represent a methodological armoury of sorts against a potential academic and political backlash relating to the topic. In other words the rigorous application of BNIM and its comprehensive analytic strategy would act as a strengthening mechanism. Instead of being the sole analyst, the ‘weight’ of the interpretive panels and their contributions would also assist the study in standing on its own merit. In conducting classic BNIM analysis, each case was subjected to nine individualised data analysis stages and was subjected to three interpretive panel analyses as outlined by Wengraf in addition to a final cross-case comparison (Wengraf 2008). The benefits, challenges and limitations of adhering to this classic (non-modified) style are discussed further within each aspect of data analysis (4.3 below). The following section illustrates how the data was collected and analysed.

4.2 Data collection

The processes and procedures which were used to access and collect data from the participants are explained in detail in the following sections.

4.2.1 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was granted from three separate ethics committees; the DCU School of Nursing Research & Teaching Ethics Committee, the DCU Research Ethics Committee

and the Research Governance and Ethics Sub-Committee in the University of Salford. Intimate partner abuse nature constitutes a sensitive topic (Hyden 2008) and as a result, it was important to ensure that the risks inherent in revealing aspects of a life were minimised insofar as was reasonably practicable (Corbin and Morse 2003). A safety protocol modified from Langford (2000) proved useful in minimising possible risks to both parties in the recruitment and interview process (see Appendix II below). However, its limitation in relation to the actual procedure became apparent when the first participant became very emotional approximately six minutes into his interview. Given my nursing experience, his emotions did not make me uncomfortable but it was apparent that the 'protocol' fell short on how to manage an interview when an interviewee became tearful. Written consent was obtained²³ from each participant and a plain language statement was distributed to any of the men who expressed an interest in the study (see Appendix III below). The challenges in maintaining complete anonymity in relation to life story (Hollway and Jefferson 2009) was explained to the participants. Although I was concerned that this would put participants off, all participants were happy to continue with telling their story. The data was treated and stored confidentially. Pseudonyms were used to anonymise references to names and places. Access to a counsellor was available for the men following the interview. All of these structures were put in place to minimise participant harm. It is ironic that no ethical measures were required to safeguard the researcher who I argue was equally vulnerable by exposure to abuse stories both at the time and afterwards during the analysis process. The debriefing process following the

²³ All of the men signed their consent forms. One man who was initially hesitant and explained (as he signed the form) that all men coming to the support group are cautious about signing forms because men had lost child custody and property in doing so. He said that the last time he signed a form; he signed away his house without him knowing it.

BNIM interviews proved useful as were anonymised informal debriefing with colleagues in disengaging oneself from traumatic stories. However, I would argue that future studies ought to consider recognising the potential vulnerability of the researcher and identifying relevant support structures where necessary (Liamputtong 2007).

4.2.2 Accessing participants

Between September 2007 and January 2008, 13 participants were interviewed using the BNIM interview method. Most participants were accessed through an abused men's support group. A reflective account of this experience can be found in Section 4.4 below. In some instances, participants had left a number with the chairperson of the support group for further contact. Two participants for interview were recruited via leaflet distribution at a conference on male victims of intimate partner abuse. At this conference, one participant asked to be part of the project but was not available for interview due to the fact that he was traveling to New Zealand. We engaged in e-mail communication, typing down the SQUIN I normally asked to face-to face interviewees. His response constituted of a 2769 word account of his story. This data collection process resulted in an excessive amount of data. As a result, a process to select the best cases for BNIM analysis was required. The rationale behind this process is discussed below.

4.2.3 Case selection

As highlighted earlier, thirteen narratives (and one written narrative) were obtained. This excessive data collection resulted from an initial lack of appreciation for the intensity of the BNIM research method. The choice to analyse three cases was informed by Wengraf

(2008) who suggested that three was a useful number of cases to conduct a cross-case analysis on. This prevented 'binary thinking' which would have occurred with two. In order to choose the best cases to submit to BNIM analysis, questions of what 'analytic depth' each interview consisted of required addressing in order to exclude cases unsuitable for analysis (Wengraf 2008). The e-mail correspondence was excluded due to its variation from the traditional BNIM interview format. Three of the interviews were excluded due to their short time duration (less than 20 minutes). Another three were of reasonable time duration yet were focussed around one Particular Incident Narrative (PIN).

Each case for final inclusion met four key criteria for life narratives as outlined by Plummer (2005). These were firstly a sense of ordering of events, secondly, a sense of the person behind the text, thirdly, that person's voice and perspective coming through the text and finally, elements of causality, i.e. accounts of a plot, and 'because of this, x happened etc. The number of PINs per case was used as the final deciding factor for selecting cases. The three cases presented in this study represent cases which met all the above criteria and also had the most PINs. The following section describes how the BNIM interviews were conducted.

4.2.4 BNIM interviewing

Data was collected using an open narrative structured interview specific to BNIM (Wengraf 2006). This study used a two-sub session interview technique. Table 2 below illustrates this process.

Table 2 Overview of the nature of the BNIM interview technique

	Sub Session 1 SQUIN	Sub Session 2 Follow up from SQUIN
Purpose of questioning	To elicit a narrative in which the participant controls the beginning, end, timing and structure of the narrative	To obtain more in depth data about Particular Incident Narratives (PINs) mentioned by the participant
Nature of questioning	<p><i>"As you know, I'm researching how domestic abuse has affected men's lives. I understand that you have had such experiences. So please can you tell me the story of your relationship with any partner, with whom such experiences happened, all the events and experiences that were important for you, personally up till now. There's no rush, you can start wherever you like. I'll listen first, I won't interrupt I'll just take some notes in case I have any further questions for after you've finished telling me about it all".</i></p>	<p><i>"You said.....do you remember any more about that particular... occasion*, how it all happened?"</i></p> <p>OR</p> <p><i>"You said... Do you have any thoughts (or feelings) about that time?"</i></p> <p><i>*Depending on the context – the words 'occasion' can be substituted with:</i> <i>Incident</i> <i>Event</i> <i>Moment</i> <i>Time</i> <i>Situation</i> <i>Phase</i></p>

As illustrated above, sub session one involved the asking of one key question with minimal involvement from the interviewer. The exact text of this key question is presented in Table 2 above. This key question contained a framing part, a core question and empowered the participant to begin, construct and end their own narrative. Otherwise known as a Single Question aimed at Inducing Narrative (SQUIN) (Wengraf 2006, 2008), this question proved very useful in unlocking the eliciting data enabling participants to control the framing, sequencing, content and duration of the interview. The rationale for the construction of the SQUIN was similar to the free association interview method (Hollway and Jefferson 1997) insofar as its wording is intentional to promote the emergence of the key meaning of the interview (Schutze 1992). Schutze

(1992) uses the term ‘gestalt’ to describe this. The use of gestalt in this sense is not to be confused with gestalt theory or gestalt therapy, it is used in a narrow sense. The gestalt of an interview could be interfered with if the interviewer interrupted the narrative flow of the participant (Schutze 2005, Wengraf 2006, Wengraf and Chamberlayne 2007). There are also gender and power dynamics between interviewer and interviewee which potentially influence the data obtained (Herod 1993, Corbin and Morse 2003, Hoffman 2007). In summary, the SQUIN interview method enabled participants to say what they wanted to say. This is in contrast with other more structured interview techniques that may have made participants talk about what interviewers wanted to hear. The skill of not interrupting a narrative flow did not come easy to me initially. BNIM interview training and undertaking two pilot BNIM style interviews (on a separate topic chosen by the volunteers) proved useful in enhancing active listening and identifying Particular Incident Narratives (PINs) as they are recounted.

The importance of empowering the participant to structure his own narrative was a key consideration – particularly in relation to the sensitive nature of the subject and the topic of intimate partner abuse which was already felt to be an invisible discourse (Butler 1999). Asking the men the wrong questions could have resulted in a poor interview with poor data resulting (Hollway and Jefferson 2000). Anecdotally, most of the participants commented on the ease in which they could tell their story. The depth of a narrative was judged to be related to the amount of Particular Incident Narratives (PINs) which were voiced. Although the average length of a response to a SQUIN in this study was 30 minutes, (similar to Wengraf’s estimation (2008)), the variation ranged from 13 minutes

to 64 minutes. As highlighted earlier, the length and depth of the interview was a key means of choosing the cases for inclusion into this study. Sub-session one characteristically ended by the participant's own closure, such as "*there you go, that's my story*" (Conor) "*that's basically it*" (Alan) and "*that's really my story I suppose*" (Mike). After sub-session one ended, there was a short break in which the participant and I had refreshments. During this time, I quickly identified key PINs to explore further in sub-session two.

Sub-session two of each interview was roughly of the same time duration as sub-session one when the initial SQUIN was asked. This part of the interview allowed deeper questioning about particular PINs brought up during sub-session one. Although it was slightly more structured than the SQUIN interview, the formula for questioning was specific and constructed in a particular format to preserve the narrative gestalt from the initial SQUIN question (Wengraf 2006). This included mirroring the participants own words within the question. An example of a question during this sub-session would be "*you said [you were beaten in front of your children on holidays (participant's own words)] Do you remember any more about that particular **occasion**, how it all happened?*" Depending on the nature of the PIN, the word emboldened (in this case 'occasion') was be substituted with other words (e.g. event, situation, phase, moment) to tailor the questioning more appropriately. Following each interview, a self debriefing to a voice recorder was made, noting thoughts, feelings and observations immediately following each interview. This, according to Wengraf (2006) facilitated the inclusion of an 'ethnographic' view, recognising some observational data often missed in the pursuit of collecting interview data (Fisher 1978, Sandelowski 2002). Serendipitously, this was

useful as a support mechanism in allowing me to ‘talk to something’ and disengage from the trauma of some stories (Liamputtong 2007).

Overall, the BNIM interview technique proved to be a powerful means of eliciting narratives and resulted in a wide variation in narrative depth and length by those who participated. Anecdotally, there was a therapeutic effect arising from the SQUIN interview process similar to that identified by Rosenthal (2003) and Vajda (2007) as participants appeared happier for having told their story.

4.3 BNIM analysis

The process of BNIM analysis required engaging in a ten stage analytic process conceptually illustrated in Figure 6 below. As illustrated, nine of these stages were undertaken and replicated with each individual case. The findings from the individualised case analysis are presented in Chapter five. The tenth stage of analysis involved a theorisation process in which all three cases were analysed collectively. The findings resulting from this stage is presented in Chapter six. The challenges in using BNIM and limitations of this method are integratively presented under the relevant sections in this chapter²⁴.

²⁴ A broader discussion of the study limitations is presented in section 7.3 below

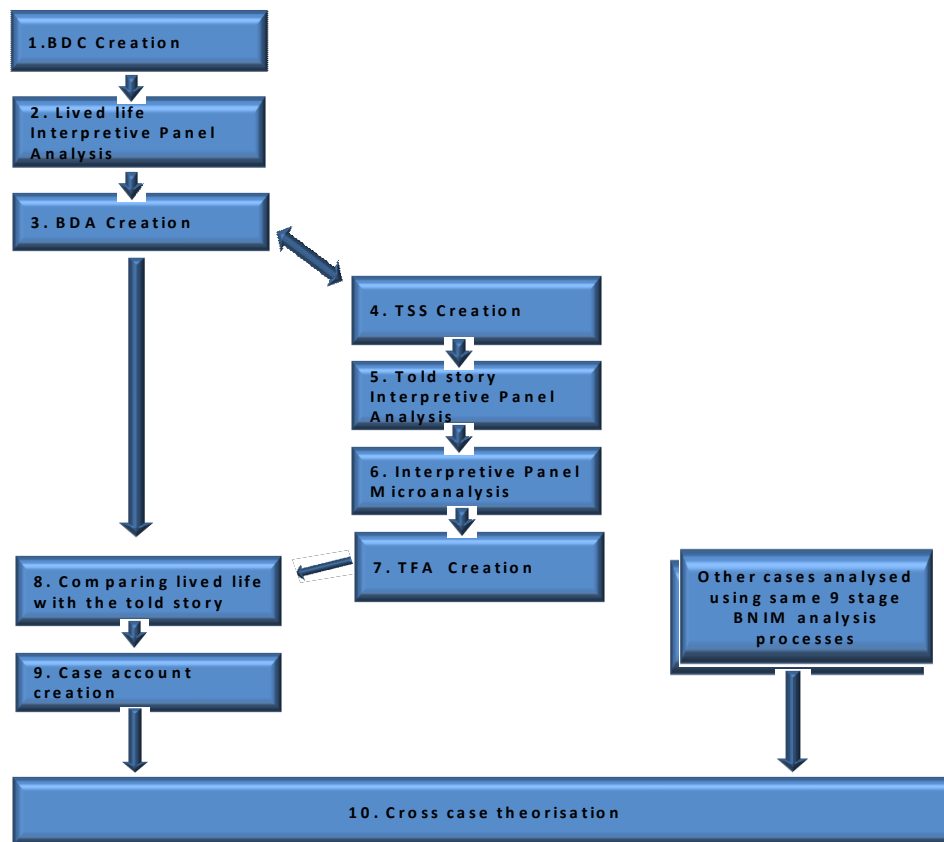


Figure 6 Overview of BNIM analytic process

As illustrated above, within the nine stage process of case reconstruction, two patterns were pursued sequentially in order to create a case history. The **living of the lived life pattern** explored how and why the life was lived in that fashion. The **telling of the told story pattern** examined the influences on how the story was told (Chamberlayne, Bornat and Wengraf 2000, Wengraf 2006). After these two patterns were analysed separately, they were reunited together by hermeneutic case (re) construction in order to generate a single case evolution (Breckner and Rupp 2002). The following section begins the process of explaining each of the processes in detail.

4.3.1 Lived life analysis

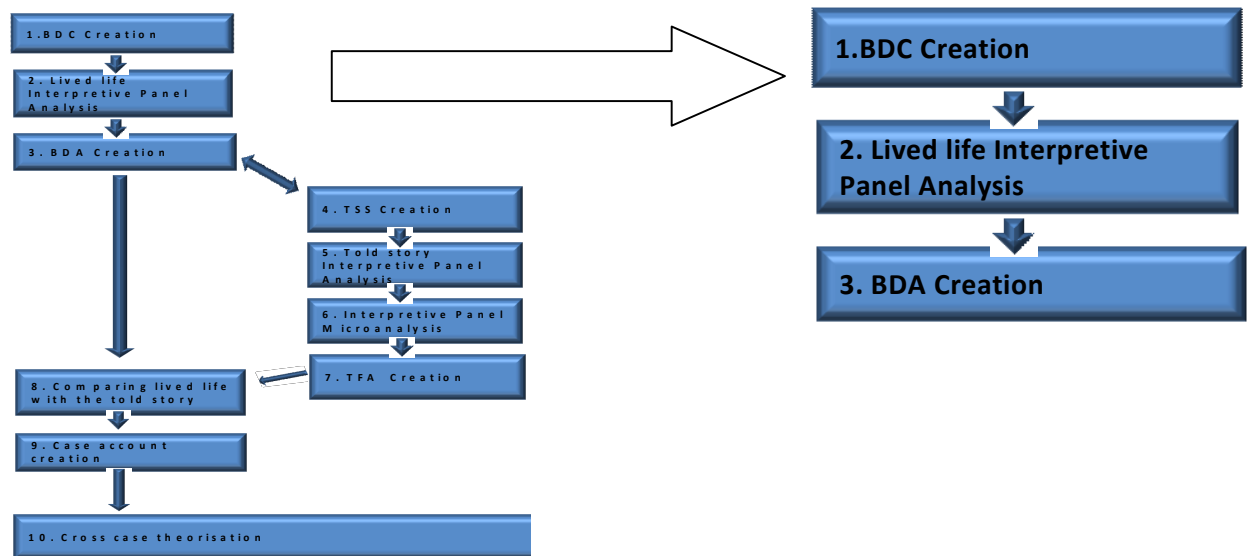


Figure 7 Lived life analysis

In BNIM, the lived life pattern refers to the life story events as told by the individual. It incorporates examining objectively verifiable facts about events and their influences on the life as lived (Denzin 1989a, Wengraf 2006). In this process, the facts were distilled from the data (separated from subjective judgements) and placed in a chronological order to create a Biographical Data Chronology (BDC). The BDC was then used as a framework for a lived life interpretive panel analysis. The outcome of this panel analysis and researcher analysis of the participant story provided the framework for the creation of the overall interpretation of events within the lived life otherwise known as the Biographical Data Analysis (BDA). This process is represented conceptually in Figure 7 above. Appendix VI provides an illustration of a sample of BDC interpretive panel analysis notes made in relation to Conor. Here, the relationship between the BDC and the group analysis is made evident. More detailed information regarding the construction

of the BDC, BDA and the accompanying interpretive panel can be found in Appendix IV below.

Although the theory of generating a BDA seemed straightforward, the practice of generating a BDA was problematic and represented a methodological challenge to the reconstruction of a lived life and the core assumption regarding the meaning of verifiable facts. The fact that abuse was alleged and technically lacking in ‘objectivity’ (for inclusion into a BDC/BDA) presented a challenge to Wengraf’s assertion that “insufficient verifiable facts” ought not to be included in the analysis of a lived life (Wengraf 2009). Verifiable facts in a basic sense are conceptualised as that which was potentially publicly verifiable by outside data (a possible example being year of birth, length of schooling, and year of marriage etc). The chronology of abusive events in the men’s stories was technically publicly verifiable (witnessed by family/friends/reported to police) however it did not fit the BNIM criteria. This is in spite of the fact that neither the BNIM verifiable facts nor the men’s facts about the chronology of abuse would ever be subject to cross checking given that there was no means by which to cross check the veracity of either. It was also ironic that Conor’s case was littered with potentially publicly verifiable facts (he kept a diary and could recall exact dates and times of events). I believed that the rejection of accounts of abuse as not verifiable typified the greater societal perspective regarding abuse narratives as a whole and rendered a lived life of abuse as invisible. I wrote to Tom Wengraf seeking advice about this challenge which resulted in a modification of his core text as follows:

“There are occasions when your Chronology may be very detailed but in which the ‘facts’ are insufficiently verifiable to make it worth while proceeding to an

analysis of them in the BDA. Melissa Corbally working on domestic violence obtained a narrative full of particular incidents in which hardly anything happened in the public world but the private world of domestic violence was very rich, but unfortunately the only witness to such acts was the other spouse and sometimes their small children.

Her work suggested to me the following points: It seemed useful to create a full chronology of the very few public and the very many private-domestic-violence events, but not useful to submit this long mostly-private chronology to a panel for discussion. There would anyway be a panel for discussing these incident-narratives in the TFA panel on the telling-of-the-told-story and there seemed no point in duplicating this by preceding it by a BDA panel”

(Wengraf 2009, p. 249)

Bearing in mind Wengraf's suggestion, a BDC of both public (objectively verifiable according to BNIM) and private (abuse chronology) data was constructed for every case. However, a complete lived life panel was held for each case. Half the time in this panel was dedicated to analysing the BNIM objectively verifiable facts and the remainder was spent analysing the abuse chronology. This experience suggests that the nature of the subject under investigation may determine the feasibility of undertaking a chronological account of events in BNIM analysis. It may also be due to the fact that this study was investigating 'life stories', which have a shorter time span with less publicly verifiable events than 'life histories' which due to their time span should yield greater amounts of publicly verifiable data. Despite the challenges, three Biographical Data Analyses were undertaken to inform the evolution of the case accounts. The following section explains the told story analysis process.

4.3.2 Told story analysis

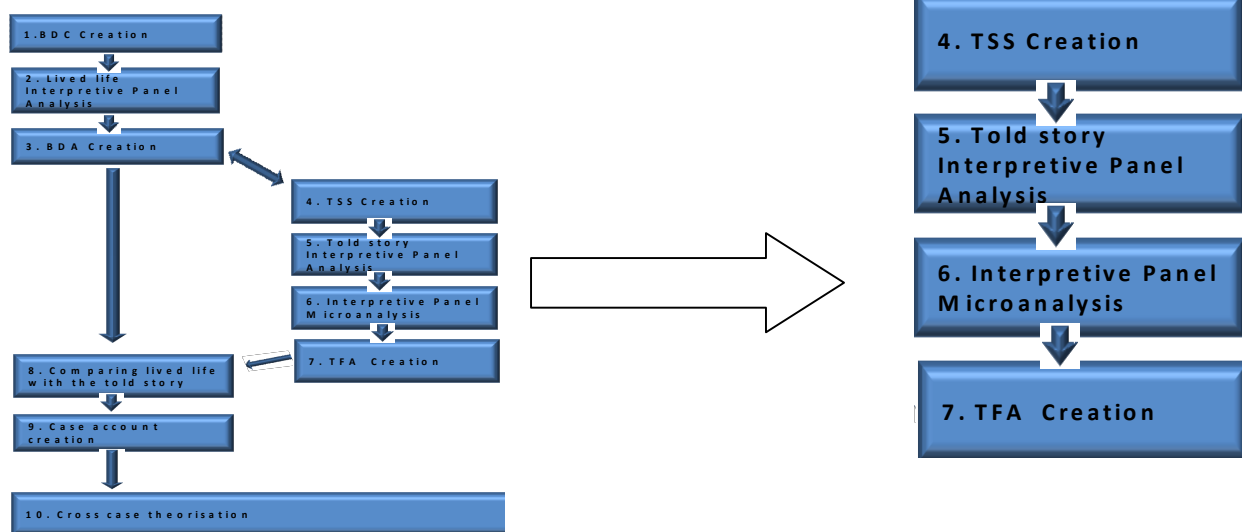


Figure 8 Told story analysis

As illustrated in Figure 8 above, three interrelated analytic strategies formed the analytic framework of the told story. Temporality or the ordering of events within a story is inextricably linked with the meaning of a narrative (Mishler 1986, Charon 2006, Kohler Riessman 2008). The **told story analysis pattern** (see Appendix 9.4 below) analysed the told story from two different perspectives prior to constructing an interpretive account of the told story. The first analytic strategy was purely structural and involved creating a Text Structure Sequentialisation (TSS) (Wengraf 2006). This analytic procedure, informed by Labov and Waletzky's theory of structure within textual narratives²⁵ (Labov and Waletzky 1997, Cortazzi 1999) required splitting the textual structure according to changes firstly in the speaker, secondly of the topic and thirdly of what Wengraf terms

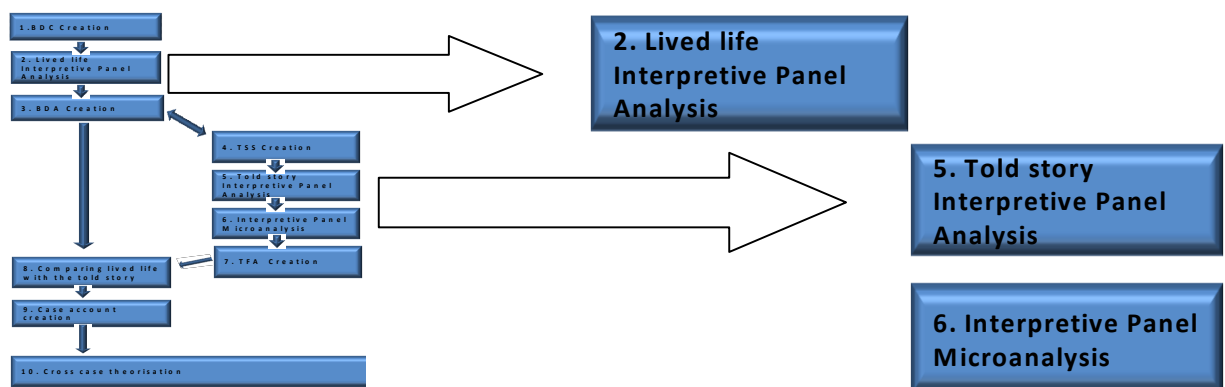
²⁵ The separate clauses identified by Labov and Waletzky were: an abstract (what the story was about), orientation (scene setting of the event), complication (the series of events that went on), evaluation (establishing the relative importance of the events to the whole story) and coda (the returning of the story to the present) (Labov, W. and Waletzky, J. 1997. Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience (Reprinted from 'Essays on the Verbal and Visual arts: Proceedings of the 1996 Annual spring Meeting of the American Ethnological Society', pp 12-14 1967). Journal of Narrative and Life History, 7(1-4), pp.3-38.)

the 'TextSort' (Wengraf 2006). Undertaking a BNIM TextSort involved close inspection of the text to identify six different changes in the structure of the text: Description, Evaluation, Argumentation, Report, General Incident Narrative and Typical Incident Narrative (Wengraf 2008). A sample of the TSS document generated for Conor is contained in Appendix VII below. Although this was undertaken for all cases, the relevance of adhering to the TextSort analytic strategy in generating a TSS was questionable. This is due to the rigid and formulaic requirements to apply TextSorts which fragmented the text, detracting meaning from the narrative. In other words it was easy to lose sight of the narrative gestalt or meaning when pre-occupied with the nature of the segmented clauses within paragraphs. In order to prevent this from happening, I listened to an audio recording of the narrative in addition to the written transcript. I found this technique useful. Others have identified the potentially limiting nature of this process within the BNIM method (Jones 2006, Patterson 2008). This was further complicated by a continuous modification of categories for inclusion within the TSS in each new publication (Chamberlayne and King 2000, Wengraf 2006, Wengraf 2009).

The second analytic strategy was more akin to traditional narrative analysis (Kohler Riessman 2008). In this stage of BNIM analysis, themes within the flow of narrative, contextual and environmental influences are consolidated in this section of analysis (see Appendix 9.4 below). In contrast with the first analytic strategy regarding the told story above, this analytic strategy (underpinned by the interpretive panel analysis for the told story) was the most meaningful in unearthing multiple hypotheses regarding the told story and the possible defended subjectivities underlying the narrative reconstruction.

This was especially the case as most of the abuse narratives were contained in this section. The structural analysis of the text and the thematic analysis of the data were merged into a final analysis of the told story known as a Thematic Field Analysis (TFA) (Wengraf 2006). Following the creation of the TFA and BDA, the process of comparing lived life with told story follows. An example of this process (undertaken on Conor) can be found in Appendix VIII below. The end product of this analytic process resulted in the creation of three separate case accounts which are presented in Chapter five.

4.3.3 Interpretive panels



“The function of the panel and the recording of its deliberations is to overcome the distorting effects of the blind spots and the hotspots, the defended subjectivity, of you as individual researcher... and to widen your imagination irreversibly for post-panel work.”

(Wengraf 2008 p.241)

Interpretive panels are a central tenet of the BNIM analytic method. In total, three panels per case were facilitated; a lived life panel, a telling of the told story panel and a microanalysis panel (Wengraf 2009). Each panel was facilitated in a particular way and

framed by the questions which can be found in Appendix IV below. The argument for using interpretive panels in data analysis is based on the need to resist the seductive naturalness of a narrative (or biographic inevitability of a story) as it is initially interpreted by the researcher and to appreciate the potential for multiple interpretations of meaning to be explored rather than a singular meaning generated solely by the researcher (Kvale 1996, Hollway and Jefferson 2000, Paley and Eva 2005). Similarly, gendered assumptions could have influenced the interpretation of interview material (Herod 1993). This was of particular concern given the research topic. The conduct of interpretive panel analysis was based upon the principle of abduction whereby members were invited to formulate typical and alternative hypotheses within a given unit of text (Chamberlayne and King 2000). It is somewhat similar to the process of analytic induction in its intention to explore potential hypotheses (Jones 2006). Sections of refined text were presented sequentially in a ‘future blind chunk by chunk’ approach (Wengraf and Chamberlayne 2007). The refined text represented the outcome of the BDC / TSS where relevant. Short quotations were occasionally included in these refined texts. In the microanalysis panels, the text was completely comprised of quotations from the transcript. This method was extremely useful in enabling panel members to hypothesise on past and current data without knowledge of what came next – attempting to simulate how the participant lived their lives in the first instance (Fischer-Rosenthal 2000, Wengraf and Chamberlayne 2007). Different hypotheses were generated including- ideas about what the narrator could have been experiencing (Experiencing hypotheses), what the narrator might not be experiencing (Counter hypotheses); wild ideas about what might have been happening (Tangential hypotheses) and main threads or themes which

might permeate the story (Structural hypotheses). All hypotheses were considered valid until their plausibility were supported or refuted as the story unfolded. At the end of each panel, members were given a blank page to write their ‘personal analysis’ of the case.

This process proved very useful in generating a comprehensive understanding of each case and was useful in unearthing meanings which were initially hidden to the researcher (Froggett and Wengraf 2004). It is argued that the use of interpretive panel analysis serendipitously also enhanced the validity or verisimilitude of the findings (Denzin 1989a, Buckner 2005).

In total 9 interpretive panels were facilitated by the author in order to create the cases. Between three and six people attended each panel session. Panel members were recruited from an e-mail recruitment strategy and informal discussions with friends and colleagues²⁶. Each group was relatively heterogeneous and in all but one panel, both genders were represented. Each panel analysis lasted approximately two hours. The photograph below (Figure 9) provides an example of the output of the panel analysis. On the right of the photo, is the printed ‘chunks’ which were stuck on to the page in sequential order. The left hand side reflected the ‘hypothesis generation’ by the panels, namely the ideas and thoughts of the panel members. This was written in green marker. The support or refutation of hypotheses generated through this process was made in red marker as indicated below.

²⁶ My heartfelt thanks are extended to everyone who volunteered to participate.

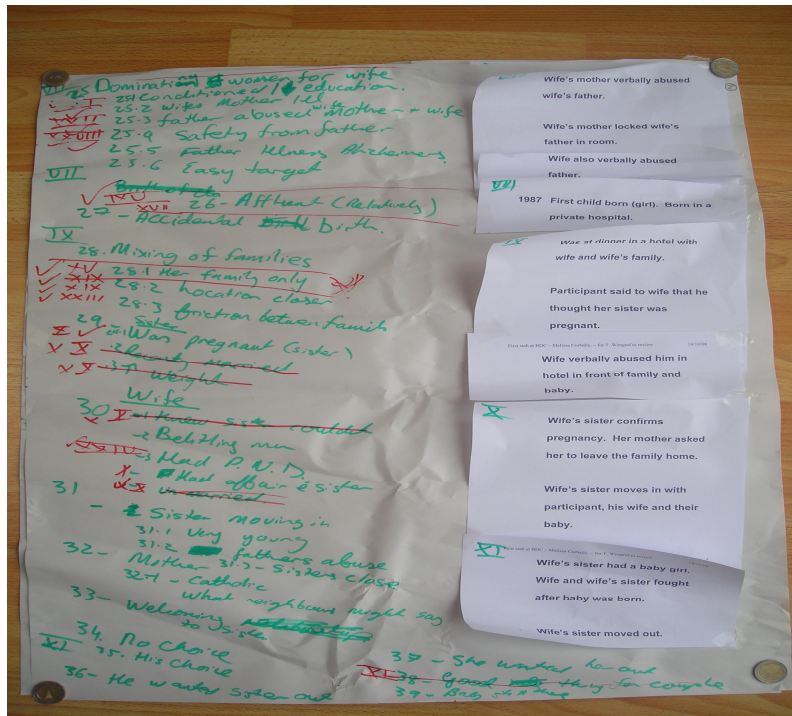


Figure 9 Example of BDC panel discussion output

This process enabled the group to visually see the strengthening of various hypotheses as the chunks were sequentially presented. After the interpretive panel work had ended, a summary document of this process was created to inform the creation of the BDA or the TFA where appropriate. An example of the case notes from the BDC interpretive panel analysis undertaken on Conor can be found in Appendix VI below. A personal reflection of the overall process of undertaking the whole study which includes a section on facilitating the interpretive panels can be found in the following section.

4.3.4 Cross case theorisation

The tenth and final stage of BNIM necessitates a process of theorisation across cases (Wengraf 2008). For the purposes of this study, Riemann and Schutze's theory of

biographical processes will be used as a framework from which to analyse how men account for abuse in their life stories (Riemann and Schutze 2005, Schutze 2008). As highlighted earlier, the four key structures: biographical action schemes, trajectories of suffering (biographical trajectory), institutional expectation patterns and creative biographical metamorphoses will be examined in the context of the men's case accounts. Trajectories of suffering are theorised by Riemann and Schutze (2008) to have their own particular stages. The particular stages of biographical trajectory are summarized as: 1 an overwhelming sense of disbelief. 2 The person articulates a growing awareness of powerful outer forces. 3 the characteristics of these powerful outer forces are initially articulated as inconceivable. 4, the person articulates a sense of loss of capacity and paralysis from one's usual management of everyday affairs. 5, this is accompanied with feelings of feeling alienated. 6, 'Downward Spin' – this is where the persons competence in social relationships is weakened which is accompanied with an inability to relate well to biographical caretakers. 7, the person's existential world continues to shrink and finally 8, a cumulative process of disorder in everyday affairs is evident. After this point, biographical metamorphosis is possible as one's relationship to oneself is changed facilitating the biographical work of reflection (Riemann and Schutze 2005, pp119-120). These trajectory stages will also be used to compare the findings emerging from the cross case theorization at this point. Greater discussion of the use of Riemann and Schutze's theory in the cross –case theorization stage will be presented in Chapter six below.

4.4 Researcher reflexivity

Because the analysis and telling of life stories in this thesis produces ‘documents of life’ pertaining to three individuals, it is important to recognise factors which have influenced their creation (Plummer 2005, Elliott 2005). Axiology is concerned with the basic beliefs associated with a particular paradigm (Guba and Lincoln 2005). BNIM is synonymous with the interpretivist paradigm. The epistemological basis of interpretivism has already been discussed earlier. How BNIM assists in interpreting meaning can be comparable with Weber’s assertion about the “emotionally empathic or artistically appreciative quality” (Weber 1999 p.5). It is achieved through a combination of adherence to the analysis process, with reflexivity on behalf of the researcher. The politics of location espoused by Koch and Harrington (1998) have the potential to influence how research is conducted, analysed, interpreted and documented. It is also important to recognise the emotional labour of undertaking research on sensitive topics which has the capacity to bring about vicarious traumatisation (Dickson-Swift et al 2009). It is hoped that the inclusion of this reflective section elucidates consciousness of the politics of my location, thus enabling the reader to have a more informed interpretation of this thesis upon understanding the situatedness of the researcher. For ease of reading, I present this text in a fashion which reflects the chronology of the study.

4.4.1 Prior to the study

My cognisance of the politics of my location (by virtue of being a female academic interested in studying abusive women) began prior to the study and will continue to

pervade long after this thesis is completed. Prior to the study, I was unsure about whether my gender would be an issue for participants. This fuelled a pre-research visit to Amen to ascertain firstly if my gender would be an issue and secondly (if it wasn't an issue) which method of inquiry (focus groups or individual interviews) would men be more comfortable with. This visit proved to be a very useful one. The welcome I received by the staff and visitors was unexpected. Although I was supposed to visit the staff, I was invited to attend the support group meeting that evening to talk to the men directly. In the group setting, I explained my background and study plans. I voiced my issues, concerns and thoughts about the study. The men stated that they preferred that I was female as it was harder telling their abuse stories to another man. They also indicated that individual interviews would be preferable and indicated that 'domestic abuse' was the term they used to articulate what they experienced. As I sat there in the room full of men, I myself initially couldn't believe the extent of abuse that they spoke of that night. During the meeting, one man asked me if I could believe what I was hearing. I said (in front of the group) that I knew abuse happened but I didn't realise the extent of it. He and several others said something like 'all the more reason you should research this and tell others'. As I nodded my head in agreement, I realised that I had chosen the right topic.

4.4.2 Reflections upon data collection

During data collection, I attended the only support group in Ireland for men experiencing domestic abuse. This group met weekly. During my period of time attending this location (approximately 12 weeks), I was made to feel very welcome and many of the men were happy to hear of the research which they hoped would raise the profile of this

problem. Each time I attended, I brought cakes and offered to make tea during the interval of the meeting. I learned a lot from the men during the informal discussions we had during the tea-breaks. I felt that by being there and offering practical assistance, I was earning the trust of both the staff and the regular attendees of the meeting. Where the study of sensitive topics is concerned according to Liamputtong (2007), this was a crucial step.

Because the location of the meeting is based in the East of Ireland, some men had to drive great distances to attend the support group. One man said that he drove almost 200 kilometres to get support. I spoke with a man who had been sleeping in a trailer for a month. To date there is no refuge for men in Ireland. The men appeared to come from a variety of social backgrounds; businessmen, farmers, students, unemployed. The age range of the men who attended (and told me their age) ranged from late 20s to their mid 70s. The men who came from all walks of life showed a mutual respect for each other. There was no class difference at this meeting. Men in suits sat beside those in construction work apparel and talked openly about their experiences. It was possible to distinguish two different groups of men at the meeting. The first/new timers appeared visibly shocked at the situation they have arrived at. They appeared pale, stated they hadn't eaten, slept or lived a normal life since the turning point which prompted them to attend. The other group, the regular attendees were more at ease with the environment and staff. They were a strong source of support for the first/new timers.

Two and sometimes three facilitators hosted the meetings. First timers were invited to talk about their situations first. Most of the questioning / discussion and advice in the

evening meetings were around legal issues. Many men did not understand what the specific legal ‘orders’ which they claimed they were served with meant (e.g. barring order, protection order, safety order etc). They were shocked to find out how easily these orders were issued and how powerful some of them (in particular the safety order) could be. It was clear that the work of the staff at Amen was invaluable for the men who attended, particularly in relation to the legal advice and information which was provided not just from the staff but also from the men who had ‘been there’ and could offer realistic support.

Anecdotally, many of the men who were presenting to Amen for the first time did so when they were presented with a situation which came as an unexpected shock to them. Examples included being served with a legal order such as a barring or protection order, being thrown out of the house, coming home to find the partner and children gone etc. They knew they had some relationship difficulty, but did not anticipate these actions. Clearly there appears to be a difference in perceptions of the seriousness of the issues within these relationships by men and women. Serving a legal order or moving out of the home requires some strategic planning on the part of the woman compared with the men who in attending Amen were seeking crisis support.

What did appear notable was that many of the men who attended had very little time to spare between their attendance and a pending court date (e.g. some attended Amen the day before they were due to attend court). Others were too late to have availed themselves of the valuable legal information, advice and support available from the staff

at Amen. Many men had sought legal advice elsewhere which in a number of cases, transpired to be incorrect. What was unfortunate was that in a lot of instances, the legal advice they had received was often not in their best interest and meant that this would work against their case in court. One particular trend the men had voiced was ‘stalling’ – where they were advised to ‘wait and see’ by the solicitors they had sought advice from. This advice in some instances, cost men the custody of their children as the time lag between separation (from the children) and the court case would work in favour of the female partner. One man told me a judge said ‘sure, you mustn’t have been in a hurry to get them’ when the fact was that he had been advised to wait by his solicitor. In the words of the manager of Amen, the legal difficulties faced by these men were “the big cancer in the system”. I wondered whether the men would have been as open with me had I not been so familiar with them. Perhaps my visibility and availability during this time (regardless of whether I had an interview) built up a trust of sorts between the men and I (Hollway and Jefferson 2000). Perhaps my conscientiousness and honesty with the men was repaid by their trust? I felt privileged to have had access to this group and the people who constituted it. This experience also opened my eyes wider to the hurt and pain that women have the capacity to inflict on men. I was left with a sense of obligation to continue the study in order to tell others that this could and does happen to men.

During that time, I interviewed thirteen men and obtained another story via e-mail. In my naivety, I thought that I could use all of the interviews in my study. However, as the study progressed, and I learned more about BNIM and the intensity of analysis, I realised that this would not be possible and some hard decisions were required regarding the

direction of the study. In consultation with my supervisors, a decision was made to pursue a classic BNIM study with three cases. This meant that I would apply the full rigour inherent in BNIM with three key cases to make a strong independent study, instead of using a less rigorous methodology with all participants. I did struggle with this initially as it meant not using the data so generously given by the other men for the purposes of this study. In coming to terms with this (given that time was an issue also), I pledged to undertake a separate analysis of the outstanding narratives (informed by the three cases) following the completion of this study. This will ensure that the voices of the participants who generously gave of their time will be heard. Becker's (2009) analogy of the 'scientific mosaic' helped me in coming to terms with this choice. My choice to do an in depth analysis of three cases created a particular type of 'piece' of understanding regarding life stories of abuse. I felt that these biographies will serve as a strong framework from which to base future studies. I also felt that the rigour of method applied to the three cases was necessary 'ammunition' in academically defending this study given the potential backlash from those who reject the ideas purported in this study. The subsequent study of the remaining participants I plan to do post doctorally will create a different type of 'piece' which will both eventually add to the mosaic of understanding about intimate partner abuse.

In the three cases I chose – one case in particular presented me with a challenge. Alan showed me he was a police officer (by showing me the newspaper article) and yet chose to conceal this in his story by saying 'I went to work in a legal capacity'. I was also told by two individuals in Amen of his occupation. As Liamputtong (2007) highlights, very

often vulnerable individuals attempt to hide their identities for fear of potential recriminations. Ultimately, Alan consented to the study knowing that complete anonymity was impossible (and that confidentiality was re-assured). I explained this to him prior to him signing the consent form. Upon further reflection (and consultation with my supervisors), it was decided that inclusion of both Alan's disclosure and avoidance of the issue in language seemed the best possible choice in presenting his story. Also, I felt that his occupation was key to the decisions he made in his biography.

4.4.3 Reflections upon data analysis

Although the process of hosting interpretive panels was labour and resource intensive, it was productive and useful both in terms of stimulating thought and generating discussion about the method and the subject of inquiry. It was a powerful means of broadening my interpretations of the data. What was notable was the initial difficulty of panel members in making what I would term 'politically incorrect' hypothesis. Examples of these would include hypotheses about the narrator lying, the narrator being manipulative and being an abuser too. This abated upon prompting and occasional suggestion of the occurrence of such hypotheses. Particularly in the case of the telling of the told story to interpretive panels, the surfacing, voicing and re-consideration of stereotypes emerged. These stereotypes seemed to diminish as the panel process continued.

I did not anticipate the enthusiasm and eagerness of the participants in wanting to stay to the end, in particular to get to the end of the story. Jones also noted this phenomenon in his BNIM research study (Jones 2001). Panel members willingly contributed their personal analysis after the session ended and were keen to discuss the experience as a

group after the meeting had ended. As a facilitator, the biggest challenges lay with encouraging scepticism and tangential hypotheses from participants and staying 'neutral' to the group process. This was a skill which I improved upon as I facilitated more panels. I also noticed that counter hypotheses were much harder to come by nearing the end of the process. This was perhaps due to the weight of evidence provided by the narrator, the frequency of abuse perpetrated by the female and information relating to being a survivor of intimate partner abuse. It is notable that the discussions during the interpretive panel analysis process for the telling of the told story analysis pattern proved to be somewhat more animated than with the lived life pattern. This could be due to the fact that the bulk of the data was included into this pattern of analysis.

As discussed earlier, interpretive panels were an effective technique used in the process of data analysis and interpretation. Although it could be suggested that there may have been an ethical concern regarding the fact that the men were unaware that anonymised segments of their transcripts would be used in these panels, the reality was that because so little of actual transcript was used (and combined with my summarised text segments), it would have been unrealistic to do so. A similar concern arose, when I presented modified sections of the data to two cohorts of students. However, the fact that it was considered so unbelievable by the students was an interesting finding in itself. It seemed to me that the biggest issue here was the issue of believability. There is also a sense of irony insofar as exposing participant's data to others (via quotations contained in publications for example) runs a greater risk of identifying the individual than their use in interpretive panel analysis. At this point, (unlike in the case of interpretive panels and

classroom work) one would have no control over how such published information is interpreted by others.

4.4.4 Reflections upon writing up

Issues relating to voice and representation are particularly challenging in relating to the writing up of narrative texts (Guba and Lincoln 2008). The multiple layers relating to this issue is primarily due to the multiple interpretations of ‘voice’ and its meaning throughout the literature. There are many ‘voices’ in this thesis: clearly the primary voice is mine as the author. However, this voice represents the voices of three individuals, informed by voices of panel analysts (Wolcott 1994). Riessman (2008) asserts that this plurivocality is a normal feature of narrative expression. One can only speculate about how readers interpret such voice(s). However it is important to acknowledge the plurivocality evident in this thesis. Throughout the study, but more particularly as I wrote up the thesis I was cognizant of Becker’s (2008) argument about the double jeopardy faced by researchers studying topics which are politically charged as all parties would be invariably sensitive to the implications of my work. I was eternally conscious of my need to maintain academic integrity and avoid distorting the findings of the study. As I wrote up each chapter, making my decision-making explicit forced me to reflect upon the doctoral journey. The hours spent agonizing over decisions during that process became worthwhile as I realised retrospectively that this time was spent in careful thought in the context of upholding those two values (academic integrity and avoidance of distortion).

4.5 Summary

This chapter presented Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM) justifying its merit as an appropriate methodology to answer the research questions posed in this thesis. The philosophical foundations of BNIM were presented as were its utility in examining the historical subjectivity of men's narrative evolution. The research process as it related to BNIM was discussed as were the ethical and practical considerations of using this methodology.

The latter part of this chapter provided a reflexive account of my own biographical work through the doctoral study process (Riemann and Schutze 2005). This section illustrated my contextual 'situatedness' and various ethical and personal considerations which were negotiated throughout the research process. The following chapter presents the first of two chapters of findings.

5 Case accounts

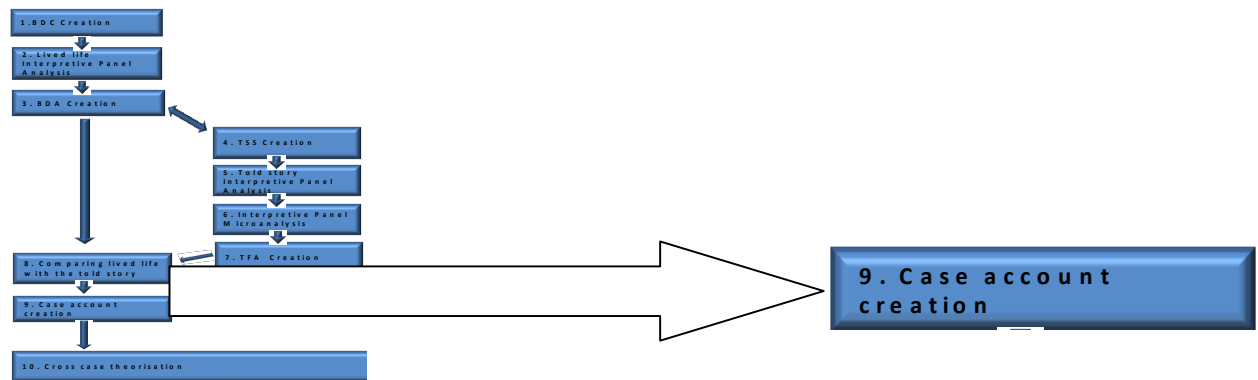


Figure 10 Construction of case account

This chapter presents the three cases which formed the basis of the study. This is pictorially illustrated by Figure 10 above. The interpretive case accounts presented here represent the outcome of the nine stages of the BNIM analytic method, the detail of which can be found in Appendix IV below. Although the voice presenting the cases is mine, it is informed by the voice of each man and co-constructed in conjunction with the views of three separate groups of individuals who participated in analysing particular aspects of this case (Wolcott 1994). The three accounts here reflect the life stories of abuse as told by Alan, Conor and Mike²⁷. Alan's case account begins the presentation of cases and follows below.

²⁷ These names are pseudonyms.

5.1 Alan

“I was in Bosnia with United Nations, and I had seen people who were...taken captive by people. And the things they went through, I couldn't believe it. And yet, (participant cries) when I looked at myself, and saw me as a person...”

Alan is a father of four in his mid 40s. As I fumble with my recording equipment we chat and he shows me a newspaper article about a policeman who is a victim of domestic abuse. Alan's story is a story of survival and recovery. It is also a story of regret for lost fatherhood on a number of levels.

Alan meets his wife in 1983 shortly after he finishes university. He gets a job which involves travel. They meet at a hotel where she works. Alan frames his relationship as never being ideal. This portrayal is key to his storytelling. He has a long distance relationship where *“sex wasn't always very much”* and they *“never lived together”*. He is first assaulted by his wife during their courtship but minimises this explaining that she didn't mean it. Despite this, the couple marry in 1985. His decision to marry and ignore the initial abusive incident illustrates his value of the prevailing institutional life course pattern (Schutze 2005, Wengraf 2009) which was to enact the biographical action plan of married fatherhood. *“Things were okay for a while”*.

Alan *“ended going to work for the public service in a legal capacity”*²⁸. This prestigious job epitomises hegemonic masculinity as he performs a public role as protector and enforcer (Connell 2003). Alan values this role and is proud to be able to provide *“a nice life”* for his family. The couple buy a house in the countryside. Alan's wife becomes

²⁸ Prior to the interview, Alan showed me a newspaper article about a policeman who was a victim of domestic abuse. He said this article was about him. He was comfortable with me knowing he was a policeman, yet he chose to conceal this when the interview is being recorded.

pregnant and their daughter is born in 1987. Alan presents his wife's family dynamics as abnormal. He identifies with his father in law's abusive treatment at the home, and reflects upon his own identity as a 'lovely man' who provided a 'nice life' for his family:

"He used to be locked in a room. He used to get his meals now and again. He, he would get his meals regularly, but there was no social intercourse, no talking to him. And a lovely man actually and a very quiet man... my wife used to abuse him as well when she went home... she would shout at him and call him names and they'd say...that he was the cause of all their problems...And there were no problems, because they actually had a nice home, and a nice life things weren't bad at all. And I thought we had a nice life".

"The next flare up" happens in a hotel when he suspects his sister in law's pregnancy. *I'm right in the middle of the hotel she stood up and she screamed out 'my sister isn't fucking pregnant'. I said I look I'm sorry sorry, I didn't mean it, sit down, I said, don't cause a, sit down. 'Get out, you bastard'. So I had to leave the hotel I walked out".* His suspicion is correct and his pregnant sister in law moves in to their two-bed roomed house with the couple and their new baby. This arrangement continues for a year and a half and was ended by a quarrel between the two sisters. This living arrangement shielded Alan from abusive events *"because after that then the abuse, it became more regular".*

The intensification of abuse marks the second stage of his life story. He cries for 21 seconds admitting his wife's alcohol problems. He then changes the subject portraying his role as a father *"I used to walk up and down the corridor at every night when she wouldn't sleep".* At this point, he interprets a biographical action plan of a family life and financial success as ingredients for a happy relationship. The couple have a son in 1988.

“I was delighted because I thought this was going to be great...We had good money...Id come home from work and things would be fine. The money would be coming in, things would be grand”

Alan’s parents did not see his children much. This is something he regrets. He claims that his wife “*fell out*” with them. However, his narrative portrayal of this indicates a deeper issue of the extent of power and control exercised by his wife which was similar to the pattern of intimate terrorism described by Johnson (2006). Here we begin to see the extent of the controlling behaviour exercised by his wife. He uses “*not allowed*” as an indirect expression of her control over his life which represents a stark separation of his public identity as a law enforcer and his private identity as a victim. Alan’s shame at his personal powerlessness is re-inforced by his tearfulness.

“She fell out with my family, so I didn't get down to see my mum and they never saw her, or our children. Very rarely did they see the kids. They would call at Christmas time and they would drop off presents. And when they did it she would say ‘that's shit’...she would take the toys off the children and break them. Now, they were small at the time. My family wouldn't come to see us. They weren't allowed, and they knew they weren't allowed. And I wasn't allowed to go to them” (participant begins to cry).

Alan continues to portray his personal powerlessness and the control and social isolation which went with it. Most of his argumentations are negatively phrased e.g. “*I didn't have an account...I didn't go drinking with the lads, I didn't go out, we didn't go to parties. We didn't go to Christmas functions, we went nowhere. I was good at football...never, I wasn't allowed play it and I felt bad about that*”. His use of ‘I’ could be interpreted as he having an active choice in his actions; however his narrative style and emotions contradict this.

There is an eight year period in Alan's life where the couple have two more children. Between the years 1998 and 2003 *"there were times when it was absolutely fantastic"*. The couple move house for a second time. Alan continues to emphasise his achievements which were publicly viewable, i.e. exceptional financial success in a time of recession. Yet despite this public expression of wealth, privately things were deteriorating. In describing the nature of his abuse, Alan frames alcohol as the primary abuser rather than his wife. This narrative tactic enables Alan to continue his biographical action plan with his wife in a similar fashion to Hyden (1994). He declares his love for his wife prior to this account.

"I'd come home from work and she'd say I was useless. In front of the kids when they were small and they would cry. (Participant pauses for 6 seconds and begins to cry). She would have had a lot of drink taken...She would get mad and she'd punch me and scrape me and hit me for absolutely no reason...I used to beg to her to stop – It still hurts an awful lot... I did everything I could. I took loans out, I gave her the money...we never went on holiday, we never went any single place on holidays...It was always up to her mother every weekend. And if she didn't want to let me go she'd make me stay at home and tidy the house. And I'd clean, clean the windows"

In 2001 Alan's father has a heart attack and dies. This event brings much regret for Alan. At this point Alan's desire to protect his public identity continues to overshadow his decision-making. He now realises he was wrong and deeply regrets his choices at the time. Alan's identity as a policeman prevents him from disclosing his private existence in spite of his colleagues knowing.

"I couldn't tell them...they used to joke about it...I used to laugh 'yeah'... "You're under the thumb" this is what used to go on. That used to hurt". The severity of the physical and psychological abuse Alan describes is significant. *"As I said I'd, I'd be locked out of*

the house. I often slept in the backyard with the dog. I'd go to work in the morning, I'd shave in work". His belief about not being believed stems from the severity of this abuse and his paradoxical public role and identity. He declares his love for his wife before reporting how she abuses him. Love, is one of the reasons for his acquiescence.

"I absolutely adored her [participant begins to cry]. She had an awful temper. I'd be on my knees, I'd beg her. I'd hold on to her, she used to hit me, kick me in the groin. She'd scratch me, thump me, I'd go sick at work [participant crying]. I wouldn't go in, my face would be torn. I often had black eyes; though she was small, 5 foot four... I'm 6 foot... sometimes she'd wait until I went to bed, and she'd hit me when I'd be asleep".

The extreme nature of the abuse is symbolised by the two older children participating in his abuse. Alan highlights his inequitable situation at work and home *"I wouldn't be allowed to eat at the table with the children...And I was the breadwinner, I earned all the money, I did everything".* In 2002, Alan travels to Bosnia with work. This move publicly enables him to leave the home in noble fashion earning extra money. Alan biographically reflects upon his desired plan and its tenability in the long term. His narrative gestalt is situated in this period of his life.

"I was in Bosnia with United Nations, and I had seen people who were...taken captive by people. And the things they went through, I couldn't believe it. And yet, (participant cries) when I looked at myself, and saw me as a person..."

This expression suggests Alan's internal recognition of the severity of his situation. Shortly after his return, the family move home again to be closer to his wife's family. The abuse worsens again. Of all the abuse he endured. *"The emotional abuse was probably the worst".* Alan's key turning point occurs when he leaves the home after 18 years of marriage. In August 2003 Alan's leaves the house following a row. His biographical trajectory begins when he chooses to make his private life public, contacting

a friend for help. As he leaves, his wife threatens him with not seeing his children. He claims he had no choice but to leave. It is evident that Alan's life project supersedes his biographical action plan of family life at this moment. His action of leaving confirms the failure of their marriage shattering his biographical action plan of married fatherhood.

Alan is ambivalent about his choice to leave the home. Although he feels it was necessary in order to survive, he regrets not being able to see his children. He attends counselling. Despite the abuse he experiences, Alan chooses not to blame her, blaming himself for 'not seeing' her lack of love. Alan interprets his 'love' as a commitment rather than an active emotion (Farley 1990). He now realises this belief was mistaken.

"I don't miss her any more. I don't hate her either. I miss the kids a lot. I have never hated her actually. I couldn't hate her officially, because I. (participant wipes his eyes and sighs). From the time I fell in love with her, I was in love with her. And I couldn't see that she didn't love me. And I thought that one day she would. (Participant wipes his eyes again). And I thought if I did what she wanted, and made her happy, that she would be happy. But she wasn't happy. She was never happy in herself".²⁹

Shortly after saying this, he discloses that the real reason he did not leave was because "*I was afraid of her actually*". Alan engages the legal system to access his children. Despite being granted access, he has been prevented by his wife from seeing his children since he left. He expresses feelings of injustice by a system which cannot follow through on its judgements. Four years have passed since he left. He attempts to communicate with and apologise to his children through letters but doubts that they have read his words.

The final phase in Alan's life story represents a reclaiming of a life lost by abuse. This biographical metamorphosis is marked by evaluations and contrasts. In reviewing his

²⁹ This text section was used in a microanalysis panel

story, Alan reveals a changed self from the one who endured the abuse. His portrayal of present self as 'better' than his past self is typical of recovery narrative accounts (Frank 1995). His private and public identities are not actively separated and he feels 'better' mentally, physically and socially.

In 2006, Alan meets a new partner. He portrays this relationship as a positive and empowering one. The couple return to Alan's old house to deliver a birthday present for his daughter. He meets his wife and hands over the present. Alan reflects upon the significance of this event, re-evaluating his behaviour.

"I, actually, when I thought about it, I sat in the car and I felt good. Cause it was the first time that I had ever stood up to her". The first time I ever said anything without saying please and I'm sorry...I ended up 18 years, saying, I'm sorry I didn't do this...I used to say sorry for things, I wasn't even, it wasn't even my fault".

Alan regrets his own lost fathering opportunities with his children. He worries about his youngest children, but portrays a gendered imbalance in his family *"the boys in the family used to get a hard time"*. His expressions about his son reflect his own gendered suppression in the family and utilise a similar narrative expression *"He wanted to play in the team, she wouldn't let him play...she never let him"*. Alan returns to reflect upon his father's death. He re-iterates his regret for the lost opportunities his children had in knowing their grandfather. He recounts a particular incident which involved his daughter when the family attended Alan's father's wake.

"The little one, turned and wanted to know who the dead man was...she said it front of everybody... the place is packed she says ' who's the dead man? Because she didn't know her granddad"

Alan is rebuilding his life and re-connecting with members of his family and friends. He has been enabled to pursue education and looks forward to completing his legal studies in 2008. Although he feels that he has done the right thing and is a better person, the overhang of his sense of injustice – particularly in relation to his children continues to haunt him. Alan's use of language emphasises his contrast of his current partner with his wife. He ends his initial interview with the following narrative.

“My partner's amazing...I was waiting for her to just explode and attack me and hit me and say something bad to me. It never happens, an absolutely beautiful person. It's so different, so she is”

5.1.1 Unique features of Alan's case

There are three unique features to Alan's story: *the nature of the abuse he experienced, the intensity of his public/private dichotomy and his narrative style.*

The nature of the abuse Alan experienced compared to Conor and Mike is the most graphic and severe. His exemplars of restricted human rights and physical and psychological abuse supports his narrative gestalt of comparison with victims of war crimes. Alan's narrative descriptions compare with the typology of 'intimate terrorism', a pattern most associated with female victimisation (Johnson, et al. 2006). His account of his children's involvement in his abuse is also unique to this story.

The intensity of his public/private dichotomy in Alan's narrative is attributed directly to his role as a policeman and the socially constructed performative expectations of persons which accompany this. Being a police officer represented the epitome of hegemonic masculinity where attributes of strength, valour and impartiality represent the norm

(Connell 2005). Privately, his masculinity mutated into subordination (Nye 2005). Alan was living an ultimate irony; in work, he was a law enforcer, at home he was a victim. In separating his narrative reconstruction, Alan illustrates his lack of alternative choices in the context of 80s Ireland. From the time of Alan's first assault, 14 years would pass before an Irish support group was established.

Alan's narrative style/form is from the position of 'the wounded' where the severity of the suffering could not be made sense of (Frank 1995, Hyden 2005). His minimisation of personal responsibility in his life story, coupled with the emotionality of the account suggests that although he has physically left the abusive relationship, in narrative time, part of him is still there (Ricoeur 1981). In other words, the fact that his recollections still cause him emotional distress means that he has not completely recovered from his abusive experiences.

5.2 Conor

“Me like a fool had no idea that the legal system was so biased against men... once you’re a mother...any fool can see what’s right”.

Conor is a father of two in his mid twenties. I am struck at how young he is. He appears friendly and jovial. He is part of a close-knit family and has three brothers and two sisters. His parents have been married for 36 years. Conor began the interview by articulating his tendencies in telling stories, which were to “waffle on”. He asks me to keep him on track (which I can’t do due to the nature of the SQUIN). Periodically, he recognises his own deviations and quickly re-focuses himself. Conor’s story is one of personal transformation, from being naively indifferent to being consciously strategic.

Conor meets his partner whilst studying for a master’s degree in 1996. The couple enjoy the student life which was characterised by a drinking culture in which they both participated. Conor was assaulted by his girlfriend when they were courting, but he minimises this *“I wasn’t the only one”*. Conor embeds his girlfriend into his own narrative. The portrayal of her identity and behaviour is key to his. He presents a summary interpretation of the *“dips and slides”* pattern of her life, framing her as an unreliable and vulnerable individual. She has an alcohol problem which he attributes to her up bringing. Her family history was abusive; her father’s abuse of her was *“shocking”*. Conor recognises her trauma and expresses empathy at her plight: *“there were lots of things she would have experienced that weren’t very eh nice”*. Conor initially portrays himself as a ‘fixer’ and provider of stability. This links with the common social constructions of masculinity (Connell 2005b). His desire to rescue her and her desire to be rescued represent a symbiotic relationship of sorts. Within a year,

the couple move in together. *“It was probably obvious at the beginning that she had a... problem, but to me it wasn’t at that time... Maybe now it would be different but sure you know, you (participant laughs) gain life experience as you go along, don’t you”.*

He uses naïveté to explain a series of poor decisions he made in his life. Perhaps his use of historically situated naïveté enabled him to sustain his dual role as narrator and biographer. This is recognised by many reflective statements of himself conveying his foolishness *“me like a fool...me like a twit”* at the time. Although he claims that he didn’t realise the extent of his partner’s problems, his parent’s concern contradicts this. In 1999 they lend him money to buy a house on the condition that he is the sole owner.

Soon after they move in, his partner becomes pregnant. Although unplanned, this event changes Conor’s subjectivity and his desire for a biographical action plan emulating that of his own parents becomes apparent. Paradoxical to the trend in contemporary society, Conor decides to marry his wife so their baby can be born in wedlock. Although he claims it is *“because I’m a bit of a traditionalist”*, there is perhaps an ulterior motive in ensuring his joint custodial rights were upheld. The couple marry in 2000 and their daughter is born safely despite her drinking through her pregnancy. The family unit comes under increased pressure when Conor’s wife quickly becomes pregnant again. Conor compensates for his wife’s unreliability and instability by performing the role of primary carer. He changes his working arrangements spending more time at home as *“didn’t feel comfortable leaving the kids”*. This suggests he senses a ‘trajectory potential’ for things to deteriorate. In 2001 their second daughter is born. Conor’s wife experiences depression and the *“dips and slides”* begin to get worse.

Conor interprets his wife's abandonment of their two infant children and drunk driving as a key turning point in the relationship. He gives her an ultimatum to seek help which she agrees to in order to save the relationship. This ultimatum backfires legitimising his wife's increasing absence from the family home attending AA meetings and various other courses. Although Conor expresses annoyance with this, this situation allows him to align his private and public life enabling him enhanced participation in his children's lives. At this point, Conor chooses not to tell anyone about his situation as "*me being a bloke*" he is embarrassed to talk about it.

In 2003 Conor discovers his wife is having an affair. He initially confronts her and she leaves. It is at this point that he chooses to disclose his relationship difficulties to his parents and friends. This event presents him with a dilemma regarding his value system.

"She was in love with this guy... I told her to get out of the house...she left the house, cleaned out whatever was in the bank and set up in [location] left me with the girls, had an apartment there... she was gone for 3 months... I did nothing but beg her to come home you know, eh, because you know I didn't want to have a wrecked marriage you know"

His desire not to have a 'wrecked marriage' highlights his continuing value for a family unit over infidelity and explains his contradictory actions. His wife returns and the couple seek counselling. Despite not being able to afford it, the couple then move to the countryside, placing the family under increasing financial pressure.

Conor changes the subject describing a family visit to his wife's father in America which was requested by his wife. This visit went badly. Conor's wife was assaulted by her father in front of him and the children. The family leave and Conor and his wife agreed "*that there'd be no contact ever again*". Conor's wife reneged on this promise on foot of

an overdose of paracetamol some time in 2004 and returned to her father alone for a month. Conor's frustration is evident. Although he does not explicitly acknowledge it, this was an epiphany as it is the first time he recognises the untenability of his life project.

"I was so sick of it, of her carry on, you know all these patterns of drinking and AA and affairs and feckin suicides and then going to see her dad. I just felt fuckin nothing".

This moment marks the next phase of his life story which is the deterioration of his marriage. In 2006 he interprets a change in his wife's behaviour recognising that something was "fishy" as *"she started doing stuff in the house like, you know cleaning things"*. He detects a build up of trajectory potential (Riemann and Schutze 1991). What Conor did not realise was the nature and extent of this pending biographical trajectory.

At this point, the pattern of Conor's storytelling changes and exact dates become embedded in what now becomes 'factual reflection'. He is preparing me for his biographical trajectory story. He justifies the need for including dates in his story. *"I know these dates are irrelevant to you, but they're very relevant to me"*. During a week's holiday with his daughters his wife asks for a separation via the phone. At this point, Conor presents the narrative gestalt of his story.

"me like a fool had no idea that the legal system was so biased against men... once you're a mother... that seems to be fine you know, and it's more or less what the judge said to me... anybody, any expert would be able to state that one, she hasn't been able to look the children ever, and that I've done most of the upbringing... So to me it would have been pretty clear if there was a dispute over the children...who they would stay with... [In] any marriage break-up...it can't be easy for anybody, but what's right for the children was to stay with me, it wasn't just to get at her".

Conor starts his diary on the 11th of July. His keeping of a diary during this time enables biographical reflection, enabling him to accumulate ‘evidence’ and legitimise his experiences as abusive. *“Maybe it was the same as it always was, it’s just that written down...how could you have just stood there and not said anything?”* He recalls a particular incident:

“The younger one...she stepped in front of me...she shouted at (wife) to "stop being mean to daddy - leave him alone - he's a good daddy". And I mean, there's a five year old, you know, em, standing up for me, you know. I'm just, I was, I couldn't. I mean I couldn't stand up for myself... It was bad enough as it was...I just didn't know how to handle it”

Conor claims that he was poorly advised by outside agencies. *“The advice was to walk out of the house, but I wasn't going to walk out of the house and leave the children.*

Conor’s identity as father becomes his sole motivation for his actions. Conor consciously enhances his public identity as capable father, involving himself in community organisations in addition to his usual involvement in school activities.

He begins to cry as he presents the event which sparked his biographical trajectory.

“I found out afterwards... [Conor’s wife] said to her GP, who then was duty bound to report it to the social services. Said that my elder daughter [name’s daughter] came into her and said eh, “oh morning mammy, daddy sticks his finger up my bum”, right, just like that”

This ‘incisive shock experience’ (Riemann and Schutze 1991) seriously threatens both his private and public identity. Irish society has a particular repulsion to paedophilia given a spate of recent clerical sex abuse scandals which were in the news at that time (Ferguson 2001). Having an identity associated with child abuse is anathema to his self-concept privately and publicly. He argues that the allegation is *“bullshit”*. His structuring of her actions after the alleged event supports his interpretation of the

ridiculousness of the situation as she goes away for 4 days leaving him caring for their children and her nephew.

Whilst his wife was away that weekend, Conor attends a local street party. *“I was drinking at the street party. Not a lot, I’ve plenty of witnesses...My brother was babysitting before you ask”*. Emphasising witnesses seems important for Conor, perhaps due to its importance in the trajectory process. Prior to this he and his wife have a row about taking the children to visit her father who was in Ireland. She returns from holiday at 1am and attempts to take the children. His brother rings him and he returns immediately. She calls the police twice. Conor uses metaphor to illustrate his gender biased experience *“I was man handled...I was pushed into the kitchen. Two, of course, two guards to handle me, you know, the violent man. And a ban guard [female police officer] to comfort the damsel in distress. She comes down the stairs, you know ‘afraid’. And thank Jesus, my sister was there”*. He and his sister are questioned separately and the police leave. Conor believes that her actions were coached.

“I’m thinking... Like all her AA friends would all have been through all of this stuff you know, all the tricks of the trade. So you couldn’t actually report something herself, she’d have to go the GP and the GP would report it so that would cover her in court. “the child said this, and I just told the GP what the child said, so I never said anything to anybody”, you know, this is the angle”.

At this point, his portrayal of himself changes. Conor realizes he needs professional assistance and needs to adapt in order to negotiate. This signals the beginning of a creative biographical metamorphosis (Riemann and Schutze 1991). Conor contacts the national men’s domestic abuse support group and was enabled to challenge her allegation. This did not go down well with his wife: *“she went nuts... She obviously*

thought I was going to be thrown out of the house". His wife's tactics change and deepen from this point. She knowingly threatens his public and private identity. He has no choice but to report this to the police in order to salvage his identity. He interprets his treatment as gender biased, translating to what I term 'second wave abuse' (see section 6.2.1.2 below).

"She was calling me a paedophile bastard and all that on the street. You know "stay away, keep your children away from him". You know, with people around, eh, neighbours and that. And them not knowing what was going on. And em, I'm chairman of the parents association; she was going around to the school telling them... all this sort of stuff. Em, so I went to the guards myself...Like once she said I was attacking her and I wasn't even there. So, I wanted to tell them what was going on. But as it turned out I had to wait for three and a half hours cause she was in there making a statement..."

Conor's wife then removes the children from the home deepening his biographical trajectory, severing his identity as father and the normality of family life.

"When I was in with the guards, she went back to the house, my parents were minding the kids, and she just left and she went to a women's refuge saying 'in fear of me'. And of course, women's refuge, well no woman would make up stories. They took her in. And they provide a great service, women's refuge, don't get me wrong...They're there to provide a service, but it's a huge, huge hole that allows women to abuse that service"

Conor reaches the biographical chasm of his narrative (Chamberlayne 2004). His expresses sarcasm in describing her intentional (ab) use of support systems. He also uses sarcasm to highlight the gross inadequacy of social services and solicitors, and clear gender bias towards women.

"I went to social services and said "well who's supervising her now?" "Oh, it's in a regulated environment, its fine", I says "It's not fine – how do I know she's not setting me up", which is something a solicitor suggested [solicitor's name] "I'd seen it before you know" he says. "But don't worry, that will come out in the investigation". I says, so that (voice pitch rises). So I mean you leave the kids

with a potential abuser because it's alright, it will come out in the investigation? Because it's a woman? If that was a bloke, there's no way that would happen"

Conor doesn't see his children for a total of 11 weeks. He now portrays himself as strategist committed to gathering evidence to 'prove' his side of the story. He illustrates a creative metamorphosis motivated by being a committed father who rebels against the suggestions offered by those he comes in contact with

"Constant, constant phone calls to social services....I'd phone them, I don't know, 50 times per week. Em, I'd eventually get to talk to somebody. One of them actually said to me that I should seek a section 20 order which is, you know, to see if the kids would go into care..." "Why put the kids into care? You know, they come home... they can come home and live with me...I'll have whoever she likes will supervise. I don't care who it is. Kids back at home, going to their normal school."

Conor engages the legal system to access his children and learns how to work this system to his advantage.

"I got a protection order then against (wife). And eh, that meant that her barring order had to be eh, you know, we had cross applications so that was postponed. And we immediately had an application in for custody which obviously couldn't be heard until there was a sexual abuse investigation undertaken"

He interprets the delay by social services as abusive in itself.

"Putting the children through a sexual abuse investigation, completely unnecessarily, is abuse in itself or tantamount to abuse...I have done nothing...and they didn't seem to give a fuck. Excuse my French. I was just so annoyed. You know, even talking about it, it makes my blood boil".

Conor is failed by social services. He is angry and disappointed by their inaction. Their low priority of the case (according to social services) incenses him, as this firstly confirms the ridiculousness of the allegation whilst unnecessarily prolonging his absence from the children. On the 6th of October, Conor is allowed to speak with his daughters over the phone. He records all of his calls. This again illustrates his desire for 'evidence'

in order to prove his innocence. This decision eventually pays off. Conor evaluates that *“it’s all about money with her”* and not children *“I have €90 a month to live on”*. He expresses frustration at the assumptions of the dominant discourse in practice and his invisibility within it.

“It’s... the whole system. Where you have this abuse made up and there’s no, no psycholo-. Nobody sees the kids, nobody sees me. And she’s in a refuge and I’m obviously a bad man”.

Three months later, he *“got to see the girls then on a Saturday for six hours under supervision. I had to have two people with me at all times. And she didn’t have anyone with her...I was ‘the accused’”* [participant uses fingers in quotations]. His use of sarcasm and contrast between his treatment and hers emphasises his perceived inequality of the situation.

The recording of evidence by Conor pays off and sparks a turning point in his trajectory.

“A phone call. [Daughter’s name] said to me that ‘mammy kisses me on the bum’ ...I’m thinking, didn’t mean anything. Then I thought ‘fucking Hallelujah’, that’s as stupid as what she just used or allegedly said. So I went to social services with it the next day... I told them I recorded them as well... lo and behold, ten days later...they were to bring the girls in...so three months after this whole thing started out...”

This confirms Conor’s attachment to ‘evidence’ as the recorded ‘evidence’ proved to be a catalyst for action. Conor states that the investigation hearing *“was half an hour”* which confirm the point he has been trying to make all along. He paraphrases the investigator’s words saying *“it’s perfectly clear that nothing ever happened to those children”... there’s no confusion here, no need for an investigation”*. This decision paves the way for a custody hearing. Conor attends the district court to seek custody of his children. He

wrongly assumes that his ‘evidence’ or ‘the truth’ would be sufficient. He discovers the gender bias of the legal system.

“After me saying my concerns about her psychiatric state, her ability to parent the children, the emotional damage being caused to the children, their completely unfair removal from the home... from me...my family....And [the judge] just said “look she’s the mother, it’s the natural way of things” he said. “Has she ever eh, hit them with the frying pan? Has she cut them with a knife?” I said “no, well I’m not going to lie to you judge, she hasn’t done that”... He goes “well she’s their mother – I’ll save you coming back” he says and awarded her full custody, you know. And that was my Christmas present”.

Although Conor immediately appeals, this decision is a setback to his biographical metamorphosis and desire to return things back to normal. He now faces moral and legal dilemma:

“My solicitor, when he found out the judge call that was coming up... He said “you can’t go up in front of him and appeal custody”. I said “what do you mean”. He said “he’ll never give it to a man, and if you’d been turned down, you’ll not be able to appeal it again, you’ll have to go up again”. So I had to adjourn three times. Eh, and I got advice from two other solicitors as well and everybody all backed each other up and they wouldn’t have done it as well. So I just couldn’t go in”.

Although he has ‘proof’, he knows that the judge has ultimate power in court. He cannot risk losing his appeal to a biased judge, yet deciding to postpone prolongs the unsatisfactory situation where his children are not at home. Ironically, despite ‘losing legally’ Conor minds his children more than he is supposed to at his wife’s discretion. He is frustrated by his children’s care being fragmented and his powerlessness as a father trapped within a system biased against men like him. In the meantime, Conor attempts a different legal strategy to obtain custody of his children (Section 47 order). He is not optimistic about the future. In ending his narrative, Conor uses his children’s perspective to re-iterate what he and his children desire: *“they love (wife) as much as*

they love me, there's no doubt in that. But, what they do want is to be back in [family home] with me. And they made that very clear. Because, I even asked them "well supposing I didn't live in [family home], well, how would that stand?" do you know. Just to try and separate [family home] and me. And they said "wherever you are", you know". Conor closes his narrative with a summary of his narrative gestalt saying:

"Any fool can see what's right".

5.2.1 Unique features of Conor's case

Conor's story is unique in a number of ways: *the nature of his story telling, the embedding of his wife as a key event carrier and, the nature of the abuse (as mostly second wave) make his story distinct from the others.*

The nature of his story telling is articulate, vivid, humorous in parts and detailed. His use of metaphor in augmenting the crystallization of his narrative is not seen in the other cases (Charon 2006). His ability to recollect actual dates in his narrative is initially surprising yet understandable. Conor is acutely aware of the importance of accuracy, context and detail in telling a story. After all it is a 'told story' which begins his biographical trajectory. He tries to convey a lot in his interview which characterises approximately eleven years of his life. There are many shifts and turns, which suggest that his narrative constraint to go into detail is stronger than his constraints to condense and close the form of his extempore narration (Schutze 2008). Although his decision to begin a diary is motivated to collect evidence for legal reasons, this process serendipitously enables him to undertake biographical work on his life story ultimately

legitimizing his experiences as abusive. As a result, his account illustrates a high level of biographical rendering (Schutze 2008). Compared with Alan and Mike, Conor's biographical trajectory is quickly negotiated. It is argued that his diary is a key catalyst in facilitating his transition to biographical metamorphosis.

Conor's embedding of his wife as a key event carrier in his story is unique to his account. Goffman highlights the importance of 'setting' or context in the presentation of one's life (Goffman 1990). His dedication of a large amount of narrative to frame the character of his (unstable) wife suggests that understanding her was key in understanding his narrative gestalt which was that "*any fool*" should, but didn't realise her incapacity.

The nature of the abuse in Conor's story illustrates a form of abuse interpreted as but not directly undertaken by his wife, but by biographical care takers such as social workers and police who failed to treat him fairly. He attributes gender as the key reason for his abuse, telling a story of gender discrimination both interpersonally and societally. Although he experiences 'first wave' direct psychological and physical abuse from his wife, he also articulates a different kind of abuse; experienced by the actions (or inactions) of representatives from outside agencies. This abuse entitled 'second wave abuse' is discussed further in section 6.1.2.2. below.

5.3 Mike

She's not hitting me because she wants to hit me; she's hitting me because she wants me to hit her back. That's what she wants because you know that'll be it, game, set and match".

"Nobody seems to be here to help me... whatever I've turned to it's been 'go away'".

Mike is a father of two in his mid 40s. He speaks with an English accent, yet is of Irish descent and has lived in Ireland since the mid 80s. He tells a story of betrayal and inequality. It is also a story of coping with loss (children, home, marriage and career).

Mike, an electronics engineer meets his partner in England. During their engagement, she punches him in the face at a party during an argument. He accepts her apology and the couple marry in 1983. Shortly after this, they return to Ireland. Mike portrays the following nine years of life as *"perfection...a fabulous marriage...we had everything you could want"*. This reflects a successful enactment of the biographical action plan of financial success and married fatherhood (Ferguson 2001). The couple have a son and a daughter during this time. Mike gets a job in sales in a multinational electronics company involving long hours of work and time away from home. He frames this as a conscious negotiated plan

"I'd sat down with my wife and we had decided... we'd be able to earn a lot of money in a short period of time and then I would get out because the stress was absolutely enormous...I was working mostly 13-14 hour days...the idea was we'd pay off the mortgage, you know we'd have a bit of money and I would go...get out of the rat race".

What he does not express is the inevitable strain this choice would invariably have had on his role as a husband and father. Mike then emphasises his position as successful, building up a narrative contrast of success on a worldwide scale. He portrays himself as

“ a very very successful international sales guy working for an American company...they used to give out a prize on an annual basis to one of the sales guys around the, around the world actually and you became a director of the company for a year and this was a company turning over... 3 or 4 billion dollars a year, so a major, in every country in the world, a big electronics company and em, 3 years in a row I was the most successful sales guy in the world and on this particular year I became sales director and I won a trip to (location) for 2 weeks and things like that. It was like, it was an incredible year”.

This narrative strategy of emphasised success as a contrast medium, prepares the listener for an inevitable fall from this position. Mike comes home from an uneventful business trip. His wife announces that she wants to end the relationship. *“She said... I don’t love you anymore, em, and I just really want you know, us to finish and you to move out of the house”.* This event marks Mike’s biographical trajectory which is *“a total bolt from the blue”*. Classic narrative responses to this trajectory process (Riemann and Schutze 1991) emerge as he explains *“I actually thought she was joking to be perfectly honest with you...so I asked her like, you know, why?... I mean we’d been having proper marital relationships you know right up to me going away for that particular business trip. There was no issues on the table... we weren’t fighting, there was nothing.”* Their children are aged 4 and 5.

Mike asks her for some time to think which she agrees to. She moves out of the couple’s bedroom that evening. Mike tries to make sense of things. His work life suffers. He confides in a friend *“my best³⁰ friend at the time”* who was supportive. Mike does not believe that his marriage is in difficulty and as a result tries to ignore the trajectory event, continuing ‘life as normal’. This technique works for about three weeks until his wife becomes frustrated. This marks the third phase in Mike’s life – the deterioration of the relationship. Mike now experiences physical and psychological abuse from his wife.

³⁰ Mike emphasises this word

“She just started to scream and shout at me...I need to get the hell out of her life... she was screaming right in my face... I was just like, you know, like “why are you so angry, I mean I’m just trying to resolve it”...she just wasn’t listening to any of it and she started to push me and everything and I just said look I’m getting out...So I left and about, I suppose about an hour later I came back after thinking well maybe she’s calmed down at this stage”

He remains puzzled at her sudden change of behaviour. His portrayal of puzzlement is important to his narrative thread of shock at the sudden biographical disruption. He contrasts his pre trajectory life which was ‘*perfection*’ with his present interpretation that “*it’s all crashing in around me*”. The following day, he receives a solicitor’s letter confirming his wife’s request for a separation. The letter requested that he obtain legal counsel and left the house. Mike realises that his wife is serious and attends a solicitor. He is advised that “*if she’s decided, that’s it, its over*” and that he would be lucky if he saw his kids twice a month. He is devastated by this.

The couple attend one marriage guidance session. Mike realises she did this for strategic reasons. She becomes physically violent towards him. He refuses to attend mediation as he is not prepared to accept the marriage as over. His solicitor believes there is a third party involved. Mike builds a phone tap. He realises his marriage is over.

“I was listening to the tape between my best friend...talking about the sex that he’d had with my wife the night before...there was a lot of nasty things being said about me you know... how they were planning to get me out.. They reckoned they could break me within 6 weeks to 12 weeks”

He feels conflicted, yet chooses not to confront his wife at this point. Approximately 6 weeks later, he confronts his friend and wife. This action confirms his acceptance of his shattered marriage. That evening “*she went berserk, absolutely berserk. She was hitting me, kicking me and screaming at me*”. He offers to salvage the relationship but this is

refused. Mike decides to talk to her parents about their relationship difficulties. Her parents travel to Ireland to visit the family. Two days after they arrived he met with her mother who allegedly “*thought that she’d gone mental*”. Her parents return to Wales. Some time later, Mike returns from work to find his possessions removed from the home.

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“She...told me that I wasn’t to come back into the house and that she was going to get a barring order. I said well like “what can you get a barring order on”? She said... my solicitor tells me I can get a barring order against you”. I said “well I’ve done nothing like, (laughs) how can you bar me for doing nothing?”.

Approximately two weeks after this incident, Mike experiences his first false accusation of abuse which results in him being served with a protection order.

“The guards turned up at the door, that I had hurt my wife. (Laugh) I was just woo where is this coming from”? I said I came in, she went out and that’s all there was to it. So anyway they interviewed me and said look this is domestic, they didn’t really want to get involved...2 days later I’m served with a protection order, em, and an interim barring order application was in the works, em, and I hadn’t, I hadn’t laid a hand on her ever”.

At this point, he decides to seek legal advice again. He recalls a particular incident narrative when the couple row about his wife speaking to her lover in his company, she “*clattered me around the face with this phone and pushed me up against the wall, I split my head against the corner of the wall*”. He attends his doctor and discloses his abuse. His doctor advises him to seek help. Mike realises the doctor is right. He attends the local court and obtains a protection order. “*I was to serve it on my wife, which I found bizarre...I just felt if I handed her this piece of paper I know what’s going to happen...I was starting to get quite scared of her you know*”

One week later he leaves the protection order on the table “*and skidaddled effectively, cowardly, but that’s what I did. I wasn’t proud of it but I mean I just thought maybe that*

was a way of approaching it". He realises this would mean trouble. He compliments his wife for not (usually) abusing him in front of the children. *"I used to then start dreading as soon as the children would be in bed... because things would start happening then"*. Mike and his wife row about their papal blessing of their marriage. This was the first time the children witnessed the abuse.

"She really laid into me at that point in time in the kitchen and I mean really started to kick me and thump me... she was screaming and the kids came into the room and all I could think of doing was just rolling up in a ball, em, and as I did that she actually jumped, jumped on top of me, jumped on top of me and kept jumping and jumping on top of me and my son, em, came running over and said "look leave daddy alone...". And I mean I just, at that point I was more concerned that they were seeing this than anything else and I was just saying to her just stop, stop, stop, stop. She wouldn't, she just would not stop...then my daughter arrived and she got involved and it was just horrendous, em, but she didn't seem to know, she just seemed to be in like, like this red mist and she was just going completely berserk and she was scary looking".

His wife leaves the house for the night. Sometime after this, Mike's wife becomes *"really nice"* to him. He evaluates something was coming but wants to believe that she is making an effort.

" I thought well maybe she's reconsidered, so I started to talk and chat... 20 minutes later she came in,[asked]"would you like a cup of tea or coffee?" and I said yeah I'd love a cup of coffee... I just could not figure this out, but I thought it was good, whatever was happening was good rather than bad, so I was just going to roll with it...she came in and she walked up to me and she just threw it [coffee] in my face... straight in my face...my face was red from the burn and everything else and then she threw the cup at me as well and hit me on the side of the head".

This is a key turning point in the relationship. Mike calls the police. When they arrive his wife denies doing anything. Mike is interviewed by the police alone. Mike presents the key narrative gestalt of his story.

*“I couldn’t believe it but the guards turned to me and they said “well look this is domestic, look at the size of you, look at the size of her, you know, could you not sort this out”? And I said “well what are you telling me, like what are you telling me”? Are you saying that I should sort this out with my wife as in you know, have a go back at her [meaning hit her], because I know if I do, I know exactly what’s going to happen, she’s going to call you guys and you guys are going to take me away. **This is the plan, she’s not hitting me because she wants to hit me, she’s hitting me because she wants me to hit her back. That’s what she wants because you know that’ll be it, game, set and match**”.*

The guards threatened to involve social services/child protection services if he does not resolve the situation. It is at this point that Mike now realises his isolation within a gender biased legal system.

“If this was on the other foot, like if I was battering my wife, would you be telling her that? Would you actually be saying you’re going to remove the children because...she’s trying to protect herself against me?...at least I know now, nobody is going to help me, at least I know this protection order is not worth the paper it’s printed on”.

He is angry at being advised to “walk away” by those in authority. He chooses not to. Mike’s wife begins “torturing” him by interrupting his sleep patterns with loud noise. He said that his wife would leave a stereo playing music loud overnight with the speakers directed against the wall of his room. Mike accepts his marriage is over and the couple attend mediation services. Nearing the end of these sessions his wife leaves early refusing to sign any arrangement. He feels exposed and vulnerable by this tactic yet realises this was part of her “game plan”. She punches him which he minimises “it was only one punch thank God”

Some time later, Mike’s wife performs a ‘parentectomy’ (Summers and Summers 2006) taking the children to the UK. He interprets this as devastating and successfully instigates an application to the English courts through the Hague Convention to return the children home. This process takes about 3 and a half months. During his period of

absence, Mike hits a 'biographical chasm' (Chamberlayne 2004 p. 341) contemplating suicide.

"I just went up to the [remote location in the mountains] and I just said, you know, "fuck... I just cannot take this anymore"... I've no one to talk to...I just sat there... it was just the whole night long and I just said, I just, the easiest way out is just get out [commit suicide], but I didn't...I don't know... how I made the decision but I drove back and I just said no, I've got to, I've got to fight this.....she can have what the hell she wants but what I want is to be able to see my children, you know".

Mike portrays his commitment to fatherhood as the catalyst for his biographical metamorphosis. He acknowledges his marriage as over and seeks a formal separation. His choice to stay in the home was a catch twenty-two situation; legally if he left it would benefit his wife's case; however staying emphasised his physical vulnerability. He describes the unpredictability of her assaults

"I was having to leave the house often...getting out of a window because I didn't know what would hit me when I got into the hallway and things like that... you just didn't know what she was going to do or say or you know hit you with or whatever. It was just continuously mind games, physical battering....so, you never got into a routine because you know that if you had a routine it was going to be used against you"

In court, there is dispute over custody of the children even though he was entitled to joint custody as a married father. The court appoints a child psychologist who eventually "annihilates" him as a father. He uses sarcasm to describe this assessment.

"I'd been told to bring the money in cash, £600 at the time. So I gave him the envelope full of cash...I never ever got a receipt for that. So we had this session where there was the 4 of us in the room, em, where he asked some questions and watched the interaction supposedly between me and her and the kids and everything else. It was all of half an hour"

He uses metaphor to describe the second stage of this assessment, which he was not part of, demonstrating cognisance of the external perceptions of what he claims is a false situation.

“There’s my wife, the two children and this guy in the room, in the kitchen and it was like... Little House on the Prairie, my wife was cooking with the kids, they were making stuff, they were doing all sorts of things...and I swear, god can strike me down dead now, she had never done that in her life before. She’d never played with the kids, not that she didn’t love them, that was not her way of being with the kids. She’d never cooked with them. That was the kind of stuff I did with the kids... I mean to the outside world...this was just like perfection”

He expresses cynicism about how this ‘report’ generated through an unfair means, prescribed his (unfair) access to his children.

“He annihilated me in this report...it was all based on this day that he had arrived in the house... I hadn’t spent, given enough attention to [daughter’s name]. [Son’s name] had dominated me and I’d basically ignored [daughter’s name] and it couldn’t be further from the truth. What it was is he’d managed to get further on top of me and talked to me more. I always spent as much time with them and his recommendation was that I would get one Saturday afternoon a month, is what he reckoned was good for me”

This decision devastates Mike. He contrasts his role as an active father with the irony of his wife’s parenting style. He recognises her awareness of the children as his ‘Achilles heel’ which was a powerful weapon in dispute (Hyden 1994)

“It’s not that she didn’t love them, she just wasn’t that sort of human being...the kids were almost for me if you like, to fulfil my part of life...she was very kind, she was very functional...never ever ever did she do anything bad to the kids...But she knew that the one thing I really wanted out of this was you know to have interaction and be part of their lives.

He expresses a growing sense of isolation resulting from the biographical caretakers in his life.

“Everything I’d ever turned to was against me... nobody was there to help me. My own solicitors and barristers, judges, everybody...there wasn’t anybody there for me at all other than my own family”. During the separation process “there was continuous violence at all points in time but there wasn’t, it wasn’t anything

really that was you know, she wasn't going to kill me or anything, well I didn't think so anyway (laughs). I'm not sure because sometimes in her face she looked like she wanted to kill me³¹"

Mike realises the psychologist's report would be damaging to him. The psychologist did not attend the court hearing. He receives joint custody of his children. He jokingly reflects upon the conditions of his child custody and the possessions he was allowed take with him. *"By the time I'd paid everything I had about £8 a week for survival, (laugh), and that was my, my life you know"*.

The last violent incident occurred prior to him formally leaving the house. *"I was chilled because... I knew what was going on now... I knew that in 2 weeks time I'd be living there in (location) and I'd be able to see my children and you know, to be honest with you I would see the back of her as well (laugh) because there was no love left in me"*.

She beats him with a stick inciting him to hit her. *"Come on now hit me and hit me, now you can hit me and I said I don't want to hit you", you know. She kept at it and at it and at it and at it. And eventually I was bleeding and everything else"*. He leaves the house and returns later that night to his wife wielding a kitchen knife at him. *"I really thought she was going to kill me and I didn't even try to defend myself"*. This event signals the closure of the third phase of his life story.

The fourth phase of his life story spans the last 14 years since this event in which he experiences 'continued mental torture' via the children and via letters. Mike's choice not to elaborate about this period of his life perhaps reflects his wife's non involvement in these years. The only key event he discloses is that his children came to live with him as soon as they were old enough. Mike then changes topic to speak about his recent divorce

³¹ This text section was used in a microanalysis panel.

from his wife in the last year. His tone and posture changes as does the narrative style of his storytelling. This is perhaps due to a lack of opportunity to do biographical work in this section due to its relative recency compared with the rest of his narrative (Schutze 2008).

“I got divorced last year, it was the first time I’d probably set eyes on her in a number of years. I hadn’t realised it and. I mean when I actually was in the same room as her, I was actually frightened of her. I couldn’t believe it after all those years I was still frightened of her and I’d never been frightened of her when I was married. But I just, I just, it was beyond being scared of like you know the dark or something like that, it was a real base scare and I was panicking and everything but I had to stay in the courtroom obviously and she was sitting you know maybe 3 seats away from me. But I actually, I couldn’t get over that I could still be so frightened of that woman and yet you know, I really deeply loved her when I was married to her and I’ve no feelings, I mean as in I haven’t a feeling for her, I don’t hate her... she’s like a complete stranger to me but she could still scare me like that³²”

Mike is now in a new relationship. His grown up children live with him now. He concludes his interview by evaluating that him saying ‘no’ (by not leaving the house initially, and fighting back for his children) to his wife was the cause of his situation. He concludes by saying his wife *“had never, ever in her life been told [no] by her parents or me. And I hold my hand up to that, I’d never said no to her and that was the first time in my life that I’d said no, enough is enough and that’s it³³”*

5.3.1 Unique features of Mike’s case

The unique features to of Mike’s story highlighted are: *the nature of the abuse, his active involvement of biographical care takers, and his narrative style.*

³² This text section was used in a microanalysis panel

³³ This text section was used in a microanalysis panel

Mike's *active involvement of biographical caretakers* early in his narrative is unusual. In contrast with Alan and Conor, Mike consciously seeks out biographical caretakers for support and is the only story which has evidence of seeking support from a healthcare professional. This may be due to his lack of trajectory potential and the normativity of his relationship prior to trajectory.

Mike's *narrative* style is similar to a highly rendered recovery story (Plummer 1995). This high amount of biographical rendering is due to the passage of time and by multiple re-tellings (one which occurred at a conference shortly before this interview) (Riemann and Schutze 1991, Schutze 2008). The last section of his narrative (characterised by its lack of rendering) sharply contrasts with the earlier story which flowed smoothly. His high level of rendering enables strategic use of contrast structures, most obviously his emphasised successful identity contrasted with his post trajectory identity as betrayed and poor.

In relation to the nature of the abuse, Mike's case illustrates both first and second wave abuse. His first wave abuse could be compared with the badly titled 'common couple violence' pattern as described by Johnson (2006). Mike's case suggests that abuse could be a tactic not for power but as a means to achieve desired goals. Mike's story also illustrates how abuse experiences can re-ignite anxiety responses long after they have been experienced.

5.4 Summary

This chapter presented three interpretive case accounts which represented the outcome of nine stages of BNIM analysis. These interpretive case accounts illustrate the relationship between the particular and the general throughout the text. Overall, this process resulted in the finding that the process of accounting for abuse is a highly individualised one, historically situated by the prevailing social constructions of masculinity and intimate partner abuse. The key finding in this section is presented below.

- Men accounted for their experiences differently yet shared common narrative strategies in articulating life stories of abuse.

The unique features of each case described at the end of each case account are testament to this. Although Alan, Conor and Mike accounted for their experiences differently, there seemed to be common narrative strategies used in articulating life stories of abuse. The shared narrative strategies are discussed further in Chapter 6 below. Alan's account is a striking example of contested selves (public and private) polarised by his prominent public position. The extreme nature of abuse he experienced and the fact that he is now in a happy relationship is testament to the capacity for a man to recover and find happiness in the face of adversity. Conor's story is useful in demonstrating that false claims can be made by women and that health and social care agencies can make gender biased assumptions. Mikes story of betrayal exemplifies the speed at which biographies can change whilst also illustrating how one can remain affected by abuse even after fourteen years. The following chapter (Chapter six) presents the findings emerging from the collective analysis of the three case accounts.

6 Cross Case theorisation

The preceding chapter presented the individualised case accounts of Alan, Conor and Mike. This chapter contains the outcome of the collective analysis of the three cases in relation to the study aims. This represents the tenth and final stage of the BNIM analytic process. Figure 11 below provides a conceptual illustration of the processes which have lead to the findings presented in this chapter.

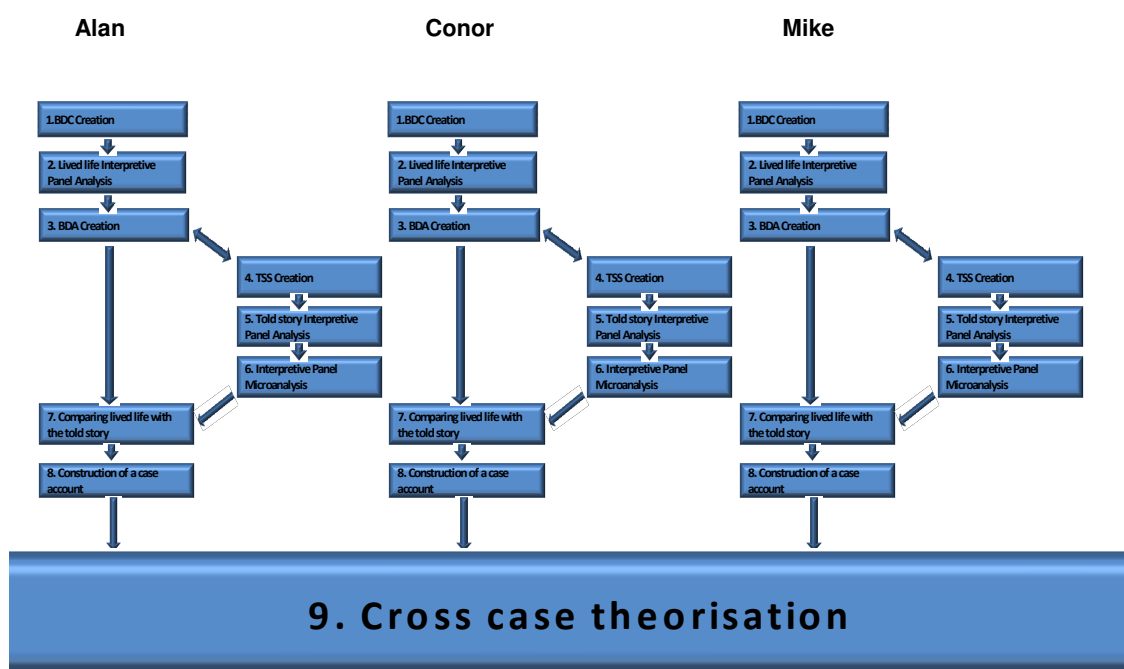


Figure 11 Cross case theorisation

One characteristic of the findings presented in this section is the movement between the particular, the general and back again. This illustrates relationships between men's narratives and broader social discourses in the life story. The key findings which emerged from the cross case theorisation process are illustrated below. How these findings were generated and their discussion relating to the relevant literature is critically discussed in the subsequent text thereafter.

- How masculinity and intimate partner abuse were constructed were central ordering principles in biographies of abuse. These social constructions actively disadvantaged both men and their biographical caretakers firstly in identifying abuse and secondly in responding appropriately. These constructions also helped men to maintain their identities.
- Biographical work was important for recognising abuse and appeared to speed recovery.
- Current definitions of abuse were insufficient to incorporate the man's perspective.
- Narratives of powerlessness were the means by which men expressed private abuse experiences.
- Dominant narratives of 'fatherhood' and 'being a husband' were used as a key means to express the abuse experience.

6.1 The social 'constriction' of masculinity in the biographical process

As illustrated in the literature review, being a man in the world usually renders men with a clear societal advantage (Walby 1990, Connell 2005b). However, this study found that the topic of intimate partner abuse presents an exception to this norm. This study found that **how masculinity and intimate partner abuse were socially constructed were central ordering principles in biographies of abuse** (Bruner 2004, Schutze 2008). Riemann and Schutze's theory of biographical processes is used to exemplify how men's narrative accounts evolved throughout the life story (Riemann and Schutze 2005, Schutze 2008). The four key structures associated with extempore narration (biographical action schemes, trajectories of suffering (biographical trajectory), institutional expectation patterns and creative biographical metamorphoses) were used as a means to illustrate how the contradictory discourses relating to intimate partner abuse and masculinity shaped

how men collectively accounted for themselves. In section 3.1.1 above, I provided a pictorial illustration this theory. The following figure provides a conceptual representation of how this theory relates to the findings presented in this section. The bottom section of this diagram has been added to elucidate the role biographical work (discussed later in this section) played in the men's account of themselves.

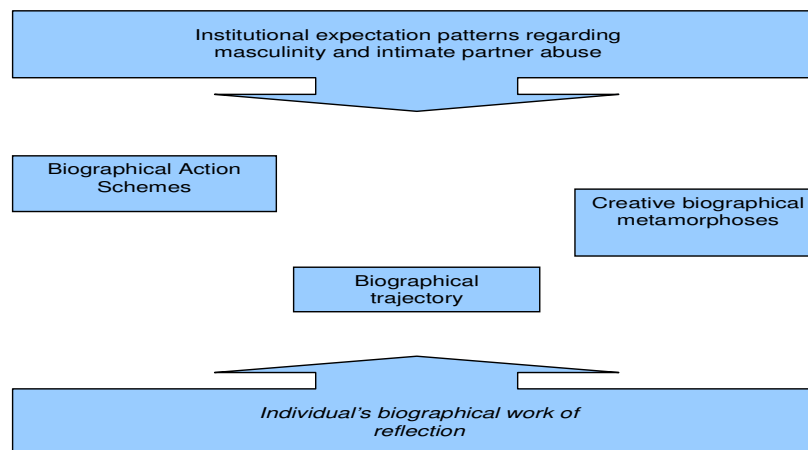


Figure 12 Conceptual representation of how Riemann and Schutze's theory applied to the study findings

The prevailing social construction actively disadvantaged both men and their biographical caretakers firstly in identifying abuse and secondly in responding appropriately. In relation to narrating the abuse experience, men's own constructions of masculinity delayed the vital biographical work of recognising themselves as abused, vulnerable and needing help. This is due to the presence of what Hopper (2001) terms 'contested selves' where one struggles with conflicting identities. This problem was not unique to the narrators but also extended to biographical caretakers who by their stereotypical constructions of intimate partner abuse and indeed masculinity, were restricted by their own 'constrictions'.

The primary reason for this is attributed as the lack of available discourse relating to male victimisation. The social construction of masculinity and intimate partner abuse as I have argued in the literature review were rooted in opposing traditions (namely masculinity and femininity). This has proved to be evident in this study. Burr (2008) and Gergen (2010) highlight the centrality of language in interpreting socially constructed meanings. The invisibility of a linguistic discourse surrounding male victimisation was brought about by the emphasised discourses of masculinity and the feminisation of intimate partner abuse. Being a man brought about the storying of abuse as both an individual and collective endeavour – inflicted by women and also biographical caretakers indoctrinated by a conceptualisation of masculinity which did not recognise men as victims. It is argued that men's power over women in society and the discursive practices which surrounded this phenomenon constituted a meta narrative in the story. As members of this society, they did not recognise themselves and used narratives of disbelief to express their and others' initial responses to this crisis of identity. Society mythologises men as masters of their own fates – not as recipients of a fate. This in essence placed the men in a paradoxical situation in which their identities as men directly conflicted with a possible (feminine) identity as victims of abuse. How can a member of a more powerful group make visible their vulnerability? This question, posed by Faludi's study of masculine incarnations proposed that men cannot initially analyse what is happening to them as this directly contracts their espoused dominant identity (Faludi 2000). The ideology of masculine identity and the discursive practices associated with it were interpreted by the men as a social constriction in relation to the abuse experience. The discursive practice of masculinity and its historically situated ideology according to Miglaccio (2001), is

shaped by a dichotomous perspective of that which is not masculine. It is suggested that this ideology influenced the men's interpretation of self and other in their narrative accounts. Although masculine identities are not fixed, the dominant ideology of hegemonic masculinity remains a powerful construct in Irish society (Connell 2005b, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Fatherhood and being a good husband are prominent identities associated with the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity (in the ordinary sense) in Irish society (Wetherell and Edley 1999, Ferguson 2001). Within the discursive practice of femininity, there is a narrative discourse surrounding victimhood and vulnerability which to date, men have not been privy to (Loseke 2001). It is no surprise that the two dominant narratives in all three cases were shaped by what are the two most dominant discursive practices of masculinity in Ireland. These two dominant narratives (good father and good husband) provided men with acceptable discourse from which they could legitimately articulate abuse experiences. The relevance of these two discourses in the narrative construction of self is discussed further in section 6.3 below. The narrative positioning of "being a bloke" excluded them from the practice of help-seeking as illustrated below.

*"Of course me being a bloke, I wasn't talking to anybody about this... **I would** be embarrassed to be saying, you know asking for help or anything like that" (Conor)*

*"**I couldn't** tell them (colleagues)... I was ashamed of myself... **I couldn't** go in and say. I was a big man and was into, they used to joke about it and say 'oh here, she won't let you out to play football' and I used to laugh 'yeah, ah not at all, look I'm busy, I'm looking after the kids'. 'Ah she won't let him out, she won't let him go for a drink, oh, you're under the thumb'. This is what used to go on. That used to hurt as well...She used to tell me she hated me, she didn't want me in the house, she was going to get rid of me. She said she was going to report me to the guards [police]. And I said 'I'll tell them what you've been doing to me for the last 18 years' and she said (participant emphasising)', no one will believe you' she said '**no one will** believe you'. And **I know that.**" (Alan)*

This pattern of reluctance in seeking help is also evident in relation to men's health. Men visit the GP less, and are more inclined to present with problems late in the course of illness (McEvoy and Richardson 2004). This social practice has been found to relate to the attribute of stoicism associated with constructions of masculinity, perpetuating the identity of being a 'big man' (Courtenay 2000). Seeking support could be likened to admitting vulnerability, something which is contrary to being a man. Anecdotally, men who attended the Irish domestic abuse support group seemed to attend late in the course of their relationship difficulties (see Section 4.2.2 above). Alan's quotation (above) highlighted his paradoxical situation. In order to maintain his public masculine identity as a 'big man', denial of his evolving private identity 'as under the thumb' was essential. In other words the thought of not being believed rationalised their choices of denial and inaction in the early part of the biographical process. Being a man was the 'thread of destiny' which underpinned the biographical process structures in their stories (Schutze 2005).

The macro social construction of intimate partner abuse as a predominantly women's domain became evident as 'not being believed by others' through narratives of interactions with biographical caretakers in the public arena. Women's stories are believed by virtue of their prevalence and social acceptance within discourse (Loseke 2001). The presumption of women's innocence and men's guilt (guilt by gender) became evident through contrasting accounts of gender difference. For example, Conor said:

"You leave the kids with a potential abuser because it's alright, it will come out in the investigation? Because it's a woman? If that was a bloke, there's no way that would happen..." "You can't change your locks in your house because that's seen

as intimidation apparently. So legally you can't change your locks because if you do eh then you're being aggressive. Eh, but if a woman changes them, the locks, she's just protecting herself" (Conor)

Language represents the performative element of social construction which is made available (or not) through social processes (Burr 2008). Use of the linguistic term 'not being believed' represented the structuring of men's abuse experiences as something which was unsanctioned or invisible in the available contextual discourses. This was interpreted additionally as abusive in itself. This 'collective abuse' is discussed further in section 6.2.1.2 below. The men used not being believed as a strong narrative positioning tool throughout the narrative. For example, Conor expressed that he would not be believed in his narrative of his custody hearing which was stalled for this reason.

*"The appeal was to come up in March in the circuit court. And my solicitor, when he found out the judge call that was coming up... He said "you can't go up in front of him and appeal custody". I said "what do you mean". He said "**he will** never give it to a man, and if you'd been turned down, **you will** not be able to appeal it again". (Conor)*

The use of future tense by the men reflected a situated paralysis of sorts and suggested that despite the narrator expressing the story, uncertainty persists regarding being believed. With the exception of Mike, there is a union of the portrayed self 'then' and self 'now' in relation to perceptions of not being believed in the wider society (Gubrium and Holstein 2001).

The technique of using future tense expressions about not being believed is not unique to the three cases presented here. In Cleary's collection of narratives (Cleary 2004), this phenomenon is evident in narratives of men still in abusive relationships (e.g. "*People*

will never believe the things she does to me” p. 5, *“If the judge hears [a false allegation] he will kick me out and take my child from me* p.22 *“because I am a man, I would not be believed”* p. 43). ‘Not being believed’ is a core abuse narrative theme and reflects an embedded social process of denying a man’s vulnerability. Narratives of not being believed by Gardaí, solicitors, social workers and the medical profession are also evident in other Irish studies. Identical themes emerged from case studies of 24 fathers in Ireland who were involved with social/family support agencies (Ferguson and Hogan 2004). There are also examples of wrong advice given by these groups which had damaged men in their pursuit of child custody and legal orders (Cleary 2004). In a small scale Irish study, mistrust of the legal profession emerged from a focus group conducted on 5 male victims of abuse (Lehane 2005). According to Richardson (2004), men’s choices in accessing health services are more linked to the value men place on it rather than its necessity. It is possible to suggest that mistrust of a service such as legal, social and police services may prevent men from accessing them, regardless of the competence of the legal personnel. Unlike Alan and Conor, Mike did assume he would be believed in his disclosure to his GP.

“I went to my local doctor and I just said to him “look, I’ve got to do something about this, I don’t know what to do about it. Everything I do seems to be exploding in my face. You know, whenever I try to calm everything down all I’m doing is just making everything worse”. He said “well all I can do” he says, “You’ve really got to protect yourself because this could get out of hand”. He said “the violence is growing, it’s getting worse and worse, like, you need to do something about this”. (Mike)

This section represented the only positive account of disclosure which happened to be with a healthcare provider. As highlighted earlier (3.1.1 above) healthcare providers represent a potentially valued and respected resource for support and interventions and

have a duty to care for men professionally and sensitively. The role these ‘biographical caretakers’ play in the recognition of intimate partner abuse uniquely positions them to effectively respond as (in Mike’s case) they could be the first professionals victims of violence turn to (Richardson 2004, Kenny and Ni Rian 2008, Health Service Executive. 2010). The prevalence of men’s disclosure in Irish GP surgeries (Paul, Smith and Long 2006) perhaps suggests that this environment may be one perceived to be a safe environment for disclosure.

6.1.1.1 Making sense of abuse in the biography

As highlighted earlier, process structures are a useful means by which changes in subjective presentation can be illustrated as the story evolves (Riemann and Schutze 1991, Riemann 2003). **This study found that prevailing social constructions (of masculinity and intimate partner abuse) actively disadvantaged both men and their biographical caretakers firstly in identifying abuse and secondly in responding appropriately. These constructions also helped men to maintain their identities.** Institutional expectation patterns reflect social constructions of what constitutes the ‘ideal’ self, i.e. the self co-constructed within societal norms and expectations (Butler, 2004, Schutze 2008). In this study, the good father narrative and good husband narrative were the two dominant (public) selves which were portrayed in addition to the abuse narrative. The shaping of these ‘selves’ was determined by social expectations of what the ideal father; ideal husband/man ought to be. Biographical action schemes represent intended patterns of activity (or non-activity) for the individual’s life course (Schutze 2008). Both of these process structures illuminated the individual’s value system and the

influences of previous life experiences and conditioning (Erickson 1968). It is worth considering four key reasons identified by Shipway (2004) which influence decisions to pursue their biographical action plans of staying in relationships. These are; fear of worsening violence, hopes about the relationship, mistrust of agencies and lack of knowledge about what agencies can do (Shipway 2004). An obvious aspect of the men's narratives was their strong identity commitments (Philbin 2009) with being good family men. This commitment to engaging with an identity associated with this persona influenced their judgements and decisions (Courtenay 2000) which in some cases involved the expression of active resistance against events which clearly had 'trajectory potential' (Riemann and Schutze 1991). For example, Conor's wife abandoned their young children and drove a car whilst drunk, Alan was systematically beaten and made to sleep outside with the family pet, Mike's wife suddenly announced that the relationship was over and moved rooms that night. Although any one of these events could have ended a relationship – none of them did. The men chose to pursue their biographical action scheme *in spite* of such threats.

The first abuse (which was early in the relationship) represented a sudden challenge to normative expectations of relationship dynamics and the reality the men faced at that moment. Although this could have represented a trajectory, it is classified as an initial shock due to it being isolated within the early phase of the relationship. Alan explained his reaction to his first assault:

"We were at a party... I spent all my time with her...the one or two occasions when I went away and somebody talked to me em, she was fine...that night when we went back to the house we were staying in, she thumped me. And I laughed because -I said what's all that about?... why did you do that?... she actually got

really angry and I said said em, why did you do that?...she said, 'ah, I didn't mean it' and, I thought, 'fine'. But I was kind of taken aback because I've been into sports all my life in college and in secondary school and for a woman to hit a fellow it was kind of funny for me because I didn't actually, I thought this was strange. We got married and em, everything was fine I think for the first year".

Alan's assertion of laughing at his assault emphasised a historical and present tense of incredulity or un realness. The expression of abuse as 'unreal' or 'unbelievable' represents a key narrative which men used to express the personal impact of their abuse (see section 6.3.1 below). In keeping with socially constructed conceptualisations of normative relationships (Loseke 2001, Connell 2005b) Alan portrayed his behaviour as appropriate and hers as inappropriate. The obvious transgression of this performance by a female assault *in this situation* challenged both the social norms of relationships and (dominant) masculine identity. Alan's articulation of the strangeness of a 'woman hitting a fellow' represents his interpretation of a non normative discourse in practice regarding interpersonal violence. The uncertainty inherent in this situation and its potential for emasculation, and loss of control over their identity by this transgression was significant (Butler 1999, Migliaccio 2001). The first abuse experience simultaneously challenged the ideology of the self and the self in society (Jackson 2004). Clearly, their choices in continuing with the relationship required a process of re-alignment between the situation and its interpretation. Strategies such as conscious minimisation of the event or deflection were used to conceal what ultimately was a bad decision at the time. Conor minimised the assaults by deflecting their intensity. His girlfriend was "*particularly aggressive towards me, but it wouldn't be just me*". Alan minimised its seriousness by his quick acceptance that she "*didn't mean it*". Mike accepted that when his girlfriend "*gave me a punch in the face actually... she was very sorry for it...there was never any you*

know, real...” This portrayal of a punch as un real, contrasted with later accounts of “*real*” violence during Mike’s biographical trajectory. This also suggests that perhaps rendering this first event as un real assisted the continuation of their desired biographies. Conscious minimisation of the first abuse was necessary in order to frame the remainder of their life story which essentially confirmed their (poor) decision to continue with their intended biographies. However, the intensity of their social conditioning or institutional compliance pattern of masculinity (Schutze 2005), and their subsequent accountability to masculinity as a collective (West and Zimmerman 2009) afforded them little choice. The first abuse sealed their fate bringing them closer together as they now both had something which needed concealing from society.

Choosing to stay, and pursue desired biographical action plans (which included abuse) is often perceived as a weakness attributed to ‘victims’ who lack the ability or will to leave. I suggest that this is an unfair attribution as the choice to stay with a biographical action plan could be constructed as an expression of strength (albeit at a personal level) to the power struggle inherent in one’s biography (Foucault 2002). Interpreted in this way, ‘staying’ or a commitment to a planned life course could be viewed as strength of character – conducive to masculine identity portrayal (Haywood and Mac an Ghail 2003). It can also reflect a strong commitment to the ideals of living a life close to the ideal. The alignment of selves or identities with one’s biography is a pivotal aspect of biographical storytelling (Schutze 2008). This means that how a person expresses themselves and positions themselves in their life stories is reflective of their values and beliefs about their identity.

Although Alan, Conor and Mike's choices may have been influenced by a desire to remain true to their espoused identities, their belonging to the dominant social group made them more acutely aware of their marginalised status. They realised that there was a higher price to pay by moving away from their particular biographical action scheme and public identity construction which was positioned in a 'stage' of men's power over women. Staying in this relationship enabled the continuation of what Goffman terms a front stage performance of normativity for a public audience against a back stage experience of something quite different (Goffman 1990). This situation enabled the maintenance of masculine identity associated with status and success in a public arena. Alan realised his choice to leave was the harder one "*its easier stay...Sometimes it's easier (to) stay*". Being a married father fostered an identity of 'head of the household' bringing associated connotations of power. Unmarried fathers are comparatively powerless societally and legally (Ferguson 2001, Ferguson 2002a). The conscious minimisation of abuse incidents is suggested to relate to men's denial of this trajectory potential in favour of a more desired life plan. Hoping that abusers can change has long been cited as a reason for victims to stay in relationships (Kelleher, Kelleher and O'Connor 1995). However, it is argued that 'hoping for change' was not a sufficient motivator for the men in this study.

Biographical rendering can involve different strategies (e.g. rationalising or neutralising the severity of abusive events) (Hyden 1994, Migliaccio 2002). This was potentially problematic as the articulated events (i.e. being abused by a female) and the biographical action plan (e.g. providing for a wife and family) were clearly incompatible. A coherence

structure for maintaining potentially conflicted identities was required. This was accomplished mostly through the dominant narratives and made evident by contrasting narratives of accomplishment with narratives of loss (see section 6.3.1.1 below). Outside of these regular discourses, an abuse narrative provided a means by which their marginalised identities were expressed. Several different rationalisation processes were offered which are presented below. With the exception of ‘knowing no one would believe’, the rationalisation processes used reflected a contrasting positioning between themselves ‘now’ and themselves ‘then’ differentiating the narrator from the protagonist (Holstein and Gubrium 2000).

The men’s historically situated denial in the early stages of biography was one narrative strategy which was used in minimising personal responsibility within the biography. Conor claims he only knew in retrospect about his wife’s drink problem and his decision to marry.

“People often ask me did you not notice anything at the beginning and I suppose in retrospect I could have...It was probably obvious at the beginning that she had a drink problem, but to me it wasn’t at that time. Maybe now it would be different but sure you know, you (participant laughs) gain life experience as you go along, don’t you...we had spoken not long before that about marriage you know. In retrospect I’ve no idea why, but anyway we did and eh, I was of the opinion if we were going to get married. I’m a bit of a traditionalist and I know it might be the wrong, you shouldn’t get married for the wrong reasons, but I felt well if we were going to anyway, and a child is on the way, well why not get married beforehand rather than afterwards, you know, I didn’t see the, you know...maybe that’s mad but that’s the way I felt about it”.

Mike’s portrayed a similar pattern of knowing and not knowing, expressing disbelief at his solicitor’s suggestion.

“I mean perfection, with everybody in the outside world, and certainly I considered a fabulous marriage...I was just devastated...the solicitor just said, he said you know “I think you should look at him”, he said “I think there’s a third party involved and I think you should look at him”. I said “what do you mean look at him?”

Alan’s attribution of not living together prior to marriage was also an attempt to claim that he didn’t really know that his relationship would become abusive.

“It was a long-distance relationship... week ends basically...we didn't live together...again it was long-distance...we had that kind of relationship for maybe 12 months...We were married on (date). We never lived together em”.

As the narrative evolves the portrayal of themselves ‘then’ and ‘now’ illustrates a metamorphosed, wiser ‘self’ than the one portrayed in the earlier stages (Gubrium and Holstein 2001).

6.1.1.1 Biographical trajectory: the collision of private and public identities

Biographical trajectories refer to a severe disturbance of the life project or biographical action plan. For Alan, Conor and Mike, the biographical trajectory represented the key turning point or epiphany in the story (Denzin 1989a, Riemann and Schutze 1991). As alluded to earlier, the division of public identity (and narrative) was core to living with the private identity of an abused man. As a result the biographical trajectory became a collision point where when their private and public identities could no longer be kept separate. The men’s commitments with their biographical action plans were released either by (a) competing obligations (in Alan’s case between his self project of survival and his biographical action plan of married fatherhood) or (b) when the meaning of the commitment (i.e. mutual trust) had changed (Farley 1990). Alan’s trajectory began when after 18 years, he left the home. *“If I hadn't, I would have ended up in (named psychiatric*

hospital). Conor's trajectory began when he was informed by social services that he was being accused (falsely) of child abuse. For Mike, it began the evening his wife announced the end of their marriage. The amount of 'biographical work' (Riemann and Schutze 1991) undertaken in advance of this trajectory influenced the experience and recovery from this phase in their biographies. This issue and its impact on biographical metamorphosis are discussed further in the next section.

The role of 'powerful outer forces' is key to Riemann and Schutze's theory of biographical trajectory (Riemann and Schutze 2005 p.119). 'Powerful outer forces' in this study were interpreted as society and 'biographical caretakers' (Riemann and Schutze 1991 p.350) (i.e. support agencies and friends). These are persons involved in the re-organisation of the trajectory experience which have the potential to alter its characteristics (Bury 1982). The power of this group to exert control over those in the throes of trajectory is noteworthy. This study found that caretakers exercised power over key events in the men's biographies and played a key role in the trajectory process. At some stages the powerful outer forces were portrayed as abusers in themselves (see section 6.2.1.2 below). The role biographical caretaker's play is an important factor in this thesis as my professional practice is inextricably linked with the preparation of biographical caretakers for effective functioning in a health care capacity. The implications of these findings on practice are discussed in section 7.1.1 below.

The men became accountable for their practices of masculinity by those 'powerful outer forces' who judged them using a frame of reference shaped by the dominant discourses or central ordering principles described above (section 6.1). This rendered the men

potentially marginalized and vulnerable by representatives of the support agencies they interacted with (West & Zimmerman 1987, Butler 1999).

When a person is in trajectory proper (Riemann & Schutze 2005), there are a number of basic features associated with narrating ones trajectory which are drawn upon to elucidate the findings. The particular stages in trajectory articulated by Riemann and Schutze (2005) are summarized as: 1 an overwhelming sense of disbelief. 2 The person articulates a growing awareness of powerful outer forces. 3 the characteristics of these powerful outer forces are initially articulated as inconceivable. 4, the person articulates a sense of loss of capacity and paralysis from one's usual management of everyday affairs. 5, this is accompanied with feelings of feeling alienated. 6, 'Downward Spin' – this is where the persons competence in social relationships is weakened which is accompanied with an inability to relate well to biographical caretakers. 7, the person's existential world continues to shrink and finally 8, a cumulative process of disorder in everyday affairs is evident. After this point, biographical metamorphosis is possible as one's relationship to oneself is changed facilitating the biographical work of reflection (pp119-120)

The first stage in the trajectory process is associated with an overwhelming sense of disbelief. Mike's example is used here to elucidate this.

"This was like a total bolt from the blue. Em, I actually thought she was joking to be perfectly honest with you. I really thought it was some sort of bizarre weird joke" (Mike)

A growing awareness of the capacity of powerful outer forces (and one's own relative powerlessness) characterized the next stages of trajectory (Riemann and Schutze 2005).

This growing awareness is an important step and represented the ultimate paradox which they were faced with. In essence the men were slowly distinguishing themselves from being on one hand, part of the ‘powerful outer force’ which was male societal dominance, and on the other hand, subject to the very force they subscribed to by virtue of the vulnerability of the context which they found themselves. In other words the macro social constructionist perspectives of abuse and masculine identity conflicted with micro social constructionist individualist perspectives of the masculine self and the abuse experience (Gergen 1973, Burr 2008). The re-positioning of self within the hegemony resulted in initial feelings of disorientation and victimization characterized the early part of this narrative phase, as Mike for example *“really wasn’t functioning in any shape or form”*. The evolutionary realization of the power of ‘the system’³⁴ and the biographical caretakers which functioned within it was key to the men’s portrayal of their abuse experiences. Their portrayal of their evolving subjectivities in relation to ‘the system’ took centre stage in both Conor’s and Mike’s story which was suggestive of its relative importance in the portrayal of their identities. The ‘system’ for these men represented representatives of a society which was shaped by constructions of abuse and masculinity as an anathema to what the men were experiencing. All of the cases present a portrayal of being let down by a gender biased and inefficient system which was constructed as abusive in itself (see 6.2.1.2 below). Conor positioned himself from a self-blaming perspective (Hyden 2005) whereas Mike externalized his blame, positioning himself as wounded by ‘the system’. Alan also portrayed his trajectory from the position of the wounded (Hyden 2005), minimizing his personal agency in relation to events. Early in

³⁴ ‘The system’ relates to the legal system though it in Conor’s case relates to the system of child protection also.

his narrative, Conor *“being naïve thought well there’s a whole history of her crap”* wrongly assumed that the legal system as a powerful outer force would be supportive of him. He blames himself for not realizing this earlier *“me like a fool had no idea that the legal system was so biased against men”*. Conor’s positioning of himself as a fool resonates to self-blaming strategies adopted by battered women’s reflections upon leaving (Hyden 2005). His use of metaphor to and irony in being *“manhandled”*, treated as *“the violent man”* compared with the *“damsel in distress”* illustrated insight into the macro social constructions of intimate partner abuse in which female victimization is characteristic and male victimization is absent.

Mike’s portrayal of ‘wounded-ness’ from the powerful outer force of the system and support agencies pre-empted beliefs of paralysis and feelings of self alienation.

“Everything I’d ever turned to was against me... nobody was there to help me. My own solicitors and barristers, judges, everybody...there wasn’t anybody there for me at all other than my own family...was absolutely horrified that the people who are there supposedly to protect me as well, who is a citizen of this state, as well as everybody else, was just told you’re on your own and that’s really what it was, you are on your own and we don’t believe you”.

Men in Ireland who conform to the ‘norms’ of masculine behaviour enjoy a privileged position in society (Walby 1990, Connell 2009). The privilege of conformity for the men in this study appeared through its absence – through articulations of denial and desertion by the group they traditionally formed part of. Alan was charged personally (as a man and father) and professionally (as a protector of the peace) with protecting the vulnerable from violence. This internal conflict of selves with the patriarchal society in which he and the other men lived gives rise to feelings of marginalization and isolation from the dominant group in which they no longer conform to (Horrocks 1994, Connell 2002). In a

similar fashion to the example of Rock Hudson described earlier in the literature review (section 3.3.1 above), the men initially forced to make choices about the private and public portrayal of selves, were thrust into the public domain and subject to public scrutiny.

The narrative process where the men experienced this transition is termed by Riemann and Schutze as ‘downward spin’ (Riemann and Schutze 2005). This term represents another stage in the trajectory process and is defined by the portrayal of self as alien to oneself whilst also being a period where the person has difficulty with social relationships due to feelings of despair and suspicion (Riemann 2003, Schutze 2008). An important factor in the downward spin is that it is a key area in which men interfaced with biographical caretakers. Ironically, when they were most vulnerable, their ability to perform rationally was weakened. This incident gives an example of Conor’s liaison with a court clerk to see his children.

I said “well when is the soonest I can get to see a judge” and she says “he’ll be in (location) tomorrow, but sure, why don’t you wait till Friday?” I said “why”?... I had never been away from them and I said she, “In her state of mind and the way she’s carrying on - they’re not safe – I can’t wait till Friday”. And she goes, “well you’ll be in anyway” and I said “for what?” , “ oh, your barring order hearing, did you not get the summons?” “No, I didn’t get the f, fecking summons”

Mike’s downward spin was characterized by how he reacted to the police when assaulted by his wife.

“ I couldn’t believe it but the guards turned to me and they said “well look this is domestic, look at the size of you, look at the size of her, you know, could you not sort this out”? And I said “well what are you telling me, like what are you telling me. Are you saying that I should sort this out with my wife as in you know, have a go back at her (meaning hit her), because I know if I do, I know exactly what’s going to happen, she’s going to call you guys and you guys are going to take me away... So he said “tell you what... we’re going to bring in the em child, whatever they’re called, you know protection agency or whatever it is and the kids will be removed”. And he said to me you know, he said I was getting

aggressive at that point in time and I had better watch myself. I said “I’m not getting aggressive, I’m just trying to have you look at it from my point of view”. He said “you’re getting very angry” and I said “well I am angry now because like nobody seems to be here to help me”

What is ironic about the downward spin aspect of the trajectory is that the men’s performances in these situations characterized the dominant discourse in practice – reinforcing the stereotypical beliefs of the biographical caretakers they came into contact with. This predicament placed the men even deeper into the construction of masculinity and intimate partner abuse which they have been battling against. When Conor says “*no I didn’t get the feckin summons*” he expresses verbal aggression which has the potential to be interpreted by the clerk (a biographical caretaker) as justification of his wife’s earlier application for a barring order. This phase in the biography most acutely highlighted the risk of systematic miscommunications between the protagonist and the biographical caretakers (Riemann and Schutze 2005). Because many of these incidences in ‘downward spin’ were constructed as forms of abuse, these are discussed in more detail in section 6.2.1.2 below. This phase also represented what Chamberlayne (2004 p.341) describes as a biographical ‘chasm’ when the person reaches the lowest point in their biography. For Mike it was the contemplation of suicide, for Alan and Conor, it was despair at not seeing their children. As the lowest point, this point simultaneously signaled the re-construction of self and meaning in the final phase of the biography.

6.1.1.1.2 “But if it was to happen to me now”: biographical work and biographical metamorphosis

This study found that **biographical work was important for recognising abuse and appeared to speed recovery**. All of the cases presented underwent a transformational process of narrative re-construction of self in their narratives. Riemann and Schutze (1991, 2005) refer to this process as creative biographical metamorphosis. This process results in an irrevocable (inevitable) alteration to the narrative threads resulting from the culmination of biographical trajectory processes described above. Whilst the transformation of self within narrative accounts is not a surprising finding given the topic, narrator and context of the interview (Bruner 1991), it emerged that the amount/intensity of biographical work undertaken by the men influenced both the trajectory process (shortening its relative duration), consequently quickening the metamorphosis of self. A recent discourse analysis of six women who experienced abuse illustrated similar findings highlighting the pre-requisite nature of internal reflection and withdrawal in re-evaluating the self (Baly 2010). Whilst this study did not examine the intensity or timing of biographical reflection, it does provide resonance to the importance of this phenomenon for biographical recovery.

Conor undertook the most biographical work in advance of his trajectory (in the form of his diary entry). His case illustrates a pointed exemplar of how reflection and documentation assisted the metamorphosis process. The particularity of writing the self Stanley (1992) notes has the potential to empower authors in reuniting the ‘auto’ with the ‘biography’. This may explain Conor’s early metamorphosis compared with the others.

Alan undertook some biographical work (during his time away in Bosnia). However, Mike had no opportunity, experiencing trajectory in a classic sense compared with the other two who had some relative sense of trajectory potential (Riemann and Schutze 1991, 2005). His opportunity to reflect came post trajectory. A key feature of creative biographical metamorphosis is the initial recognition of experiences as abusive (Schutze 2008). Conor's decision to document (initially for legal purposes) served a dual purpose of facilitating the exercise of intensive biographical reflection. I suggest that the full extent of being abused only became apparent in this phase of the biographical process. The dual functioning of diary keeping has been identified previously (Allen-Collinson 2009a, 2009b). Its scope in serving a protective function whilst also providing a pragmatic record of events perhaps adds weight to its potential as a useful resource for men in similar situations.

There was a contrast between the language used by the men in presenting their selves 'then' and selves 'now'. Alan's assertion of his life as "*so different now*" asserting that "*if [the abuse] were to happen to me now*" things would be different. The use of contrasting narratives pre and post trajectory is similar to the bridge building position which Hyden (2005) claims results from the biographical process of critical reflection on one's life. The cross case analysis of the nature of abuse is presented in the following section.

6.2 Accounting for abuse – nature and language

In the literature review - intimate partner abuse was broadly defined as “*the intentional use of power manifested by a pattern of behaviour within a current or past intimate relationship that causes, or has the capacity to cause psychological, physical or sexual harm*” (section 3.2.1 above). One of the flaws of pre-defining abuse (as is the case quite often with the research described in the literature review) is its potential to limit understanding of the phenomenon of interest. The obvious gender bias of the bulk of intimate partner abuse research and policy e.g. (Krug et al. 2002, Mills, et al. 2003, Garcia-Moreno, et al. 2006, Reeves and O’Leary-Kelly 2007) implied that there could have been a potential limitation in relation to the meaning of intimate partner abuse from a masculine perspective. This suspicion was justified in one sense, though some similarities resonated with women’s abuse narratives (Loseke 2001). This study found that **current definitions of abuse were insufficient to incorporate the man’s perspective**. The nature of abuse found in this study constituted two narrative forms; the first linked with ‘traditional/existing’ abuse narratives. This is termed ‘first wave abuse’ and is discussed further in section 6.2.1.2 below.

A second form of abuse constructed by the men was identified in this study. Distinct from the traditional discourse relating to intimate partner abuse, this study found other ‘abusers’ in men’s biographies – that of society and of biographical caretakers whom the men interacted with. ‘Second wave abuse’, referred to men’s constructions of non-intimate partners causing (mostly psychological) harm which was interpreted as abusive. As highlighted earlier (section 6.3 above), the prevailing social constructions of

masculinity and intimate partner abuse limited available (acceptable) discourses from which to articulate the abuse experience (either first or second wave). This study found that although an ‘abuse’ narrative thread was present, two other dominant narratives (fatherhood and good husband) formed the key narrative discourses used in order to express the abuse experience. Figure 13 (below) illustrates the relationship between the nature of abuse and the language in which such abuse was constructed.

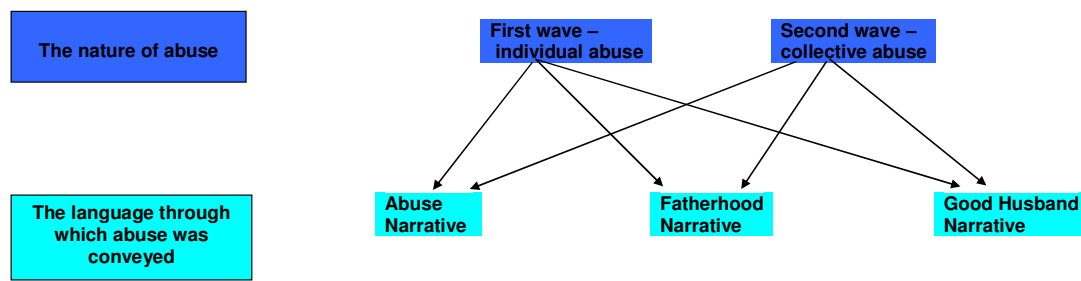


Figure 13 Pictorial representation of the relationship between the nature of abuse and its narrative expression.

6.2.1.1 First wave abuse

In this study, first wave abuse related to acts of abuse which seemed similar to traditional representations of intimate partner abuse i.e. physical and psychological harm resulting from behaviours initiated by a present or past intimate partner (Krug et al. 2002). The content of these narrative accounts were similar to the typology of abuses which Johnson (2005, 2006) theorised that mostly female victims experienced. Alan’s account, in particular was almost identical to ‘intimate terrorism’ (argued by Johnson to be a female only phenomenon). The systematic isolation, emotional and physical abuse of Alan

reflects the content in both male and female narratives of abuse (e.g. Kelleher, Kelleher and O'Connor 1995, Migliaccio 2001, 2002, Cleary 2004). Table 3 overleaf represents the scale of abuse experienced by him.

Table 3 Descriptions of abuse described by Alan

Type of abuse	The nature of abuse in Alan's story
Physical abuse from wife	<p>Punched</p> <p>Kicked</p> <p>Scraped</p> <p>Grabbed</p> <p>Hit with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fists • Golf club • Broom handle • Frying pan • 'anything and everything' <p>Kicked in the groin</p> <p>Scratched with nails</p> <p>Thumped while awake</p> <p>Thumped while asleep</p> <p>Hit while asleep</p> <p>Water thrown on him while asleep</p> <p>Ice cubes put down pajamas trousers whilst in bed</p>
Physical abuse from children	<p>Hit</p> <p>Kicked</p>
Controlling behaviour by his wife	<p>Not allowing others (i.e. his family) access to children</p> <p>Not allowing him access to children</p> <p>Not allowing him to bring children to see others</p> <p>Not allowing him go to social functions</p> <p>Threatening to call the police and say falsely that he was abducting the kids</p> <p>Not being allowed to sit and eat with children</p> <p>Not allowing his friend to park car in driveway</p> <p>Control over family finances</p> <p>Control of privacy and liberty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not being allowed have a lock on his bedroom • Unprovoked intrusion of privacy in bedroom • Not being allowed to have a lock on the toilet • Unprovoked intrusion of privacy in the toilet <p>Control of the duration of sleep</p> <p>Control over the location of his sleep</p> <p>Control of his behaviour – making him clean and re-clean if not satisfactory</p> <p>Locking him out of house – having to sleep outside with dog</p> <p>Control of his timing of access and egress from the house</p>
Psychological abuse by wife	<p>Abuse of others which caused upset</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breaking children's toys • Abusing him in front of children • Making the children cry <p>Saying she hated him</p> <p>Calling him names such as fat, ugly, worthless, useless</p> <p>Threatening to ring police to falsely state he was abusing her</p> <p>Threatening that he would never see children</p> <p>Preventing him from seeing the children</p> <p>Inciting children to hit him</p> <p>Saying he was no good as a parent</p> <p>Verbally abusing him in front of her female relatives</p> <p>Tearing up his £200 book voucher</p>
Psychological abuse by children	<p>Calling him names such as fat, ugly</p>

Whilst a detailed discussion of the actual narrative discourse of men's abuse is described in section 6.3.1 below, the fact that there are some similarities relating to the nature of abuse in narrative accounts may suggest the possibility for the existence of gender neutral elements of the abuse experience.

6.2.1.2 Second wave abuse

Second wave abuse represented the men's constructions of harm (sometimes initiated by intimate partners) but not enacted by them. This phenomenon represented the outcome of the prevailing social construction of masculinity and intimate partner abuse which were central ordering principles in the men's biographies as discussed above (Bruner 2004, Schutze 2008). The configurative practice of hegemonic masculinity essentially serves to maintain a particular societal gender order. I suggest that second wave abuse was the means by which masculine hegemony was maintained in relation to ideologies of violence and abuse (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Practically, second wave abuse, worsened the downward spiral of biographical trajectory. The key practices in second wave abuse were articulated as denial and ridicule. This occurred mostly when the men's biographies interfaced with that of biographical caretakers. Second wave abuse was initiated by the woman as Conor's example articulates "*she went to a women's refuge saying 'in fear of me'*" (Conor). The phenomenon of women lying in order to manipulate the legal system in their favour is not new and represents a strategy of one-upmanship in relationships. It has been recognised in previous studies (Cleary 2004, Ferguson and Hogan 2004, Hines, Brown and Dunning 2007). Second wave abuse also resulted from men's own actions for example by Mike phoning the police to come to his house.

Regardless of who initiated liaison with outside agencies; solicitors, judges, police and social services was inevitable during the men's biographical trajectories. These powerful outer forces (Riemann and Schutze 1991) by their actions of ideological denial brought about a phenomenon of guilt by gender due to macro social constructions of abuse which the men claimed was gender biased against them. The practice of 'ideological denial' (Cohen 2010 p.137) through the absence of discourse in practice regarding male vulnerability was both an inhibiting factor and a form of abuse in itself. As highlighted earlier 'not being believed' was the language used by the men to express the unsanctioned discourse of male vulnerability. In other words, not being believed was a form of abuse. Articulations of 'knowing' one wouldn't be believed were confirmed through narrative incidents of not being believed. Through the men's biographies, an evolving awareness of the power of macro social constructions of masculinity and victimisation and their influence on normative behaviours became apparent (Burr 2008). Mike's evaluation that "*She's not hitting me because she wants to hit me – she's hitting me because she wants me to hit her back*" clearly positions how his awareness at the macro level evolved through his life story. If Mike hit his wife back, he would be conforming to macro social constructions instead of being an exception to them. For the wives of the men in this study, macro social constructions of abuse and masculinity presently constitute 'power over' the men. This continues to be a valuable entity for potential perpetrators regardless of its veracity (Hyden 1994).

As discussed in the literature review, hegemonic masculinity represents the dominant discursive practice and discourse in practice both the legal, health and social care fields in

Ireland (Connell 2003, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). The preservation work in sustaining the dominant collective masculine identity is evident here (Butler 1999). The defensive procedures (towards the men in this study) were related to the seriousness in which the threat was viewed (Berger and Luckmann 1966). The Irish police force and judicial system are both highly masculinised systems of gendered power within the Irish state (Connell 2002). Within each of these systems, there is an internal masculine hegemony which, in the main perpetuates conformity to the notion of men as ‘protectors’ of the peace and women as vulnerable others. Daily practice re-inforces these identities and beliefs. The fact that the Irish police force are roughly six times more likely to receive a call from an abused woman than from a man (Watson and Parsons 2005) also re-inforces the unbelievability of women’s abuse of men. Social constructions of reality require ‘plausibility structures’ which legitimize what is believable and what is not (Berger and Luckmann 1966). A masculine victim threatens biographical caretakers’ own constructions of their personal ‘reality’ as they sit outside what is deemed plausible for hegemonic masculine practices. Given the current statistical evidence regarding the prevalence of male to female intimate partner abuse, the (albeit remote) possibility that biographical caretakers are themselves perpetrators also exists. This could further compound the issue.

In this study Alan, Conor and Mike were held accountable for their sub-ordinated masculine practices by biographical caretakers who attempted to police their sub-ordinated practices of masculine vulnerability to ensure the continuation of the dominant social order (Connell 2003, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

“[The police officer] turned to me and they said “well look this is domestic, look at the size of you, look at the size of her, you know, could you not sort this out”? And I said “well what are you telling me, like what are you telling me. Are you saying that I should sort this out with my wife as in you know, have a go back at her?” (Mike)

*“So **the judge**, after me saying my concerns about her psychiatric state, her ability to parent the children, the emotional damage being caused to the children. Their completely unfair removal from the home... just said “**look she’s the mother, it’s the natural way of things**” he said. “Has she ever eh, hit them with the frying pan? Has she cut them with a knife?”... He goes “well she’s their mother – I’ll save you coming back” he says and awarded her full custody”. (Conor)*

Alan’s experience of second wave abuse was portrayed through the inability of the legal system in supporting the implementation of legal decisions and preventing its abuse.

“Since I left home [four years ago] I’ve seen my kids once. I’ve been to court on eight occasions, to see the children. The judge has given me access to see the children. And every time I’ve gone there, she has just prevented me from having them...I took two friends of mine, I took different people with me to the house... she reported them for abusing her, and when they came to investigate she withdrew her complaints”. (Alan)

The key narrative gestalt in Conor’s story conveyed his evaluation of the judicial system’s gender bias against men in light of the ‘evidence’ put before it. Feenan (2008) argues that, *“The myth of neutrality is one which has served to veil and protect the maleness of the judiciary”* (Feenan 2008, p499). Whilst solicitors played a lesser role in Conor’s second wave abuse, their advice to ‘wait and see’ was in itself gender biased. *“So I mean you leave the kids with a potential abuser because it’s alright, it will come out in the investigation? – Because it’s a woman. If that was a bloke, there’s no way that would happen [participant moves his hands]”.*

In highlighting the gendered nature of abuse, the men's narrative expressions amplified their positional inequality. When Mike was scalded and assaulted, he felt abused by the police because he was a man.

*“So [the police] said “if you continue to push this, we’re going to bring in the em child... protection agency or whatever it is and the kids will be removed”. **“If this was on the other foot, like if I was battering my wife, would you be telling her that? Would you actually be saying you’re going to remove the children because you’re trying to, she’s trying to protect herself against me?”** I said “ you wouldn’t be doing this” but I said “at least I know now, nobody is going to help me, at least I know this protection order is not worth the paper it’s printed on nobody seems to be here to help me”. (Mike)*

Conor constructed his abuse resulting from his gender positioning it in his dealings with social services when he was concerned for his children's safety.

*“Like, you know, it’s just, and I wasn’t allowed. I went to social services and said “well who’s supervising her now?” “Oh, it’s in a regulated environment, its fine”, I says “It’s not fine – how do I know she’s not setting me up”, which is something a solicitor suggested [solicitor’s voice] “I’d seen it before you know” he says. “But don’t worry, that will come out in the investigation”. I says, so that (voice pitch rises)....So I mean, you leave the kids with a potential abuser because it’s alright, it will come out in the investigation? – **Because it’s a woman. If that was a bloke, there’s no way that would happen** [participant moves his hands]. (Conor)*

*“And I did say to social services at the time that in my opinion, **putting the children through a sexual abuse investigation, completely unnecessarily, is abuse in itself or tantamount to abuse.** And “I want that on record”, I said. “I have done nothing, so if somebody has done something, I want to find out who did it... they didn’t seem to give a fuck. Excuse my French. I was just so annoyed. You know, even talking about it, it makes my blood boil. I didn’t. Like there was one girl in social services, she was giving me loads of advice. And she kept saying, you know when I would ask “why is it taking so long?” you know. I was told originally that it would like about 4 weeks, it was high priority. “Resources”, she’d say and “what, what”. And she’d say “well it’s not our priority case”. “Well so why not” and she’d say “well we don’t really think there is anything in it” I said “well can you not just say that?” “Well we have, we can’t, until we talk to the girls”, “well talk to them?” (Conor)*

Conor's quotation (above) pointedly constructs abuse as something perpetrated by 'social services', not that which was done by his wife. This shifts in the locus of 'perpetrators' is an important factor in conceptualizing abuse from a masculine perspective. A more detailed discussion of the actual narrative discourse of second wave abuse is expressed through the 'fatherhood narrative' and 'good husband' narratives below (Section 6.3.2 and 6.3.3 respectively).

Although second wave abuse emerged from narrative expressions of abuse arising from non-intimate partners, there were occasional instances in which second wave abuse was not evident. Examples include Mike's visit to the doctor, Conor's visit to one particular judge and Alan's work colleague's eventual support of him. Although these exemplars represent an exception, it is theorised that these 'caretakers' underwent some biographical work regarding masculinity and intimate partner abuse and had begun the process of negotiation and reconfiguration relating to these conflicting principles (Connell 2005b).

The tension between the collective ideology and the individual conceptions of the masculine remains fraught with difficulty (Connell 2005b). The men's portrayal of abuse by their collective peers perhaps conveyed a separating of the self as individual from collective masculinity – particularly in relation to the subject of violence and abuse. Nye's (2005) perspective about the protean nature of masculinities is relevant here as although the men were marginalised in this sense, the men in this study still subscribed to the regional ideology of hegemonic masculinity, not as 'vulnerable or abused' but in the forms of 'fatherhood' and being a 'good husband' (Connell 2005c). This links with

Holstein and Gubrium's thesis that the technologies of self presentation often involves the portrayal of multiple and contested selves (Holstein and Gubrium 2000). This is evident by the perpetuation of these dominant narratives throughout the biography and is discussed further in section 6.3 below.

6.3 *Talking abuse - dominant narratives in men's biographical accounts.*

In presenting the evolution of self through narrative, a plurality of selves can co-exist (Holstein and Gubrium 2000). Similarly, the continuous interplay between the private world of the individual and the public world in which they live also needs cognisance (Mills 1959). This relationship between the private world and public world became most evident through the three dominant narratives which were used across the cases. The dominant narratives illustrated previously in Figure 13 were; the abuse narrative, the fatherhood narrative and the good husband narrative. The criteria for defining a narrative as dominant were its presence in all three cases and its pervasiveness throughout the life story. The topic of investigation assumed the emergence of an abuse narrative which given the earlier discussion, is a private entity in mainstream discourse. However the emergence of the other two narrative threads suggest that these represented the two most acceptable narrative discourses in which men can make sense of the abuse experience (Burr 2008). These narrative discourses also mirrored the overarching institutional expectation patterns reflecting social constructions of what constitutes hegemonic masculinity in the ordinary sense i.e. the self which is co-constructed in conjunction with societal norms and expectations (Edley and Wetherell 1999, Butler 2004, Schutze 2008).

This study found that dominant narratives of ‘fatherhood’ and ‘being a husband’ were used as a key means to express the abuse experience. It is argued that the fatherhood and good husband narrative represented contested selves compared with the abuse narrative (Hopper 2001). The portrayal of masculinity is often done strategically within narrative to convey a sense of identity conducive with it (Riessman 2005). Narrative models (Bruner 2004) or plausibility structures (Berger and Luckmann 1966) are means by which the particular cultures can be characterised. It is argued that these were reflected in the fatherhood narrative and good husband narrative in which subscription to the ideology of hegemonic masculinity could be articulated. Using the vernacular associated with masculine identities enabled the social construction of abuse through ‘plausibility structures’ (Berger and Luckmann 1966) (which happened to be mostly of loss). Similar strategies in attaching one’s story to a plausible narrative have been also used by women (e.g. Neuhouser 1998, Loseke 2001). The fatherhood and good husband narrative represented what Plummer (2003) termed ‘Public Identity Narratives’. These narratives, constructed via contemporary media influence are a key influence on the portrayal of self in the public eye and as such define acceptable discourses of practice from which individuals interpret meaning and choose to perform (or not) (Plummer 2003 p.167). The presence of these particular narrative threads above all others illustrated the biographical commitment the men had to these identities and represented ‘standpoints’ (Holstein and Gubrium 2000 p. 105) or ‘canonical stances’ (Bruner 2004 p.694) from which the storying of masculinity could be best portrayed (Farley 1990).

6.3.1 The abuse narrative

In the context of this study, I suggest that the private identity narrative of abuse constituted the ‘unbelievable’ in terms of its content and narrative style positioned against the prevailing dominant societal discourses. What is apparent about the abuse narrative is its particular narrative form. Abuse narratives were notably difficult to tell (Plummer 1995, Fitzpatrick 2005). Their expression directly challenged the men’s gendered assumptions of themselves. The inextricable link between victimhood and femininity risked the expression of what Allen-Collinson terms ‘forbidden’ narratives (Allen-Collinson 2008) which can also be interpreted as ‘not being a man’. ‘Abuse, victim, and violence’, terms associated with loss of control and status (Allen-Collinson 2008) were relatively absent in the vernacular used by the men in articulating their experiences. Not once in any of the interviews did men use the term ‘victim’. This supports the view that the discourse of victimhood and vulnerability is not ‘known’ within a masculinist discourse (Gergen 1985, Burr 2008). Some would also argue that it has been counter productive within feminist discourses also (Hyden 1994). **Narratives of powerlessness were the means by which men expressed private abuse experiences.** The ‘abused self’ was expressed as a private experience in the cases presented above. Given the presence of conflicting principles in the biography, this seemed a sensible and protective mechanism in sustaining a sense of power over the public portrayal of self (Plummer 1995). Exposing private narratives would have rendered the men publicly vulnerable so keeping this aspect of their lives (which represented a marginalised identity) private was reasonable (for as long as was feasible). The masculine abuse narrative exists in the absence of any pre-determined ‘formula stories’ which Loseke (2001) argues exists for

women in relation to abuse. That said I believe that the men's engagement with the support group network enabled them to articulate this vulnerable aspect of themselves. Although some abuse narratives were contained in response to the SQUIN, more narratives emerged in sub-session two suggesting that talking 'abuse' does not flow naturally for these men.

The embodiment of masculinity via physical size and strength contradicted this narrative thread (Courtenay 2000, Migliaccio 2001, Connell 2005b, Connell and Meserschmidt 2005). Alan, being "*a big man*", and Mike being called to question about "*look at the size of you, look at the size of her*" illustrated the dilemma of their bodies belonging to the kinship group of men yet their stories 'belonged' to women (Butler 1999). This dilemma of difference and marginalisation evolved through their life stories (Courtenay 2000). The abuse narrative was not an abuse story per se; it was articulated through the language of loss – loss of power and control.

6.3.1.1 The private abuse experience: powerlessness

Narratives of powerlessness were distinctly different, characterised by a different pattern of telling, uncharacteristic from the language patterns and narrative style used in the other sections of their storytelling. The following sections illustrate graphic examples of direct (first wave) abuse expressed through powerless narratives. The three cases provided exemplars congruent with the definition of intimate partner abuse provided in the literature review (See section 3.2.1 above). The practice of 'intimate terrorism' – the

exercise of violence and control by one over another attributed to be a female phenomenon by some (Johnson 2005, Johnson 2006) is also identifiable in Alan's case.

"I'd lock myself into the bedroom. And she would kick the door, and thump it until she got in... she would come in and attack me...The key was gone off the toilet door and she could just walk in and open it and put her hand on her nose and say 'oh, smell the pig'³⁵, he stinks' I'd be sitting on the toilet...As I said I'd, I'd be locked out of the house. I often slept in the backyard with the dog. I go to work in the morning, I'd shave in work". (Alan)

"I'd be on my knees, I'd beg her, I'd hold on to her, she used to hit me, kick me in the groin. She'd scratch me, thump me, I'd go sick at work (participant crying). I wouldn't go in, my face would be torn. I often had black eyes, though she was small, 5 foot four, and I was, I'm 6 foot. Sometimes, and sometimes she'd wait until I went to bed, and she'd hit me when I'd be asleep. Or she'd throw water on me, which she did a few times [participant crying]. I used to work nights, sometimes. And I'd come home at six o'clock in the morning after a long night. At maybe 12 o'clock then she'd say 'you're still in bed, get out of that bed you lazy bastard' and I would get up and do whatever work had to be done around the house. And she follow me and say 'that's not cleaned properly, clean it again' And she'd make me clean it. [participant continues to cry]. And I'd do it" (Alan)

"A Samurai sword... Now it was sheathed, but it was hanging up... in the spare room ... I didn't know what it was at the time but the end of it, the handle with the metal bit on it, the grip. I'm getting this whacked over me and I was fast asleep and she's belting me with this. So I obviously wake up, I'm holding my hands up and em, I just covered my face and she cut me with it on my arms and that and I was really shaken and I just screamed at her to stop...I turned on the lights, got up and I was dazed and went out. And she'd actually, she'd taken all my clothes...and of course had thrown them out the window... that was the worst, that was the worst she'd ever hit me" (Conor)

"She started, really laid into me at that point in time in the kitchen and I mean really started to kick me and thump me and everything else, and at that point in time, obviously with the noise, she was screaming and the kids came into the room and all I could think of doing was just rolling up in a ball, em, and as I did that she actually jumped, jumped on top of me, jumped on top of me and kept jumping and jumping on top of me and my son, em, came running over and said "look leave daddy alone and all this kind of stuff". And I mean I just, at that point I was more concerned that they were seeing this than anything else and I was just saying to her just stop, stop, stop, stop. She wouldn't, she just would not stop, she kept at me and at me, kicking me and everything else and then my daughter arrived and she got involved and it was just horrendous, em, but she didn't seem

³⁵ A 'pig' is both a derogatory term for a person and also slang for a police officer – which Alan was.

to know, she just seemed to be in like, like this red mist and she was just going completely berserk and she was scary looking". (Mike)

"My family wouldn't come to see us. They weren't allowed, and they knew they weren't allowed. And I wasn't allowed to go to them so [participant begins to cry] I didn't have an account. We had a bank account we had credit cards and she took mine and she cut it up...I was afraid of her actually" (Alan).

These narratives are characterised by a lack of the authoritarian voice often associated with masculine storytelling (Plummer 1995). The chaotic nature of the language results from a lack of available discourse in practice in communicating this part of the self. The terms used in this narrative represent a clear positioning of oneself as powerless and weak. For example ("I wouldn't be allowed", "I slept outside with the dog", "she was scary looking", "she'd make me clean", "I was screaming" is not usual language in men's vernacular (Gilbert 2002) and is akin to 'narrative slippage' (Holstein and Gubrium 2000 p.109) from the dominant public narratives (Bruner 2004). Anecdotally members of the interpretive panels laughed when direct quotes of this nature were presented for analysis³⁶, Panel analysts said 'you must be joking' on more than one occasion. This public expression of ridicule by two separate sets of strangers perhaps confirms how deeply embedded social constructions of masculinity and intimate partner can be. Similar narratives of powerlessness have been found in narrative studies of both male and female victims (Hyden 1994, Kelleher, Kelleher and O'Connor 1995, Migliaccio 2002, Cleary 2004, Allen-Collinson 2008a). This suggests that intimate terrorism, previously argued to be a women's domain can also experienced by men.

³⁶ Additionally, I presented modified sections of the private narratives to a class of 30 students in a lecture I was giving about intimate partner abuse and men's experiences. The students laughed upon reading the text, a male student in the class said 'what a loser'. A female student said 'this can't be a man'. I was struck at the obvious disbelief and instant reaction of this group to language like this attributed to a male voice. None of these individuals were involved in the interpretive panels.

6.3.2 The fatherhood narrative

This is the first of two public identity narrative threads which emerged in this study. For the cases presented in this study, the largest proportion of abuse was expressed via the fatherhood narrative³⁷. This is not surprising given the fact that the men lost access to their children in their biographies which was part of their trajectory processes. Taking into account Philbin's (2009) assertion of self relations as constituted by that which is valued to them, the fatherhood narrative (and its associated identity) is clearly the most valued by the men presented in this study. It is argued that fatherhood for these men was one of the few available valued identities in which to narrate one's biographies and represents a 'local culture' of acceptable discourse (Holstein and Gubrium 2000). Fatherhood is an attribute which is associated with hegemonic masculinity – both in the ordinary sense and biologically (Wetherell and Edley 1999). It also suggests a commitment to the identity of fatherhood in the presentation of self. The utilisation of socially acceptable identities in which to portray oneself has been identified in studies of motherhood (Neuhouser 1998). The portrayal of fatherhood through narrative representation illustrates a similar 'doing' of a gendered role through the medium of language. Similar to the fatherhood narrative (above) the good husband narrative contained narrative contrast structures to emphasise the expression of loss. For example the men portrayed being a 'committed father', in articulating their biographical action plan (Riemann and Schutze 1991). The radical alteration of these narrative threads

³⁷ In my visits to the men's support group – most of the discussions the men had related to issues surrounding fatherhood – e.g. sudden loss of their children through 'parentectomy', threats to their access, being abused in front of the children. Similarly, most of the support they received related to how they could regain their fathering role. This was mostly in the form of advice and information about the legal/court system which they had to engage with.

(through abuse and trajectory processes) was portrayed through narratives of loss and loss of fathering experiences – which were expressed as harm resulting from abuse.

Fatherhood narratives elucidated where the men were most vulnerable, not in a physical sense but within the broader context of the society in which they situated themselves. The medium by which they were abused was via access to their children. The use of children as a means to hurt the other partner is not unusual in the practice of domestic abuse of both women and men and has been illustrated in other studies (Garcia-Moreno, et al. 2006, Hines, Brown and Dunning 2007). However, stolen fatherhood was constructed as resulting from both first wave and second wave sources (see section 6.2.1.2 above).

Knowing the weaknesses and sensitivities of the other party is considered valuable in cases where couples fight, particularly in the case of counter attacks (Hyden 1994). Mike reflected that in relation to the children *“she knew that the one thing I really wanted out of this was you know to have interaction and be part of their lives”*. For men, the removal of fathering experiences was the most powerful and long lasting form of abuse they portrayed, attacking their public and private identities. This abuse was initiated by a combination of first wave abuse (wife) and followed through by second wave (outside agencies). The topic of fatherhood was also the only one which brought the men to tears at interview. Most of the data contained in the fatherhood narrative was expressed through narratives of loss (Kohler Riessman 1993, Hyden 1994). Lost fatherhood is a strong discourse in contemporary society with terms such as ‘parentectomy’ (Summers and Summers 2006) embedded in its vernacular. Nearing the end of this study, I now

wonder if ‘fatherectomy’ would be a more suitable term as the removal of fathers from children’s lives seems to be a more common societal practice. The exclusion of fathers from their children’s lives has been long recognised as a social problem in Ireland and one of the areas in which ‘gendered’ practice continues (Daniel and Taylor 2001, Featherstone, Rivett and Scourfield 2007). The systematic exclusion of fathers in Ireland discussed earlier (section 3.3.1.1 above) is deep seated, rooted in an Irish constitution which fathers remain absent (McKeown 2001).

It is possible that the men’s choices to use the language of fatherhood to narratively express their abuse experiences was due to a recent shift in the discursive practice of hegemonic masculinities (in relation to fatherhood). The metanarrative of excluded fathers from children in society is a pertinent issue in contemporary society (McKeown 2001, Ferguson and Hogan 2004, Featherstone Rivett and Scourfield 2007). Their plight has more recently received acknowledgement as a popular contemporary societal discourse. The rising prominence of father’s rights lobby groups such as fathers for justice (<http://www.fathers-4-justice.org/>) and their media targeted activity has done much to raise the profile of this previously overlooked group. The noble cause of fighting for one’s children seems concurrent with dominant masculine identity portrayal, similar to what was portrayed by the men in this study. It is also notable that in comparison with one ‘domestic violence’ support group for men, there are a number of lobby groups dedicated to father’s rights in Ireland³⁸.

³⁸ The groups I have located are: Families, Fathers and Friends located at: <http://www.fathers.ie/default.aspx> . The Unmarried and Separated Fathers in Ireland (USFI) located at: <http://www.usfi.ie/>. This group has more recently merged into the Unmarried and Separated Parents of Ireland <http://www.uspi.ie/index.html>

In structuring the fatherhood narrative, men utilised contrasting narrative positioning (of capable fatherhood versus stolen fatherhood) to amplify their constructions of abuse through lost fathering opportunities. The men portrayed their practical involvement in child care (something ascribed by McKeon 2001 as traditionally a mother's remit) in portraying capable fatherhood. For example Alan asserted that in caring for his newborn daughter *"I'd mind the little one. Actually I was the first one to change her nappy. I used to walk up and down the corridor every night when she wouldn't sleep"*. Conor gave in depth accounts of his effectiveness as a father, augmenting his capability with language synonymous with the health and social care field to supplement his narrative of capability. For example: *"I've done most of the upbringing and have been, the term apparently is the primary carer, responsible parent"*. He described practical strategies used in protecting his daughters from his wife's angry outbursts *"I used to say "right come on girls we'll go out, we'll play football or we'll play Frisbee or cycle or something" that's what I'd do. We'd just go out for an hour or something and let her cool off"*. Mike constructed his fatherhood as the defining feature of his life *"I mean in honesty, in all honesty, when it came to doing stuff with the children, it was me who had done it from day one"*. Although some argue that subject positioning such as this is done strategically to convey a desired identity (Davies and Harre 1990), it also illustrates how masculinity is 'done' in this context (Fenstermaker and West 2002). I suggest that the overarching social constructions of masculinity and intimate partner abuse severely limited the men's choices to present themselves by alternate means. In a similar sense to Ferguson and Hogan (2004), fatherhood was constructed by a combination of physical presence with children and also active involvement.

The men's accounts of stolen fatherhood were characterised by men's articulations of active removal of the children from their lives. Being 'perpetrated' by first wave and second wave sources, this abuse was articulated to be severe. Although their accounts of stolen fatherhood varied, the expression of loss and powerlessness was universal. Alan's fatherhood narrative was multidimensional.. He articulated stolen fatherhood in different ways; via his wife's abuse "*in front of the kids*" and threats of him "*You'll never see those kids if you walk out that door*"; via lamenting lost parenting opportunities "*Missing the kids is the biggest thing in my life that I miss the most*". Additionally, his loss of his own father in his abuse story demonstrates lost fatherhood on a different level.

Conor's stolen fatherhood was expressed through his prolonged isolation from his children's lives, social services' failure to follow through on their promise of 'joint supervision', social services' lack of awareness of the location of his wife and children, their handling of his phone calls and their contrasting time lag between allegation and hearing. Conor used metaphor to express the bias requiring two witnesses present during his access because he was "*the accused*" and she had no one supervising her because she was the victim. Bias against vulnerable men has been recognised within social systems before (Ferguson and Hogan 2004). However, whilst Conor was not 'vulnerable' in Ferguson and Hogan's sense, he was clearly rendered vulnerable by the way he was managed. Mike's account of lost fatherhood was expressed via his experience of 'parentectomy' (Summers and Summers 2006) when his wife took their children out of the country without his consent. The lack of urgency in which biographical caretakers ascribed to the men's plights as separated fathers could be constituted as the practice of

‘ideological denial’ of the men’s rights as fathers, favouring the practice of femininity (Cohen 2010).

6.3.3 The good husband narrative

This is the second public identity narrative which was present in the study. Two elements formed this ‘good husband’ narrative; expression of self as a provider and as a lover. These are sequentially discussed as follows. As discussed earlier (section 3.3), the social order of masculinity in Ireland remain heavily influenced by Catholicism and organised around marriage, family and heterosexuality (Ferguson 2001). One performative element of this constructed public identity was that of a hard working man who is a ‘good provider’ for the family (Coakley 1997, Ferguson 2001). Narration of this ‘investment role’ (McKeown 2001 p.10) elucidated their commitment to conforming to the dominant masculine hegemony of the provider role of men in Irish society (Ferguson 2001, Ferguson 2002b, Connell 2005c). The presentation of ‘gender ideals’ proved a useful positioning means by which one’s identity can be benchmarked against (Goffman 1976). In a similar fashion to the fatherhood narrative, the presentation of self as ‘good provider’ contrasted strongly with their presentation of selves as penalised providers. For example Mike, *“was a very very successful...international sales guy... 3 years in a row I was the most successful sales guy in the world”*. Expressions of such success implicitly positioned him as a good provider. The contrast of penalised provider status is evident in his biographical trajectory which highlighted that *“at that point in time, to have a house and feed myself and have somewhere to have the children...I had about £8 a week for survival, (laugh), and that was my, my life you know”*. Alan positioned himself similarly

in his capacity to provide well for his family his repeated expressions of the fact that he was making “*good money*” enabling them to upgrade their home a total of three times in a period of economic recession in Ireland made clear that the self as good husband was something worth expressing and usefully contrasted with the self as abused man. Alan used the term “*nice life*” a lot in describing his material wealth and financial success. Alan’s efforts to demonstrate his success in this role is notable considering he experienced the most physical abuse. Perhaps it was necessary to amplify his ‘public identity narratives’ to compensate for his extreme private identity narrative? For example: “*I’d come home from work and things would be fine. The money would be coming in; things would be grand I wouldn’t be allowed to sit at the table.... I was the breadwinner, I earned all the money, I did everything I could... I gave her the money*”. Amplifying ones role as provider could also be viewed as a positioning mechanism for illustrating the unjust nature of the abuse which was experienced (Goffman 1976). ‘Giving her the money’ meant he was holding up his side of the bargain in relation to negotiated gender roles. Conor’s version of ‘giving her the money’ became evident through his narrations of being a good provider through making “*sure all the bills were paid*”. His narrative contrast post trajectory illustrates a penalised man; portraying his current poverty situation as an outcome of the abuse “*she’s left me paying her loans and all types of her debt that she created. ...And maintenance... I, I have nothing to live on, nothing. I mean I have €90 a month to live on at the minute*”.

6.3.3.1 What's love got to do with it?

"There is no love for another which does not entail some affirmation (whether true or false, adequate or inadequate) of myself"

(Farley 1990 p. 83)

The expression of self through commitment to love represented a strategic use of narrative where the narrator was portrayed as honourable, sustaining a masculine identity. Love, it appears, justified the men's decisions to marry, stay together and acquiesce to the abuse they experienced. It is argued that the love that the men express was 'confused'. Sometimes their expressions of love were confused with a sense of duty, desire to rescue, or assertions of one's integrity. Drawing on romantic discourses of love as a strategy to support the choice to stay in an abusive relationship has been found in similar studies of women (Hyden 1994, Jackson 2007, Baly 2010). Use of this narrative positioning raises a potentially contradictory element to the presentation of self which proves problematic for biographical caretakers who express frustration at individuals who 'love' and return to their abusers in spite of the support they offer (Corbally 2001). The use of love in the men's narrative expression was constructed as commitment to fulfilling one's promise to another in marriage. This portrayal of commitment to the duties of marriage revealed more about the narrator's value in keeping promises throughout the life story and as was interpreted as a masculine expression of honour (MacInnes 1998) Alan expressed that: *"From the time I fell in love with her, I was in love with her. And I couldn't see that she didn't love me. And I thought that one day she would. And I thought if I did what she wanted, and made her happy, that she would be happy".* Mike *"I really deeply loved her when I was married to her and I've no feelings, I mean as in I haven't a feeling for her, I don't hate her".* Conor's argumentation of his being a bit of a traditionalist implies his

commitment to marriage. Alan also used his 'love' as a contrasting medium in narrating his abusive incidents.

"I absolutely adored her (participant begins to cry). She was very beautiful [participant sighs]. But she had an awful temper I'd be on my knees, I'd beg her. I'd hold on to her, she used to hit me, kick me in the groin." (Alan)

The expression of commitment to love is also potentially an expression of strength and resistance to the 'abuse' which threatens the institution which the couple have engaged with (Farley 1990). This sense of commitment equates with a sense of being bound to the values inherent in that commitment. In this instance, the expression of love is inherent in the integrity of the self which is being presented. Staying together 'for better or worse' an inherent aspect of Catholic marriage tradition which solemnised the 'love' the couple had. However, it is clear that the desire to sustain a biographical action plan of married fatherhood is greater than a conflicted sense of love. It is also possible to argue that the love narrative was used as distinct from a hate narrative. If the men said they did not love their wives, it could also potentially portray them as equal to their wife (who did not appear to love them). Not 'loving' the other means violating a commitment and potentially harming the other (Farley 1990). This could be linked with an identity similar to the abuser in the story and as such would be undesired. I would suggest that the assertions of love in this sense held the men hostage to their original promises. It would be unmanly of them to renege on a promise. It is also possible to view fidelity as an achievement akin to masculine notions of success. According to Farley (1990), love offers a way of 'faithful seeing' in which bad points of the other are overlooked. Love narratives also reflect the situated sense of hopefulness about the relationship which is

often cited as a reason for staying in an abusive relationship (Hyden 1994, Shipway 2004).

6.4 Summary

This chapter presented the findings resulting from cross-case theorisation between cases.

The key findings from this chapter can be summarised as follows:

- How masculinity and intimate partner abuse was constructed were central ordering principles in biographies of abuse. These social constructions actively disadvantaged both men and their biographical caretakers firstly in identifying abuse and secondly in responding appropriately. These constructions also helped men to maintain their identities.
- Biographical work was important for recognising abuse and appeared to speed recovery.
- Current definitions of abuse were insufficient to incorporate the man's perspective.
- Narratives of powerlessness were the means by which men expressed private abuse experiences.
- Dominant narratives of 'fatherhood' and 'being a husband' were used as a key means to express the abuse experience.

Two conflicting dominant socially constructed discourses (relating to masculinity and intimate partner abuse) paralysed both men and their biographical caretakers in acknowledging themselves as abused. As a result men's abuse narratives in the initial stages of the life story were rendered as unbelievable due to a lack of available discourse from which to articulate it. This hampered their abilities to recognise abuse and seek

appropriate support. Men's movement through biographical processes in their life story was heavily influenced by a commitment to portraying a public identity closely associated with masculine norms or hegemonic masculinity in the 'ordinary' sense (Wetherell and Edley 1999, Edley and Wetherell 1999). Using Riemann and Schutze's (2005) theory of biographical processes, it emerged that men's institutional compliance patterns reflected contemporary stereotypes of Irish masculinity. This adherence to 'compliance patterns' was mirrored in the strength of the men's commitment to their biographical action plans, in spite of threats to it. One survival mechanism articulated by the men was the separation of their private and public identities. The crisis point in the men's life stories occurred when they could not sustain the separation of their private and public identities. It was at this biographical trajectory stage when men mostly encountered biographical caretakers. The men's interpretations of these experiences were mostly gender biased, negative, of poor quality and had devastating outcomes for the men. Their recovery or biographical metamorphosis from this point seemed determined by the amount of biographical work or reflection.

The cross case analysis found that men constructed abuse as arising from two distinct sources. First wave abuse was perpetrated by the intimate partner. This reflected the more traditional body of knowledge regarding abuse (see 3.2 above). Second wave abuse was constructed as a collective endeavour, initiated by the intimate partner but not exercised by her. This construction of abuse challenges traditional definitions by broadening understanding of the meaning of abuse. The exercise of hegemony was particularly prevalent in men's accounts of second wave abuse which illustrated multiple exemplars of denial, ridicule and marginalization.

In terms of talking about abuse, three narrative threads were most prevalent; the abuse narrative, the fatherhood narrative and the good husband narrative. The abuse narrative was a narrative associated with a private identity whilst the fatherhood and good husband narratives represented public identity narrative threads. The abuse narrative was characteristically different from the others suggesting this was difficult to tell. Men used narratives of powerlessness to articulate the direct abuses they experienced, suggesting that despite the difficulty in articulating abuse, powerless narratives are used as narrative positioning devices. The fatherhood narrative was the largest narrative thread in the data. It is suggested that the fatherhood narrative (and to a lesser extent, good husband narrative) represented legitimized strategies from which the abuse experience could be comfortably articulated.

It is essential that these findings and findings from the individual case accounts (presented in Chapter five above) are critically discussed in relation to their implications for professional practice, education, research and policy. Such discussion is contained in the following chapter.

7 Discussion of findings

The central research questions of this study were (1) *how do men account for their experiences of intimate partner abuse?* & (2) *what is the nature of intimate partner abuse as experienced by men?* The achievement of the study aims, presented in the previous two chapters of findings, illustrate that the answers to these research questions were not straightforward. Their presentation findings reflected the multifaceted nature of the relationship between self and society, structure and agency and the contextual embeddedness of these in accounting for oneself whilst negotiating a masculine identity. Further discussion of the findings is considered individually in the text below.

The first key finding emerging from the interpretive case accounts was that **men accounted for their experiences differently yet shared common narrative strategies in articulating life stories of abuse**. The three interpretive case accounts illustrated that the process of accounting for intimate partner abuse was a highly individualised one, largely influenced by dominant social constructions of masculinity and intimate partner abuse. In one sense, this finding is not surprising as individuals have unique life trajectories. However in another sense, this finding illustrates the insufficiency of policy in addressing the needs of this particular group of individuals. The uniqueness of each case (discussed in section 5.4 above) illustrated the extent of diversity in which abused lives can be lived and abuse stories can be told. This challenges the prevailing perspectives of abuse which to date have mostly succeeded in proliferating feminised generalisations about the topic (see 3.2 above). Alan, Conor and Mike's life stories make

a contribution by filling in a blank spot and illustrating a blind spot of knowledge regarding men's interpretations of intimate partner abuse. Whilst the men shared a common plight, they felt individually situated and isolated by their gender and the contradictions of identity which emerged through simultaneously 'being a bloke' and being abused by their female partners. The emergence of contested selves and narratives illustrated the contradictory nature of their biographies (Hopper 2001). There is much to be learned from the individualised case accounts as they exemplify the sense making processes men use in making sense of their contradictory identities within an 'unbelievable' discourse.

This study found that **how masculinity and intimate partner abuse was constructed were central ordering principles in biographies of abuse. These social constructions actively disadvantaged both men and their biographical caretakers firstly in identifying abuse and secondly in responding appropriately. These constructions also helped men to maintain their identities.** This reflects the discussion in the literature review which highlighted the lack of discourse relating to the social problem of women's abuse of men. This finding supports the assertion made regarding the feminisation of current intimate partner abuse definitions and literature discussed in the literature review. The fact that intimate partner abuse was not regarded as a social problem for men rendered the abuse discourse as 'unbelievable' for both them and those whom they interfaced with. Although denial of female perpetrated abuse is theorised to be ideological, its practice became evident through the men's accounts. The men's choices in their life stories were negotiated by an awareness of the dominant discourses

and their vulnerability within this. The men were held accountable for their gender insofar as they were ‘not believed’ to be the subject of abuse (West and Zimmerman 2009). This reflected the perpetuation of the prevailing socially constructed knowledge regarding abuse and those who experience it and suggests that there is a need for this discourse to change. The findings support Wetherell and Edley’s thesis that the social construction of hegemonic masculinity (in the ordinary sense) is articulated as the achievement of socially legitimated stereotypes (Wetherell and Edley 1999, Beynon 2002). Whilst it is doubtful that vulnerability or victimhood (‘unbelievable’ stereotypes) will be incorporated into the lexicon of masculinity, perhaps accentuating the virtues of strength and bravery in ‘talking about it’ might be a useful first step. Using Plummer’s analogy ‘the tale and its time’ had come for these men and perhaps for Irish society (Plummer 1995 p.35). As you read this, the dominant discourses and perhaps the related concept of hegemonic masculinity have changed since the three men kindly agreed to share their biography with me. This change is broadly positive, and suggests a shift towards a more gender sensitive society.³⁹ It would seem that more gender mainstreamed change has occurred in the last three years than has occurred in the previous thirty years. These changes will irrevocably shape the structure of Irish society and the men and women who inhabit it.

³⁹ Since the men were interviewed, COSC – the National Office for Domestic and Gender Based violence was set up. Since its inception, it has funded research, awareness raising strategies and launched a national strategy document in 2010. Legislation concerning fathers and grandparents’ access to their children has also been introduced. In 2008, the Men’s Health Policy was released. More recently, in 2010 the inclusion of a storyline of a husband being battered by his wife is featured in Ireland’s longest running soap opera ‘Fair City’ has brought the reality of women’s abuse of men into the living rooms of up to 721,000 households in Ireland. This invariably is a catalyst for the shifting social constructions regarding masculinity and intimate partner abuse.

Although there is debate about whether WB Yeats said that “*education is not the filling of a bucket but a lighting of a fire*”, its sentiments have resonance for the professional practice of education and its internal interface with students (Stansfield and Lee 2009). One of the key roles of an educator is fostering what Friere terms “*conscientizacao*” (Freire 1972, p.15) that is critical consciousness of one’s position in society. The fact that the biographical caretakers did not believe the men in this study suggests that greater sensitivity to the (private) biographical processes of individuals and the (public) multifaceted societal context in which they live can help biographical caretakers to have an enhanced narrative understanding of the person, enabling them to provide appropriate care sensitively. In other words, a narrative understanding of the historically situated person remains crucial to the effective delivery of care (Edwards 2001). This study found that police, social workers, psychologists, judges and solicitors made judgements based on fixed identity perceptions of a man rather than considering the person as individual and the influence of biographical process upon how the story is told. Considering the feminisation of literature and the overwhelming body of literature presenting intimate partner abuse as male-perpetrated (e.g. Krug et al 2002) it is not surprising that biographical caretakers acted in a way which reflected the prevailing knowledge.

If educators could ‘light the fire’ of appreciation regarding biographical processes, narrative strategies, the fluidity of time, evolving identities and their influences on the life story, this would assist in the generation of more sensitive caretakers, not just for those who are abused but for any individual undergoing difficult life transitions. Although directives from governing bodies (such as An Bord Altranais and An Garda Siochana)

continue to influence curricular content, a departure from traditional ‘pedagogical’ strategies has the potential to be integrated into educational strategies used in health and social care curricula.

Encouraging the reflexivity of self is a potentially powerful instrument in seeing other perspectives, other ‘constructions’ of things (Holloway and Freshwater 2007). Reflexivity has use not just for health and social care practitioners and men whom have experienced abuse; it is also of particular relevance to men with a strong sense of identity as aggressors or one of the 213,000 women who have experienced abuse from men in Ireland (Watson and Parsons 2005). Although this issue is outside the scope of this thesis, it remains worthy that the encouragement of reflexive practice has the potential for wider societal ramifications.

As highlighted earlier in section 6.3 above, language synonymous with abuse or being a victim was not easily articulated by the men. This thesis suggests that victimhood is not easily associated with the expression of a masculine identity and that narratives of powerlessness seem to be the narrative strategy of choice. One reason for this was suggested to be due to the lack of ‘formula stories’ which men can access. Other studies have found similar findings which have identified contrasts in how abuse is articulated (Migliaccio 2002, Watson and Parsons 2005, Allen-Collinson 2009a, 2009b). Instead this study found that **narratives of ‘fatherhood’ and ‘being a husband’ were used as a key means to express the abuse experience.** Using narrative positioning, identities associated with hegemonic masculinity such as fatherhood and being a husband appear to be a more suitable means from which to articulate the abuse experience. Bruner’s

contention that narrative devices help retrospection but can also guide the life narrative into the future is important here as it illustrates that fatherhood and relationships are a means by which future dialogue with men can more comfortably be had (Bruner 2004). The implications of this finding have resonance at the level of both policy and practice, as abuse interventions are informed by the available data (which is obtained from a female population). Similarly, although current strategy documents acknowledge the possibility of men's abuse, its nature and presentation are assumed to reflect that which is experienced by women.

As mentioned earlier, the second aim of this study was to explore the nature of intimate partner abuse as experienced by men. This study found that **current definitions of abuse were insufficient to incorporate the man's perspective**. Despite similarities with women regarding the nature of first wave 'traditional' abuse (in particular the illustration of intimate terrorism), there were also distinct differences. Constructions of second wave abuse by biographical caretakers, perhaps related to their use of a fixed identity stereotypes in their care of men, suggest that there is a need for those involved in interacting with men during a difficult biographical transition to appreciate their potential to cause harm. This is particularly pertinent in relation to the biographical trajectory process when men reject support (from a broad spectrum of caretakers) at a time when they are most vulnerable (Riemann and Schutze 2005). The behaviour exhibited by biographical caretakers' was not solely the fault of the individual agents but of a combination of adherence to dominant norms and resistance to the possibility of alternatives. It is recommended that biographical caretakers involved in caring for abused

men are educated to appreciate how persons in trajectory ‘reject’ assistance when they perhaps need it most. This will ultimately improve the care experiences for men and potentially transform the outcome of the trajectory process (Riemann and Schutze 2005). In addition to problem based learning and interpretive panels mentioned earlier, another way to affect the process of denial and ridicule which resulted could be prevented by role play strategies in the classroom where participants are asked to critically examine men’s narratives of abuse⁴⁰. The biographies presented in this thesis offer educationalists interesting cases from which to explore the phenomenon further in classroom settings. It may also provide an explanation for the fact that only 5 per cent of men experiencing severe abuse choose to report it (Watson and Parsons 2005). The phenomenon itself is not new – it has been illustrated in other narratives (Cleary 2004) and in other studies (Hines, Brown and Dunning 2007). The suggestion that intimate partner abuse emerges solely from the female partner, incorrectly represents its nature and source, underplaying the dynamics of hegemony and their impact on men’s practices during the course of their work or home lives. The power differential between professionals and lay persons demonstrated in the three case accounts signifies the potential consequences of ill informed decision-making and its effect on the lives of others (Warne and McAndrew 2007). It is important that professionals in health, social care and law remain cognisant of this in the exercise of their daily work.

Whilst this thesis is not claiming rights to the prevalence of women’s abuse of men, it is testament to its existence and contributes to the body of knowledge regarding this topic, making men’s abuses more articulated and therefore less ‘unbelievable’. This study has

⁴⁰ As alluded to earlier, this technique proved useful in work with two cohorts of nursing students

highlighted that abuse, in the traditional sense, is insufficient to capture all constructions of abuse. The danger in making policy directives based on narrow definitions is further exemplified from this study. Even when there are similarities in traditional ‘definitions’ of abuse, how it is experienced in terms of harm varies (Watson and Parsons 2005). The phenomenon of second wave abuse (perhaps as a uniquely masculine phenomenon?) creates new knowledge in broadening the meaning of intimate partner abuse. Although physical abuse and harm features in men’s biographies, the largest constructed source of harm was indirectly initiated by the abuser with the goal of achieving ‘parentectomy’ (Summers and Summers 2006). Although this phenomenon is recognised in the literature, greater credence to the impact this has on men’s identities as fathers is needed. In some American states, the intentional alienation of children by one parent to another is a criminal offence⁴¹ (Neville 2001). However, given the fact that so little is publicly known about family law cases due to the *in camera* rule (discussed earlier in section 3.1.2 above) it is doubtful that this will be realised in Ireland in the near future. A more realistic recommendation for legal practice relates to McCormack’s proposal to alter the interpretation of the *in camera* rule (McCormack 2001). This has been recognised by senior counsel as reasonable (Abbot 2001) and would have a significant effect on creating a public discourse about family law and fatherhood which did not exist before. The resulting knowledge, emerging from a transparent system (which continues to protect children) would enhance trust and could potentially transform the outcomes for men falsely accused of abusing their partners or their children.

⁴¹ The term for this criminal offence in some states of America is *Parental Alienation Syndrome*

This study has found that ‘dominant discourses’ pertaining to masculinity, femininity and intimate partner abuse warrant challenge, at the very least academically. Challenging the social construction of gender in an academic environment will assist in ‘lighting the fire’ of critical assumptions of gender order, hegemonic dominance and the relationship this has with the portrayal of self. Kimmel’s claim that privilege is invisible to those who have it is useful in positioning the contradiction of masculine vulnerability in Irish society (Kimmel 2002b). Having a critical consciousness of these issues would be useful in raising awareness of the anomaly of masculinity as a ‘social constriction’ when it relates to the topic of intimate partner abuse (Freire 1972). Promoting the re-thinking of definitions, assessment and interventions relating to intimate partner abuse in higher education institutions would match its mandate of producing graduates who can adapt to changing societal needs (Higher Education Authority 2004). As Glaser (1978) asserts, care is delivered more effectively if it is delivered by those ‘in the know’ (Glaser 1978) than those not. Biographical caretakers such as police officers, social workers, nurses and doctors are clearly ‘in the know’. This thesis suggests that this working practical knowledge requires some revision. As an academic, one means to influence change is via published works. During the preparation of this thesis, an editorial I wrote was published (Corbally 2010). My personal attempts represent an attempt to affect the external interface of professional practice through the medium of literature to stimulate change (Stansfield and Lee 2009). Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concept of communities of practice is useful here in articulating an aspirational vision of interdisciplinary responses to intimate partner abuse. This has already begun to evolve in part with my joining an interdisciplinary community of practice with a shared goal to study international

responses to interpersonal violence and propose potential solutions⁴². Professional doctorates require that knowledge generated through the process of research is embedded in professional practice (Lee 2009). This chapter contributed to this process to enhance the professional practice of education and the wider spheres of policy and research by its discussions, introducing some implications for practice. The following section addresses the implications of the study findings in more depth.

7.1 Implications of findings

“Rather than asking if a research project is likely to generate truth, we can assess its potential to reduce ignorance. Will it help researchers, policy makers, teachers or others to fill in blank spots or illuminate blind spots? If so – it may be quite useful research”

(Wagner 2010 p. 38)

Considering Wagner’s point, the findings presented in this study have potential to reduce ignorance in the fields of practice, education, research, policy and society. Achieving the aims of this study resulted in the production of findings which were multifaceted. As a result, it is important to be cognizant that the implications of these findings will resonate with a multiplicity of contexts and have the capacity to influence change via a variety of interfaces (Stansfield and Lee 2009).

⁴² In May 2011, the first Responses to Interpersonal Violence (RIV) network meeting will be held in Sweden. This meeting seeks to share and create knowledge and understanding relating to interpersonal violence and responses to it.

7.1.1 Education for practice: taking care of men

This study found that men accounted for their experiences of abuse in a individualised way and that the practices of biographical caretakers were insufficient in addressing their needs. This has important implications, both for practitioners involved in directly caring for men and also for educationalists charged with educating practitioners for practice. Men's negative accounts of their liaison with police, social workers, solicitors and psychologists, illustrated a reliance on traditional perspectives of intimate partner abuse and the identities commonly associated with this phenomenon. Although theoretical definitions of hegemonic masculinity and intimate partner abuse did not exist in the realities in which the men found themselves, idealised constructions were used as a means to make judgments about abused men. This study unearthed how men accounted for intimate partner abuse. Previous studies have found that a lack of education acts as a barrier to caring for those affected by intimate partner abuse (Horgan et al. 2008, COSC. 2010). It is suggested that providing education is not enough; attention to the nature of education is also required. Arising from the findings of this study, it is recommended that educational strategies be constructed in order to appreciate the individualist perspective of abuse, in particular acknowledging how biographical processes influence the telling of the life story, in addition to appreciating historio-social contexts (Riemann and Schutze 2005). Riemann and Schutze (2005) claim that appropriate care and compassion has the capacity to transform the trajectory process. Considering this argument, the potential lies in those caring for men to apply brakes to the trajectory processes, perhaps shortening the 'downward spin' and improving recovery.

Being able to recognise abuse, respond adequately and refer appropriately are key skills which biographical caretakers require when caring for men and women (Kenny and Niran 2008). The fostering of a critical consciousness about the topic and the many issues which affect its emergence could potentially influence its disclosure through a more conducive environment. I would cautiously concur with recent strategy moves towards awareness raising through education (COSC. 2010). However, I would suggest that the content appreciate the gender differences and narrative differences between the presentation of abused men and women. Educational strategies such as problem based learning (Barrett 2005) would prove useful as a means of enabling students to raise their consciousness about the topic and the influence of gendered discourses surrounding it. As highlighted in section 4.3.3 above, interpretive panels were a useful means of eliciting a broader understanding about narratives. It is suggested that the techniques used in panel analysis (future blind, chunk by chunk presentation of text segments) could be modified and used usefully as a teaching technique with pre-prepared simulated text segments. In this way, an interpretive class discussion could be usefully initiated, prompted by key questions regarding either lived life or told story outlined in Appendix 9.5. This technique was particularly useful in eliciting multiple meanings, whilst challenging dominant mindsets. Because heterogeneity was a key factor in the success of interpretive panels, this technique would be ideal for those engaging in single and interdisciplinary education, promoting situations of shared learning and meaning (Gasper 2010).

The three case accounts provide a rich resource for health and social care practitioners and educators, providing a detailed introspective view of the historically situated, contextually embedded nature of an abused man's presentation of self. The contradictions of identity and struggles with biographical processes identified in this study provide some explanations as to why persons choose to stay in abusive relationships, an issue often discussed from a woman's perspective (e.g. Hyden 1994). Because narratives of not being believed acted as a narrative positioning tool for men (section 6.1 above), it is suffice to say that taking men's accounts seriously in a professional manner has the potential to improve the experiences of men who disclose abuse and could also indirectly affect others who are thinking about disclosing.

Many educational programmes and victim support programmes are based on resources generated from large scale studies of women (most notably the Duluth Model⁴³). The findings from this study illustrate the insufficiency of models generated from a female population in capturing abuse from a man's perspective. Perhaps exploration of the 'life story' of abuse through the framework of biographical process structures would provide an individualized contextualized perspective of abuse. This study advocates the development of the narrative practice skills of biographical caretakers in assessing stories to making judgments about interventions and care. The skill of narrative understanding could be taught in targeted programmes with those involved in the care of abused men and women (Charon 2006) and also integrated in nursing and medical curricula. It is recommended that this topic and its management are consciously positioned in the planning / revising of curricula and not as an afterthought as has been identified by others (Warne and McAndrew 2005).

⁴³ <http://www.theduluthmodel.org/pdf/PhyVio.pdf> [Accessed 20th April 2011]

Because fatherhood narratives and being a husband were used as a key means to express abuse, it is suggested that biographical caretakers (including the judiciary, police officers, social workers, and psychologists) are educated to sensitively question men through the discourses acceptable to them a means to ascertain whether abuse is occurring in relationships. This is due to the fact that ‘abuse victim’ questions would be counter productive for men as they further accentuate vulnerability (Stanko and Hobdell 1993). Similar sentiments have been voiced by advocates of women who experience abuse (Hyden 2005) suggesting that identities associated with powerlessness are undesirable. The technique of broad questioning, similar to that used in the national guidelines for general practitioners (Kenny and Ni Rian 2008) would be recommended⁴⁴. Utilising discourses acceptable to the man (i.e. using the topics of fatherhood and being a husband) would provide a legitimate avenue for disclosure whilst upholding their desire to portray adherence to a masculine identity (Edley and Wetherell 1999). This kind of questioning ought to induce narratives of abuse more easily for men and optimise the potential for disclosure. In the event of an open disclosure (similar to the one I witnessed some years back), the response contained in the national guidelines for GPs (Kelly and Ni Rian (2008) reflect a gender mainstreamed respectful response which could be utilised by other health and social care providers⁴⁵. Clearly, the practice of believing men would make significant steps in improving practice.

⁴⁴ Perhaps questions such as “how are the children/kids?”, “are you happy with your time with the children”? “How are things at home?” might be helpful.

⁴⁵ The recommended guidelines can be found on page 10 highlight that care providers need to:

- listen
- communicate belief (‘that must have been very frightening for you’)
- validate the decision to disclose (‘it must have been difficult for you to talk about this’)
- emphasise the unacceptability of violence (‘you do not deserve to be treated this way’)

Given my personal experiences of undertaking this study, I suggest that accessibility for men experiencing abuse be further improved. Amen as a support agency remains under resourced. Conor, the only person who liaised with Amen during his trajectory, found this service instrumental in his recovery. All three men continue to receive support when required from this agency. Anecdotal evidence from my attendance to the support group suggests that whilst the support group is clearly invaluable, there is a need for greater accessibility for men outside the North Eastern area of Ireland. Having an outreach centre in another part of the country (or perhaps having an electronic means to virtually access this support group) would encourage more men to avail of this service. My observations regarding the timing in which men access support suggests that men are in crisis, experiencing a biographical trajectory when they seek help from this agency.

In my view, their needs are four fold – firstly, they need care and support directed at the stage of trajectory they are experiencing. Secondly, given their ‘usual’ presentations at this support group meeting – they need immediate education regarding the implications of the legal orders they often present with along with advice regarding what to do next. In my time attending Amen, the support workers did an outstanding job at meeting both of these needs considering their under-resourced status. I suggest that a third need is care for their physical and psychological health upon arrival. I observed many men with, anxiety, sleeplessness, short term anorexia and other conditions⁴⁶ which were exacerbated

• emphasise *the person's* right to confidentiality (italics are my adjustment)

⁴⁶ I observed weakness, lethargy, depressive symptoms and dehydration. Some men mentioned that they had hypertension, gastric ulceration, and exacerbations of respiratory conditions as a result of their experiences.

by their trajectory experiences. Relating to this, I would suggest that men be provided with a safe place to sleep and eat, given the long distances they travel and the weakened state some of them attend with. Finally, given the study findings, it is suggested that a fourth need for the men is a longer term care plan in assisting men towards their creative biographical metamorphosis.

In the event of recognising an abused man, appropriate responses are clearly necessary (Kenny and Ni Rian 2008). As with the ‘teachable moment’ in education, there are windows of opportunity for health and social care professionals to intervene appropriately during ‘fateful moments’ of interaction. Because this study found that **biographical work was important for recognising abuse and appeared to speed recovery**, it is recommended that encouraging and facilitation of reflection through documentation become usual practice for those involved in responding to abused persons. The activity of diary logging or documenting events and experiences has been identified to have multiple benefits due to the neutrality afforded to this technique (Allen-Collinson 2008, Allen-Collinson 2009b). Serendipitous evidence to the power of written documents is evidenced in the many hundreds of letters received by the Irish men’s support group⁴⁷ (Cleary 2004). However, ensuring a ‘safe and private place’ to document is paramount. The consequences of perpetrators discovering this data source are potentially catastrophic (Krug et al. 2002). Given technological advances of virtual spaces such as Facebook, <http://www.boards.ie> and <http://www.box.com> there is potential to produce a password protected source where men could safely and anonymously engage in the process of reflection via documentation accessible from any

⁴⁷ I was informed of this by the centre director

web enabled electronic device. Although this suggestion is outside my level of expertise, this potential is worth exploration particularly due to its attractiveness in facilitating reflective practice and augmenting the process of creative biographical metamorphosis.

The final recommendation for practice relates both to the study and to the event which was its catalyst. As professionals charged with caring for vulnerable others, biographical caretakers need to believe and respond positively to those who disclose abuse experiences to them. For men, making a disclosure is a relative rarity (Watson and Parsons 2005) and should be interpreted by biographical caretakers as evidence of the trust which has been placed upon them.

7.1.2 Research

This study challenges the epistemological basis of intimate partner abuse. The fact that a difference between the pre-defined abuse definition and its social construction found by undertaking this study supports the need for cautious generalization about research findings which claims to ‘measure’ abuse. The new category of second wave abuse reveals a new terminology to classify abuse as it is constructed by the individual experiencing it. Although the articulation of abuse in this way is new, the category itself is not. Elements of the harm caused by state support agencies have been acknowledged in the form of ‘secondary abuse’ or ‘institutional abuse’ (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform 2009). In this sense, abuses from state support agencies can and have been experienced by women and children also. However, it is suggested that in the

context of this study, second wave abuse as constructed by these men in relation to intimate partner abuse remains particular to this group. This new perspective of abuse adds to the existing knowledge base surrounding the phenomenon. Had this study used survey methodology amongst a large population, we would be none the wiser about this new way in which men construct abuse. Perhaps the generalizations based on ‘statistical significance’ whilst appearing robust, would in fact be robust statements about one part of the ‘elephant’ rather than seeing it from a different, interpretive lens (McHugh et al 2005). This study illustrates the utility of interpretive methodologies in illuminating aspects of knowledge not accessible to quantitative methodologies.

The feminization of research perspectives on abuse (discussed earlier in section 3.2 above) along with the relative paucity of research on a male population demonstrated in this study imply a need to address this imbalance and conduct future research studies on men. The recent Irish national survey has proved helpful in addressing the issue of abuse prevalence amongst men (Watson and Parsons 2005). However, whilst the issue of ‘the general’ has been addressed somewhat, there is a need to further explore issues relating to ‘the particular’ i.e. the individual’s interpretation of abuse in an Irish context. There is clearly room for more research of this kind to fill in the ‘blank spot’ of understanding regarding this under-researched phenomenon (Wagner 2010). It is also suggested that a replication of this study using narratives of both men and women would prove beneficial in further exploring the gender differences in constructions of abuse and how it is narratively expressed.

The use of BNIM methodology in this study demonstrates originality by using a novel research technique (Lee 2009) and thus contributes to emerging the body of knowledge regarding its practical usage. BNIM has proven to be a useful means of intensively exploring the evolving situated subjectivity of individuals' narrative expression in conjunction with appreciating broader socio-historical contexts. The technique of using interpretive panels as an analytic technique was found to be particularly useful in generating broader interpretive perspectives (Kvale 1996, Hollway and Jefferson 2000, Paley and Eva 2005). However, although anecdotal evidence exists, little is known about the panel members' experiences of this technique. An evaluation study would prove useful in understanding the effect and scope of this methodological technique. Conducting the biographical data analysis in this study has already challenged the existing knowledge base surrounding BNIM analysis (see section 4.3.1. above) which has resulted in its revision by its pioneer⁴⁸ (Wengraf 2009).

Although Irish universities are not subject to actual research assessments (yet) it is important to be mindful that there is a potential for contrast between research which benefits people through improved care practices, and research which 'scores highly' in such research exercises (Smith 2005). Although it is doubtful whether BNIM studies would score highly, studies using BNIM clearly benefit others in its scope as a complimentary mechanism for testing generalisations often made by large scale studies and policy directives. This is expounded upon further below.

⁴⁸ At this point, I would like to acknowledge again my gratitude for the guidance given to me by Mr. Tom Wengraf's regarding matters relating to BNIM. His responsiveness and attentiveness in addressing any issues or challenges I presented to him during the course of this study was appreciated.

7.1.3 Policy

BNIM have been recognised as a useful means by which connections between policy, professional practice and the individual can be made (Chamberlayne 2002). Because the process of accounting for abuse was found to be a highly individualized one, policy directives targeted at abuse ‘victims’ and ‘perpetrators’ run the potential to miss those who do not identify with these terms. This study has illustrated that present policy and professional practices insufficiently addressed the needs of men. One of the reasons for this is the over-reliance on data generated from a female population which has resulted in the feminisation of policies in addressing the issue. The findings of this study support the suggestion that future policies on intimate partner abuse are gender mainstreamed throughout, not just providing a tokenistic acknowledgement of men as has been the case to date (McEvoy and Richardson 2004). Similarly, the use of acceptable masculine discourses for men (suggested in the National Men’s Health Policy) is supported by the findings of this study (Richardson and Carroll 2008). However, it is acknowledged that not all might welcome these changes. The call for such institutional change requires widespread support from women, but more particularly men if change is to be realised. This may present a challenge for men who currently retain a more powerful position societally (Faludi 2000).

Interfaces with representatives of the legal profession were constructed in this study as a significant source of abuse by men. This abuse, by acts or omission had the most devastating effects upon the men in this study. It is recommended that the legal policies and practices be reviewed as a matter of urgency with the specific aim of examining the

gendered practices which have been highlighted in this study. The gender bias of the legal system in favour of women is well known and was discussed earlier in section 3.1.2 above. It is suggested that a review of how the *in camera* rule is exercised with a view to generating some discourse surrounding the outcome of legal decisions made (which negatively affect men) will assist in making believable, a silenced discourse surrounding men and their families (McCormack 2001, O'Sullivan 2001).

The implications of findings presented have a necessary relationship between the rigour (and limitations) of the processes involved in generating them. Discussions regarding research rigour and the limitations of the study are contained below.

7.2 Study rigour

Research rigour is synonymous with the demonstration of integrity in the research process. As highlighted earlier, one of the factors influencing my choice of method was the rigour inherent in BNIM (see section 4.1.1 above) which has strengthened the trustworthiness of this study. The pervasiveness of stories in everyday life and the interpretive strategies in which they are researched remains a perpetual problem in narrative research particularly in relation to the 'holy trinity' of validity, reliability and generalisability which are often used in a narrow positivistic sense (Kvale 1996 p.229). Many of the conventional arguments about reliability and validity are essentially not applicable when used in a narrative research context (Plummer 2005, Kohler Riessman 2008, Atkinson 2010). As a result, judging the quality of qualitative research ought to require attentiveness to criteria reasonable to the epistemology of the study (Silverman 2005). Some have suggested that trustworthiness, verisimilitude and plausibility are

more reasonable criteria from which to judge the rigour of narrative enquiry (Scott 1998, Denzin 1989a, 1989b, Hoffman 2007). Others argue that there is no correct means by which validation in narrative research can be performed (Kohler Riessman 1993, Kohler Riessman 2008). In a similar vein to Atkinson (1998, 2010), my choice in using BNIM implies a subscription to the view that one must utilise (appropriate) criteria as a guiding mechanism to ensure a high quality study. In this thesis, it would seem that trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba 1999) is the more apt term in addressing issues of biographical narrative research rigour.

As highlighted previously in section (4.1.1 above), problems inherent in narrative biographical studies rooted in the tenets of interpretivism stem primarily to the issue of authorship and truth and the means by which these are (sometimes inappropriately) judged. The ‘truth’ of narratives are, by their very nature historically situated and socially constructed, as is the ‘truth’ of their analysis, interpretation and presentation in this thesis. This historical subjectivity (of events and experiences) is a key assumption of the BNIM methodology and theoretical perspective of this thesis (Wengraf 2011) which argues that there is no singular ‘truth’ to meaning as an interpretive process always underpins it. Similarly, the ‘truth’ of the reader’s interpretation of this data is invariably contextually situated and influenced by dominant social discourses (Stanley 1992, Kohler Riessman 2008, Plummer 2005). The use of BNIM involved using a rigorous methodological process which was applied to all stages of data collection, analysis and interpretation⁴⁹ (Wengraf 2006). Lincoln and Guba’s (1999) criteria in enhancing trustworthiness are

⁴⁹ A more detailed discussion about the rigour of the method applied during each stage of the study can be found in the Methodology chapter.

useful in illustrating the quality of the work presented. The criteria; credibility, transferability, and confirmability are discussed in the context of BNIM analysis below.

Credibility, according to Lincoln and Guba (1999) is enhanced when activities such as prolonged engagement and triangulation of methods and researchers are used. This thesis represents the outcome of six years of immersion in doctoral study of which four years were dedicated to the study presented in this thesis. The technique of BNIM in analysing the lived life and told story could be interpreted as a triangulative approach in terms of methodology to understand each case account. Similarly, whilst this thesis is my own work, I argue that use of nine interpretive panels⁵⁰ represented a triangulation of sorts which enhanced the credibility of the findings by minimising possible distortions of understanding which could have occurred through individual interpretation of data. The rigour inherent in this process amplified cognisance of individual researcher constraints (Plummer 2005) and promoted a more open approach to the consideration of alternative possibilities inherent in the life story.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1999), dense description of data characterises the potential for transferability in a study. In this study, the detail and depth of the interpretive case accounts provide a rigorous means by which to generate useful insights into social processes (which is clearly distinct from generalising about them). (Chamberlayne 2002). The findings of this study can attempt to claim the former but not the latter. Attention to both the micro and macro levels of social construction enabled the creation of texts which represented differentiated thinking in relation to intimate partner abuse and masculinity. Similarly, the cases presented here are ‘relativised’ by each other

⁵⁰ See section 4.3.3. for more detailed discussion on interpretive panels.

(Chamberlayne and Spano 2000 p.334). A similar process of relativisation ought to occur by readers interpreting the findings of this thesis. This is not dis-similar to the process of “moderatum generalisations” (Williams 2007 p.432) (i.e. generalisations relative to everyday life) which are invariably made by consumers of research regardless of epistemology. Judgements of transferability are facilitated by the writer but are ultimately made by the reader. Glaser (1978) argues that researchers ought to ensure that the issues of research rigour make sense to those ‘in the know’ whom have the potential capacity to influence practice relating to particular topics⁵¹. It is hoped that the depth of analysis and interpretation and the rigorous processes underpinning it illustrate scope for transferability across genres.

One of the main critiques of narrative research processes relates to a lack of a documented strategy in ensuring research rigour (Webb and Kevern, 2001). As highlighted in Appendix IV below, the procedural analytic techniques used in BNIM clearly illustrate a commitment to data capture and analysis which is methodical, rigorous and potentially confirmable through its detailed audit trail (Atkinson 2010, Thomas 2010). In relation to narrative research, the audience, political agenda and personal intentions of researchers often influence how findings are communicated (and ultimately interpreted) (Plummer 2003, 2005, Liamputtong 2007) . Given the topic of inquiry and the potential for these findings to be ridiculed in the public domain, close attention to research rigour was a necessary choice and provides an academic research safety net underpinning the integrity of the findings presented. It is suggested that the ultimate exercise in the validating the claims made will occur through academic argumentation – a

⁵¹ This was also considered throughout the discussion of findings.

process only beginning upon completion of this work (Polkinghorne 2005, Kohler Riessman 2008).

8 Conclusion

Intimate partner abuse remains a serious social issue. This study was borne out of a sense of ‘uneasiness’ which arose from the witnessing of one man’s interface with a biographical caretaker in a health care setting. In exploring men’s biographies of abuse, both the nature of abuse and how they accounted for their experiences were examined. The findings which have emerged from biographical narrative study makes sense of the unbelievable by highlighting a discourse surrounding abused men which has been rendered invisible by society and illustrating how abused men account for their experiences. It makes an original contribution to knowledge by enhancing understanding about a recognised topic amongst a rarely researched group. The use of a novel methodology as a means to explore this phenomenon reflects an originality of method also.

Chapters one and two positioned the researcher and the study in context. A review of the literature followed in Chapter three, which highlighted the feminisation of literature surrounding intimate partner abuse, discussed the theoretical perspectives regarding masculinity and analysed the limitations of education, practice, research and policy in relation to women’s abuse of men. In chapter four, BNIM methodology was introduced and its appropriateness in examining the topic was critically discussed. The interpretive case accounts of Alan, Conor and Mike were presented in Chapter five. These accounts, arising from a nine stage analytic process replicated with each case illustrated that the process of accounting for abuse was a highly individualised one, historically situated by

the prevailing social constructions of masculinity and intimate partner abuse. Chapter six presented the findings of the BNIM cross case theorisation process informed by a social constructionist perspective. What was found by this process was that in men's life stories, dominant discourses influenced narrative expressions of abuse and also decision making in recognising abuse and seeking help. For the men in this study, talking about abuse was difficult (expressed mostly as powerlessness), yet through the medium of being a father and husband it was easier to articulate. The practice of biographical work helped men to reframe themselves through story. The discussion of findings presented in Chapter seven of this thesis critically discussed the findings and raising questions about current abuse definitions, and its influence on education, policy and practice.

This study calls for a new understanding of abuse which acknowledges its socially constructed nature and considers its gender specific nuances. Professional doctorates require that research theses and their findings have relevance to practitioners and the wider social arena (Lee 2009). As an educator, this study contributes to the professional practice of education through making recommendations for practice which are realistic, achievable and have the potential to make a measurable effect upon responses towards abused persons. In addition to this, further implications for research, policy and the practice of caring for abused men were suggested in section 7.1. It is hoped that the knowledge generated from this study will be realised in the conduct of health and social care and will play some part in re-constructing men's abuse experiences not as 'unbelievable' but as a real and important issue worthy of discourse and care.

As highlighted earlier, discourses form a constant site for meaning making and play a powerful role in the social construction of knowledge. As mentioned in the literature review, one man's story (Rock Hudson's) had the power to challenge and shift existing discourses. It is suggested that the stories of three men have the potential to influence the evolution of discourse and practice in relation to both intimate partner abuse and masculinities. The case accounts also have a practical function as potential 'formula stories' (Loseke 2001) which abused men could draw upon to perhaps 'make sense of the unbelievable' for them, giving voice to what was previously not articulated. The philosophy of professional practice is person centered yet is variable, relational, and contextually embedded in political social and institutional processes. Understanding the complexities between structure, agency, contexts and the individual is more important than ever in an era of cost containment and service user involvement (Apitzsch, Bornat and Chamberlayne 2004). The research methodology of BNIM has facilitated the exploration of these multifaceted issues. This thesis challenges existing theory relating to masculinity, intimate partner abuse and narrative. Given the philosophical premise that knowledge is always open to revision (Quine 1951), I look forward to the opportunity of seeing the perpetuation of new knowledge emerging in the future in our continual journey towards understanding.

8.1 Study limitations

This study is not without limitations. It must be acknowledged that this study is based upon three cases all of whom sought help from a support group for men. As identified in previous research (Watson and Parsons 2005) men who seek help represent the small

minority of those experiencing abuse. It is possible that this small group of individuals is not representative of the larger population. However, this was a purposive sample constructed with the intention of creating insights about this particular population. Section 4.3 above already discussed the particular limitations of the data analysis techniques used in BNIM. It is worth re-iterating some limitations experienced with aspects of the method. The first related to the meaning of ‘publicly verifiable facts’ and their relation to abuse accounts (Wengraf 2009). The second potential limitation related to the technique of generating the TSS and its effect of fragmenting the text (Mishler 1986, Patterson 2008). However, both of these limitations were minimised as highlighted in section 4.3 above.

Another limitation of the study could be interpreted by virtue of gender. The fact that I am female, the same gender as those who had abused the men (whilst articulated by the men to be a good thing) must be acknowledged as a potential limitation given the overarching influence of gender discourses on the presentation of self (Holstein and Gubrium 2000). This limitation may have been addressed somewhat by the conduct of interpretive panel analysis which offered both male and female perspectives upon the themes presented.

9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix I Original library database search

Keyword term used (search terms limited to article title only)	Web of Knowledge (accessed 16th October 2007)	No. of articles	No. of articles when 'male victims' added to search
Domestic violence		2088	0
Domestic abuse		191	0
Intimate partner violence		656	0
Keyword term used (search terms limited to article title only)	CINAHL Plus full text (accessed 9th of January 2008)	No of articles	No of articles when 'male victims' combined with keyword
Domestic violence		3565	6
Domestic abuse		144	0
Intimate partner violence		2350	2
Keyword term used (search terms limited to article title only)	MEDLINE (accessed 16th October 2007)	No of articles	No of articles when 'male victims' combined with keyword
Domestic violence		1434	1
Domestic abuse		60	0
Intimate partner violence		556	1

9.2 Appendix II Safety Protocol for recruiting and interviewing participants for study

Recruitment of participants

- Men attending the support group will be informed (by the group leader) that I am conducting a study and seeking participants.
- If a participant wishes to arrange a more suitable time/location, I will contact participants at a time they have specified
- Contact initiated by the researcher will be minimal
- Participants will be asked to verbalise how they plan to take steps to ensure they are not followed to the interview location

Interviewing participants

- Interviews will be held in public buildings
- Each interview will not last longer than a two hour duration
- The researcher will not enter or leave the building with any participant
- The researcher will inform a trusted colleague of the time and location of scheduled interview who will remain nearby
- The researcher will have a mobile phone in silent mode to make contact with others if deemed necessary during the interview period

Maintaining Confidentiality

- An information sheet will be shown to the participant prior to the interview commencing.
- The participant will be informed that pseudonyms will be used to replace any names
- Prior to the interview commencing, the participant will be informed of the researcher's duty to report disclosure of child abuse
- All documents and data pertaining to this study will be stored in a secure location (i.e. locked cupboard or password protected on computer)

Adapted from safety protocol devised in a study of battered women Langford (2000, p.136)

Langford, D.R. (2000) Developing a safety protocol in qualitative research involving battered women. *Qualitative Health Research*. 10 (1), 133-142.

9.3 Appendix III Plain language statement/consent form distributed to participants

Dear Participant,

16th May 2007⁵²

I am conducting a study as part of my PhD looking at the nature of domestic violence from the perspective of men who have experienced or are currently experiencing this. I am looking for men who have experienced domestic violence and are willing to talk about their story. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from this study at any time. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to attend an interview which may last 2 hours. There will be a break provided during this time. The interview will be tape recorded but any names which you use and references to locations will be replaced with pseudonyms or removed altogether to help keep your details confidential. All documents relating to this study will be stored in a locked filing cabinet where only I have access. Please bear in mind that by law, I am obliged to report any allegations of child abuse made in the discussion. The original tape recordings of our discussion and your written consent form will be destroyed at the completion of the study.

This project has received clearance from both Dublin City University ethics committee (where I work) and the University of Salford, UK (where I am studying). This means that the way in which I conduct this study has been reviewed to ensure the maximum consideration for your involvement and safety has been made. My telephone number is 01 7008432 if you need to contact me for any further information. I would appreciate if you could note this now as for your safety I will not be giving any documentation relating to the study to you to take home.

⁵² Note: The plain language statement was not printed on university headed paper.

Please ask me now if there's anything you are not clear about. The following section asks you for your signature as consent to take part in this study.

Consent to participate

I have read and understood the information about this study and am willing to participate in the study outlined above. I understand that I can still withdraw from this study at any time if I decide to.

Signed _____

9.4 Appendix IV Overview of two track BNIM Analysis approach

TRACK 1 – THE LIVING OF THE LIVED LIFE			
Aim	Objective	Actions:	Informed by:
To ascertain the chronological order of 'publicly verifiable' events experienced in the lived life.	Creation of a Biographical Data Chronology (BDC)	<p>1. (BDC creation) The researcher creates a BDC synopsis of 'objective' biographical information relating to the 'facts' of the person's lived life. This synopsis is written in chronological order.</p>	<p>The verbatim transcript</p> <p>External sources which can cross validate the objective events (e.g. historical dates, D.O.B., News events)</p>
To maintain 'critical distance' from the data and to pursue a broader interpretation of events.	Creation of a Biographical Data Analysis (BDA)	<p>2. (Lived life interpretive panel analysis) The researcher facilitates a kick-start interpretive panel to look for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiencing hypothesis. Counter hypothesis Tangential hypothesis Structural hypothesis <p>About events in the BDC.</p> <p>These events are presented to the panel in 'sequential chunks', one at a time. Each time a chunk is presented, the panel is asked questions to elicit the hypotheses described above. Key questions asked during panel analysis (Wengraf 2001) are:</p> <p>A. How could this have been experienced in relation to age, personal development, cultural, family development etc.? (<i>Experiencing hypothesis/ counter hypothesis/tangential hypothesis</i>)</p> <p>B. How could the sequence of events so far shape the future lived life? (<i>Experiencing hypothesis/counter hypothesis/tangential hypothesis/following hypothesis</i>)</p> <p>C. For each hypothesis generated, what event could be expected later in the biographical data? (<i>Following</i></p>	<p>The BDC document.</p> <p>Flip chart notes taken during the panel analysis.</p> <p>Summary statements from panel members</p> <p>Personal notes taken after the panel analysis</p> <p>The transcript</p>

		<p><i>hypothesis/tangential hypothesis).</i></p> <p>D. What could he have done but didn't?</p> <p><i>The panel are then asked to write a 'summary statement</i></p> <p>3. (BDA creation) The researcher analyses the information obtained from this panel, and revises both the BDC and the original transcript to create a full BDA. (3a) the phases and turning points of the lived life are documented</p>	
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TRACK 2 – THE TELLING OF THE TOLD STORY			
Aim	Objective	Actions:	Informed by:
To ascertain the structure of the conversation within the text.	Creation of A Text Structure Sequentialisation (TSS)	<p>4. (TSS creation). This is a description of the sequence of structural changes in a biographical account. It involves close analysis of the transcript and splitting the textual structure according to when:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The speaker changes, and again when: 2. The topic (which needs to be defined) changes and again, when: 3. The TextSort changes. There are 6 different types of textsort: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description • Evaluation • Argumentation • Report • Particular Incident Narrative • General Incident Narrative • Typical incident narrative 	The transcript
To re-construct the person's system of knowledge, their interpretation of lives and their classification of experiences into thematic fields (p275)	Creation of a TFA	<p>5. (Told story interpretive panel analysis) The researcher facilitates a kick-start panel to look for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiencing hypothesis. • Counter hypothesis • Tangential hypothesis • Structural hypothesis <p>Main question: "at this point, why does he make that point about that topic in that way, at that time? What could he have said but didn't?"</p> <p>Key questions (Wengraf 2001):</p> <p>A. Why is the biographer presenting this experience or topic now?</p> <p>B. Why is the person using this specific sort of text to present it?</p>	TSS document Transcript Interview Recording Field notes

		<p>C. Is there a hidden agenda? (Added by Melissa)</p> <p>D. What was the speaker experiencing at this point?</p> <p>E. Why might the speaker have changed topic</p> <p>The panels are presented 'chunks' of the TSS, one at a time. Each time a chunk is presented, the panel is asked questions to elicit hypotheses which may result from the questions above.</p> <p>Hypotheses are multiplied and strengthened or refuted by the data presented to the panel. Hypotheses not supported by at least 3 data pieces are considered unproven.</p> <p>Each panel member is asked to write a 'summary statement'.</p>	
To enhance a deeper understanding about particularly contradictory/ challenging pieces of text	Microanalysis/Creation of a TFA	<p>6. (Interpretive panel microanalysis) The researcher facilitates a micro-analysis panel if to look deeper into puzzling sections of text (Wengraf 2009).</p> <p>Key questions:</p> <p>A. Why does he make that point about that topic in that way?</p> <p>B. What might he be trying to say?</p> <p>C. What might he be trying to conceal?</p>	<p>Transcript</p> <p>Interview recording</p> <p>Field notes</p>
	Creation of a TFA	<p>7. (TFA creation) The researcher analyses the information obtained from all previous analysis undertaken on the telling of the told story pattern to create a full TFA.</p>	<p>TSS document</p> <p>Transcript</p> <p>Interview Recording</p> <p>Field notes</p> <p>Flipchart notes from Told story and microanalysis</p> <p>interpretive panel discussions</p> <p>Notes from panel</p>

			analysis Summary statements from panel members Relevant theory
To relate the separate patterns of the living of the lived life and the telling of the told story together, ascertaining the “phases of mutating subjectivity” between both. Constructing and testing structural hypotheses relating the two tracks.	Lived Life/ Told Story comparison. Situating subjectivity	8. (Comparing lived life with told story) The researcher creates a framework document representing the lived life/told story phases and the individual's mutating subjectivity over the life story.	Transcript BDA TFA
To communicate the evolution of the participant's subjectivity in the life story.	Construction of a case account	9. (Case account creation) Considering all previous stages of analysis, the researcher constructs an informed interpretive account of the individual's story moving between the particular and the general, considering the historical subjectivity of the case along and its contextual embeddedness. This represents the outcome of the nine stages of BNIM used on each individual case.	All documents All interview recordings
To provide a theoretically informed answer to the Central Research Question (CRQ).	Comparison between case narratives – theorizing from cases	10. (Cross case theorisation) The researcher compares and contrasts case account narratives, critically comparing them with relevant theory.	Case accounts Relevant theory

9.5 Appendix V Single QuesTion aimed at Inducing Narrative (SQUIN)

As you know, I'm researching how domestic violence or domestic abuse has affected men's lives. I understand that you have had such experiences. So please can you tell me the story of your relationship with any partner, with whom such experiences happened, all the events and experiences that were important for you, personally up till now

There's no rush, you can start wherever you like.

I'll listen first, I won't interrupt

I'll just take some notes in case I have any further questions for after you've finished telling me about it all.

You said	Do you remember any more about that particular	Occasion	How it all happened?
You said	Do you remember any more about that particular	Incident	How it all happened?
You said	Do you remember any more about that particular	Event	How it all happened?
You said	Do you remember any more about	Moment	How it all

	that particular		happened?
You said	Do you remember any more about	Time	How it all
	that particular		happened?
You said	Do you remember any more about	Situation	How it all
	that particular		happened?
You said	Do you remember any more about	Phase	How it all
	that particular		happened?
You said	Do you have any thoughts about	time	
	that		
You said	Do you have any feelings about that	time	
You said	Do you have any feelings about that	situation	
You said	Do you have any thoughts about	time	
	that		

Round 1 words

Round 2 words

9.6 Appendix VI Sample of BDC panel (Conor) notes from discussion 9th Dec 08

	BDC	PANEL HYPOTHESIS	MY THOUGHTS
Pre 1996	She pressed charges against her father for abuse He went to prison + went to America afterwards	She was framing the context of abuse She doesn't see father SHE KNEW THERE WAS CONSEQUENCE TO ABUSE AND WASN'T AFRAID ISSUES WITH FATHER – he was guilty/shame and escaped SHE TOLD A GOOD STORY? SHE GOT RID OF THE MAIN MEN IN HER LIFE Rest of family prob not happy with her FAMILIAR WITH PLAYING VICTIM	SHE HAD 'DONE COURT' AND WON BEFORE. CONFIDENT IN LEGAL SYSTEM? ISSUES? UNRESOLVED WITH FATHER WHICH TRANSGRESSED TO THE MEN IN HER LIFE?
1996	Met through a cousin who attended al-ateen. Was doing a master's degree 'a lot of going out and drinking' Moved in together	ALCOHOLISM AN ISSUE – FOR HER/him/parents Age difference/ is he older than her? The culture/not the culture of student life Socioeconomic differences Speed of relationship – quick to move in? WAS HE RESCUING HER/her rescuing him? CONTROL IS AN ISSUE	ALCOHOLISM WAS A MAIN FEATURE IN HER LIFE – PERHAPS FROM HER PARENTS (ALATEEN) AND CONTINUED TO INFLUENCE HER ?PERCIEVED CONTROL AN ISSUE?
1998	Worked in Germany He paid for her to visit	SHE IS DEPENDANT ON HIM FINANCIALLY	DEFINITELY, THERE WERE ISSUES ABOUT HER SPENDING AND HIM PROVIDING
1999	He bought house with help from parents	He as provider/she as dependant – satisfactory roles	
General	Has 2 sisters, 3 brothers. Close knit family. Parents married 36 years She didn't last long in jobs	THEME OF STABILITY VERSUS INSTABILITY – HE REPRESENTED STABILITY. Possible distancing of himself from her – reiterating this comparison.	STABILITY VERSUS INSTABILITY – STRUCTURAL – HYPOTHESIS OF HIS LIVED LIFE AND ALSO OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP. HE VALUED STABILITY AND SHE DIDN'T REALLY UNDERSTAND WHAT IT WAS.
2000	Had unplanned pregnancy. She drank on pregnancy Got married before baby born Had baby girl Things fine	Painting picture of him as good guy and her as the freeloader SUGGESTS THAT TRADITIONAL FAMILY VALUES ARE IMPORTANT FOR HIM. Who was the father? SHE WASN'T COPING – SHE WAS AN ALCOHOLIC, UNHAPPY, UNEDUCATED?	TRADITIONAL FAMILY VALUES ARE IMPORTANT FOR HIM SHE WAS AN ALCOHOLIC AND THIS IMPACTED ON HER PREGNANCY – SUGGESTING HER LACK OF REGARD FOR OTHERS??/BABY/HIM?

9.7 Appendix VII Sample of TSS (Conor)

First met – the early days		
Line no	Summary of structure	Gist of story
10-33	Report/eval	Met through a cousin who attended al-ateen She had history of physical/sexual abuse from father. <i>“there was a lot of going out and drinking...and I just didn’t think”</i>
35-52	Desc	She was verbally and physically aggressive Moved in together within year near her family home Was a student <i>“I was paying for everything”</i> She worked on and off
54-71	Eval/arg	She had a pattern of behaviour which was progressively unreliable He made sure bills were paid

His family		
73-80	Desc	He bought house Parents helped ‘on condition that it was only his’
82-86	Arg/Desc	2 sisters 3 brothers Close knit family <i>“Good parents which are very supportive”</i>

Her family		
91-107	Desc	She had history of domestic and sexual abuse by father who was imprisoned for it. Father married teenager. Alleged that her father killed his father (her grandfather) <i>“I didn’t know any of this stuff”</i>

Patterns of behaviour		
108-122	Eval	‘New project’ Things fantastic for 3-4 months Then abuse – mostly verbal. <i>“She’d spend like a demon”</i>

Marriage/Children/ family values		
125-145	Eval	Had unplanned pregnancy + married quickly <i>“maybe that’s mad, but that’s the way I felt about it”</i>
140-142	Desc	Drank during pregnancy Abuse lessened Daughter born – things fine

9.8 Appendix VIII *Example of how lived life and told story were merged (Conor)*

Biographical Data Analysis-phases of the lived life	Subjective phases – mutating subjectivity	Thematic Field Analysis
<p>Phase 1 Student life</p> <p>met his partner in 1996</p> <p>doing masters degree.</p> <p>Moved in 1 year later</p> <p>Worked in Germany for a while.</p> <p>Phase 2 Attempted stability</p> <p>In 1999 Conor bought a house with the help of his parents.</p> <p>In 2000 his partner became pregnant.</p> <p>Got married in 2000</p> <p>second daughter in 2001.</p> <p>Phase 3 deterioration</p> <p>2002, Conor's wife attended AA meetings.</p> <p>Shortly after this they moved house.</p> <p>mid 2004, Conor's wife o/d</p> <p>July 2006, separation commenced</p> <p>Diary began</p> <p>Series of court</p> <p>Currently, Conor sees his children at weekends.</p>	<p>I was a passive person and a bit irresponsible myself. The difference between me and her was that I could control myself.</p> <p>I am realising that its time to settle down – I want to emanate my parents' lifestyle which is the antithesis of her lifestyle. Children mean its time to get serious.</p> <p>She is troubled but - I love her/want to rescue her/ am insecure so can only get her. If I let her do what she wants – I can help her.</p> <p>I should have known she'd be trouble but didn't admit it early enough.</p> <p>I realise things are one sided – but am happy to accept this so long as I can be a good father to my children.</p> <p>She is troubled but - She's crossed the line. It's no longer acceptable.</p> <p>She is capable of more destruction than I thought she would be.</p> <p>I can't believe the bias in the system</p> <p>I'm the only one who cares for the children</p> <p>I have to learn the system in order to win.</p> <p>I'm still trying to recover the damage she has caused.</p>	<p>First met – the early days</p> <p>His family</p> <p>Her family</p> <p>Patterns of behaviour</p> <p>Marriage/Children/ family values</p> <p>Patterns of behaviour</p> <p>Babies/new project</p> <p>Patterns of behaviour/deterioration/ his responses</p> <p>His reflections on her</p> <p>A good idea backfiring</p> <p>Her patterns of behaviour/ the affair/suicide attempt</p> <p>Her father</p> <p>Her patterns of behaviour / suicide attempt</p> <p>His thoughts about her</p> <p>Smelling a rat/change afoot</p> <p>Start of separation/naïve beliefs about custody/legal system</p> <p>Mayo holiday/dispute about her bringing kids to see her father</p> <p>Reflections on abuse</p> <p>How the family coped with her abuse</p> <p>The allegation of CSA – major turning point</p> <p>Dispute about kids and visiting her father</p> <p>The allegation – his thoughts</p> <p>Getting support/amen/fighting back</p> <p>Garda Involvement/epiphany</p> <p>Beliefs about the inequity of 'the system'</p> <p>Fighting the system/ to access kids</p> <p>Social services/anger, frustration and disappointment</p> <p>What she really wants/ what it's all about</p> <p>Social services/anger, frustration and disappointment</p> <p>Fighting fire with fire –the phone call – counter allegation</p> <p>Opinions on the court system/judges</p> <p>Awareness of the children's wants and needs</p>

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